Reading educators receive grants for their students

Two Western Illinois University Department of Curriculum and Instruction (C & I) graduate students and two alumnae of the program were awarded grants while they were enrolled in the C & I Program Fall 2013.

According to C & I Professor Sara Simonson MS-Ed, Kelsey Bower M.S. ‘13, Sarah Brauhn M.S. ‘13, Candy Berquam and Maggie Hyde—all studying in the department’s reading program—received grants they will use to help students in their school districts and classrooms.

Simonson said for accreditation purposes, graduate students in her Reading Specialist K-12 program are required to write and submit a grant, which is a project for the class 588 level course, “Leadership in Reading.”

“These dedicated and hard-working teachers are deserving of recognition and the reward of classroom literacy materials,” Simonson said. “Their students are first and foremost in their minds as they create literacy communities within their classroom walls. I’m proud of their diligence and tireless efforts as they work to improve their teaching practices.”

Bower (Davenport, IA), a first grade teacher in North Scott Community School District, received $40,000 from Scott County Regional Authority, plus a matching gift of $30,000 from her school district (for a grand total of $70,000), for her project, “Classroom Libraries.” Bower will use the grant award to purchase a variety of engaging and high interest books for libraries in all K-6 classrooms in her district.

Brauhn (Madison, WI) is a literacy coach at Black Hawk Middle School in the Madison (WI) Metropolitan School District. She received a $4,000 award from the Lodewick Partner School Network at the University of Wisconsin School of Education for her project, “Middle School Literacy Collaboration, Common Core and School Improvement.” This grant will fund Brauhn’s.

Friends of Horn: Working together to honor and advance Horn Field Campus

It was in 2009 that a few members of the Western Illinois University community came together to serve a place they hold near and dear to their hearts—Horn Field Campus. Horn, as it is affectionately referred to by many, is one of the University’s outdoor educational facilities situated south of Western’s Macomb campus on 92-acres. Those acres were donated to the University almost 50 years ago, and the location is one that has inspired hundreds of students, faculty members and community members.

While it is administered through the Department of Recreation, Park and Tourism Administration (RPTA), Horn Field Campus (HFC) has been part of many WIU students’ experiences. Through its natural beauty, its team-building activities, leadership-development offerings and the “stuff memories are made of” events and activities, such as the annual Corn Maze, the Haunted Maze, outdoor skills seminars, conservation workshops, staff retreats ... the list goes on, Horn has provided a place where people can learn more about themselves and test their physical limits.

According to HFC Program Manager Mindy Pheiffer ’91 M.S. ’92, this group came together five years ago and created the “Friends of Horn” Leadership Team to honor the history of HFC and extend the reach of Horn by generating ideas, finding resources, and providing support of various kinds.

Past and Future Convene in Yearlong Celebration of HFC

Lon Alderman ’88 M.S. ’03—who earned both his undergraduate and graduate degrees in RPTA—served as the first HFC program coordinator at Western. Nearly 21 years ago, he spearheaded the concerted effort to define the mission, purpose and core values that shape HFC.

“I was there when the RPTA department was able to start it in a direction that would offer programming. Basically, I arrived in 1993 with a blank slate. So, with former College of Education and Human Services Dean Nick DiGrino [who also served as RPTA chair and professor from 1986-2004], RPTA Professor Frank Lupton (now Emeritus) and Mike McGowan (RPTA professor and graduate coordinator), we had big dreams of where we might be able to take Horn Field Campus,” Alderman noted.

While the words may have changed over the past few decades, the overall theme continues: To facilitate environmental responsibility and human development within the core values of compassion, community, growth and education.

Alderman also led the Friends of Horn Leadership Team when it began five years ago. He, along with Caryn Elm ’07, Jim Miner ’72 M.S. ’73, Mitchell Standard ’88, Karen Peitzmeier ’88, Emily Schoenfelder M.S. ’11 and Christi Reed (graduate assistant in the College Student Personnel Program), as well as RPTA faculty members Michael McGowan and Rob Porter, served as the charter members of the team.

Alderman’s own group’s mission gained momentum, Kelley Ashby M.S. ’00 agreed to step in and take the helm. Under her leadership, the group formalized strategic planning goals, which included facilities development, marketing and fundraising objectives.

