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WMU Researchers Fighting Colorectal Cancer
First-ever Brain Bee hosted by WMU

WMU hosted its first ever Brain Bee event, aimed at increasing neuroscience literacy at the K-12 level. According to Professor of Biological Sciences, John Spitsbergen, “The local competition hosted students from four different school districts in the area. The winner was Hanna Larcinese (Paw Paw High School) and the runner-up was Madeline Price (Portage Northern High School).” The winner receives a $500 travel award from the Michigan Chapter of the Society for Neuroscience to travel to the National Brain Bee in Baltimore.

The Society for Neurosciences (SFN) sponsors the International Brain Bee program, a neuroscience competition for high school students. The event runs in coordination with Brain Awareness Week (BAW) activities sponsored by the Society for Neuroscience and the Dana Alliance for Brain Initiatives.

The Brain Bee is an attempt to motivate students to learn about the brain, capture their imaginations, and inspire them to pursue careers in biomedical brain research.

http://www.wmich.edu/biology/
The National Cancer Institute, within the National Institutes of Health, has awarded a three-year $400,000 grant to Western Michigan University professor Karim Essani to research and develop a new treatment for colorectal cancer. The grant to the WMU virologist and professor of biological sciences, will fund the Experimental Oncolytic Virotherapy Project which will attempt to use viruses to attack cancer cells without harming normal cells.

The new virotherapy, as opposed to chemotherapy and other conventional cancer treatments, holds great promise and could prove more effective in treating colon cancer and not harming healthy cells, thus avoiding nausea and other undesirable side effects common with other treatments.

"This is not a new idea, but it has generated new interest in the last 10 years," Essani says. "What we're doing is really in the beginning, experimental stage."

The idea for the research comes from a decades-old case in which a person with cancer contracted rabies. When the rabies vaccine was administered, the cancer disappeared.

Some research already is under way using viruses to attack tumors, Essani says. Viruses are very specific in the cells they attack. They often differentiate between species of animals and even the type of cells within that species. So theoretically, a virus could be developed to attack specific cancer cells and leave other cells untouched.

Essani's project will take a rare, nonfatal African virus known as the tanapox virus (which infects monkeys and humans), and use it to treat colon cancer. Colon cancer is a particularly troubling and potentially deadly cancer for which conventional treatment is not often effective, and which often causes unwanted side effects.

"We thought if we could take this virus and modify it in such a way that it will only infect and destroy human colorectal cancer cells and not normal cells, that would be really outstanding," Essani says.

The viral cancer therapy would work something like penicillin, Essani says. Penicillin targets bacterial cells, but does not harm normal human cells. An oncolytic virus, in a similar manner, infects and destroys only cancer cells without harming healthy human cells.

"Unfortunately, it has been very difficult to find such targets in cancer," Essani says. "It is very difficult to differentiate between a normal cell and a cancer cell at the molecular level."

Essani and his team of students plan to take human colorectal cancer cells and transplant them onto nude mice—specially bred laboratory mice that do not mount a rejection response because they have an inhibited immune system. The team then will treat the nude mice with tanapox virus mutants they have genetically designed to see if they can kill the human cancer cells. If successful, they then move to experimenting with monkeys and finally humans. The tanapox virus was selected because it is confined to equatorial Africa and people outside that region have no immunity to it. If people were immune to the virus, it could not replicate itself and attack the cancer cells.

Additionally, it causes only mild side effects which are self-limiting in humans.

Currently, chemotherapy and radiation are used to fight colon cancer, but neither is always effective and both may be accompanied by serious side effects, including nausea, diarrhea and suppression of the immune system. In addition, cancer cells can eventually become resistant to chemotherapy drugs. "With viruses, we do not expect to see any of this," Essani says.

http://www.wmich.edu/biology/directory/faculty-profiles/essani.htm
Dr. Alan D. Poling, WMU professor of psychology, is part of a team of specialists working with a non-governmental organization APOPO, which has had considerable success using large African pouched rats to sniff out landmines and tuberculosis bacteria. APOPO, which is headquartered in Tanzania, is an acronym for what in Dutch means Anti-Personnel Landmines Detection Product Development.

Poling says the rodents, dubbed HeroRats, have an acute sense of smell and do well at detecting explosive devices and live TB bacterium. They’re also cheaper to train and maintain than dogs, making them a valuable alternative for landmine detection in developing countries.

“Product developers, not scientists, founded APOPO. They asked me to get involved because of my expertise in animal behavior,” Poling says. “On the one hand, I thought their work was innovative and interesting. On the other hand, I thought it was kind of counterintuitive—rats don’t come immediately to mind when one thinks of diagnosing disease.”

A psychopharmacologist and behavior analyst, Poling joined APOPO and the HeroRat team in August 2009 to increase its research capacity, improve the scientific rigor of that research and further streamline rat-training processes. Among his specific activities are developing research protocols, analyzing data, and writing grants and articles.

