Each year during Parents and Families Weekend, the Office of Parents and Family Services at NC State awards one outstanding Wolfpack family the title of Family of the Year. The selection is made by the Department of Campus Activities, which chooses the winner from a pool of essays written by current NC State students nominating their families for the award. This year, two families were recognized: the family of Crystal Tsang, a junior in the Poole College of Management, and the family of Caroline Funkhouser, a junior in the media concentration.

She is the daughter of Dr. Edward Funkhouser, Associate Professor of Communication. Her mother and grandfather are both NC State alumni and her father has taught at the university for 33 years.

Funkhouser wrote her essay in just one night. "I didn't think I was going to win," she said, "but I wanted to give back to my dad what he's given me for the last 20 years."

She wrote in her essay, "The attachment I feel when I am on campus is from the dedication of my father and the undying spirit of my mother." Her mother, who lost her battle with lung cancer in Funkhouser's freshman year, became Funkhouser's biggest motivator after her death. Funkhouser wrote, "I did not miss one moment of school after my mother's death because that's what she would have wanted...being a member of the Wolfpack is not about quitting."

Her father was the first person she called after she got news her essay had been chosen as one of the contest winners. She credits her father with the strong bond she has with the university, citing his "constant support and love for this university," as the main reason she chose to attend NC State. Dr. Funkhouser, who has been battling cancer for the past year, "went through three months of chemotherapy without missing a single class."

It is fitting that a family that embodies the heart, dedication and strength of the Wolfpack be recognized as NC State's Family of the Year. Funkhouser says that she will be a member of the Pack family for life and that she owes it all to her mother and father.
Kurt Lewin, the seminal theorist who widened our understanding of how groups function, once said, “There is nothing so practical as a good theory.” I was reminded of Lewin’s famous words the other day when talking with a Sports Information Director (SID) for a prominent Division One university, whose job it was to make sure the university’s athletic department sent accurate and clear information to local media, boosters, and alumni. When he told me he had earned an undergraduate degree in communication, I asked him how his degree had served him in his job. He said that the theory he had learned in college helped him deal with the challenges he faced as SID and was instrumental to his professional success. I was heartened to discover that, as a communication practitioner, he had made the connection between theory and application.

Linking theory to applied practice has long been an important part of the study of human communication, dating all the way back to the pre-Socratic philosophers in 5th Century BCE Greece. Several of these philosophers, the group known as the Sophists, believed it was important for citizens to understand how to speak well in order to function effectively in a variety of political, legal, and ceremonial contexts.

Applying theory to communicative practice can help democracies flourish as well, as the communication scholar William Keith points out in Democracy as Discussion: Civic Education and the American Forum Movement. Keith argues that the development of both the field of communication and what was known as the “Forum” movement in the United States was efforts to practically realize how communication education could improve discussion as an important mode of participation in public life — hence contributing to the health of our democracy. The idea of “Intellectual Entrepreneurship,” developed by Richard Cherwitz, a communication professor at the University of Texas in Austin, fits very well into the tradition of linking the theoretical with the applied. Cherwitz and other intellectual entrepreneurs in the Department of Communication at UT have used their theoretical training in the classroom to work with community partners to develop “communication-based” solutions to society’s problems and needs.

In our own department at NC State, we take the connection between theory and practice — what is called “applied communication” — very seriously. Dr. Joann Keyton is a foremost expert in applied communication. Her work in this area has been recognized by the National Communication Association, which in November awarded her the prestigious “Gerald M. Phillips Award for Distinguished Applied Communication Scholarship.” She has edited the Journal of Applied Communication Research, which publishes scholarship that addresses or challenges the relation between theory and practice in understanding communication in applied contexts. And Dr. Keyton taught an undergraduate course in Applied Communication during the fall 2011 semester. In this class, students used their theoretical knowledge of communication to address challenging issues related to health, discrimination, immigration, violence, and better government.

The work of several other faculty in the Department of Communication has a strong applied dimension as well. Dr David Berube and Dr Andrew Binder along with their team of researchers draw on theory to help scientists and the public understand the communication of science and technology. They are especially interested in how theory illuminates the ways in which communicators address the risks and uncertainties associated with scientific and technological breakthroughs. Dr. Kami Kosenko’s research on safer sex communication, all of it theoretically grounded, suggests ways in which people can avoid and/or manage sexually transmitted infections. Dr. Kosenko, having conducted research on safer sex communication, is focused on using communication research to reduce the transmission of HIV and sexually transmitted infections.

