It has been a little over a year since the last department newsletter, and the department has undergone a few changes during that time. Perhaps the foremost of these changes was Dr. Karen Williams’ decision to step down from her position as Department Head and return to her faculty position at the end of May 2010, and the beginning of my new role as Department Head in June 2010. This change has resulted in an exciting new opportunity for Karen – she was selected as the first Technology in Education (TIE) Faculty Fellow in the Outreach School for fall semester. This is a split appointment with the department and the Outreach School, where Karen will be responsible for highlighting the Outreach School’s innovative curricular, research and training opportunities, and also for the development of a permanent TIE faculty fellows program for Outreach.

Sadly this year we said “Goodbye” to our friend and colleague Suzy Pelican when she retired in January. We are lucky however that Suzy has stayed in Laramie and stops by to visit the department on a regular basis! We were very excited to welcome several new colleagues this year. Melissa Bardsley joined the department in July as the Extension Food and Nutrition Specialist. We look forward to seeing the results of Melissa’s innovative programming and approaches related to emerging nutritional and food safety issues facing Wyoming families. Kelley Dees joined the AgrAbility project last fall as Project Coordinator. Kelley grew up on a small farm in rural Alabama. The Early Care and Education Center (ECEC) welcomed Brenna Randall as a new Lead Preschool Teacher last fall. Brenna moved with her family from Bozeman, Montana in August 2010 to take the position at the ECEC. This fall the ECEC was joined by Victoria Parker who accepted the Lead Preschool teacher position. Victoria comes to us from Denver.

Not only have we had some changes in staffing this year, we have also been working on a few physical changes to upgrade and beautify our space. This year we have added new chairs, tables and benches to the hallways around the main office suite to create a more inviting and comfortable environment for students and visitors. Additionally, we have added some new artwork (completed by an undergraduate student) and posters to the hallways. Two of our classrooms are undergoing changes to upgrade the available technology for teaching and also for interacting with our distance instructors and students.

The faculty spent time this past year reviewing and assessing both our undergraduate and graduate programs. One of the changes that occurred as a result was the renaming of the Child and Family Studies program option to Human Development and Family Sciences. The department has also made some revisions to the core requirements for all Family and Consumer Sciences majors.

Our faculty, staff, students and alumni have had some amazing accomplishments this year, many of which you will read about in the pages to follow. We welcome stories and ideas, as well as comments and feedback from you – please send them to us.
Recognition of the performance and achievements of our amazing faculty, staff and students came in a variety of forms this year.

Assistant Professor Christine Wade was the recipient of a North American Colleges and Teachers of Agriculture (NACTA) Teaching Award of Merit and was also nominated for both the Lawrence Meeboer Outstanding Teacher Award and the Outstanding Advisor Award for the College of Agriculture and Natural Resources in 2010. She was also selected for honorary membership in both Phi Upsilon Omicron and Mortar Board.

Associate Professor Rhoda Schantz and doctoral candidate Richard Adams from the College of Arts and Sciences were selected as joint first place winners for their article Nuts and roots: The staples of prehistoric cuisine in the Greater Yellowstone Ecosystem in the summer 2010 edition of the College of Agriculture and Natural Resources magazine Reflections.

Professor Donna Brown, recipient if a UW Mortar Board Top Professor Award, was also the Curator’s Choice Winner for Suitably Turquoise and Gold, the garment she submitted to the 2010 Hoffman Challenge and Visions of a Secret Garden submitted to the 2011 challenge.

Associate Professor Shane Broughton was granted sabbatical leave for Fall 2010.

Mindy Meuli, Cent$ible Nutrition Program Manager, was appointed by Governor Matt Mead to the Dietetics Licensing Board for the State of Wyoming.

Senior Office Associate Mona Gupton was selected as the University of Wyoming Outstanding Staff Member for the fourth quarter of 2010 and was also one of the College of Agriculture and Natural Resources Outstanding Staff.