To achieve these goals, the Friends of Horn Leadership Team, Pheiffer and faculty and staff in the College of Education and Human Services are planning a yearlong celebration that commemorates half a century of HFC as part of Western Illinois University. An objective in the plan to celebrate HFC is to raise money for an outdoor education building, which is sorely needed to continue to expand the program offerings to the region, Pheiffer said. “The kick-off event for the celebration is set for Saturday, Sept. 27, 2014 at Horn Field Campus,” Pheiffer added. “As plans become more concrete, we’ll publicize details about events and activities that will occur during the year-long campaign.”

Current members of the leadership team include Stan Abbot ’94, M.S. ’96, Ashby, Elm, Alex Fuller ’05 M.S. ’07, Dale Maxson ’08 M.S. ’10, Tom Miller ’87 M.S. ’11, Rachel Feltman Murray ’13, Peitzmeier, Dominica Rogers M.S. ’08, Brian Sprinkle ’12, as well as Porter, McGowan, RPTA Professor Katharine Pawelko, and RPTA Graduate Assistant Allen Rudicil ’13.

Fuller, who earned his master’s degree in RPTA and served as a graduate assistant at HFC, said his involvement with the Friends of Horn Leadership Team was inspired by his service there as a student.

“I gave so much of my time to Horn Field Campus as an undergraduate and graduate student that, upon leaving Western, a big part of me still cared very deeply about Horn Field Campus. I want to be part of its future,” he noted. “HFC is one of the great hidden gems of WIU, and every department, every classroom and every student—really anyone—can gain something new from it.”

Although not an alumnus of the RPTA department, Miller (who majored in agriculture) also has an affinity for Horn Field Campus. As a manager in the Peoria (IL) Park District, his work led him to serve on Friends of Horn Leadership Team.

“This group has allowed me to interact with WIU faculty and students in a personal and professional
An inspiration to many: Remembering Julia L. Johnson

By Teresa Koltzenburg ’92 M.S. ’11

It was Julia Johnson ’89 MS-Ed ’92 who inspired Patricia “Patty” Feierberg ’01 M.A. ’07 to attend Western. Although more than a decade apart in age, the two had a strong connection, initially, through one of Feierberg’s older sisters (who was a good friend of Johnson’s growing up) and eventually through their own friendship and their Western Illinois University alma mater.

Late last autumn, Feierberg sent a note to the Alumni Association to share the sad news of Johnson’s untimely passing.

“I regretfully must inform you that Julia Johnson died on August 1, 2013. There are many reasons why this passing is so tragic. I’d like your help in letting other alumni and the Macomb community know. She was very well known across campus and the town,” Feierberg wrote.

Determined, Dedicated, Dynamic… Johnon’s Legacy

Johnson earned her bachelor’s degree in psychology, as well as her master’s degree in counseling and guidance, from Western. The 1989 edition of Western’s yearbook, “The Sequel,” identifies some of Johnson’s undergraduate activities as, “Hall Government, Swasso and College of Arts and Sciences Student Council.”

It was on a trip to see Johnson that Feierberg was first introduced to the WIU campus.

“Her mother and I drove down to Macomb together to visit Julia, and I was just so inspired by everything she had been accomplishing, as well as the campus. I found myself thinking, ‘Hey, this could be my future,’” Feierberg explained. “It was a big leap for me, because, at that point, going to college wasn’t necessarily something I was considering.”

In her note, Feierberg talked of her friend’s time at WIU and what a special place Johnson held not only in her family members’ hearts, but also of her impact across campus during the time she was at Western.

“Julia Johnson was born in 1966 to Irving and Shalla Johnson of Rockford, Illinois, where she lived for the first 20 years of her life,” Feierberg wrote. “She was born with a degenerative eye disease and underwent 13 eye surgeries during her life to save what sight she had until becoming legally blind. But this never slowed her down! Julia was an excellent student. After high school, she went to Rock Valley College for two years. She transferred to Western Illinois University, where she eventually earned a master’s degree in counseling. At WIU, Julia had found her professional calling and her home. She was very well known across campus for her dynamic personality and dedication to her education. Watching Julia study at the library was truly amazing! Although studying took her twice as long as the typical student, she never complained and never let her disability stop her. The University made a commitment to Julia by enlarging her texts and supporting her with computerized tests, sound signals, etc,—a new concept in the 1980s. She inspired many throughout campus.”