Dr. James Kiwanuka-Tondo employs his theoretical understanding of communication to develop public health campaigns for reducing the spread of HIV in African nations. Dr. Bill Kinsella’s theorizing about environmental communication suggests ways in which communities concerned about environmental degradation can advocate publicly to have their concerns heard. Dr. Elizabeth Craig’s research has major implications for how couples use communication to make difficult decisions about growing their families. Dr. Jessica Jameson’s engaged scholarship with nonprofit boards of directors helps nonprofit leaders examine their communication practices and improve levels of participation and collaborative practice. And my own research in rhetorical theory has aided my work with local political candidates vying for political office.

Many other faculty in our department draw upon their theoretical knowledge about creating messages and meanings to show others how to run companies more effectively by persuading stakeholders to practice healthier lifestyle habits and save our environment. Our faculty’s work also helps citizens inform others about what is happening in their communities and how to develop and maintain more satisfying personal relationships. Every day in their teaching, research, and service our faculty demonstrate that Kurt Lewin was absolutely right — there really is “nothing so practical as a good theory.”
On August 23, 2011, associate deans and the Academic Policy Committee of the Faculty Senate approved the Undergraduate Grade Exclusion Policy. Undergraduate students can now select up to two NC State courses at any level with posted letter grades of C- or below to exclude from their Total GPA.

“These changes were implemented to more equably address the academic difficulties of all students,” said Sandra Stallings, Assistant Director of Advising in the Department of Communication.

For undergraduates, the first two years of college are sometimes years of adjustment. Some students need time to adjust to the college lifestyle and life at NC State. The old policy only allowed 100 or 200 level courses to be dropped. Transfer students and freshmen who enter with AP credit often take higher level courses during their first two years; thus, excluding them from taking full advantage of the policies. The new modifications to the policies will provide greater flexibility for all undergraduate students.

Although there are merits to these changes in policy, there are some drawbacks. “People sometimes forget that they need to retake the course that they drop,” noted Stallings. If a dropped course fulfills a graduation requirement, the student will need to find another course to fill the requirement. For seniors who wish to utilize the new policy, this can be problematic.

Also, for students who are looking to apply to graduate schools, the revised policy may not help their chances of being accepted. Because the dropped courses will stay on the students’ transcripts, graduate schools will be able to view the grades for these courses and likely recalculate them back into their GPAs.

**Communication Convocation**

To kick off the event, Dr. Jameson discussed several learning objectives connected with the Department of Communication and described how students would achieve those objectives in their classes. She explained how courses focused on research methods would help students apply theories to real life situations. In addition, she stressed how communication writing courses would teach students the fundamentals of writing and help them excel in their careers.

Warf, the Senior Marketing Director of the Carolina Hurricanes and a Department of Communication alumnus, also emphasized the importance of well-developed writing skills. He encouraged students to “challenge yourself...you learn that way.” Warf could relate first-hand and connect the courses he completed to his successful career.

The convocation provided tips to help students navigate the best career path for them. Not only did the professors emphasize the importance of hard work in relation to a satisfying career, but Warf also encouraged students to improve their writing and oral skills as a way to gain an edge on their competition for internships and jobs.

Encouraging words came at the end of the event. Warf, one of Raleigh's "Top 10 Business Professionals under 35," closed with memories of one of his proudest moments. Once, when he was a guest lecturer at Duke University, Warf’s introduction ended with, “He graduated from North Carolina State University with a degree in communication.”

**NEW ADVISING PROCESS ADOPTED**

After many students complained to the Department of Communication about the hectic advising process, the faculty and staff decided it was time for a change. That process gave students a new adviser every year, making it somewhat frustrating for students to leave advisors who knew their backgrounds and academic goals.

The new process gives each class a single adviser that follows them through their academic tenure at NC State. This allows students to develop a close relationship with an individual advisor during their academic career to ensure advising needs are met.

“The students spoke, and we heard them,” said Associate Department Head Jessica Jameson, “We wanted to allow students to develop a relationship with their adviser, and this process will allow just that.”

In this updated system, there are currently three advisers – Sandy Stallings, James Alchediak, and Cynthia Zuckerman. There are plans to add a fourth adviser next year.

Best wishes to our summer and fall semester graduates!

The Department of Communication’s graduation ceremony will be held at 2 p.m. on Dec. 17 in Carmichael Gymnasium. Approximately 92 undergraduate students will walk the stage, including 40 students from the Communication Media concentration, 22 students from the Public Relations and Organizational Communication concentration, and 30 students from the Public and Interpersonal Communication concentration.

