Voltz named dean of UAB School of Education

Deborah Voltz, Ed.D., professor of curriculum and instruction and director of the UAB Center for Urban Education, has been tapped to be dean of the School of Education in UAB’s College of Arts and Sciences effective Jan. 1.

 Voltz, who will report to DiLorenzo, will continue to direct the Center for Urban Education. She also will be a member of the newly constituted UAB Deans’ Council, said Provost Eli Capilouto.

“Debbie Voltz is uniquely qualified for this position given her tremendous experience as an educator, researcher and administrator, as well as for her talent for preparing effective grant proposals,” said College of Arts and Sciences Dean Thomas DiLorenzo. “As a full professor with strong ties to the education community, she is positioned to leverage all of her talents and strong connections for the benefit of UAB faculty, staff and students, and also the Birmingham City School System and the state.”

A Berming-ham native and graduate of West End High School with more than 25 years of experience as an educator and champion for urban students and children with special needs, Voltz has been responsible for the university obtaining millions of grant dollars for educational research and teacher training. She also has published scores of academic articles and book chapters on topics ranging from strategies for success in diverse classrooms to urban special education in the context of standards-based reform.

“Debbie Voltz is uniquely qualified for this position given her tremendous experience as a teacher, researcher and administrator, as well as for her talent for preparing effective grant proposals,” said College of Arts and Sciences Dean Thomas DiLorenzo. “As a full professor with strong ties to the education community, she is positioned to leverage all of her talents and strong connections for the benefit of UAB faculty, staff and students, and also the Birmingham City School System and the state.”

UAB nurses ready to aid South African orphans

The area surrounding the South African town of Piet Retief is immense and hardy. It is a timber-growing region, with trees and lumber lining both sides of the roads heading out of town as far as the eye can see. Occasionally a little road or trail will appear among the tall trees. It’s the orphans of the small villages along them that stir the heart of several UAB employees. They have been to this land for the past two years to bring the most vulnerable love and hope.

Respiratory Therapist Philip Hood and nurses Melissa Garner and Beth Craig have been a part of UAB’s Alys Stephens Center staff for a combined total of 11 years. After working at the beautiful ASC facility they are delighted to make the ArtPlay house their new home on campus.

ArtPlay House gives imagination a new home

Imagination has a new home. ArtPlay, the education and outreach initiative of UAB’s Alys Stephens Performing Arts Center, will begin hosting classes Jan. 18 in its new location at 1006 19th St. South. ArtPlay will provide innovative arts-education programming in a collaborative and holistic environment that endeavors to educate, inspire and nurture creative growth and self-expression in children.

“We will offer classes, workshops, residencies and events in all areas of the arts — visual arts, drama, creative writing, private music lessons, recording arts and others,” says Kimberly Kirklin, education and outreach director. “We want people to use these classes to help them explore and find their creative voices and become lifelong learners in the arts.”

For a complete list of classes available from pre-Kindergarten to adult and to register, visit artplayasc.org. Register through Jan. 18 for winter and spring classes. The registration fee for UAB employees has been waived for the first-session classes.

ArtPlay — a cultural arts-education center for the Birmingham community — is the result of years of research and planning by UAB faculty, staff and students, and also the Birmingham City School System and the state.”

Special to the UAB Reporter
Chef Frank Stitt adds a culinary cure to UAB hospital menu

There aren’t many hospitals in America in which a patient can order room service, and there’s only one where that patient can choose an item inspired, planned and prepared under the guidance of a chef considered one of the nation’s best. UAB Hospital went to a full-time room-service approach for all patient meals in October 2010. In mid-December, renowned local chef Frank Stitt, second from right, a James Beard-award winner, contributed three of his special creations to the menu. “I wanted to provide a few dishes that would be exciting, good food,” says Stitt. “Hospitals are about getting better, and we wanted choices that would be healthy, nutritious and promote healing.”

Be part of the next UAB Day of Service

For a second year, faculty and staff have an opportunity to support our longstanding mission of serving the community by participating in a UAB Day of Service. The special day, known as Hands On Birmingham King Day of Service, is scheduled for Monday, Jan. 17 — Martin Luther King Day. The Hands On Birmingham organization encourages volunteerism in Birmingham through employer-sponsored, group and individual volunteer projects. UAB will join other local employers, including Alabama Power and Wells Fargo, to provide an opportunity for employees to participate in one of many volunteer opportunities offered.