The organization has been garnering national and international attention, with stories about its work featured on MSNBC and CNN as well in the United Nations publication “Freedom from Fear” and numerous scholarly journals. In addition, Poling has been interviewed by CBS News and Voice of America. He is lead author of a study published in the December issue of the American Journal of Tropical Medicine and Hygiene, and was featured in an editorial of the American Psychological Association publication, APA Monitor.

Poling has been going to Tanzania periodically since joining the team, and will be traveling there early this year to work on several projects with two doctoral students from WMU.

“Poling says that when he joins his doctoral students in Tanzania this year, he will be working on that type of comparison as well as moving ahead with other experiments and projects. He’s particularly interested in investigating how detection rats can be adapted to screen for explosives in cargo shipments and whether their natural burrowing talent can be harnessed by fitting them with miniature cameras so they can search for survivors in the rubble of disaster sites.

“A WMU faculty member since 1977, Poling has written or co-written 11 books, along with some 250 articles that have appeared in 40 different professional journals. He is a fellow of three divisions of the American Psychological Association and the recipient of WMU’s Distinguished Faculty Scholar Award. He earned a bachelor’s degree from Adelphi-Broaddus College, a master’s degree from West Virginia University and a doctoral degree from the University of Minnesota.

Visit Dr. Poling’s website by clicking here: http://homepages.wmich.edu/~epoling/Al_Poling/Home.html

To detect the active TB bacteria, sputum samples typically are prepared and examined under a microscope or are cultured to see if any bacteria will grow. “Microscopy misses 60 to 70 percent of active infections and is slow—a technician can only do 30 to 40 smears per day. Cultures allow for accurate detection, but take six weeks to grow,” he says. “Rats can analyze hundreds of samples in a day, and we’re reasonably sure they are as accurate as microscopy, and probably substantially more accurate. The next step is to study how rats do compared to culturing.”

Poling says the next real potential of HeroRats is in TB screening. The early signs are promising, and trained rats already have increased TB detection rates in five Tanzanian hospitals by more than 40 percent.

“Two billion people around the world are exposed to TB—it’s just a scourge in the developing world,” Poling says. “There is no cheap and accurate method of detection, so if we improve screening, it will be a huge benefit to humanity.”

Health officials report that TB kills more youth and adults than any other single infectious disease in the world today, in addition to hindering agriculture, reconstruction, repatriation of refugees, and other aspects of social and economic development.

“Microscopy misses 60 to 70 percent of active infections and is slow—a technician can only do 30 to 40 smears per day. Cultures allow for accurate detection, but take six weeks to grow,” he says. “Rats can analyze hundreds of samples in a day, and we’re reasonably sure they are as accurate as microscopy, and probably substantially more accurate. The next step is to study how rats do compared to culturing.”
Foreign languages have been a major part of Western Michigan University since its earliest days, and for good reason. Learning about languages is an integral link to the world at large; it serves as a bridge across culture and perception. As global openness increased over the last century, interest in other languages expanded past the traditional study of the classical languages. Languages clear roads and enable cultural discourse and expression. At Western Michigan University, the Department of Foreign Languages is growing to accommodate this global outreach.

Department of Foreign Languages Chair Dr. Cynthia Running-Johnson explains that there are multiple benefits to learning another language: when working between languages for a long period of time, she says, “you learn more about your own language.”

From its beginnings as the Department of German and Latin in 1904, the Department has grown to offer three language majors and seven minors. Students now major in German, French, or Latin, or minor in Arabic, Chinese, French, German, Japanese, Latin, Russian, or World Literature. Beginning courses also are offered in Italian. Historically, the Department housed Spanish instruction, but due to increasing demand for Spanish courses, 2003 saw the creation of the Department of Spanish. The department will begin offering a new major—infall 2012.

The Department of Foreign Languages offers exceptional opportunities and support to its students. Over a dozen study abroad programs across the globe range in length from a few weeks to a full academic year; students have the choice of immersion in one of many options through the Office of Study Abroad. WMU language instructors join students on these trips abroad, serving as mentors and fellow researchers in the field. The annual Summer Translation Institute, sponsored by the department, presents valuable experiences for speaking and writing in a second (or third) language. Says Running-Johnson, “Nationally, language is becoming more of an interest. It reflects the global interest of the world. Businesses and government are much more involved in the world now; there is a need for practical, as well as literary, translation.”

She also gives a nod to the future goals of the program. With these translation courses, as well as possible graduate certification, the Department hopes to lure more international students to Kalamazoo. “It is possible graduate certification, the Department hopes to lure more international students to Kalamazoo. “It enriches our program and university to have people from outside our culture,” notes Running-Johnson. One driving factor of the Department’s success has unquestionably been its faculty. WMU language professors are involved in a constant cycle of research—breaking new ground while simultaneously sharing findings with students. Department faculty have been lauded as researchers, translators, and, of course, top-of-the-line instructors. When asked about outstanding faculty, Running-Johnson laughs. “You can be working and working and working on different projects, and suddenly the book comes out or you get the grant,” she says. This makes it difficult to pick only a few names.