Graduate student Michaella Kaszuba was the recipient of a NACTA Graduate Teaching Award of Merit.

Fellow graduate student Becce Birdseye received the Excellence in Agriculture Award from the Wyoming State Department of Agriculture.

Skye Murphy (BSFC May 2011) was selected as Outstanding Student of the Year by the Wyoming Dietetics Association at their April 2011 annual conference.

December 2010 graduate from the Textiles and Merchandising program, Natalie Ferguson’s design was selected as Undergraduate Best of Show at the American Association of Family and Consumer Sciences National Conference in Cleveland, Ohio in June 2010.

Nicole Macy received the National Exemplary Construction Award in the 2010 Make It with Wool Competition.

In late October 2010 Jessica Platt (BSFC December 2010) accompanied Associate Professor Shane Broughton to Berlin, Germany where she presented a paper at the 13th World Congress on Controversies in Obstetrics, Gynecology and Infertility (COGI).

Sophie Pettipiece received the Sports Cardiovascular and Wellness Nutrition (SCAN) Undergraduate Poster Award at the 27th Annual SCAN Symposium in March 2011.

In April, Big Brothers Big Sisters, a mentoring agency that pairs children and adults in mutually beneficial relationships, named Julianne Hughes Big Sister of the Year for Laramie and also for the State of Wyoming.

In May, Emily Gran was selected to be in charge of more than 300 volunteers for the Wyoming Special Olympics event in Laramie.

Molly Janak (BSFC December 2010) was selected as a finalist for presentation of her design La Donna Che Brucia at the 2011 Community of Apparel, Textiles and Design (ATD) Juried Showcase and Exhibition at the American Association of Family and Consumer Sciences National Conference in Phoenix, Arizona in June 2011.
Kati Stoll is one of those students who is rarely idle. A senior in Textiles and Merchandising, Kati also carries two minors in Family and Consumer Sciences - Apparel Design and Interior Design - as well as a second major in Business Marketing. Kati served as President of the UW Delta Chapter of Phi Upsilon Omicron (Phi U) for the 2010-2011 academic year and will remain in that office for 2011-2012. Under her leadership Phi U has doubled its membership.

Kati’s service to student organizations on campus does not end there. She is a member of Alpha Kappa Pi, the professional business fraternity, and the Global Business Club. In spring semester, Kati was inducted into Mortar Board, the premier national college honor society that recognizes seniors for superior achievement in scholarship, leadership, and service. She was recently notified that she has been selected to receive a national Phi Upsilon Omicron scholarship for 2011-2012.

Kati sets high personal standards and is respected by her peers. She seeks opportunities to lead her classmates. In spring semester Kati interviewed her fellow FCSC undergraduates and produced a 15-minute video My Family and Consumer Sciences: A Student Perspective that premiered at the department’s annual student recognition event in April. The video was also used during coffee hours hosted by the department over the summer to educate other campus units on what our department and our undergraduate program options are all about. Watch our webpage - we will be adding the video soon.

Between classes, Kati finds time to be an undergraduate teaching assistant in two apparel construction courses with Professor Donna Brown. Outside of the classroom, Kati co-produced two events that showcased student designs. The Fusion Fashion Show was held in fall semester. ReInvent: A Sustainable Fashion Show debuted on Earth Day in the spring to increase awareness about sustainable garments.

Kati also had a successful year as a student designer. She received the Undergraduate Best of Show award for her design Splatters and Spikes (pictured right) submitted to the 2011 Community of Apparel, Textiles and Design (ATD) Juried Showcase and Exhibition at the American Association of Family and Consumer Sciences National Conference in Phoenix, Arizona in June 2011.
So Long, Farewell, Auf Weidersehen, Goodbye

On January 7, 2011 friends and colleagues gathered to celebrate the accomplishments of and bid farewell to Suzy Pelican. Her well-thought-out decision to retire on that date was supported by everyone who worked with her but it was not something anyone looked forward to.