The ceremony will honor the 3 graduate students who completed their MS degree this fall. CRDM will graduate its 3 doctoral students. Students graduating Cum Laude, Magna Cum Laude and Summa Cum Laude as well as students with memberships in communication societies will be recognized.
hazing research shows that many students enter college expecting to be hazed. NC State Academic Advisor and Department of Communication Lecturer Mindy Sopher is convinced that hazing is not an adequate method or measurement for how Greek fraternity and sorority members should educate their new members. She has become an expert on hazing and is a leading advocate for reform.

As a part of her dedication to stop the abuse, Sopher spoke at her alma mater Wittenberg University during National Hazing Prevention Week.

During September 19-23, 2011, weeklong national events brought hazing awareness to many universities. Sopher did her part by challenging Ohio’s Wittenberg students to step up and speak out against hurtful practices.

Being a Wittenberg alumna and Kappa Delta member, Sopher appreciated the chance to visit as a wonderful opportunity to continue learning about current campus culture and go back to share her experiences. She said hazing is defined several ways and there are endless interpretations of the subject.

“If you wouldn’t do potential hazing activities in front of your parents, your advisor, your dean, the local TV cameras or the campus newspaper, you probably shouldn’t do them at all,” said Sopher.

“Light hazing” is still hazing. Sopher believes that everybody lives with some form of hurt in their lives and there is no reason to make anyone feel worse than they already may feel.

In order to smoothly operate a fraternity or sorority it takes strong leadership and healthy teamwork. She borrows from concepts used by real-world successful organizations to teach Greek life students the importance of working together in a positive way.

“What’s the goal for new members? Dedication? Building people up? I know there is a better way to do that than employing hazing as part of the activities or mission,” said Sopher. She suggests fighting hazing in three ways. She calls it the 3-H approach. The three H’s stand for heart, head, and health.

She said it’s important to talk about the heart when talking about hazing, because fraternity and sorority members are caring people, as indicated by their commitment to both friendship and philanthropic efforts. She also explained that hazing sometimes comes from a desire to develop members with a strong sense of commitment to their organizations.

"I want students to understand how hazing destroys a person’s emotional connection to the values of the organization and makes them less committed to organizational ideals," she said. "The results of hazing often include the hidden harm it sometimes inflicts on individuals with personal issues. Staying healthy is tough enough at college. Our students should be bright enough not to waste their time, money, academic success or potential careers by engaging in hazing of any form."

She told students that new non-hazing traditions can replace the harmful ones if extraordinary student leaders step up and take responsibility for changing their organizational culture. “One person can make a tremendous difference,” she said.

This year the Department of Communication put forward several reappointment, tenure, and promotion cases.

Dr. Liz Craig and Dr. Kami Kosenko have been reappointed to second terms as assistant professors.
Dr. Adriana de Souza e Silva has been tenured and promoted to the rank of associate professor.
Dr. Deanna Dannels and Dr. Melissa Johnson have been promoted to the rank of professor.
PROFESSORS EXPOSE TRUE MEANING BEHIND RESEARCH STUDIES

By Kathleen Beaver

On a campus with hundreds of research studies occurring at any one time, the odds of capturing the true spirit of each study are nearly impossible. The reasoning behind any one study often goes unseen and the history behind the researcher is often left untold. However, making a personal connection between the researcher and the study can reveal interesting stories reflecting passion and dedication.

Research topics can be born through a variety of different approaches, interests or questions. Dr. Ryan Hurley, a senior lecturer in the Department of Communication, is using his interest in Internet communication channels as an outlet for his research. Dr. Hurley is currently working on a research study examining the health content people receive through media channels and how that content influences health behaviors and cognition.

“I decided to study health and mass communication because it became apparent that a large percentage of the world’s population is searching for and finding health information through media channels, such as the Internet,” said Dr. Hurley.

Personal connections to a specific cause or action can be an organic route in identifying a research topic. A native of Uganda, Dr. James Kiwanuka-Tondo has spent his time as a researcher studying HIV/AIDS organizations, public policy, and HIV/AIDS campaigns in Uganda, Kenya, Tanzania, and South Africa. He is now interested in the influence of culture as well as socio-economic factors on HIV/AIDS prevalence in Africa.

“The current research that I am doing indicates that one of reasons that we have failed to reduce the spread of the HIV/AIDS epidemic is because we do not fully understand the cultures of the regions that are most impacted by the disease,” said Dr. Tondo.