Running-Johnson notes that the trends in language learning have been interesting to watch. “The trend is the boom in global interest among students and professors.” She attributes the growth of languages such as Chinese, Arabic, and Japanese to enthusiastic students interested in international politics and recent world events.

“Students are becoming more aware of developments in the world, and are beginning to tailor their education, and their interests, with their global environment in mind,” she concludes.

Peter Blickle, professor and advisor in German, whose book on the concept of “homeland” within German society has, since its publication, become one of the standard works on the subject, also is the winner of the 2009 Geertje Potash Prose Prize of the Society for Contemporary American Literature in German. In addition, he has just published his second novel in German, “Von einer Liebe zur andern” (“From Love to Love”), July 2011.

Peter Krawutschke, professor of German, received the Alexander Gode Medal, the most prestigious award of the 11,000-member American Translators Association. He is an officer in major national and international translation organizations.

The department begins offering a new major in Japanese in fall 2012.

Noted Accomplishments


His book, “Writing the Love of Boys: Origins of Bishonen Culture in Modernist Japanese Literature,” was published this year.

www.wmich.edu/languages
When Dr. Paul Maier delivered his last lecture on the history of ancient Rome this spring, Western Michigan University closed the book on a long chapter in its history.

Maier, WMU’s Russell H. Seibert Professor of Ancient History, will retire at the close of the spring semester after more than 50 years on the history faculty and 52 years as a member of the University community. He is WMU’s longest-serving faculty member ever, and his expansive research findings and prolific writing career have put him in demand among scholars and reporters as an internationally known expert.

His attitude about his WMU role remains as fresh as the day he was hired.

“There is no greater job than being a university professor,” he says. “I’ve actually had a little pang of conscience all these years about cashing my paychecks.”

The Rolodex had just been introduced when Maier launched his academic career at WMU, and he quickly became a fixture on the files of reporters at some of the nation’s leading publications. Reporters have long since moved Maier’s name from the Rolodex to their Smartphone directories, and the calls keep coming. He has been a favorite source for reporters at media outlets ranging from U.S. News & World Report to Time, Newsweek and the “NBC Nightly News.”

One of the nation’s foremost authorities on early Christianity, Maier is a Harvard- and University of Basel-educated historian and a seminary graduate who first came to WMU in 1958 as the Lutheran campus pastor (a position he held until 1999) and a visiting professor. However, he views his official start date as 1960, when he accepted an offer to become a full-time member of the history faculty.

As a faculty member, his research has focused on manuscript and text analysis, archaeology, and companion of sacred and secular sources from the first century A.D. That means he’s been able to uncover fresh information on such topics as the actual date of the crucifixion of Jesus of Nazareth, the hidden politics behind His trial and condemnation, the circumstances of the persecution of Christians under Nero, and many other topics he has explored in nearly 300 published articles and reviews.

Maier has written 25 books — academic tomes, translations, biographies, novels and children’s works — that have sold more than four million copies and been translated into 18 languages. Nearly every weekend during the academic year, he gives seminars across the country on topics reflected in the seven DVDs he has produced that offer new light on Jesus, St. Paul, the early church and current Christianity.

He’s been named WMU’s Distinguished Faculty Scholar and a winner of the WMU Alumni Association’s Teaching Excellence Award. In 1984, he earned a citation as one of America’s 25 finest educators by the Washington-based Council for the Advancement and Support of Education.

During his WMU tenure, Maier has worked under the administrations of six of the University’s eight presidents, and he’s fond of pointing out that years of History at WMU

“Most people I’ve known through the years are now buildings.”

“They kept me teaching the introductory course so that students would learn that history can be pretty entertaining.”

Today, most people know about the people he worked with during his early years on campus for far different reasons than their personalities or teaching skills.

“Most people I’ve known through the years are now buildings,” he says. Those who have had University buildings named after them include Maier’s early history colleagues Willis Dunbar and Robert Friedmann as well as friends in other disciplines like George Kohrman and administrators like Paul Sangren and Russ Seibert.

Those who think his retirement may mean he’ll be easier to reach or that he’ll spend more time indulging his favorite nonscholarly hobby — operating heavy equipment — are in for a rude awakening. His post-WMU life is already beginning to take on the frenetic pace he kept up as a faculty member.

His plans during the coming years include:

• Stepping up the number and length of his visits to conferences.
• Working on a new History Channel project.
• Continuing his leadership role in his national church body as a vice president of the Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod.
• Expanding one of his great loves — leading travel tours to explore the history of the regions he knows so well. It’s the latter plan that best characterizes Maier’s approach to studying and learning history. Ever the student himself, Maier relishes the opportunity to share what he knows and learn even more.
• “That sharing is very big for me,” he says. “I don’t want to ever be bored with my own lectures.”

That commitment to making lectures exciting and interesting has led to a decades-long role as a beloved professor who teaches introductory history courses in addition to his advanced offerings.

“They kept me teaching the introductory course so that students would learn that history can be pretty entertaining,” he says.