Pelican joined the Department of Family and Consumer Sciences as the Extension Food and Nutrition Specialist in April, 1997. During her thirty years as a professional in the field, before and after her UW career, Pelican reached thousands of individuals simply by sharing her knowledge and striving to create the best programs possible. A leader committed to her work, Pelican was selected to receive the Helen Denning Ulrich Award of Excellence from the Society for Nutrition Education (SNE) in 2010. One of her nomination letters summed up what everyone who knows Pelican believes to be true. “What is truly special about Suzy is her eternal optimism and belief in others. When you are around her you feel valued and you know anything is possible.” Everyone in the department extends their best wishes for a happy retirement!

Joining the Extension Team

Melissa Bardsley joined the department as the new Extension Food and Nutrition Specialist on July 1. Bardsley will be responsible for development, implementation and evaluation of food and nutrition extension programs for adults and youth in Wyoming. She received her undergraduate degree in dietetics in 1986 and her master’s degree in human nutrition in 1991 from Colorado State University. She has worked in extended care facilities, community health centers, hospitals and dialysis units and was an associate extension specialist in Colorado. She says she was drawn to nutrition as a way to serve. She feels most successful when she sees sustained, changed behavior in those she has served. Her most recent positions were in a dialysis unit in Casper and as director of the Carbon County Women, Infants, and Children (WIC) Clinic. She says she was drawn to nutrition as a way to serve. “People serve in different ways. I have found my niche through nutrition. You have the ability to reach a lot of people.”

Highlights from Wyoming AgrAbility

In the last year, Wyoming AgrAbility has started looking into the use of social media to fulfill their national goals of developing service capacity through innovative programs, encouraging networking to facilitate information sharing, and providing direct services through individual consultations and other means. The Wyoming AgrAbility Facebook page can be found at www.facebook.com/agwyoming. Currently, there are over 1,000 followers and this number is growing each day! Wyoming AgrAbility also has a blog that is updated regularly. The resources on this blog focus on problems facing agricultural workers, with topics that also relate to the general population. To date, the blog has been visited by over 2,500 visitors! This blog can be found at http://wyomingagrability.wordpress.com.

In February 2011, Wyoming AgrAbility co-sponsored an event that brought Dr. Temple Grandin to the University of Wyoming. Dr. Grandin gave two presentations with over 500 in attendance for the first presentation and over 1,300 for the second. Dr. Grandin also signed books for those whose lives she had touched. Other co-sponsors of this event included the College of Agriculture and Natural Resources, WIND Speaker Series, and the Office of Academic Affairs.

Currently, Wyoming AgrAbility is in the final stages of completing an Infusion Unit in cooperation with the Wyoming Geriatric Education Center (WYGEC). This infusion unit will be used to train medical professionals on how to properly assess difficulties that rural populations in particular face. This unit should be available online by the end of the year.
Under the guidance of faculty advisors Associate Professor Bruce Cameron and Professor Mike Liebman, and with Kati Stoll’s leadership as President, Phi Upsilon Omicron Delta Chapter had a truly amazing year. They hosted National Phi U President Dr. Corine Carr at their fall semester initiation. This was the first time anyone from the national office had come to UW. Between the fall and spring semesters they welcomed 17 new members. They participated in several fundraising efforts including the Ag Day BBQ and selling Christmas wreaths. The chapter was able to send two representatives to the national Phi Upsilon Omicron Conclave in Savannah, Georgia in 2010. Phi U also trick-or-treated for canned goods to donate to the local food bank and made fleece tie blankets to donate to the local WIC office. They spent much of the year focusing on their national project of adopting a family. Phi U was proud to provide clothing, food, and necessities as well as gifts for a family of six during the holiday season. Members also helped plan, organize, and orchestrate the department’s annual student recognition event in April. President Kati Stoll said, “Family and Consumer Sciences has great students and Phi U is happy to represent them.”

