



Western Michigan University
ScholarWorks at WMU

College of Health and Human Services
Newsletter

College of Health and Human Services

3-2019

Connections 03/2019

College of Health and Human Services

Follow this and additional works at: https://scholarworks.wmich.edu/hhs_news

WMU ScholarWorks Citation

College of Health and Human Services, "Connections 03/2019" (2019). *College of Health and Human Services Newsletter*. 53.

https://scholarworks.wmich.edu/hhs_news/53

This Newsletter is brought to you for free and open access by the College of Health and Human Services at ScholarWorks at WMU. It has been accepted for inclusion in College of Health and Human Services Newsletter by an authorized administrator of ScholarWorks at WMU. For more information, please contact wmu-scholarworks@wmich.edu.





Student helps theater launch program for visually impaired patrons

Abby Tongue, who is pursuing a dual master's degree in WMU's renowned Department of Blindness and Low Vision Studies, will perform live audio description for two upcoming performances at the Kalamazoo Civic Theatre.

[Read More »](#)



“I know there is strength in the differences between us. I know there is comfort where we overlap.”

Ani DiFranco

David Areaux named new chair of Department of Physician Assistant

WMU's Department of Physician Assistant has announced the appointment of **David Areau** as the new chair and program director. This is a role that he is familiar with, having served as interim chair and program director since July 2018. David, currently an associate professor, has been part of WMU's PA program since 2008 when he started as an assistant professor.

[Read More »](#)



Dr. Earlie Washington to receive 5th annual Purple Poppy Award

Dr. Earlie M. Washington has been selected to receive the Purple Poppy Award from Heritage Community of Kalamazoo for her dedicated support of the organization's mission and vision. This award presentation will be made at the Heritage Community Foundation Gala on Thursday, April 11.

[Read More »](#)



OT student to present at national conference

Caceti Dobrowolski, a graduate student in the Occupational Therapy program, has been selected to present her research poster at the AOTA national conference on April 5. The prestigious opportunity will showcase research conducted for her Lee Honors College thesis on the topic of college students' mental health.

[Read More »](#)

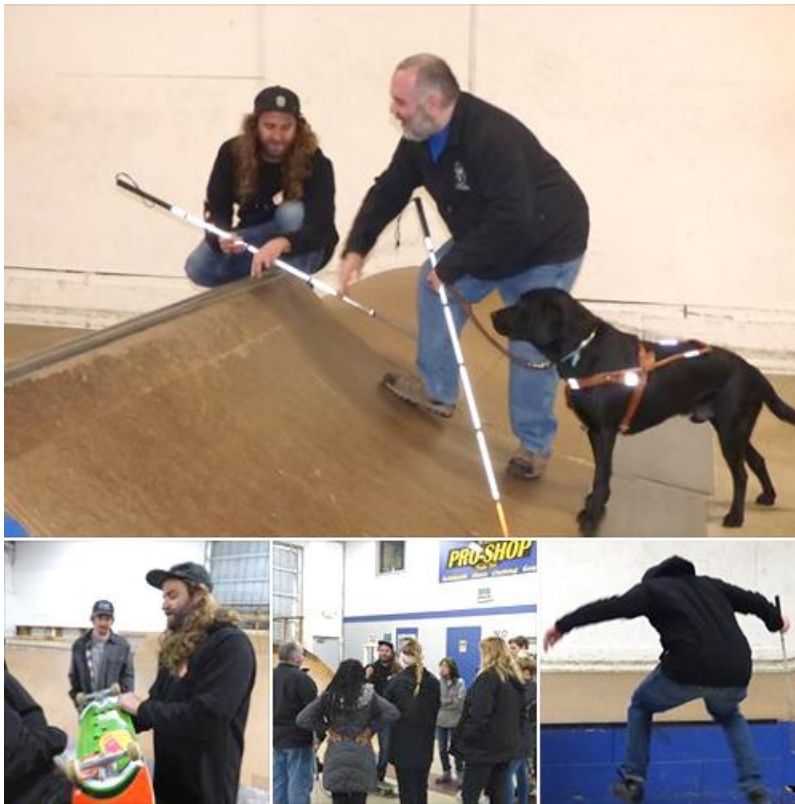


In other WMU news for you:

- [WMU alum finds success in Broadway's 'Hamilton'](#)
- [Miller Broadway lineup includes 'Grinch,' 'Les Misérables'](#)
- [Sixth-graders get a look at college life at WMU](#)

CHHS in social media:

Tuition dollars at work! The VRT research class visits the Kalamazoo Skate Park. Current VRT student Dan Mancina, travels around the world motivating and teaching people with visual impairment about skateboarding as a blind person. Below are pictures of Dan teaching his cohort peers about making skateboarding accessible for persons with vision loss.



From the [Department of Blindness and Low Vision Studies](#) via [Facebook](#)

Student helps theater launch program for visually impaired patrons

CONTACT: ERIN FLYNN
MARCH 1, 2019 | WMU NEWS

KALAMAZOO, Mich.—Imagine going to a theater performance but not being able to see why people are laughing or gasping during the show. With the help of a Western Michigan University graduate student, a new program at the Kalamazoo Civic Theatre aims to fill in those gaps in experience for people who are visually impaired.

Abby Tongue, who is pursuing a dual master's degree in WMU's renowned [Department of Blindness and Low Vision Studies](#), will perform live audio description for two upcoming performances.

"Sometimes you need to know that the villain is watching from above, because it changes the story, and you wouldn't know that without being able to see or having someone tell you," explains **AnnMarie Miller**, lighting and sound designer at the Civic.

PERSONAL EXPERIENCE



WMU student Abby Tongue takes notes during a dress rehearsal of "Madagascar—A Musical Adventure JR." at the Kalamazoo Civic Theatre.

The theater started looking into audio description services at the suggestion of an audience member.

"We had a patron who frequents the theater who has visual impairments," says Miller.

"Sometimes you don't realize what people need until they say it."

Miller researched the kind of equipment the theater would need to accommodate live audio descriptions and then she reached out to WMU. When she connected with Tongue, the pieces began to fall into place.

"Abby loves theater. She took several friends to see a show at Western last year and was the only one in the group that didn't have vision challenges," Miller says. "She said throughout the show, the audience would clap and make noises and her friends would turn to her and ask what happened."

Tongue remembers that moment well.

"Understandably, the people behind us were not very happy with this setup, so it put us in an awkward situation, and I stopped describing for a while," she recalls. "Then my friends didn't know what was going on at key points, so it was this really difficult situation where there was this barrier to accessing the full enjoyment of the performance for everyone."

Tongue says audio description offers a solution that enhances the experience for patrons who are visually impaired and patrons who are sighted. She's listened to audio description during movies and some television shows, but hadn't had the opportunity to try providing the description herself.

"That was a learning curve for me," Tongue says. "So, I met with one of my professors, who is blind herself, and she helped me prioritize what to describe and what not to describe."

PREPARING FOR PERFORMANCES

Tongue, who studies both teaching children with visual impairments as well as orientation and mobility for children, also gained insight from her fiancé, fellow WMU student **Osman Koroma**, who is blind. She also tapped into resources from the American Council for the Blind.

Then, in December, she practiced her live audio description on the Civic's production of "Chitty Chitty Bang Bang."

"I attended dress rehearsal and we went through the entire performance during one of their shows to test out the equipment so I could get comfortable," she says.



Osman Koroma, left, listens as his fiancée, Abby Tongue, right, practices live audio description during a dress rehearsal of "Madagascar —A Musical Adventure JR." at the Kalamazoo Civic Theatre.

Tongue jotted notes on her script, paying close attention to the director's notes and any other points in the play where she could help convey the plot or emotion.

"I think as sighted people, we don't get that feeling of confusion as often as someone who is blind trying to put together the pieces of what's funny or what's going on," Tongue explains. "So, as an audio descriptionist, you want to relieve some of that (confusion) without stepping on the toes of the actors."