“Hands On Birmingham anticipates that thousands of volunteers will come together on this day in support of the community in which we live and work,” says Josephine Jackson-Banks, HR manager coordinating the UAB Day of Service. “It will be great to have members of the UAB team among those numbers.”

Employees scheduled to work Jan. 17 who would like to volunteer will need to use vacation time to participate. A Volunteer-in-Kind program will be provided for hospital and university employees who will be working on Jan. 17 and unable to participate. Employees may bring clothing or personal items to the following locations any time before Jan. 17 to contribute: Russell Ambulatory Center Suite 162 or Administration Building Suite 110.

E-mail confirmation will be sent to registrants with project information, and an e-mail reminder will be sent two days before the event.

Direct questions about the UAB Day of Service to Jackson-Banks at jjbanks@uab.edu.

Birmingham’s first Einstein Bros. Bagels opens on campus

Known for its bagels, sandwiches and trademarked “Darn Good Coffee,” Einstein Bros. Bagels has officially opened its first Birmingham location, off the main entrance of UAB’s Learning Resource Center at 1714 Ninth Ave. South.

The addition of the café-style restaurant is the first improvement planned for an area of campus that also includes UAB’s schools of Health Professions, Nursing and Public Health, says UAB Vice Provost Harlan Sands.

“We’ve had many requests over the past few years to provide a dining location at the Learning Resource Center,” says Sands, vice provost for Administration and Quality Improvement. “We’re pleased to respond to them by welcoming Einstein Bros. to our Campus Restaurants group, and of course even more pleased to offer students and faculty who spend most of their time in that area a new healthy and convenient dining option.

New center broadens reach of MHRC

UAB’s Minority Health & Health Disparities Research Center (MHRC) soon will offer free health screenings, health-education classes and programs and other primary prevention resources at its new wellness center in downtown Birmingham.

The UAB HealthSmart center, scheduled to open in February in the Watts Tower Building at 20th Street and Third Avenue North, will be a health-information resource for employees, visitors and residents of the downtown area and surrounding neighborhoods, says MHRC Director Mona Fouad, M.D.

The center will offer its programs at targeted times, just before and after work and during lunch time, for instance, to accommodate downtown business hours and work schedules, she says.

The HealthSmart center is an extension of MHRC’s outreach programs, which have provided health screenings, talking circles, nutrition and physical activity programs and other disease-prevention services to 60,000 community members in eight Birmingham communities and 12 Alabama counties.

“We’ve been interested in getting the Minority Health & Health Disparities Center, which seeks to eliminate minority health disparities throughout the Southeast, to operate outside the walls of UAB, in the heart of downtown, in an effort to serve the broader community,” Fouad says. “Many people from surrounding counties come to Birmingham to work every day. This will be an opportunity for them to take some of what they learn back to their communities.”

The HealthSmart center is funded by UAB philanthropic fundraising and national grants. It is based in part on models in St. Louis, Mo., and other cities but tailored to Birmingham’s needs, Fouad says.
A new in-service training opportunity will enable graduate students to receive hands-on instruction from licensed, professional instructors and provide counseling services to people in the community who otherwise could not afford them.

The UAB Community Counseling Clinic is a practicum and internship site in the School of Education building and a service of the Counselor Education Program (CEP); it begins receiving clients this week.

“Until now, all of our students have been placed in different community agencies for their practica,” says Solange Ribeiro, Ph.D., clinic director and licensed therapist. “With that, some agencies by nature have a niche population they serve. We want our students to have an opportunity for a more rounded experience in which they are exposed to a variety of different clients.”

The clinic will serve pediatric, adult, and geriatric patients from 1 to 7 p.m. Monday through Thursday in its location in School of Education Room 157. The cost for an individual session is $5. Call 996-2414 for referrals and appointments.

A variety of counseling modalities will be available, including cognitive and emotional behavior therapy, parent-child and group therapy and counseling for anxiety, depression and relationship issues, among others. Providing affordable and diversity-competent counseling services will fill a void in mental health services in the region and contribute to UAB’s status as a leader in health services to the community, Ribeiro says.

“By offering quality in-house training to these beginning professional students, the CEP will have the opportunity to develop innovative approaches to counselor education and to clinical practice bringing UAB to the forefront as a leader in counselor education,” Ribeiro says. “This will provide a forum for collaboration between the CEP, the School of Education and other campus units and enable the clinic to contribute to the UAB mission as a leader in research.”