Student Society Has Successful Year

Under the guidance of faculty advisors Associate Professor Bruce Cameron and Professor Mike Liebman, and with Kati Stoll’s leadership as President, Phi Upsilon Omicron Delta Chapter had a truly amazing year. They hosted National Phi U President Dr. Corine Carr at their fall semester initiation. This was the first time anyone from the national office had come to UW. Between the fall and spring semesters they welcomed 17 new members. They participated in several fundraising efforts including the Ag Day BBQ and selling Christmas wreaths. The chapter was able to send two representatives to the national Phi Upsilon Omicron Conclave in Savannah, Georgia in 2010. Phi U also trick-or-treated for canned goods to donate to the local food bank and made fleece tie blankets to donate to the local WIC office. They spent much of the year focusing on their national project of adopting a family. Phi U was proud to provide clothing, food, and necessities as well as gifts for a family of six during the holiday season. Members also helped plan, organize, and orchestrate the department’s annual student recognition event in April. President Kati Stoll said, “Family and Consumer Sciences has great students and Phi U is happy to represent them.”

Student Dietetic Association

Under the guidance of their faculty advisor Associate Professor Rhoda Schantz, SDA members participated in several events during the past year.

• Members attended and presented at the annual meeting of the Wyoming Dietetic Association.
• They were involved in Body Image Awareness Week.
• Information was presented at the College of Health Sciences annual health fair.
• Members helped promote Nutrition Month in March.
• Posters and other nutrition-related educational materials were developed and distributed at UW Student Health.

Cent$ible Nutrition Graduate Becomes Nutrition Educator

Karen Kimutis is one of the newest Nutrition Educators hired by the Cent$ible Nutrition Program (CNP). She joined the program this fall and is housed in the Johnson County Extension office. CNP Director Mary Kay Wardlaw is always excited about adding new educators but what makes this addition especially meaningful is the fact that Kimutis’ first connection with CNP was as a client. About 10 years ago Kimutis was living in Gillette and was new to the area and state. She went to the Campbell County Extension Office to request some gardening tips as it was plain to see Wyoming would have a different growing season than Florida where she had been living. While she was in the extension office she noticed the Cent$ible Nutrition information and inquired about the program. Kimutis recalls, “Lori Jones was there and didn’t have a client at the time so I got to go in and visit with her. I scheduled an official appointment with her and started my CNP classes.” What Kimutis enjoyed most about the program was the way the information was presented. “I have some nutrition and teaching background so the material was easy to absorb. There was no useless information. I was excited to get the incentives and my favorite was the cookbook. I liked how the cookbook had the nutrition facts listed beside the recipe so there was no guess work. The ingredients were pantry basics a person would have in the kitchen already so I didn’t have to go out and buy a lot of things to make a meal.” After completing the program Kimutis was a stay at home mom for seven years and just recently re-entered the work force. “I am excited about working for the CNP. I feel I can relate to the clients because I have been where they are currently.”
On May 17, after a one week intensive on-campus preparatory class, Professor Sonya Meyer and Associate Professor Bruce Cameron left Laramie for Europe with 15 UW students, one junior high student (Stuart Cameron) and 5 adult non-student participants. The group spent 12 days visiting designer show rooms, textile manufacturers, museums, and historic/cultural sites. This study tour also provided students with an introduction to Scottish, British and French culture. The trip started in the city of Edinburgh, Scotland and then onto Heriot-Watt University’s School of Textiles and Design where the group met faculty, students and staff. They also had the opportunity to visit one of the world’s leading tartan manufacturers, Loch Carron of Scotland. London was the next stop on their journey. Long recognized as a center for men’s fine tailoring, London has also earned a reputation as an international fashion center. The group met with the head designer of Zandra Rhodes in their London studio. Continuing on, the group traveled via Eurorail through the Chunnel for a five night stay in Paris, considered by many to be the capital of the international fashion scene. While in Paris, the group met French wedding dress designer Alain Lalou. Through their various appointments students learned of opportunities for graduate study with European institutions and for internships with designers and European retailers.
“This was my second international study tour. I had the first trip to sort of teach me what it is like to travel abroad. This time I was more relaxed and was able to experience so much more. My advice for students on future study tours is try to experience everything that a city has to offer.”