Researchers most often use their passions combined with a sense of fascination as a compass in discovering a research area of interest. Dr. Elizabeth Craig used her interest in interpersonal relationships as a starting point in her current research. With a focus in families that are sometimes misunderstood or understudied, Dr. Craig’s most recent research focuses on the social stigmas surrounding childless couples.

“For a number of reasons, some individuals choose not to have children, but have different experiences when they tell friends and family members about their decision. Given familial and societal pressures to have children, this topic sheds light on the many ways individuals choose to create and sustain family,” said Dr. Craig.

However different research topics may appear on the surface, there is a common thread within the research community: passion.

“As with most things, do something you’re passionate about. Research can be discouraging at times, so choosing a topic that you care about can be a continual source of inspiration,” said Dr. Craig.

DONISE BENTON FOCUSES ON GIVING BACK TO HER COMMUNITY

By Shelli Mayfield

Donise Benton is a vivid example of what it means to give back to the community that helped her become what she is today: compassionate volunteer extraordinaire.

As Undergraduate Administrative Support Specialist for the Department of Communication, Benton graduated from NC State in 1991 with a Bachelor in Social Work. While a student, she became very involved in student affairs and made a name for herself on campus as a leader. After graduation, she worked in the banking industry for several years before returning to campus first in a temporary position and later as a regular employee. She worked for the university’s cashier’s office for three years before accepting her current position within the department.

Benton’s passion to help others in a hands-on way is the drive behind her volunteerism. For the last seven years, she has been a volunteer at the Women’s Center at NC State. She answers calls that come in through the Relationship and Sexual Violence hotline (919-618-RAPE) and assists victims in getting the help they need.

She also volunteers with the Applied Suicide Intervention Program (ASIST). Her duties include helping individuals that call the helpline (1-800-273-TALK) talk through the issues that have driven them to contemplate suicide and getting them the help they need.
Donise Benton — Volunteer Extraordinaire

In addition, she is the CEO and founder of Victory Against All Odds, a non-profit ministry that addresses issues such as child abuse, domestic violence, sexual abuse and sexual assault, depression, and suicide. She hosts a weekly radio show Mondays at 12:30 pm during which she encourages listeners to call (818) 572-2919 and discuss issues relating to these topics. Her broadcast and contact information can be found at: http://www.blogtalkradio.com/victory-against-all-odds.

Her tireless efforts as a volunteer earned her several accolades. Recently, she was appointed to the position of chairperson for the African-American Faculty and Staff Organization, which is the largest diversity organization on the campus. She also is the recipient of a scholarship to attend the North Carolina Governor’s Conference for Women in Charlotte, NC. This conference is “a powerful annual convening of more than 1,500 women from across the state for energizing dialogue on a variety of women's issues,” Benton said. (www.ncwomensconference.com).

Benton also was named Garner’s 2011 Professional Woman of the Year by the National Association of Professional Women (NAPW). “My mission is to help people to become empowered with strategic life tools to overcome abuse, rejection, fear, abandonment, and oppression. My hope is to inspire others to stretch their lives to include volunteering for causes that move them. I can’t imagine living life any other way,” she said.

DR. TONDO EARN TWO GRANTS TO HELP SAVE LIVES

By Shelli Mayfield

Dr. Tondo and Dr. Fay Cobb Payton, from the College of Management, are co-principal investigators on a large grant from the National Science Foundation (NSF). It is a two-part grant totaling $291,360. Part one of the grant is an allotment of $252,360 that is to be used to educate and spread awareness about HIV AIDS among black female students on campus. They chose to study black females as their target group because 1.2 million people in the U.S. are living with HIV infection, 46 percent of them are African-American, and a majority of them are women. The researchers are targeting college students because they are most at risk of contracting the disease. They have decided to use Twitter and Facebook as the main mediums for spreading their message because this target group is the biggest users of those social media channels. The researchers first conducted a focus group among some members of the Delta Sigma Theta Sorority at NC State since the sorority focuses on wellness as one of their issues of concern.

The second part of the grant was an allotment $39,000, and it involves comparing the results of the study with a similar study in a rural setting. Since NC State is in an urban setting, Dr. Tondo and Dr. Payton decided to partner with Penn State, which is in a rural setting. The original grant is for a two-year period after which the researchers hope to apply for another grant so they can take the program nationwide.