Asked to single out any regrets he has in what, by any measure, would be called an exemplary and productive career, he points to a lifelong addiction to the construction/landscaping equipment he has collected, restored, repaired and used to clear his 50-acre Oshtemo Township property.

“I’d be several books ahead if I hadn’t devoted so much time to heavy equipment,” he confesses. “But I couldn’t resist it. It was something so quintessentially different than what I was used to doing every day.”
Undergraduate students are now doing hands-on research at WMU thanks to a National Science Foundation-funded Research Experience for Undergraduates (REU) Program. The Departments of Biological Sciences and Chemistry at WMU work together to bring in undergraduates from around the country to participate in interdisciplinary research and undergraduate research opportunities with a variety of faculty at the University.

The REU experience at Western Michigan University includes: participation in a research project; presentation/discussion series on the process of science; considerations of scientific ethics and integrity; research seminars; and career-oriented discussions.

“REU supports active research participation by undergraduate students in any of the areas of research funded by the National Science Foundation,” explains Dr. Susan Stapleton. The students intern with faculty mentors for 10 weeks the summer before their junior year, learning, as Stapleton says, to become “scientists, not just content-knowing experts. We’re out to create scientists who choose the profession of teaching,” says Stapleton, also WMU’s Howard Hughes Medical Institute grant project director.

This year’s participants in the REU program, their area of research and their faculty mentors are:

- Trung Quan Tran, (Oxford College at Emory University) and Dr. Sherine Obare: The project focused on developing chemical sensors that could distinguish between various organophosphorus pesticides by providing an optical signal in the form of color change.
- Jennifer Moloche, (Alma College) and Dr. Elke Schoffers: The project goal is to synthesize known and new inosamine derivatives in order to test their ability to function as nutritional media for bacteria that are able to fix nitrogen.
- William Thoyer, (WMU) and Dr. James Kiddie: The project was focused on creating a catalyzer, and thus environmentally friendly, method to synthesize 5 atom carbon ring molecules.
- Vanessa Pinto Burgos, (University of Puerto Rico at Cayey) and Dr. Lisa Baker: The project examined if eight weeks of moderate forced exercise will improve radial arm maze acquisition (task that measures spatial learning and memory in rats) in one year old male Sprague-Dawley rats, comparing them with a group of non-exercise rats.
- Lyanne Rolon Rosario, (University of Puerto Rico at Cayey) and Dr. John Spitsbergen: The project examined whether two weeks of involuntary exercise increases neurotrophic factor expression in skeletal muscle and prevents death of motor neurons in a mouse model of Amyotrophic Lateral Sclerosis (ALS).
- Katie Mullis, (WMU) and Dr. Sharon Gill: I studied the nesting success and nest-site selection of chipping sparrows in an urban environment.
- Carolyn Huston, (WMU) and Dr. Steve Kohler: The project examined whether parasitic infection affected the feeding behavior of a carnivorous fish (mottled sculpin).
- Eduardo Hernandez Colo, (University of Puerto Rico at Cayey) and Dr. John Geiser: The pathogenic Gram-negative bacterium, Yersinia pestis, is the responsible agent for the black plague, causing millions of deaths in Medieval Europe. The current study was aimed at identifying naturally occurring molecules that could act to block entry of the e pathogenic Gram-negative bacterium, Yersinia pestis, into host cells.
- Hema Balkaran, (University of the Virgin Islands) and Dr. Pam Hoppe: The purpose of this experiment was to help answer the question of how the unc-82 kinase enzymes is activated. The unc-82 mutant causes muscle organization defects.
- Michele Alpert, (Texas A&M University) and Dr. John Jelles: This project studied the neural networks in the medicinal leach that are responsible for controlling blood flow in hopes of better understanding how a simple neural network can regulate vascular contractility in this model organism.

Western Michigan University’s Telecommunications and Information Management (TIM) program received a Program of Excellence Award for undergraduate education in the field of information technology management at the International Telecommunications Education and Research Association National Case Study Competition.

In addition, three students won a national case study competition for the group for the second consecutive year. Competing against teams of graduate students, the final round of the competition and public presentations were held during ITREAs annual Conference on Telecommunications and Information Technology in Indianapolis. In the final round this year, WMU faced teams from Ball State University, James Madison University and Murray State University.

The program is offered through the Department of Business Information Systems in the Haworth College of Business and the School of Communication in the College of Arts and Sciences. It is co-directed by Dr. Pairin Katerattanakul, associate professor of business information systems, and Dr. Rick Gershon, professor of communication.
WMU Alumni Association

Linked Inbox

Shout Outs!
from the WMU College of Arts and Sciences Alumni and Friends group on Linkedin

I started my career as a radio broadcaster and most recently worked as the marketing and membership director for the WMU Alumni Association.

Glen Dillon
B.A. Communication
I’m the Program Director and do middays at 105.3 WKRH in Kato. I use my communication skills all the time. Group Problem Solving with Dr. Yelsma continues to be one of the best classes I’ve ever taken. I’ve used it almost every day since taking it. The only trouble is that while I have a B.A., my wife Sara has her M.A. in Organizational Communications and uses that as the trump card when we disagree. Go Broncos!