- Nicole Macy

“I met great people in the industry and I got a lot of ideas about future opportunities with many of the people we met in all three countries. I also was able to expand my knowledge of the global economy and how my career choices and interests in both interior and apparel design fit with current global trade.”

- Morgan Martin

“I was thrilled to find out that Heriot-Watt offers an amazing master’s program as well as scholarships. Both Zandra Rhodes and Alain Lalou offer internships to students studying fashion. Any of these would be the opportunity of a lifetime and something I would have never been aware of if I had not gone on the trip.”

- Kati Stoll

“The fashion industry is enormous, but there is extreme diversity in the global fashion market. This short course really benefited me because I gained a new perspective. Every component of this industry was explored. I can’t wait to do this again!”

- Paul Ditty

“This study abroad was quite an eye opener for me in how expansive the opportunities are within the textile, merchandising and apparel design fields of study. We visited famous design studios and talked with designers about how they started and their retail philosophies. The trip was worth the sacrifices!”

- Mary Mills
Kentz Willis - Extension Educator Extraordinaire

As I began typing this I saw something on the calendar that triggered a quick grin—it was three years ago that I defended my master's thesis at the University of Wyoming Department of Family and Consumer Sciences (UW FCS). It has been quite a journey!

I now call Sheridan, Wyoming home and work as a Nutrition and Food Safety Educator for the University of Wyoming Extension. I really enjoy being able to work with many different groups in my local area and across the state. It is very fulfilling to see my work make positive impacts on the health and safety of others. Life as an extension educator is never boring: I am continually shifting from one project to the next, and with clientele aged 5 to 75 I have to stay on my toes!

There are a lot of interesting happenings within the UW Extension nutrition team and I would like to highlight one in particular that I have been heavily involved in for the past 18 months: the Eat Wyoming project. Eat Wyoming (www.wyomingextension.org/eatwyoming) is a statewide effort to increase consumer knowledge about the benefits, safety, and availability of local foods. This has been done with local foods expos in Sheridan and Pinedale and a local foods guide (a directory and more!) in print and online. In addition, in August 2011 extension educators across the state took part in a training aimed at teaching health and nutrition concepts using local foods. It is hoped that by spring 2012 you will see Eat Wyoming food expos across the state and that our guide will be the 'go-to' resource for local food information.

So how did I get here? This journey started when I met a young lady from Laramie (we celebrated our third wedding anniversary this summer). After surviving the trials of a long-distance relationship I decided it was time to move to Laramie and continue my education. I found that the FCS department quickly welcomed me as part of their family. Though the nutrition faculty was small in numbers I was immediately impressed with the breadth and depth of their collective knowledge. I really enjoyed the size of the program as it allowed for a lot of interaction with the faculty—something I don't think I would have found anywhere else.

Looking back at those two short years at UW FCS I don't know that I could have found a program that better prepared me for a career in extension education. The flexibility in coursework encouraged individuality and independence. Challenging coursework, research projects and professional presentations all stretched my comfort zone. These opportunities gave me the confidence to speak and work with groups (large and small) as I do now.

My advice for new students: Take advantage of everything that campus life has to offer. You will miss it when you're gone! Find a club or student group that you are genuinely interested in and get involved. Attend a professional meeting and present your work there—this was among the most rewarding experiences during my time as a student. For nutrition students specifically: Take your interests beyond the science of nutrition and learn about the basics of the food itself. Teaching people to grow, preserve, and prepare their own produce is a great but often overlooked way to help them eat healthfully.

I am thankful for the many great experiences I had as a student at UW FCS and am fortunate that my role as an extension educator allows me to still be involved with the department.