The clinical faculty includes Ribeiro, Larry Tyson, Ph.D., program coordinator; Michael Brooks, Ph.D., associate professor of counselor education; Glenda Isenhour, Ph.D., assistant professor of counselor education and Jacqueline Swank, Ph.D., assistant professor of counselor education and Jacqueline Swank, Ph.D., assistant professor of counselor education. The faculty are licensed, professional counselors in Alabama, and one is a certified play therapy supervisor.

Students will staff the clinic under direct supervision of the five counselors. Prospective clients will be screened prior to their visit to the clinic, and those whose needs appear to be beyond the level of student competence will be referred to a faculty professional.

The clinic facilities possess equipment that enables live observation of all sessions, and will provide live supervision as needed.

“All of our students will have the same level of supervision,” Ribeiro says. “We can interject during a session if needed, and we can debrief and engage the students immediately afterward. It really should benefit us, the students and the clients because we can see how and what they are doing, and we’ll have a better idea of the skills that need to be further developed.”

On-the-job training

The CEP, in its 42nd year, prepares graduate students to become school, community, mental health and/or rehabilitation counselors. Students are required to participate in two levels of clinical experience — practicum and internship — after completing coursework and passing a comprehensive examination.

The practicum experience is 100 hours of field experience, 40 of which must be spent providing counseling services directly to clients. At least half of those 40 hours must be providing individual counseling; 10 may be in assessment activities, and 10 hours may be in group-leadership work. During practicum, students receive one hour of individual supervision and 90 minutes of group supervision per week from program faculty.

The internship comprises 600 hours of field experience, 240 of which must be direct contact with clients. Students are expected to develop all areas of concentration-specific practice needed by a counseling professional employed in that setting. During this phase of training, one hour of individual supervision is provided by the site supervisor, while group supervision continues to be provided by program faculty.

“An in-depth, hands-on, intense program,” Ribeiro says.

The CEP recently received an eight-year accreditation from the Council for Accreditation of Counseling and Related Educational Programs and holds its Council on Rehabilitation Education accreditation until 2015.

Partnerships on campus and off

The Counselor Education Community Clinic will partner with The UAB Wellness Center to fill voids each entity cannot meet, but it will not see enrolled UAB students. The clinic will provide services to students after they graduate and spouses and family members of UAB students who are not eligible for Counseling & Wellness Center services.

“We aren’t competing, we are partner- ing” says Susan Hapgood, director of the Counseling & Wellness Center. “I graduated from the Department of Education, and I know the importance of training. I think the counselor education program understands our role and they don’t want to interfere with the mandate and mission we have. But they have opportunities to help people on campus and in the community who we can’t help. I see that as a wonderful blending of what we have to offer.”

Consultation with professionals from area agencies, including the Alabama Department of Rehabilitation Services, The Crisis Center, Lovelady and others, revealed that clients served by these agencies would benefit from low-cost counseling services. Area children and their families who seek mental health services also would benefit.

“The service is at a very low cost for the client,” Ribeiro says of the $5 fee. “That is not intended to financially support the clinic; it’s for reasons of accountability. We want the clients to put something into it so they will value it.”

The majority of funding for the clinic comes from the College of Arts and Sciences and professional training courses and workshops hosted by the Counselor Education Program during the year. Fees collected will be used for clinic operating expenses.

Birmingham has many stories to tell. Several come to mind immediately — the stories of steel, civil rights, race relations, the rise of the city as a medical research destination and its rich musical history. Imagine hearing those stories from the points of view of the poor, rich, old, young, famous or not, and learning their struggles, passions, successes, bitter-sweet memories and forgotten places. Such stories are being told, one at a time, at StoryCorps, an independent, nonprofit organization that collects and preserves the histories of Americans. Its three-member team and traveling recording studio will be in Birmingham until Jan. 29.

At least 60 people already have signed up to share their stories, and more slots are available. Learn more about participating at storycorps.org/record-your-story.

Students and faculty in UAB College of Arts and Sciences Digital Community Studies program, which is a community partner for the StoryCorps tour, will work with the crew and record interviews with members of the community.

Birmingham’s local National Public Radio affiliate, WBHM 90.3, which lobbied for the project, will help to gather stories and make them heard locally on its “Tapeday” program. Listeners already have heard excerpts from StoryCorps each Friday on the “Morning Edition” program, and segments of selected interviews may air nationally. Assistant General Manager Mary Hendley says the station plans to create other opportunities for listeners to hear some of the stories recorded here.