Bruce Modej
B.A. ‘74 Communication/Education, English minor
I am the associate athletic director of special events and projects at the University of Michigan. Over the last 30 years, I have led the media relations unit of the athletic department.

Charles (Roy) Brockie
M.A. ‘77 Industrial/Organizational Psychology
Charles is Director of Human Resources, Cancer and Hematology Centers of West Michigan, PC, Grand Rapids, Mich.

Nicholle Allen
B.A. ‘82 Public Relations, English
I am a creative designer and write copy as a digital marketing specialist for major brands. Although I don’t get the external communication drive from my public relations degree I am doing something different everyday. I convey the client’s message in a creative manner to drive visitors to their websites and increase online sales. Some days I work the technical aspects of the back end of their ecommerce sites, some days I work strictly on the creative side and some days I do both.

Join the WMU College of Arts and Sciences Alumni and Friends group on Linkedin

Tell us what you’re up to here, or see page 24.

Jessica Story
B.A. '90 Communications, Theatre minor
I moved to Denver and work for Wolverine World Wide. I am a territory sales manager for Harley Davidson Footwear. My degree equipped me with the ability to work with many different people.

David Gorski
B.A. ‘10 Public Relations
I manage Multimedia Services at the College of DuPage, a community college 35 miles west of Chicago with a student population of around 30,000. With a staff of 10, Multimedia Services provides most media services to students, faculty and staff. We specialize in live satellite production, on-demand training and media streaming.

Michael Betz
B.S. ’77 Communication, Business; M.A. ’87 Public Relations
I co-own a new media production company just down the road from good old WMU. We are always working on interesting projects and learning new things, and we get to travel the world. A WMU Communications degree can take you places!

Kina L. Brown
B.S. ’95 Broadcast/Cable Production, Criminal Justice and Black American Studies minor
Kina L. Brown was inducted into the WMU Athletic Hall of Fame for women’s basketball. She was a three-time First Team All-MAC selection, earned Second Team All-MAC and played for the U.S. Junior National Team. She recently completed coursework for a master’s degree in physical education and health and is completing student teaching.

Kristin Koetsier-Miller
B.A. ’06 Sociology; Criminal Justice, Sociology minor
Kristin Koetsier-Miller was inducted into the Grand Rapids Sports Hall of Fame. She is a WMU assistant women’s basketball coach.

Mark Meadows
B.S. ’71 English, Technology minor
Mark Meadows was elected to a third term as Michigan State Representative, 69th District in Lansing, Mich.

Brenda L. Hunt
B.S. ’83 Communications/Sociology, Women’s Studies minor
M.P. ’85 Public Administration
Brenda L. Hunt, president and chief executive officer of the Battle Creek Community Foundation, is the 2010 recipient of the Dale G. Griffin Healthcare Leadership Award. The award recognizes exemplary contributions that improve the quality and accessibility of health care in Battle Creek, Mich.

Sara Gabriel Dillon
B.A. ’98 Communication, Philosophy, M.A. ’03 Organizational Communication

December 7th: HOLIDAY CONCERT
at DeVos Performing Arts & Worship Center (GR) begins at 7 p.m.
– $10 per person. A 90-minute “Brass Christmas” performance.

NEED TICKETS?
WMUFAMILY Experience Concierge Service created specifically for WMU Alumni
• tickets may be purchased to all of the WMUFAMILY events! Please call 269-387-8746 so that we may personally assist you!

Hours of operation include: Monday-Thursday, 8 a.m. until 9 p.m.; Friday, 8 a.m. until 5 p.m.; Saturday, 10:30 a.m. until 3:30 p.m.; and Sunday, 3:30 until 9 p.m.

Tell us what you’re up to here, or see page 24.

September 15, 2011: THE CANNON CUP Golf Challenge (Tullymore)
• our first golf event partnering with CMU. Two-person scramble. $55 per player – includes lunch, golf and dinner. Each foursome will have a team from CMU and a team from WMU.

September 23, 2011: The ArtPrize After Party
• WMU Downtown (GR) – the experience begins at 7 p.m. It’s $25 per person – drinks and food. The Western Jazz Quartet will perform from 7:30 to 8:15 p.m. – followed by a presentation from Rever to the group and then the “unveiling” of The Epic Broncos on the side of the building.

October 7, 2011: WMUFAMILY Mentor Luncheon
n a new experience here at WMU. We are inviting WMU ALUMNI and Deans to host a WMU freshman for lunch at the Fetzer Center. The fun begins at 11:30 a.m. Deadline to sign up is September 9!

October 7, 2011: PAINT THE TOWN BROWN Pep Rally
• at The Arcadia Creek Festival Place in downtown K2O2. The fun begins at 7:30 p.m. The Bronco Marching Band, cheerleaders, football team and coaches will be in attendance. We’ll also be honoring a team from the ‘60s at the event.

