Dybek named MacArthur Foundation Fellow

Stuart Dybek, an acclaimed short-story writer who has taught at WMU for the past 33 years, was one of 24 Americans named Sept. 25 as the recipient of a coveted John D. and Catherine T. MacArthur Foundation Fellowship.

Popularly known as “genius awards,” MacArthur Fellowships are awarded to nominees selected for their creativity, originality and potential to make important future contributions. Each fellowship comes with $500,000—no strings attached—designed to provide support for the recipient’s work during the next five years.

In outlining the variety of endeavors and caliber of winners of the 2007 awards, a MacArthur Foundation news release describes Dybek as “a short story writer borrowing from the Old World yet emerging from the New World to feed the imagination of contemporary Americans.”

Dybek, who retired from full-time teaching at WMU earlier this year, is a Distinguished Writer in Residence at Northwestern University. He remains closely connected to WMU as an adjunct faculty member, and he teaches in the University's renowned Prague Summer Program.

"I took the call on my cell phone and checked the number to see if it was a friend who was playing a practical joke," he said.

Dybek added that, like all writers, his challenge is finding time to write, and he will continue on page 4

Benson, Pennock to receive Distinguished Service Award

John Benson, a longtime Spanish language professor, and Rob Pennock, associate director of Miller Auditorium, are this year's recipients of WMU's Distinguished Service Awards.

They join a list of 41 faculty and staff members who have received the accolade since it was established in 1980. The pair will receive a plaque and $1,500 honorarium as well as be among those honored later this month at the University's annual Academic Convocation.

Benson, a member of the faculty since 1974, first served as chair of the Department of Foreign Languages and then the Department of Spanish for a total of 13 years. He was cited for his service to students, fairness, ability to mentor new faculty members, and the creation of study abroad programs that provide “life-changing” experiences for U.S. students and opportunity for students in other nations.

Several current faculty members writing in support of his nomination said that they had continued on page 4

Distinguished Alumni Award winners announced for 2007

The Alumni Association has selected a veteran broadcaster, prominent businessman and top executive to receive its most prestigious honor, the Distinguished Alumni Award.

The 2007 award recipients are Jim Hickey, national correspondent for the ABC Radio Network; Jim McKinley, president and founder of McKinley Financial Services based in Fort Lauderdale, Fla.; and Dennis Nally, chairman and senior partner of the U.S. firm of PricewaterhouseCoopers LLP.

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Distinguished Faculty Scholar nominations due in January

The Distinguished Faculty Scholar Committee is seeking nominations for the 2007-08 Distinguished Faculty Scholar Award. The deadline for nominations is Saturday, Jan. 26.

Up to three awards may be made each year. Those selected will be honored in several ways, as well as receive a $2,000 honorarium that becomes part of their base salaries.

The DFS awards are based on outstanding professional achievements. Wide recognition beyond WMU is essential. Eligibility criteria and nomination details and forms are available at www.wmich.edu/research/distinguished.html. For more information, contact Ernest A. Breisach, history, at ebreisach@sbcglobal.net or 344-1734.

Correction

It was incorrectly reported in the Sept. 20 Western News that Valerie Ott has traveled overseas to present and show her film “Jewish Women in American Sport: Settlement Houses to the Olympics.”

Borish served as executive producer and historian for the documentary, which was directed and produced by award-winning, Chicago-based filmmaker Shuli Eshel.

Another presentation and screening is set for Sunday, Oct. 14, at the Sen. John Heintz History Center in Pittsburgh and the Rauh Jewish Archives. The film also has been selected for upcoming film festivals, including the Jewish Eye-World Jewish Film Festival Nov. 14 to 22 in Beersheva, Israel, Palm Desert Jewish Film Festival, also in November; and International Jewish Film Festival in Hawaii in February.

Film features Angles commentary

Jeffrey Angles, foreign languages, is featured in the audio commentary of the digital release of a classic Japanese movie that is part of a prestigious collection of classic international films.

Angles provides the voice-over commentary to the Criterion Collection’s release of Kenji Miyaguchi’s film “Sansho the Bailiff,” a moving tale of a mother separated from her children and sold into slavery in medieval Japan. His commentary is featured throughout the more than two-hour film, a feat that required an enormous amount of preparation. He also contributed to an 80-page booklet included in the box set with the film.

Angles, head of the Japanese program and associate director of the Michitoshi Soga Japan Center, was picked for the project after producers heard him on National Public Radio’s “All Things Considered” in 2006 talking about a book he co-edited.

Targowski heads national group

Andrew Targowski, business information systems, was elected in June to a three-year term as president of the International Society for the Comparative Study of Civilizations.

ISSCS members are academics and independent scholars interested in the history of world cultures and related global issues. The society is affiliated with comparative studies programs worldwide and believes complex, civilization-related problems need diverse, multidisciplinary analyses.

It fosters internationalism through annual meetings and publications. In 2009, WMU will host the World Congress on “One More Chance for Civilization,” which is being organized by the ISSCS and WMU’s Haenicke Institute for Global Education.
New tool helps WMU students track their degree progress

Undergraduate students now have a powerful tool to track their academic progress toward graduation.