Kentz Willis, M.S., is the University Extension Educator in Nutrition and Food Safety for Northeast Wyoming. He can be reached via email at kwillis3@uwyo.edu or by phone at 307-674-2980.

Stay current on all department news, events, and personnel by visiting our webpage.

www.uwyo.edu/fcs
Megan McGuffey’s time at the University of Wyoming was spent on the basketball court and in the classroom. She completed her undergraduate program in dietetics in 2010. Recently Megan returned to Laramie to begin a new job that is right up her alley. Brenda Cannon completed her undergraduate family life education program in 2006 but stayed at UW to pursue graduate studies. This year she became one of the department’s newest online instructors. When we spoke to them about writing for this edition of our newsletter they were delighted to tell us about what drew them “home” to Laramie and to their roots in the department.

Megan McGuffey — “My road to becoming a registered dietitian began five years ago. I was an undeclared freshman with a broad interest in biological sciences. At that time in my life, dietetics was a foreign term. I had taken science and health classes in high school, but I had yet to gain an introduction to this unique study of nutrition and health – something I hope to change for future students. Despite this, a professor introduced me to the possibilities of earning a degree in dietetics and nutritional science in the first semester of my freshman year. I immediately transferred to the Department of Family and Consumer Sciences in hopes of becoming a dietitian.

When I thought I was only trying to find an avenue into the professional world, I later realized what I actually found was a home. The warmth and welcome by the FCSC department front office immediately made me feel like I made the right decision. The first day in the department I met my advisor and future mentor, Enette Larson-Meyer. I owe many thanks to her because of the opportunities she presented me with and the encouragement she provided me over four years. I also took a variety of classes from other caring and influential professors within the department. Dr. Larson-Meyer, other FCSC professors, and the staff in the department continue to be professional role models that I aspire to be like everyday.

After graduation I spent 10 months in New Orleans completing a dietetic internship through Tulane University. The internship experience was diverse and, at many times, challenging. Aside from the initial shock of being immersed in an unfamiliar culture, I had to learn how to communicate with people of many different socioeconomic backgrounds. The term “health disparity” passed my eyes in textbooks and in classes I had taken at UW, but my time in New Orleans gave me a firsthand perspective of how many people in our country face a large and unfair gap in healthcare services. The resilience and strong will I witnessed in the people of New Orleans that lost so much, by either Hurricane Katrina or the Deepwater Horizon oil spill, gave me hope that humankind will also prevail in the face of many national health epidemics today.

Recently Laramie again became my home. I returned here this summer to begin my career as a Registered Dietitian at Laramie Pediatrics & Internal Medicine. I will be one member on a team of physicians, nurse practitioners, registered nurses, and other healthcare professionals. Although I am only at the start of my professional journey, I see dietetics as a career with many horizons and opportunities. I am also excited to start providing a service to the community that has given me so much. I am not sure what the future has in store for me. As I look back on the time I spent in the Family and Consumer Sciences Department on the campus of UW, I feel prepared and confident to approach life’s challenges. I would recommend to any student to challenge themselves by getting out of their comfort zone. I learned so much about other people in this world but I also learned about myself.”

Brenda Cannon — “When I graduated from the Family and Consumer Sciences Department, I knew that the education I had received was one that had prepared me in a genuine way to reach my goal of becoming a counselor. After graduating with my undergraduate degree, I worked for a year as the program director of Albany County Tobacco Prevention; then, I began my graduate work in the Counselor Education Department. The Family and Consumer Sciences Department gave me a powerful foundation to form my identity as a counselor throughout my time in graduate school.

Currently, I am a co-owner of Alliance for Growth: Counseling & Consulting, LLC in Laramie, Wyoming. I work with individuals, couples, and families – much of what I draw on in my work with clients is Family Systems Perspective...a perspective that guided a great deal of my education in the Family and Consumer Sciences Department.