Since 2003, StoryCorps has collected and archived more than 30,000 interviews from more than 60,000 participants, making it one of the largest oral history projects of its kind. Each conversation is preserved at the American Folklife Center at the Library of Congress.

January 10, 2011 UAB Reporter 3

Counseling clinic will train students, help underserved

WBHM, students to collect Birmingham’s stories, memories

Campus News
The discovery of a gene deletion linked to poor patient outcomes in nearly 25 percent of all glioblastoma cases could lead to better diagnosis and targeted treatments with available drugs. A UAB study is the first to implicate the deletion of a copy of a gene called NFKBIA as a contributing cause of glioblastoma, the most aggressive, deadly brain tumor in humans; the findings were published online Dec. 22, 2010, in the New England Journal of Medicine.

The lead author and principal investigator Markus Bredel, M.D., Ph.D., a scientist with the UAB Comprehensive Cancer Center, says previous studies have revealed that as many as one-third of glioblastomas have an abnormality involving the gene coding for EGFR, a key cell-surface receptor for the hormone epidermal growth factor.

Bredel, who directs the UAB Radiation Oncology Brain Tumor Laboratory, says his team asked, “What causes the majority of glioblastomas that don’t have this defect?”

NFKBIA deletions were identified in one of four of the 790 glioblastomas studied, and they confirmed earlier rates of EGFR deletions. The two genetic defects combined accounted for a majority of glioblastomas; yet, Bredel says, there were only a handful of instances in which both gene abnormalities occurred in the same sample.

“Untreated patients usually survive only a few months after diagnosis. When surgically removed, tumors typically recur within six months. Radiation and temozolomide, a chemotherapy agent, can prolong survival, but not by much. These treatments extend median survival to perhaps 18 months,” Bredel says.

“If we can determine that a patient’s glioblastoma harbors the NFKBIA deletion, we can potentially target that tumor for treatment with drugs capable of stabilizing levels of I-kappa-B, NFKBIA’s protein product,” he says.

“There are drugs approved for treatments of other cancers or under clinical investigation that may have that capacity.”

Fried fish may be a culprit in strokes among Southerners

Eating that Southern staple fried fish could be one reason people in Alabama and across the Stroke Belt states are more likely than other Americans to die of a stroke, according to a study published in the Dec. 22, 2010, online issue of Neurology, the medical journal of the American Academy of Neurology (AAN).

The findings were part of the long-running REGARDS (Reasons for Geographic and Racial Differences in Stroke) trial, led by George Howard, Dr. Ph., that enrolled 21,675 people ages 45 and older between January 2003 and October 2007 and continues to follow them for health events.

“Our study showed that Stroke Belt residents, especially African-Americans, eat more fried fish than Caucasians and people living in the rest of the country.”

“Our study showed that Stroke Belt residents, especially African-Americans, eat more fried fish than Caucasians and people living in the rest of the country,” said Howard, professor and chair of the Department of Biostatistics in the UAB School of Public Health.

The American Heart Association recommends that people eat fish at least twice a week, particularly fatty fish, because studies have shown that its omega-3 fatty acids may reduce the risk of stroke; but the benefit of natural fatty acids is lost in frying.

Among the REGARDS participants, fewer than one in four reported consuming two or more servings of non-fried fish per week; in the Stroke Belt it was less than one in five. Conversely, the study showed that people in the stroke belt were 30 percent more likely to eat two or more servings of fried fish than those in the rest of the country.

“In the next steps in this research we will determine if people who eat higher amounts of non-fried fish have less risk of stroke than people who don’t eat a lot of fish or eat more fried fish,” said Suzanne Judd, Ph.D., assistant professor of biostatistics at UAB and a study co-author.

The stroke belt comprises Alabama, Arkansas, Georgia, Louisiana, Mississippi, North Carolina, South Carolina and Tennessee.

In Alabama, the stroke-death rate is 125 per 100,000 people compared with a national average of 98 per 100,000.

Other co-authors were Anh Le, Department of Biostatistics and Virginia Howard, Ph.D., Department of Epidemiology, UAB School of Public Health.

Genetic link to brain cancer offers promise for treatment

The discovery of a gene deletion that gives glioblastomas a survival advantage may offer new hope for glioblastoma patients.