The Progress to Degree system enables students and advisors to generate electronic reports that evaluate a student's academic history against the requirements of a selected undergraduate degree program.

"Students can choose to run an evaluation for their chosen major or for another major or minor," says Registrar Barbara McKinney. "They can run a limitless number of what-if possibilities, and the results are generated almost instantaneously.

"Progress to Degree, which has been in development since 2006, is not a response to WMU’s new Western Edge commitment to eligible students, but it will be a valuable aid to the advising process," says McKinney. "All students must still file for an audit to apply for graduation. All degree requirements will be verified by graduation auditors, and students will be notified of the results."

Progress to Degree is available for undergraduate students who entered WMU since fall 2004, for whom academic records and applicable degree requirements are available in the system. The tool is expected to be available for graduate students in 2008.

University launches this year's United Way campaign; schedules campus rally for Oct. 17

WMU officially kicked off its 2007 United Way campaign Oct. 1 with a goal of $215,000.

The funds will support the Greater Kalamazoo United Way’s $11.1 million overall target. The campus community is encouraged to step up this year to make a positive difference in Kalamazoo County.

"This is an organization that is truly committed to Kalamazoo," says Vice President Emeritus Bob Beam, chair of the campus campaign. "Its agency partners work tirelessly to better the lives of people right here in our community—our neighbors, friends, coworkers and sometimes our own family members."

President John M. Dunn and campaign committee members will host a WMU United Way Rally to thank everyone who has already given and provide more information for those interested in giving. The “7th inning Stretch” will be held from 11 a.m. to 2 p.m. Wednesday, Oct. 17, in the Bernhard Center Ballroom.

Faculty and staff members have contributed $32,403 through Sept. 28 in pre-kickoff gifts and pledges. This amount represents 15 percent of the campus goal and is the product of 196 of the 2,696 employees who received pledge cards this year.

“We still have a long way to go,” Beam says, “but we’re thrilled to see such great response and generous giving this early in the game.”

For additional or replacement pledge cards or more information, contact campaign Vice Chair Sue Caudill at sue.caudill@wmich.edu or 387-4307.

Pros talk turkey to students

Some 100 students will be displaying their good taste by attending the 10th annual Etiquette Dinner from 6 to 9 p.m. Thursday, Oct. 18, in the Fetter Center. It imparts broad and better information about proper business etiquette in realtime situations.

Students must register to attend the dinner, which costs $10 and is open to juniors, seniors and graduate students. Seating is limited. To register, call Career and Student Employment Services at 387-2745 or visit its office in Ellsworth.

Dybek honored continued from page 1

use the MacArthur award to tackle projects he has had planned for some time.

“The vast majority of writers cannot support themselves with writing alone,” he notes. “Everyone has two jobs...As banal as it sounds, I’ll use this award to buy time and spend it on projects I’ve wanted to pursue.”

MacArthur Fellows are selected by anonymous members of a 12-person selection committee who delve deeply into the work of nominees who demonstrate exceptional creativity and promise.

Other recipients of this year’s fellowships include a biomedical scientist, a blues musician, a forensic anthropologist, an inventor, a medieval historian and a spider silk biologist.

“As a group, this new class of fellows takes one’s breath away,” says Daniel J. Socolow, director of the MacArthur Fellows Program. “As individuals, each is an original...”

Distinguished Alumni winners continued from page 1

joined the WMU faculty because of Benson.

“John taught us to become dedicated educators, scholars and leaders through his encouragement, patience, trust and foremost, his passion and enthusiasm for our profession,” one such faculty member wrote. “He set expectations high and inspired us to meet them by his own example.”

Also mentioned by nominees were Benson’s legendary advocacy for all graduate students, special generosity toward international students and channeling of his passion for world travel into creating first-rate study abroad experiences for WMU students.

Pennock, who had a career as a financial officer with a number of private-sector firms, came to the University in 1997 as Miller Auditorium’s business manager. He left to serve in the same role in WMU’s College of Aviation, but returned in 2004 as associate director.

Pennock, who had a career as a financial officer with a number of private-sector firms, came to the University in 1997 as Miller Auditorium’s business manager. He left to serve in the same role in WMU’s College of Aviation, but returned in 2004 as associate director.

Nominators lauded Pennock for his ability to “do it all,” from assisting other units in his division with his business acumen to serving as an advisor to student groups and a mentor to individual students.

“He faces every challenge with enthusiasm and believes there is nothing that can’t be solved with a little ingenuity, teamwork and humor,” wrote one colleague. “…His dedication to the University and the offices he works for is unmatched.”

Other colleagues praised Pennock for his role in helping Miller meet success as it takes

Service award winners continued from page 1

among the many activities open to the public during the week-long festivities will be a 5K and 1K run/walk; the student-sponsored Ski Night, Western Games and Soap Box Derby; the Alumni Association PepFest; and the National Pan-Hellenic Council March Down.

For more information about Homecoming activities, including cost and registration details, visit www.wmich.edu/homecoming and click on the links for “Student Events,” “Alumni Events” and “Campus Events.”