When I was asked to teach the Family Relationships course online this summer, I jumped at the chance. I was so grateful to be given the opportunity to “come home”...to be a part of the department that gave so much to me. I am eager to continue my teaching experience with Parent-Child Relationships online this fall and to be a part of UW student learning within such a dedicated and caring department.”
This past February Professor Sonya Meyer, (Textiles and Merchandising) along with her colleague, and FCS alum, Associate Professor Melinda Adams (M.S. 2000, Ph.D. 2004) of the University of the Incarnate Word in San Antonio presented a workshop at the fifth annual International Conference on Design Principles and Practices. The conference was held at Sapienza University of Rome, Italy, February 2-4. The conference brought together researchers, teachers and practitioners from around the world and from a variety of disciplines to discuss the nature and future of design. Meyer and Adams conducted an hour long workshop entitled Defining Creative Scholarship in Textiles and Apparel Design in the United States.

The research being conducted by Enette Larson-Meyer, Associate Professor in the Human Nutrition and Food program on the health and performance implications of vitamin D in athletes is gaining national recognition and appears to be of increasing interest with the approach of the 2012 Summer Olympics in London. Larson-Meyer was an invited member of the International Olympic Committee (IOC) Consensus Conference on Sports Nutrition. As part of her responsibilities she presented a paper entitled “Vitamin D supplements for athletes: sense or nonsense?” and also served on the Consensus Panel which reviewed the current state of knowledge in the field of sports nutrition with the intent of producing a new consensus statement. The Consensus Conference was held at the IOC Headquarters at the Chateau de Vidy in Lausanne, Switzerland, October 25-27, 2010. The IOC Consensus Statement on Sports Nutrition is available at www.olympic.org/Documents/Reports/EN/CONSSENSUS-FINAL-v8-en.pdf

This August, Larson-Meyer was an invited speaker at the International Sports Medicine and Sports Science Conference held in Newcastle Upon Tyne, England, August 18-20, 2011, where she spoke with Kassim Javaid, MD of Oxford in a symposium entitled “Vitamin D and the athlete: a medical issue or a nutritional issue?”

Dr Larson-Meyer was also invited to present her work on vitamin D to a select group of sports dietitians at the U.S. Olympic Training Center in Colorado Springs on September 18-20 and at the Norwegian Conference on Sports Medicine in Oslo November 3-6 hosted in part by the Norwegian Olympic Committee.
Early Care and Education Center Update

The Early Care and Education Center (ECEC) recently celebrated its five year anniversary in conjunction with April's National Week of the Young Child by revealing a new logo (left) and updated webpage (www.uwyo.edu/ecec).

With funding from the Ellbogen Foundation, the ECEC staff hosted a conference in May that focused on creating more positive communication and awareness between UW and the early childhood centers at the Wyoming community colleges. In attendance were representatives from Casper College, Northwest Community College, Laramie County Community College, and Central Wyoming College. Groups spent time brainstorming ideas for building stronger connections. A model from the National Coalition for Campus Child Care Centers was presented and discussed. In addition, Deanna Frey of the Wyoming Children’s Action Alliance gave an update on current legislation in the state as well as future goals and expectations, and sources of state and federal funding for early childhood endeavors. The ECEC staff hopes to continue this momentum and is planning a June conference in Jackson.

They are also pursuing possible funding to continue work on natural outdoor play areas at the center. Natural play areas utilize elements such as gardens, climbing rocks, mud areas, water and other natural areas to enhance creative play opportunities for children.

Meet the ECEC Staff

Center Director Mark Bittner has been at UW for 20 years. He earned a B.S. in Elementary Education and Early Childhood and a M.S. in Professional Child Development prior to becoming director of the two previous early childhood programs on campus – the UW Child Care Center and the Hitchcock House. Those programs were combined with infant, toddler, and school-age programs that comprise the ECEC today. Bittner says the best part of his job is “working with families as well as being surrounded by great staff.”