During the performance, Tongue sat below the stage, watching a live stream of the show and delivering her descriptions for patrons wearing special headsets.

"The people in the audience were really excited about it and said it helped them understand things better and gave them a fuller picture of what was going on," Tongue says.

Miller says the Civic used feedback from the audience to enhance the experience at future performances.

Audio description services will be provided during two upcoming shows this season:

- "Madagascar—A Musical Adventure JR.," **Friday, March 15, at 7:30 p.m.**
- "War Paint," **Saturday, May 4, at 7:30 p.m.**

ENHANCING ACCESSIBILITY

The Civic plans to provide live audio description during one performance of every show next season, just as it does with sign language interpretation.

"One of our goals is making sure the theater is accessible to everyone, whether that's from the patron's side, from the volunteer side or from our performers' side," says Miller. "So, we've really been trying to reach out and be open to the community when they bring us ideas.

"We would love to continue working with WMU students as audio descriptionists."

Tongue says she's excited to volunteer and continue to grow her skills as a visual descriptionist with the Civic.

"I think it's absolutely fantastic. I'm just really hopeful in the years to come this program will grow and people who are blind are able to go to the theater just because they want to, without having to arrange for other services to be in place."

BLINDNESS AND LOW VISION STUDIES

Western Michigan University's Department of Blindness and Low Vision Studies is the oldest and largest program of its kind in the world. Since 1961, it has been preparing students for work in the growing fields of rehabilitation teaching, counseling, teaching children with visual impairments, and orientation and mobility for persons with blindness and low vision.

For more WMU news, arts and events, visit [WMU News](#) online.

New PA department chair announced



David Areaux, new chair of the PA department

Western Michigan University's Department of Physician Assistant has announced the appointment of **David Areaux**, MPAS, PA-C as the new chair and program director. This is a role that he is familiar with, having served as interim chair and program director since July 2018.

David, currently an associate professor, has been part of WMU's PA program since 2008 when he started as an assistant professor.

David earned a Bachelor of Science in 1997 and a Master of Physician Assistant Studies in 2000 from Grand Valley State University. He has a clinical background in family medicine and later specialized in otolaryngology.

His past independent research has focused on adult learning styles of physician assistant students, as well as their choices of medical specialty chosen after graduation. David has worked interprofessionally with occupational therapy faculty, evaluating the potential effectiveness of a Tai Chi program for the promotion of good health practices among persons with severe mental illness. He also worked with faculty from the Interdisciplinary Health Sciences Ph.D. Program on a research project titled "Initiative for Diabetes Education Advancement and Support (IDEAS)." Blue Cross/Blue Shield awarded nearly \$100,000 for this project, which supplies free diabetic screening and diabetic education in underserved areas.

Congratulations, David!

Dr. Earlie Washington to receive the 5th Annual Purple Poppy Award



Dr. Earlie Washington

Dr. Earlie M. Washington has been selected to receive the Purple Poppy Award from Heritage Community of Kalamazoo for her dedicated support of the organization's mission and vision. This award presentation will be made at the Heritage Community Foundation Gala on Thursday, April 11.

Dr. Washington is the former dean of Western Michigan University's College of Health and Human Services. During her 12-year tenure as dean, the college established a [Center for Gerontology Education, Research and Service](#), enrollment in the college increased by 60 percent, and six of the college's academic programs ranked among the top 100 best graduate programs in the nation by U.S. News and World Report.

She currently serves as director of WMU's [University-Community Empowerment Center](#), a research, consultation, and training center that collaborates with individuals, groups and organizations to empower communities to reduce poverty. She is also a professor in the School of Social Work and has served as the Principal Investigator on numerous grant funded projects in the areas of gerontology, substance abuse, and social work education.

Her service roles have included an appointment by the Governor of Michigan to the Michigan Home Based Child Care Council; commissioner on the Commission on Accreditation for the Council on Social Work Education; and the elected Region 6 Representative for the National Association of Social Workers on the National Committee on Nominations and Leadership Identification.