In a follow-up conversation about her friend, Feierberg—who earned her bachelor’s degree in history and her master’s degree in political science and now works at the Oak Park (IL) School District—said a bit more of Johnson’s story. After graduating from Western in 1992, Johnson worked at the Youth Service Bureau in Ottawa (IL). She eventually was the individual in charge of the juvenile sex offender program there.

“She counseled both the offenders and the victims, and many times, she was asked to provide her findings in court. She became extremely successful in her career,” Feierberg noted. “She had to manage and balance some pretty heavy situations. People came from all around to seek her expertise after a while.”

In addition to her work in the counseling field, with the help of her brother, Greg Johnson, she started a website for those who suffered from visual impairments. (The website is no longer in operation.) And while she was at Western and after she left, Johnson was often referred to as the “Cookie Lady.”

“At Christmas, she would bake hundreds and hundreds of cookies to give away. Over the years, it amounted to thousands of cookies,” Feierberg added. “She had an amazing sense of humor, and I was always so impressed with her determination. She never let anything stop her.”

At the time of her death, Johnson was living in Spring Lake Park (MN) with her partner, Bruce Erickson. Her obituary can be found online at legacy.com/obituaries/startribune/obituary.aspx?page=lifestory&pid=166249270.

Kilmer named College of Education and Human Services interim assistant dean at WIU-QC

Lloyd Kilmer has been named interim assistant dean in the College of Education and Human Services (COEHS) at Western Illinois University-Quad Cities (WIU-QC), according to COEHS Dean Sterling Saddler.

“We are excited to have a college-level academic leader at the WIU-QC campus,” Saddler said. “Lloyd’s prior experiences and his professional connections to the Quad Cities’ communities complement the college’s goals of access for students, technology, research and service. We look forward to having him on the dean’s office team.”

Kilmer has served as a faculty member in the WIU Department of Educational Leadership since 2005. During his time at Western, he has taught courses in the graduate administration preparation and doctoral programs; developed online and distance learning opportunities; designed new courses and research processes for the doctoral program and chaired and served on students’ doctoral dissertation committees.

Prior to coming to Western, Kilmer worked as an independent school consultant for the Mississippi Bend Area Education Agency in Bettendorf (IA); served as the chair of the education and psychology department as Avila University in Kansas City (MO); was an assistant professor at Northwest Missouri State University in Maryville (MO) and served as the principal and district curriculum director at Arlington High School in Arlington (NE). In his career in education, he has also served as an assistant principal (high school), an English department chair (high school) and as an English teacher.

Kilmer holds an administrative and supervisory certificate in Nebraska (endorsements for K-12 superintendent, 7-12 principal), as well as an Iowa conditional license (for 7-12 English/language arts and 7-12 principal). He is a member of the Illinois Council of Professors of Educational Administration, National Council of Professors of Educational Administration and the American Association of School Administrators.

Kilmer earned his doctorate from the University of Nebraska-Lincoln, his master’s degree from the University of Kansas-Lawrence and his bachelor’s degree from the University of Nebraska-Lincoln.

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partnership. I have worked in environmental education for 26 years, the last nine with the Peoria Park District at Sommer Park. I definitely see how my background can enhance the wonderful opportunities that exist in this hidden jewel at WIU. Sommer Park and HFC are alike in many ways, and it’s great to see that each has provided outdoor education to thousands of students for almost 50 years,” he said.

For alumni interested in staying involved in the ongoing life of Western, Pheiffer said there are many ways to engage with Horn Field Campus, the RPTA department and with the University. In addition to being involved in the Horn Field Campus yearlong celebration, interested alumni can also be involved in the RPTA Professional Development Conference. Scheduled for Thursday-Friday, April 10-11, the annual event celebrates and honors the RPTA department culture and provides a venue to bestow the annual department awards and recognize student, alumni and faculty accomplishments. It also features alumni presentations that enhance student learning and social events that provide opportunities for professional connections. Interested individuals can register by visiting wiu.edu/rpta.

For more information about ways to get involved with the yearlong celebration of HFC, contact Pheiffer at (309) 833-5798 or MJ-Pheiffer@wiu.edu