Curriculum Coordinator Nikki Baldwin taught in public schools for five years and then spent eight years working for the Lincoln Uinta Child Development Association as an early childhood special education teacher and in administration as the education coordinator. She joined the ECEC staff three years ago. Baldwin commented on her position. “I have the perfect job! I get to work with teachers, children and families, and college students. Every day is different and full of new possibilities – and the children at our center energize me!”

Tracy Goodspeed is typically the first person you meet when you step through the door at ECEC. She occupies the front desk where she serves as the administrative support person. Goodspeed graduated from the FCS Professional Family Services option in 2001 and has been at the ECEC since it opened. She says, “My favorite thing about working at the ECEC has been to get to know all of our families and being part of such a great campus community. I have also been fortunate to have my own children attend the ECEC. It has been a great opportunity to watch them grow and learn in such a supportive, nurturing environment. I feel so lucky!”

Toddler Teacher Crystal Ballard says her favorite thing about her job is that it is always evolving. In 2000 Ballard completed her B.S. in Child and Family Studies. During her last semester she enrolled in an internship at the Child Care Center and has been there ever since. She relocated to the ECEC when it opened and served as one of the preschool teachers. She changed her focus a bit and now teaches in one of the two toddler rooms.

Eleanor Frye’s first experience at the ECEC was an intern in the toddler room when she was finishing her undergraduate program in Professional Child Development in 2006. She left Laramie and UW for a time, working at a Montessori preschool and kindergarten and at the Children’s World Learning Center. Frye returned to the ECEC three years ago when a position opened in one of the preschool rooms. This fall she shifted back to the toddler program where she says she “loves learning with the children and their families.”

“Watching each child’s personality develop, experiencing their excitement when they reach a new milestone, building great relationships with each family and working in an environment where I have never ending support” are Michelle Kearns’ favorite things about her job as the Infant Teacher at the ECEC. In her spare time, Kearns is working on a master’s degree in Curriculum and Instruction with an Early Childhood Special Education endorsement.
The newest member of the ECEC staff is Victoria (Torri) Parker. Parker joined the staff in August and says she “values problem-solving, developing social-emotional skills and self-help skills” which are fostered in her classroom through individualized instruction and play. She has been working with young children for over 11 years in a variety of settings including for-profit child care centers, public schools, and as a director at a multilingual school in Denver. Parker has a B.A. in psychology from the University of Denver, and recently completed her M.Ed in Elementary Education with an emphasis on early childhood at Regis University.

Brenna Randall operated her own preschool program for 11 years before relocating to Laramie last year. She also mentored and trained early care and education providers. Randall’s bachelor’s degree in early childhood education with a dual emphasis in special needs and family support prepared her well for her role as an ECEC Preschool Teacher. Randall says, “I love working with the children and their families. I also love sharing my knowledge and education with others in order to promote high quality teachers in the field.”

Linda Tanner joined the ECEC staff in 2009. She came to Wyoming by way of Iowa, South Dakota, Oklahoma and Massachusetts. Tanner’s baccalaureate degrees in Home Economics Education and Early Childhood Education are from Penn State. Watching children’s excitement about learning and “seeing them master skills in all areas of their development” are Tanner’s favorite things about teaching young children.

The newest member of the ECEC staff is Victoria (Torri) Parker. Parker joined the staff in August and says she “values problem-solving, developing social-emotional skills and self-help skills” which are fostered in her classroom through individualized instruction and play. She has been working with young children for over 11 years in a variety of settings including for-profit child care centers, public schools, and as a director at a multilingual school in Denver. Parker has a B.A. in psychology from the University of Denver, and recently completed her M.Ed in Elementary Education with an emphasis on early childhood at Regis University.

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Linda Tanner joined the ECEC staff in 2009. She came to Wyoming by way of Iowa, South Dakota, Oklahoma and Massachusetts. Tanner’s baccalaureate degrees in Home Economics Education and Early Childhood Education are from Penn State. Watching children’s excitement about learning and “seeing them master skills in all areas of their development” are Tanner’s favorite things about teaching young children.

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