She was selected by the Heritage Community of Kalamazoo Board of Directors for her previous service on Heritage's board and facilitating a sustainable partnership between Heritage and WMU's College of Health and Human Services.

Earlie was instrumental in forming a partnership between both organizations which has allowed hundreds of Nursing and Occupational Therapy students to gain experience and enhance the lives of residents.

Past Awards Include:

- 2018 Volunteer Community Service Award, Kent County, Kalamazoo-Muskegon Michigan National Black Nurses Association
- 2012 Onyx Society Mentoring Award
- 2011 YWCA of Kalamazoo Woman of Achievement Award

- 2002 Special Recognition Award—Platinum Awards, Division of Multicultural Affairs, Western Michigan University
- 2002 Outstanding Service Award, Commission on Accreditation, Council on Social Work Education
- 2001 Service Recognition Award, McNair Scholars Program, Western Michigan University
- 2001 Outstanding Contributions Recognition to the Development of the Educational Policy and Accreditation Standards, Council on Social Work Education
- 1998 Elizabeth Butler Alumni Award, School of Social Service Administration, The University of Chicago
- 1996 Social Work Educator of the Year, Alabama/Mississippi Social Work Education Conference

About Heritage Community of Kalamazoo Foundation

The Heritage Community Foundation is a nonprofit 501(c)(3) organization established to support the charitable needs of Heritage Community of Kalamazoo and the residents who live here. Founded in 1945, the Foundation has been raising funds to help support residents through various means including the Heritage Legacy Fund, which assures residents that if, through unexpected circumstances, they can no longer cover their own living costs, their home will always be secure at Heritage Community. Read more at HeritageCommunityFoundation.com.

Purple Poppy Award

The Purple Poppy Award name stems from the beginnings of Heritage Community of Kalamazoo when the first committee began fundraising and called it a “Flower Fund.” Their concept was a new idea in 1945 when community members were encouraged to make memorial donations to the fund in lieu of sending flowers to funerals. The poppy flower itself is a springtime flower and symbolizes remembrance and honoring service. Purple blooms signify accomplishment and admiration, and it is also associated with Alzheimer’s disease and memory loss, which are conditions of older adults that Heritage Community of Kalamazoo serves.

OT student to present at national conference



Caceti Dobrowolski

Caceti Dobrowolski, a graduate student in the occupational therapy program, has been selected to present her research poster at the American Occupational Therapy Association national conference on April 5. The prestigious opportunity will showcase research conducted for her Lee Honors College thesis on the topic of college students' mental health. In conjunction with the invitation to present at the AOTA national conference, Dobrowolski has also been awarded a grant on behalf of the Barbara J. Hemphill Endowment for Student Professional Development.

Dobrowolski conducted a scoping review of internet-based interventions (IBI) efficacy for college students. She hopes, based on her research, to spark interest in IBI integration for WMU students. This could serve as a viable service in conjunction with other counseling services.

“I chose the topic of college student mental health in response to the growing reports of college students worldwide struggling with heightened levels of anxiety and depression,” says Dobrowolski. “I wanted to write about something that I hoped the student body at Western could relate to and benefit from.”

During her time conducting research, Dobrowolski consulted with **Dr. Ann Chapleau**, associate professor in the Department of Occupational Therapy. Chapleau served as her thesis chair beginning last February. Chapleau will present alongside Dobrowolski at the AOTA national conference.

Dobrowolski, originally from Decatur, Michigan, is excited to present at the conference. She looks forward to the opportunity to network with other occupational therapists and learn about the most current research in the field.

“It is an honor to present at conference as a graduate student and I am grateful to Western for enabling students to pursue this opportunity with the [Barbara J. Hemphill Endowment](#),” she said. “It is validating and encouraging to have my research accepted as I hope to contribute to the growing body of occupational therapy literature in my future career.”

The Barbara J. Hemphill Endowment for Student Professional Development and the Barbara Jo Hemphill Endowed Student Book Fund were established in 2006. The endowments support students who attend conferences, encourage research in mental health, and assist with educational expenses.

More information on the Barbara J. Hemphill [is available on our website](#).