With more than 14,000 new cases of glioblastoma diagnosed each year, patients often have less than 18 months from diagnosis to death despite aggressive treatment.

“A lot of what we do is on the margin,” said Howard, professor and chair of the Department of Biostatistics in the UAB School of Public Health.

Suzanne Judd, Ph.D., assistant professor of biostatistics at UAB and a study co-author.

“The discovery of the NFKBIA deletion’s role in glioblastoma and its dismal effect on survival has important implications,” Bredel says. “Our laboratory now is trying to develop a robust method to screen patient samples for the gene defect.

“Untreated patients usually survive only a few months after diagnosis. When surgically removed, tumors typically recur within six months. Radiation and temozolomide, a chemotherapy agent, can prolong survival, but not by much. These treatments extend median survival to perhaps 18 months.” Bredel says.

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“There are drugs approved for treatments of other cancers or under clinical investigation that may have that capacity.”

Rethinking therapy

Bredel said that patients with either the NFKBIA or EGFR abnormality had a significantly shorter length of survival, despite therapy, than patients whose tumors bore neither genetic defect. He said the findings could inform treatment.

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“There are drugs approved for treatments of other cancers or under clinical investigation that may have that capacity.”
A five-year extension of a groundbreaking longitudinal study of youth health will create the most thorough data set ever generated on family and peer relations.

Healthy Passages II is a five-year, $9 million, multi-site grant award from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. It will be used to assess factors that influence disparities in health, educational and social outcomes across diverse racial and ethnic populations and better understand the primary influences associated with obesity, early sexual initiation, substance use, violence and delinquency.

“Healthy Passages is using a broad lens to figure out the things that individually influence and interact to influence behavior,” says Susan Davies, Ph.D., associate professor of public health and principal investigator on the project. “Adolescent risk-taking is rarely the result of a single factor — a dysfunctional family, deviant peer group, under-performing school or a dangerous neighborhood. Similarly, risk cannot be prevented by a single protective factor — involved parents, good education, religious affiliation or a high IQ. Rather, it’s the combination and interaction of those things and others.”

“Outside influences make earlier intervention a bigger need than ever before,” Davies says. “They are exposed to things now at an age they are not developmentally ready to comprehend and understand how to make good decisions. We can change that. We can provide them with these skills that will benefit them throughout their lives.”

Data has been collected from 5,200 fifth-grade youth and their caregivers in Birmingham, Houston and Los Angeles since 2005. This grant extension will enable the team to follow the cohort until they are two years past high school. The objective is to provide a research basis for policies and interventions to promote the health and development of adolescents and adults.

The study will assess a broad array of health behaviors, including mental health, pregnancy, substance use, intentional injury and violence, sexual behaviors and health-seeking behaviors. Researchers from health behavior, biostatistics, psychology and sociology are involved in the project, which was led by Frank Franklin, Ph.D., before his retirement from the School of Public Health.

Intervention programs

Davies says the key to the study was gaining access to fifth-grade children — a time when they have yet to experience significant peer pressure but have begun forming perceptual beliefs. Researchers were able to ask them questions and gain insight into what drives their beliefs and the attitudes that ultimately shape their behaviors.

“You’re far enough ahead of the game when you get them to the fifth grade that we can intervene on those beliefs and attitudes before they ever get exposed to those risk opportunities,” Davies says. “Middle-school years is the time when kids are caught from behind or under-prepared for the kinds of risks to which they are going to be exposed, and at that point it’s too late to talk about these things with them — certainly in Alabama.”

Davies says that doesn’t mean talking to fifth graders about condoms.

“Intervening at an earlier age has other advantages. Davies contends. “It’s less expensive and more effective in the long run if children are engaged earlier;” she says. “It’s easier to identify those at risk and engage them with protective activities, the better off we are and our communities. It’s a tremendous investment to do early prevention in kids. Certainly our data are showing us that’s going to argue very strongly for the need of that.”

“Early-intervention programs help preadolescents understand themselves and others to build better relationships, make healthy decisions change how Americans conceive of aging. Davies contends. “These are just as important as math, science and literature but rarely given the priority they deserve.”

Study focuses on factors influencing children’s behavior

“The great thing is you don’t have to,” she says. “You can talk about positive future aspirations — identifying their strengths and figuring ways to apply them in ways that make their weaknesses irrelevant. You can find ways to connect them to positive school, social and community groups and organizations. You often will find that youth naturally want to engage in risk much less.”