The second grant Dr. Tondo is working on took him to East Africa last summer. Professor Fred H. M. Semazzi from the Department of Marine, Earth and Atmospheric Sciences was the lead consultant on the research project. The project involved Dr. Tondo and two other NC State faculty as senior consultants and was funded by a grant from the Lake Victoria Basin Commission. Professor Semazzi and Dr. Tondo are from Uganda.

The objective of this research project is to improve safety of navigation on Lake Victoria as well as enhance the efficient exploitation of natural resources on the lake. Lake Victoria is the second largest freshwater lake in the world. About 5,000 people die every year on the lake because of a weather phenomenon that causes sudden violent storms.

The project aims at analyzing the meteorology services, the early warning systems, and the dissemination of information about weather changes in the area. To date, Dr. Tondo’s role in the study has been to design a survey that was administered to local fisherman and other stakeholders. He traveled to the five east African countries to train meteorology officers how to administer the surveys. The data has been collected and has been analyzed. It will help the researchers develop a plan of action for the commission. This effort will help save thousands of lives a year and also help the region promote its natural resources.
In Québec, we call it “pâté chinois.” This dish, whose name could be translated to “Chinese pie,” is composed of a layer of cooked ground meat, topped with a bed of creamy corn and covered with mashed potatoes. Made with love for generations, this weird looking recipe turns out to be a delicate dish in which ingredients blend together perfectly. When they meet, different cultures can also intermingle creating a hybrid, open to the world perspective. That’s what happened in Bob Larson’s Case Studies in Public Relations class this fall.

On the first morning of the semester, three broken English accents distinguished themselves among the American students. Through their participation, Sofie Zeuthen Madsen and Louise Uglit Thomsen, two study abroad students from the Copenhagen Business School in Denmark, added their voices to my French-Canadian accent. Taking advantage of our foreign background, Professor Larson soon included us in his case studies asking us to compare American perspectives with ours.

In the following classes, not only did we learn about communication theories, we also found out more about our international peers. Through COM 346, I learned that Denmark had a fat tax, a surcharge on foods that are high in saturated fat. I also found out that my Danish classmates had never had a quiz including “true or false” and “fill in the blanks” before. Back home, they would rather study for one final exam determining their entire grade. My American companions taught me about campus spirit. I discovered that it was okay to wear red wolf shirts and support the pack, as not many of us would do that for our sports team at l’Université de Montréal. From them, I learned what it is to get involved and be an active part of NC State’s student body. In return, I hope they got a better insight on Canada, a country that often tends to be in the shadow of its southern neighbor.

Just like when it comes to preparing pâté chinois, Professor Larson brought together three ingredients, three cultures, into a single and unique mixture. He provided us with an enriched and multicultural perspective of communications. Through our interactions in his classroom, he created a “cultural pie” to call our own.

DIVYA RAMAMURTHI HELPS CHARGE ECOCAR2 PROJECT

Communication graduate student Divya Ramamurthi did not know anything about cars when she started with the EcoCAR project. She owns a car in Bangalore, India, where she is from, but it was just a convenient form of transportation. Last January, when she started working with the EcoCAR project as part of her assistantship, she had to learn about cars really fast! Ramamurthi’s job includes creating marketing and communication campaigns to increase awareness among the public about sustainable practices and NC State’s participation.

A lot of the information she gains about cars is from the engineers themselves, who live and breathe cars, but do not always consider the communication aspect. In this way, she adds a designer’s and communicator’s perspective to the project that is dominated by engineers.

This semester, Ramamurthi has been part of the EcoCAR2 project with the RADPack (Responsible Automotive Design Pack) in which NC State was one of 15 schools charged with converting a 2013 Chevrolet Malibu (provided by the Department of Energy and General Motors) into a sustainable, show-room ready car.

The outreach factor is quite a large one with the team getting points for hits on its website, social media, PR, and events. Ramamurthi uses the support of her outreach volunteer team who are students from the Department of Communication. Claire Basista, John-Paul Overton, Christopher James Morgan, Anne Purcell and LeChastin Mason form the team that meets weekly to promote the program and sustainable vehicle technologies.

One of the first events that Ramamurthi and her team of volunteers put together was a halloween-themed event for Sustainability Day at NC State on October 28. The team had to design games, prizes and the communication and posters for the event.