October 7, 2011: THE BROWN & GOLD GALA
• open from 8 p.m. to 11:15 a.m. next to Waldo Stadium on the baseball field. Beer and Wine, Food, Live Entertainment and FUN Free admission with football ticket or student ID.

November 11, 2011: THE BROWN & GOLD GALA
• Frederick Meijer Gardens (GR) begins at 6:30 PM – our “signature” event! WMU’s Gold Company will be performing – we’ll honor WMU Alumnae Suzanne Geha this evening. $150 per person – a “best-in-class” event!

September 17, 2011 & October 8, 2011: THE CORRAL Entertainment Village
• open from 8 a.m. to 11:30 a.m. Deadline to sign up is September 9!
Megan Coatley, B.A. ‘02 Psychology M.A. ‘05
Applied Behavior Analysis

"For the past several years, I’ve been working in the field of behavioral treatments for children with autism and developmenta
tal disabilities. And, currently, I am making an exciting segue into a role that will hopefully meld my behavior analytic skills, my penchant for health and fitness and my love of travel and volunteering"

After graduating with my master’s in 2005, I headed out into the world to help families and children who were struggling with autism and developmenta
tal disabilities. My world was turned upside down (in a great way) by an amazing volunteer vacation on the Blackfeet Reservation in Montana! I have spent the past year trying to figure out how I could share these life-changing travel experiences. What could I do to fuse the vehicle of adventure travel with my skills and background in behavioral psychology? Could sustainable, meaningful travel somehow be my venue for ‘saving the world’ (as my advisor, Dr. Malott would say) with behavior analysis?

I finally found my answer… on a stunning beach in Uvita, on Costa Rica’s Pacific coast. After just a week, we were hooked… Hooked on surfing, hooked on Bahia Ballena, hooked on the peace, simplicity and pure vida (pure life) we found in Costa Rica. I have become committed to sharing this inspiring space and its beautiful people with others.

Over the past month, I have been coordinating with Travis and Glibran at Bodhi Surf School to develop a very unique surfing, yoga and behavioral life coaching retreat in Costa Rica (www.bodhisurfschool.com/retreats/empowered-self). My role as the retreat lead and behavior coach will be to provide participants with practical tools and skills so they are empowered to initiate lasting behavior change in their everyday lives.

From a behavioral perspective, I plan to incorporate a pre-retreat assessment, SMART goal setting, self-man
agement training, some BST, planning for generalization at home, and training in data collection as well as post-retreat Skype consultation for troubleshooting and checking prog
ress. All of the skills I learned in my time at WMU will be in full force during this week-long, all inclusive adventure! I may be a dreamer, but I think that this could be a really great opportunity for behavior analysts to join a great commu
nity of ‘doers’ and really work toward ‘saving the world.’

Megan Coatley earned her master’s degree in applied behavior analysis under Dr. Richard Malott in 2005.

Bob Hercules, B.A. ‘79
Communication, Creative Writing minor

I am finishing two new feature-length documentaries about dance. The first, “A Good Man...” chronicles famed choreographer Bill T. Jones over two years as he creates a modern dance work about the legacy of Abraham Lincoln. The film will premiere at the Full Frame Documentary Film Festival in mid-April and was broadcast on PBS “American Masters” program in October.

The second film, “The Joffrey Ballet: Mavericks of American Dance,” tells the remarkable story of the groundbreaking ballet company from their founding in 1956 to the present. It is co-produced by director Har
old Ramis and is narrated by actor Mandy Patinkin.

In addition, my production company, Media Process Group, just celebrated our 25th anniversary.

Jon Elright, B.S. ’95 Biomedicine

Jon Elright currently is a district sales manager with Genoptix, Inc., a medical laboratory based out of California. Jon works in the greater Detroit area, and has worked with the firm’s parent company, since 2006 in various functions within his field. He has enjoyed a great deal of experience within the pharmaceuti
cal and health care fields, and has been ranked #1 in his region for sales performance.

Jason Skipper, Ph.D. ‘05 Creative Writing

Jason, a former fiction editor for the Third Coast Writing Project, just published his first book, “Hustle.” His stories have appeared in numerous literary journals, with awards and recognition from Zoetrope: All Story, Glimmer Train, and Crab Orchard Review. He also is the recipient of grants from Art
ist Trust and the Vermont Studio Center, as well as nominations for the Pushcart Prize. Best of the Small Presses and Best of the Web anthologies.

Marilyn Hayes, B.A. ‘80
Communication

I have been a human resources administration/recruiter position, an automotive manufacturing position, and now have obtained a position at Steelcase as an account manager to shuttle customers to and from Grand Rapids on our company jets.

My role as aircraft coordina
tor, is to arrange corporate flights in courting customers. We cater to customers coming to and from Grand Rapids and Steelcase to view our product and buy! We are the first and last impression. I’ll be scheduling jets, pilots, and all the details that goes with it for a smooth transi

Tell us what you’re up to here, or see page 24.