Sound policy is key

Of the 5,200 students and caregivers taking part, almost 1,600 are from the Birmingham metro area, and Davies says the need is especially high.

“We have a good representative sample that mirrors the general population of U.S. adolescents and families from public and private schools and across the socioeconomic spectrum,” she says. The sample in Birmingham includes Caucasian, African-American and Hispanic adolescents and parents.

“We hope to collect and analyze all of these data during the next five years and disseminate them broadly — to researchers, practitioners and policy makers — so that interventions can be developed to educate families, schools and communities to reduce high-risk behavior and increase protective factors,” she says.

“School administrators will tell you they can predict in third grade which students are going to drop out of school before they reach the 12th grade,” Davies says. “Similarly, we can predict which kids are going to initiate sex at an earlier age and which kids are going to be at increased risk for violence, substance abuse or delinquency.”

Intervening at an earlier age has two other advantages, Davies contends. “It’s less expensive and more effective in the long run if children are engaged earlier;” she says. “It’s easier to identify those at risk and engage them with protective activities, the better off we are and our communities. It’s a tremendous investment to do early prevention in kids. Certainly our data are showing us that’s going to argue very strongly for the need of that.”

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Beware the “silver tsunami” — Boomers turning 65 in 2011

The start of the new year marks yet another milestone for America’s Baby Boom generation, one that is sure to be welcomed. The first of the baby boomers turn 65 in 2011. The boomers are getting old.

And the rest of the 76 million Americans are changing how aging is perceived. It has been dubbed the Silver Tsunami. The number of people age 65 and older will double between 2010 and 2060, with the number of those 85 and older increasing four fold. The question is, will the country be ready to meet the extraordinary medical and social needs that the boomers will require?

The answer, according to UAB geriatric experts, is no. As time passes and the boomers continue to age, they will need specialized geriatric care from specialized health care professionals in specialized facilities.

“National estimates cite approximately 7,000 geriatricians currently certified to care for the rapidly growing boomer population,” said Richard Allman, M.D., professor and director of the UAB Division of Gerontology, Geriatrics and Palliative Care. “Yet our society will need more than 20,000 geriatricians to accommodate the increasing demand for specialized care.”

And it’s not just doctors. Allman, who is also director of the Birmingham/Atlanta Veterans Administration Geriatric Research, Education and Clinical Centers (GRECC) and the UAB Center for Aging, says the need for specialized caregivers for geriatrics extends beyond physicians to include nurses, therapists, dietitians, social workers and community caregivers.

“Doctors alone don’t deliver geriatric care,” Allman says. “You’ve got to have a team to optimize the quality of life for older people.”

“We’re recruiting students who are dentists, physical and occupational therapists, nurses, optometrists, psychologists and a number of other disciplines.”

And these are the boomers we’re talking about — traditional models of old age just aren’t going to cut it, says geriatrician Andrew Duxbury, M.D.,

“The boomers have always gotten what they want when they want it, with the demographic numbers to push society to accord to their demands,” he says. “They are not a generation to sit back and let history roll over them. They’ll go out and make their own history.”

He suggests that demand for such things as joint replacements, medications to improve aches and pains of aging and bypassing of clogged arteries will all skyrocket. Dux- bury says the boomers will want the system to work around them and their active life styles and will not put up with all-day visits to the doctor. They won’t be sitting around playing shuffleboard at the retirement center.

“The boomers, with their health and vitality relatively intact into older age, will completely change how America comes to conceive of what it means to be old,” Duxbury says.

January 10, 2011 UAB Reporter 5
Kohler earns national award for excellence in mentoring

Naomi Chen visited the UAB School of Public Health in 2007 as a prospective master’s student. She didn’t know what to expect or whom she might meet.

Connie Kohler, Dr.P.H., professor of health behavior and director of graduate studies for the department, was the person to engage Chen and enlighten her on the virtues of a UAB public health master’s degree. Kohler familiarized Chen with the department and showed her research initiatives to the prospective student. But it was the way Kohler delivered the message that really struck a chord with Chen. She was warm, encouraging and passionate.

“I immediately felt at home,” Chen says. “Dr. Kohler’s friendliness and accessibility were key factors in my decision to attend UAB.”