To support Ramamurthi and her team's efforts and to support NC State’s participation in this program, you can “like” their Facebook page: http://www.facebook.com/NCSURADpack and follow them on twitter: twitter.com/ncsuradpack
PRSSA FALL SEMESTER BUSY PROMOTING MR. WOLFPACK

By Caroline Perkins

Throughout the past year, the Public Relations Student Society of America (PRSSA) has grown in member participation and will continue to have a large presence on North Carolina State University’s campus. PRSSA works closely with other campus organizations to publicize their events as well as reaching out to the community to publicize local organizations.

With a strong member base and officer leadership, PRSSA has had very successful participation at the meetings this semester. At the end of October, the organization toured the RBC Center where members had the opportunity to hear from the RBC event coordinator about various logistics that go into planning an event at the RBC Center. In addition, members had the opportunity to visit the Carolina Hurricane’s locker room, sit in the press conference and media room, and see a preview of the newly renovated VIP box seating.

“Visiting the RBC Center was a great experience,” said senior Kelly Reiser. “The event planner shared with us stories about events she has planned, and it was really interesting to hear some of the unusual requests that some celebrities have made for a concert event,” said Reiser.

In addition to taking field trips, PRSSA has launched a publicity campaign for the Mr. Wolfpack charity competition, which will be held in February 2012. PRSSA members serve on a committee called The Pack where they will experience using social media, advertising, and marketing skills to help promote the event.

“Promoting Mr. Wolfpack will be a great way for members to put their PR skills to a great use because they are responsible for making this event successful,” said Jackie Small, co-director of The Pack. “Members will be able to discuss their experiences promoting Mr. Wolfpack in future job interviews, so it is definitely rewarding in many ways,” said Small.

Currently, PRSSA event planner Caroline Perkins and chapter members are making preparations for their annual Public Relations Day, which will be held during Communication Week in February, 2012.

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Currently, PRSSA event planner Caroline Perkins and chapter members are making preparations for their annual Public Relations Day, which will be held during Communication Week in February, 2012.

“PR Day is a great way to network with local employees and learn more about the various fields of PR that students may be interested in pursuing after college,” said Perkins. At PR Day, there will be a networking lunch where organizations will have the opportunity to speak one-on-one to students and offer them an insight to their particular job field.

Though the fall 2011 semester is coming to an end, PRSSA will continue its efforts to promote Mr. Wolfpack and looks forward to reaching out to the student body for help with the event.

“The more we can publicize this event, the more the students will enjoy it, and the more recognition we will receive for PRSSA,” said Small. “We have been working very hard to promote this campus activity, so I know it will be great!”

LPE FACULTY NIGHT, RESEARCH FORUM MARK SEMESTER SUCCESS

By Brittany Waddell

Lambda Pi Eta, the communication honors society comprised of undergraduates with a sincere interest in communication research, got off to a busy start this semester. Three meetings have been held, including two of LPE’s biggest events. Under the guidance of faculty advisors Dr. Kami Kosenko and Dr. Elizabeth Craig, the society has had good attendance at meetings and participation in events.

On October 4 the organization sponsored its annual Faculty Night at which several faculty members addressed their personal research interests. The event gave faculty and students an opportunity to meet and make connections for possible joint research.

The organization held its Undergraduate Research Forum on October 25. During the meeting, students presented completed research projects. Students Emily Ford, Sara Cook, Andrea Fix, Kelly Reiser, and Adam Hughes all gave presentations that summarized their research. Several students still in the research process gave details on their research status.

Later in the semester the organization held its induction ceremony for new members. LPE is also developing a presentation titled, “How to Do Graduate School” to help students who aspire to further formal education. LPE President Adam Hughes is leading this effort.
ALUMNI NEWS

ALUMNUS JACOB HERRIN STARTS A NEW CHAPTER IN LIFE

By William Kaylor

One day you’re a freshman ready to take on the life of a college student and then, before you know it, you’re graduating from college to take on the real world. It can be a scary thought for many, but for alumnus Jacob Herrin, the transition from college to career went smoothly.

Herrin graduated from NC State in 2007 as a communication major and has been busy ever since. The career spark for him came while visiting the SEE Expo where he became inspired. The SEE Expo is the Southern Energy and Environment Expo. It is a three-day event of education, interaction, and celebration focused on energy, the environment, and the economy.

He then moved to Boone, North Carolina, where he earned a Master’s of Science from Appalachian State University’s (ASU) Appropriate Technology Program. He focused on renewable energy technologies, such as solar thermal, photovoltaics, wind, microhydro, and biofuels. He also did research in utilizing a biodiesel production co-product called crude glycerin.