Tell us what you’re up to here, or see page 24.
Keeping up with alum Matthew Kern, B.A. ’09 Environmental Studies and BBA, Business Finance

Graduation is a time of uncertainty for most. It is hard to think about stepping outside the school system when it is all most of us have known. It took me five and half years and plenty of introspection to prepare for this step. I concluded that I needed to take ownership of my own career ambitions and plan the direction I wanted to go, because no one else was going to do that for me. I began this process by adding an environmental studies major and a holistic health minor to my degree in business finance at the beginning of my fourth year. I made this leap to follow my intuition and throw logic aside for the time being. Starting over was difficult, but I found like-minded individuals in the members of the Registered Student Organization Students for a Sustainable Earth. The cultivation of these relationships gave me new friends and helped interest me in my class work.

Half way through my fifth year I was considering going into the Peace Corps, so I thought about what skills would be handy for me in that kind environment. This led me to apply to teach CPR/First Aid at the Greater Kalamazoo Red Cross Club-WMU Chapter. The Red Cross was looking to establish a presence on WMU’s campus and asked me to spearhead the creation of the Red Cross Club-WMU Chapter with other student volunteers. Working as President of the Red Cross Club gave me a creative outlet for my business knowledge, while using my environmental education to make the organization as green as possible.

My path has been and will continue to be unconventional, and whether you subscribe to this methodology or not, I would like to share with you three themes that have helped me and continue to provide opportunities:

- The first is diversifying your education. Not only do multiple majors and minors give each other synergy while in school, but they broaden your horizons when searching for opportunities afterwards making you a well-rounded candidate for potential employers.
- Second, if you cannot find a paying position in your field, you can easily gain experience by volunteering with registered student organizations, community nonprofits, or by taking unpaid internships. These organizations are usually flexible to your schedule and are happy to have the help. They provide skills and experience that will be invaluable in the future.
- Lastly and most importantly, follow your passion. If you are not excited learning about your major, what makes you think you will enjoy a job in that field? Ask yourself where you want to be and what you will be happy doing for years to come. These questions do not require concrete answers but will help you discover your own direction.

Education and experience enable you to be competitive in the professional world. The more competitive you are the more likely it is that you will find an enjoyable job and be offered a higher salary. This can all be accomplished by making personal and career goals that are S.M.A.R.T (specific, measurable, attainable, realistic, and timely). There are many paths to success, find your own and let your imagination run wild because your only limitations are ones you put on yourself.

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Jored Randall, B.A. ’06 English: Creative Writing

My book of poetry, “Apocryphal Road Code,” came into print in December 2010 with Salt Publishing out of the U.K. I was fortunate to have studied with the British poet John Wilkin-son during my time in the MFA program at the University of Notre Dame from 2007-09, and he liked one of my workshop poems enough that he sent it (without my knowledge) to Salt, which is also his publisher. Chris Hamilton-Emery at Salt liked it enough to want to see the whole project in which I was engaged, and the rest is the mundane history of getting the book to print. The book itself came into being as I was struggling to find a way to write about childhood memories and family history. In an odd turn of events involving last homework (yes, even grad students lose their homework), I struck on a poetic voice tied to the lonely life of the road, railroad tracks and boxcars, and homelessness. On researching these aspects of a life lived from the outside looking in, I naturally struck on the history of the American hobo. Especially influential was the discovery that a group of hobos in the late 19th century formed a card-carrying labor union and voted on a set of principles to govern their travels for the benefit of all. This “code of the road” became the structural and ethical backbone of my book in a series of poems that all go by the name “Road Code” (accessible in series at the online literary journal Danske Macabre, for those who would like to visit: http://danskemacabre.art,efffective.com/Road-Code.aspx). Of course, I would be remiss not to mention those of my professors at WMU who were influences on my work and have supported me in various ways since graduating, among these Stuart Dybek, Nancy Elmers, Jamy Gordon, Peter Blöckie, and Herb Scott (who was rather rough on my work as a young sophomore, but without whom I would not have progressed as a writer). “Apocryphal Road Code” is available at Michigan News Agency and Kazoo Books or from various online sources, including my publisher’s website, salt publishing.org. Anyone wanting to get in touch with me should check out my blog at http://wanderingstiff.com/mainstream/.

Our Alumni Write...
For the last 11 months, Megan Dietrich has been trekking the globe with The World Race, a program which gives young people the opportunity to perform missionary work across the world. In the last year, Dietrich has visited and lived in the Dominica Republic, Haiti, Ireland, Moldova, Romania, Malawi, South Africa, Mozambique, the Philippines, Thailand, China, and Malaysia. She kept an ongoing blog of her travels, detailing her experiences in each new region.

While abroad, Dietrich was able to live in widely varying communities, cultures, and in vastly different environments. Originally from flushing, Mich., Dietrich had the opportunity to widen her global and cultural experiences with a unique organization.