And Kohler’s guidance as a mentor led to Chen nominating her for awards, including the Graduate School’s Dean’s Award for Excellence in Mentorship — an award Kohler earned in 2010. Since Chen put together the book of letters nominating Kohler for that award, she figured she should send it to the American Public Health Association (APHA), too. Because of that, Kohler recently was named a recipient of the APHA Student Assembly Excellence in Mentoring Award. The award is given annually to senior public health academics or practitioners who take an active role in mentoring students and young professionals through regular contact, professional development, research support or joint publications.

“Dr. Kohler is more than an innovative researcher,” Chen says. “She shares freely of herself and takes a genuine interest in her students. When people ask how I am enjoying graduate school, I tell them that I am getting what I came for — and more — and that I love my success in large part to Dr. Kohler.”

Engaging students

Kohler is not one to seek attention and recognition for her work, but she enjoys what she does and relishes the opportunity to engage students.

“I like teaching in the classroom,” says Kohler, who teaches two courses a year in health communication. “I have my good days and bad days at it, but I just discovered along the way that working with students one-on-one is a lot of fun.”

Kohler, a 27-year UAB employee, has mentored students extensively for the past 15 years, and she does admit to possessing an affinity for explaining things to other people.

“If somebody doesn’t know something, I like to explain it to them,” she says. “I just find that really rewarding. Even when I was a little kid I wanted to play school and be the teacher. It’s kind of showing off in a way I guess — I know something you don’t know, and here let me tell it to you — but it’s also a social thing. I like getting to know the students. I probably spend more time than a lot of people getting to know them personally — not that that is the best way to do it; it’s just the way I am.”

Students admire the high academic standards Kohler sets for herself and them and how her teaching strategies often draw them into thoughtful and engaging conversations on health communications theory. And they are especially appreciative that she shows a willingness to engage them personally and get to know them.

That personal relationship was key to Angela Warren Baumann continuing on her path in school. Baumann, a fourth-year doctoral student in health behavior, was an excellent and diligent student. She also was a mom-to-be in spring 2008 and was going to miss time while on maternity leave. Kohler worked with Baumann and enabled her to complete the requirements of a course during her leave so she could maintain her progress in the program.

“She was kind and compassionate in balancing the need to complete assignments in her course and realizing that I needed time to recuperate after just having a baby,” Baumann says. “I gained even more respect for Dr. Kohler during this semester because I realized she respected me as a whole person — one with responsibilities to school and family.”

Kohler believes helping students navigate issues like Baumann’s are essential.

“As a mentor, you have to help students navigate more than just the professional aspects of things,” Kohler says.

Learning from others

Kohler says she has been the beneficiary of a mentor as well. In fact, she says, it was Bill Bailey, M.D., professor of medicine in pulmonary, allergy and critical care, often crosses her mind.

“I worked in the Lung Health Center for several years early in my doctoral career, and I learned a lot from Bill Bailey in terms of research and how to treat people,” Kohler says. “He was a wonderful mentor.”

And because of that, Bailey was among those who thanked in Denver during the 2010 annual meeting of the American Public Health Association where she received the Student Assembly award. In fact, Kohler thanked Bailey and every student she has mentored in her career in a rhyme.

“I had to give a three-minute acceptance speech, and I didn’t know what to do,” Kohler says.

“I wound up naming them in rhyme in order to thank them. And I didn’t miss anybody.”

Kohler delivered the message that really struck a chord with Chen. She was warm, encouraging and passionate.

“Dr. Kohler’s friendliness and accessibility were key factors in my decision to attend UAB.”

Connie Kohler enjoys teaching students one-on-one like Mike Taylor, an advanced doctoral student in health education and promotion. Kohler serves a mentor to Taylor — and he is grateful for her guidance.

SOUTH AFRICA

CONTINUED from page 1

After hearing Weston speak, the Hoods knew South Africa was where they wanted to go. They made their first trip in 2008. In 2009, they added Garner, other caregivers and construction workers who helped to build a water supply in one village — a much needed resource for the area. Craig is joining this year’s team for the first time.

In the area, children and adolescents care for most of the infants and toddlers. Hood has seen children as young of mouth very quickly that medical treatment was available. They also put together numerous first-aid kits for area caregivers that they leave behind after they leave, and they train them how to use the supplies.

“We train the caregivers on how to clean out wounds, use ace bandages properly and apply antibiotic ointment,” Hood says. “We also show them how to teach villagers to wash their hands, brush their teeth and other basic hygiene maintenance. We do this type of training for the caregivers who live with the orphans.”