While at ASU, Herrin also participated in algae research and competed in an EPA event as the student lead. He had the chance to go to Taiwan and attend a workshop at Ching Yun University. This past spring Herrin taught a senior level class and accepted a paid internship at National Renewable Energy Corporation in Charlotte, North Carolina. He finished graduate school in only one and a half years while also interning at the SEE Expo.

“I think one of our society’s biggest problems is that we are disconnected from nature, our energy sources (food, fuel, etc), and ourselves. I love interacting with the world, my neighbors, and my own self,” said Herrin about his experience. Herrin also found some new hobbies while living in Boone which included running and camping. Those hobbies stemmed from his childhood years. Herrin said he owes his love of the outdoors and sense of environmental responsibility to his parents. They were always encouraging him to play outside, compost, and recycle while he was growing up.

“I was interested in communication because it offered the chance to receive a well-rounded education,” Herrin said. Professor Jessica Jameson was influential in his growth. “She exposed us to leadership, including civil and societal leadership and service in the form of nonprofits — which are now trending towards sustainable administrative practices,” he said.

Herrin’s experiences demonstrate that students may not go where they were expecting to go, but along the way they will find out what truly inspires them.

ZACH BECHTEL LIVES HIS DREAM IN ‘THE BIG APPLE’

By Rebecca Teich

Growing up in Cary, N.C., Zach Bechtel’s life-long dream was to live in New York City. In 2009, he graduated from NC State with a degree in communication and a minor in journalism. He began working at WRAL-TV his junior year and continued to work there after graduation. In January 2010, he decided to drop everything, take a chance, and move to the Big Apple.

In March, he landed a job with the NBC Page Program, stating that he “got lucky on the job search.” The NBC Page Program began in 1933, and selection is highly competitive. The yearlong program serves as a stepping-stone to an entry-level job with the company. During his time in the program, he had the opportunity to explore different departments of the company – ranging from marketing, to communications, to production. His luck continued when he spent three months on assignment at Saturday Night Live.

However, the Page position was a one-year job. By reaching out to a colleague, Zach got an interview for a position and he was hired. In March 2011, he began working as a New Media Coordinator at NBCUniversal in the Talent Acquisition Department.

This position supports the staffing function of the entire company. Zach is responsible for developing recruiting strategies using social media. He manages and produces the content for the department’s Twitter (@NBCUniCareers) and Facebook accounts. In addition, he supports the Director of Executive Recruitment. His favorite parts of the job are the people and the work environment. Working around the studios in 30 Rock, there is an interesting story to tell every day. Although NBCUniversal is a huge company, “I know this sounds like a cliché, but we’re all family,” he said.
TONY CAPRA MONITORS PULSE OF NATIONAL NEWS

By Kalley Miller

Tony Capra, a 1987 Department of Communication graduate, is the Senior Assignment Manager at NBC News Washington and his name is nationally recognized. Capra’s responsibilities include managing the NBC News Washington Assignment Desk and coordinating Washington coverage for the Today Show, Nightly News, msnbc.com, and NBC News Specials.

In addition to his duties on the Washington Desk, Capra has covered presidential campaigns, primetime press conferences and major national events. He has also traveled the globe covering presidents and other administration officials. His work for NBC earned him an Emmy in 2005. Capra’s talents were further recognized when he received the Edward R. Murrow award for his outstanding achievements in electronic journalism.

Capra advises students to obtain “internships because most companies look for graduates with experience in the field.” Capra also advises students to take business and economic classes because he found them to be “extremely helpful for economics, reporting and budgeting.” He also noted that leadership and organizational skills are indispensable.

He learned about leadership early as a student at NC State. As the president of Delta Upsilon, DU won the Caldwell Cup for the fraternity’s abilities in standards, intramurals and academics. Another one of his favorite memories as a student was attending football and basketball games with his future wife.

Capra looks beyond his award-winning career to the new opportunities he will encounter and wants to help others recognize their potential to reach success.

FORMER PARK SCHOLAR BATTLES CHRONIC LYME DISEASE

By Kathleen Beaver

NC State's Park Scholarships program is based on outstanding accomplishments and potential in scholarship, leadership, service, and character. Former Park Scholar Pete Smith exemplifies the meaning behind the program.

Shortly after he began his sophomore year at NC State, Smith was handed an opportunity to a summer internship with the National Football League’s Headquarters in New York City.

With plans of returning to NC State after the internship, Smith was offered a more permanent position with the NFL in the Football Operations Department.