Dietrich’s blog allowed friends and family to keep up with her on her travels. She often used the blog as a way to bring attention to issues she witnessed firsthand, such as the HIV/AIDS epidemics in Africa and Thailand; poverty in Moldova; and the ongoing effects of the earthquake which hit Haiti Jan. 12, 2010. Of that catastrophe, she wrote, “...even in the devastation they are not breaking. [There are] stories of people being saved after being trapped for days, husbands, fathers, mothers, standing and fighting to find their children for days, people living against all odds ... They are in need now. It wasn’t easy to be so disconnected from her friends and family in America, but Megan made the most of it, creating special posts for holidays such as Thanksgiving and Christmas, and giving those back home a description of how some holidays are practiced abroad. Despite the difficulty and stresses, she acknowledged in a post that “this is my journey...I'm learning, I'm in a process and it’s going to be hard at times but I am walking.”

She also wrote about the highlights of the trip, such as driving through the lush countryside of Mozambique, getting the opportunity to spend time in and learn the cultures of each country, and working with children in local orphanages. One of those orphanages in particular, Door of Hope, impressed Dietrich: “They are an organization that seeks to rescue and receive any babies and children in cooperation with other agencies. [They also provide a temporary home] for the children during the search for permanent placement.

Now, Dietrich sums up her views on The World Race: “This is my life: I find myself on a ferry boat after a nine hour bus ride, a two hour stop at a bus station in the middle of the night, a four hour van ride, and two border crossings ... I walk into a new hostel, with a new contact, in a new culture. In one year in the world completely changes.”

One minute I am eating curry and rice, 20 hours later I find myself eating a quesadilla salad at Chilis’s watching the British royal wedding on CNN Live. It’s a life of discomfort, disunity, and disorientation to some. But it’s a life of trust, dependence, and normalcy to me.

This isn’t an experience; it’s...the life I am choosing. Almost a year after beginning her race around the world, Dietrich has realized a dream and made her own unique mark on the world. Megan Dietrich B.A. Organizational Communication ’06

The World Race is on!

Megan Dietrich B.A. Organizational Communication ’06

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Dean’s Excellence Fund Supports Student Activities

As Dean of the College of Arts and Sciences, I recognize that my ability to affect change within the College is directly related to my ability to identify and access available resources quickly. With this in mind, I am embarking on a newly established fundraising effort called the College of Arts and Sciences Dean’s Excellence Fund.

This fund will make on- and off-campus academic and experiential activities possible for students throughout the College...activities like studying abroad, student academic group competition travel, internship programs, student research and creative activities, and more. Our students will experience life outside the classroom while participating in these ventures, and former students have reported establishing mentoring relationships, or securing employment or internship opportunities during these encounters.

Forming valuable partnerships with area businesses to help connect students with employers also is a major goal of the Dean’s Excellence Fund. Immediate funding for the Dean’s Excellence Fund will directly—and quickly—provide funds to enhance existing learning opportunities and fund even more opportunities.

Thank you for all you do to continue supporting our students.

Alex Enyedi, Dean
College of Arts and Sciences

Please go to www.wmich.edu/cas, and click on the “Giving” link to support this fund.

We guarantee your donations will make a difference to these students.

Join us for our biggest event of the year...

Major Excitement!
Thursday, September 22
11 a.m. - 2 p.m.
Chemistry Building Walkway
Western Michigan University

More than 2,000 students visited 38 information stations during the fourth annual Major Excitement event, sponsored by the College of Arts and Sciences in 2010. A repeat of the event is planned for Thursday, Sept. 22, 2011, from 11 a.m. to 2 p.m., and YOU'RE INVITED.

The event provides students with a great opportunity to explore as many majors as they find interesting with visiting alumni, faculty, graduate students, advising and more.

Visiting alumni help students make personal connections and get advice on which courses and programs are most valuable to their chosen profession.

Faculty, chairs and graduate students meet with upwards of 3,000 first-year students during the event to advise and share stories.

To RSVP for the Sept. 22 event, or more for more information, go to www.wmich.edu/cas/major-excitement.html
Talk Back to Us!

We love to keep in close touch with our alumni. What are you doing? Send us an email at cheri.bales@wmich.edu or fill this out and return it to the College via one of the methods listed below. To learn more about us, please visit www.wmich.edu/cas.

Name ____________________________________________

Date of graduation ________ Degree(s)Major/Minor (s) __________________________________________

What are you doing now? __________________________________________

________________________________________________________________________________________

________________________________________________________________________________________

What advice do you have for current students and recent graduates? __________________________________

________________________________________________________________________________________

________________________________________________________________________________________

________________________________________________________________________________________

Address __________________________________________________________________________________

City, State, Zip ____________________________________________________________________________

Phone ____________________________________________________________________________________

Email ___________________________________________________________ (Join our email distribution list; save paper)

Online? Look us up!

www.wmich.edu/cas

Return updated information to:
College of Arts and Sciences
2304 Friedmann Hall1
903 W. Michigan Ave.,
Kalamazoo, MI 49008-5308
or email to cheri.bales@wmich.edu