Hood’s team is seeking supplies and donations for their upcoming trip. Items needed include antibiotic cream, antifungal cream, toothbrushes, small tubes of toothpaste and small toys for the children. If you would like to contribute, contact the Hoods at philandwendyhood@ yahoo.com or send tax-deductible donations to Daystar Christian Center, 5400 West Mifflin Blvd., Gadsden, AL 35904, memo African missions.

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Baugh named Commissioner of Mental Health

Zelia Baugh was named by Governor-elect Robert Bentley to be Commissioner of Mental Health. Baugh is currently the administrator of psychiatry at UAB’s Center for Psychiatric Medicine.

York, LaGory retire

UAB Department of Theatre Chair Will York and Mark LaGory, chair of the Department of Sociology, retired Dec. 31, 2010.

York joined the faculty in 1999 and recently was honored by the Alabama Conference of Theatre Directors, when he was presented with The Marian Galloway Award for his contributions to theater in Alabama. York will return to campus to direct UAB Theatre’s fall 2010-11 production, “Three Sisters” by Anton Chekhov. April 13-17 in UAB’s Alys Stephens Center. York says he plans to pursue new endeavors in directing and performing and other artistic interests.

LaGory joined the Sociology faculty in 1980 and has chaired the once spring 2006 was the first elected chair of the university-wide UAB Faculty Senate and chaired the governance committee that established its constitution and by-laws. LaGory is a member of the Episcopal clergy and will be a full-time staff member at St. Luke’s Episcopal Church in Birmingham. His primary duties as a member of the clergy staff will revolve around outreach and education.

Business professor writes one of nation’s best blogs

Stephanie Rauterkus, an assistant professor of finance in the UAB School of Business Department of Accounting and Finance, is the author of 365 Days on a Budget, which recently was named one of the country’s 50 Best Business Blog Professors.

The best bloggers list was compiled by BSchool.com, an online resource for information on the nation’s MBA programs. Rauterkus blogs daily about her efforts to keep her family of four spending wisely.

Nominations for Woolfolk award close Jan. 14

Nominate a full-time faculty member who has rendered outstanding service to the Birmingham community in education, economic development, health-care delivery, the arts, social services, human rights and/or urban and public affairs for the 2011 Odessa Woolfolk Community Service Award.

Submit a brief letter of nomination, the faculty member’s curriculum vitae, a one- to two-page description of the community service performed and a maximum of five letters of recommendation to the Office of the Provost (AB 374, +0103) by 5 p.m. Friday, Jan. 14. Learn more at www.uab.edu/facultydevelopment.

Direct questions to Linda Pliton at lapiteo@uab.edu or 934-0513.

Sutton, Wyatt join Media Relations

Marie Sutton and Nicole Wyatt have joined Media Relations in the UAB Office of Public Relations and Marketing, as media specialists responsible for working with the news media and producing stories for UAB’s website.

Sutton, a former reporter with the Birmingham News, will cover a variety of beats in the College of Arts and Sciences, including the School of Education, and many activities in Student Affairs. Sutton is a Stillman College alumna.

Wyatt, a former reporter and anchor for CBS 42, will cover the School of Public Health and topics within the School of Medicine, including the Division of Infectious Diseases and the UAB Center for AIDS Research. Wyatt graduated from the University of Alabama.

Gilbert featured in dentistry newsletter

Gregg Gilbert, D.D.S., chair of the Department of General Dentistry in the UAB School of Dentistry, was featured in the December 2010 edition of Science Advocate, the e-newsletter of the American Association for Dental Research. Gilbert’s research career has focused on oral health clinical research.
the COMPLETE WORLD of SPORTS (abridged) COMEDY SHOW

TICKETS START AT $20!

Friday, January 14 • 7:30 p.m.
Saturday, January 15 • 2:30 & 7:30 p.m.

It’s a marathon of madness and mayhem as the world’s great sporting events are shrunk down to theatrical size. It “owes as much to the insanity of Monty Python as to the inanity of actual sports programs” says Boston Globe.

Wear your favorite team’s jersey to the show and you could win a great prize!

SPENCERS THEATRE of ILLUSION

Friday, January 28 • 8 p.m.

Prepare to be mystified! The Spencers dazzle audiences with their never-before-seen illusions.

$1 of every ticket will benefit the Children’s Miracle Network.

*Valid while supplies last. Not good on previously purchased tickets. Offer expires 1/25/11.


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