“I quickly discovered that it was really where I wanted to be,” said Smith. I was dealing directly with the teams, owners and enjoyed tons of travel to games and meetings. My boss gave me total freedom. He allowed me to create and install initiatives as acting director of Game Operations, a division of Football Operations, for multiple projects without anyone outside of the organization even knowing it. I just ran with it and found myself presenting my projects to the whole league — once to nearly 1,000 college and NFL athletic trainers. My initiatives are still being used by the League today.”

As an official employee of the NFL, Smith realized that his dreams of graduating college were beginning to blur, and he was losing focus on his goal of earning a degree.

He had a great opportunity and exposure to business, which he loved. He applied to and was accepted by Harvard, and later graduated with highest honors in 2007. Smith completed his last semester in a study abroad program in Fiji, and from there began traveling the world with a carefree attitude.

“Fiji was unbelievable and changed my perspective on everything: living, family, what is truly important to me. The Fijian people were so inviting. It was incredible, and it really whet my appetite for more travel,” said Smith, who after Fiji took off alone to trek through New Zealand, Mali and Ghana, West Africa, and Thailand and Hong Kong.

Living the life he had always imagined, Smith’s world came crashing down in early 2009. Feeling exhausted and in severe pain, Smith collapsed at work, and his life of play and travel screeched to a halt.

Pete Smith speaking at a Lyme Disease Awareness event.

Pete Smith, cont. page 11
Smith Battles Chronic Lyme Disease

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After months of testing, Smith eventually learned that he was suffering from Chronic Lyme disease, a crippling disease with symptoms often including cognitive dysfunction, hallucinations, memory loss, severe bone and joint pain, insomnia, and constant headaches. Lyme disease is commonly misdiagnosed for other disorders such as fibromyalgia, Chronic Fatigue Syndrome, Lupus, and ALS.

“It took me a while to discover I had Lyme disease. Searching for a diagnosis, I saw about 13 doctors and each doctor would say it ‘Oh, it’s definitely not Lyme disease.’ It just so happens, the co-worker that saw me black-out had first-hand experience with the disease. His mother was suffering with Lyme disease and recommended I get tested,” said Smith. “Though the tests are notoriously inaccurate, I tested positive and received the clinical diagnosis of Chronic Lyme from a Lyme-literate physician. In the meantime, I learned the true politics suffocating this already nebulous disease.”

So, why is Chronic Lyme disease going undiagnosed and ignored by the medical community? Smith is on a personal crusade to expose the politics behind Lyme disease and the backlash received by thousands of people suffering from Lyme. “Part of it is the Infectious Disease Society of America incorrectly stating that Lyme doesn’t exist in a chronic form, mostly due to the significant conflicts of interests they have, to the point of even being on the payrolls of pharmaceutical and insurance companies. These companies don’t want to pay for the long term care and treatment of Chronic Lyme,” said Smith.

With the absence of insurance companies within the Lyme treatment process, treating Chronic Lyme disease has become highly, often prohibitively, expensive. To overcome this obstacle, Smith has started a group to promote awareness of chronic Lyme disease and helps offset the costs of his treatment by selling t-shirts through his website (www.lymedesignsbypete.com) and helping to organize other projects and fundraisers.

“I thought, ‘How am I going to afford this?’ A single doctor’s visit was $800 and an IV treatment for a month was about $2,000; I had to do 13 months of IVs. What started out as a simple Facebook group, ‘Help Pete Smith Beat Lyme Disease,’ has grown into a full-blown awareness group approaching non-profit status. I’ve gone to rallies and even started a local support group,” said Smith.

Upon losing everything in Boston and returning home to be cared for by his family, Smith briefly tried to return to NC State and take Mindy Sopher’s COM 466 Nonprofit Leadership and Development class as a Post-Baccalaureate Studies student to develop his skills, but he was too ill to participate as a student. Last year, however, the COM 466 class helped him further establish his new group and align it to achieve non-profit status with a more focused, polished mission, reaching beyond himself to offer support and help to all sufferers of this debilitating disease.

Even as he fights Chronic Lyme disease, the future looks bright for Smith as he expresses his plans for the coming years. “First and foremost, I want to be healthy. I then want to get to a point where we’re really making a difference with the non-profit group. Whether that is through raising awareness or by opening a center where people could stay when they are getting treatment is unclear,” said Smith. “What is clear is that I will be working directly with people to help them through this quagmire, hoping, of course, to keep travel and non-profit projects at the forefront of my life.”

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