

# VCU Psychology Department

NEWSLETTER  
December 2010

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Chair

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Director,  
Graduate Studies

**Linda Zyzniewski**  
Director,  
Undergrad. Studies

**Dorothy Fillmore**  
Associate Director for  
Academic Operations

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**Marilyn Stern**  
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**Eric Benotsch**  
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## LETTER FROM THE CHAIR

DR. WENDY KLIEWER

Greetings from [VCU Psychology!](#)

We are excited to launch this newsletter, which is part of a communications effort I initiated when I became chair in July. We hope to distribute this newsletter quarterly to alumni, former and current faculty, current students and friends of the department as a way of letting you know about all of the exciting things happening along the 800 block of West Franklin Street.

First, I am delighted to report that our level of support from grants and contracts has increased markedly. In fiscal year 2010, we received \$6.2 million in grants and contracts, which is double from merely five years ago. More than half of our grant and contract support was from the National Institutes of Health (NIH). This is particularly impressive because funding from NIH has decreased in recent years and the number of our tenure-track faculty has remained relatively constant.

Grants and contracts are critical to our department and the university because they fund the important scientific discoveries our faculty and students are making, provide support for graduate students, provide opportunities for undergraduate students to be exposed to and participate in research and provide resources to fund services to individuals in the community, such as parenting programs in correctional institutions, mentoring in juvenile detention facilities and psychological assessment and

therapy to patients in primary care at the VCU Medical Center. This year, we will feature specific research projects in the e-newsletter so you can share in the excitement of what is happening on campus.

Second, we continue to educate more doctoral students than any other program in the university, with 125 students in our Ph.D. programs. Doctoral programs are important at VCU because they help us retain our status as a Carnegie Research University with High Research activity. [Dr. Michael Southam-Gerow](#) agreed to direct the graduate program when I became chair and is doing a great job in this important role. In 2008, our new doctoral program in health psychology was approved (see the [article](#) on p.6), and we were fortunate to hire [Dr. Eric Benotsch](#) to lead that program in 2009. Our first cohort of students entered the program this fall.

Third, we serve one of the largest numbers of undergraduates in the university, with more than 1,500 majors. Our undergraduates are in good hands with [Dr. Linda Zyzniewski](#) directing our undergraduate program, Dorothy Fillmore overseeing academic operations and Katharine Stoddard, new to our faculty this year, overseeing our advising center. This year, Stoddard is leading an effort to develop Discovery 101 – a one-unit online course designed to introduce sophomores to the psychology major. We are working to augment opportunities for un-

dergraduates to participate in research internships, fieldwork placements and service-learning courses.

Other exciting activities in the department this year include our continuing work with veterans (see the [article](#) on p.3), our focus on international research, our large presence in the community, including services we provide at our [Center for Psychological Services and Development](#), and research we conduct in community- and school-based settings. In addition, we just received the exciting news that our [Clark-Hill Institute for Positive Youth Development](#) was awarded a \$6.5 million grant from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention to continue their work in achieving a multi-faceted approach for youth violence prevention in our communities (see [page 2](#)). Further, we are in the process of recruiting faculty to join our health psychology and clinical psychology programs.

As you read through this newsletter, we invite your comments and would love to know what is happening with you.

Wishing you a great year,

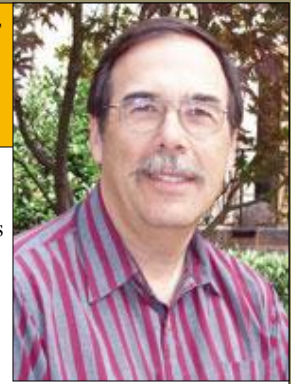
[Wendy Kliever](#)  
Chair of Psychology



## VCU CLARK-HILL INSTITUTE FOR POSITIVE YOUTH DEVELOPMENT RECEIVES \$6.5 MILLION GRANT

DR. AL FARRELL

*Courtesy of VCU News Center*



The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention awarded a \$6.5 million grant to Virginia Commonwealth University's [Clark-Hill Institute for Positive Youth Development](#) to work with the City of Richmond and Richmond Public Schools on a comprehensive approach to reduce youth violence in Richmond.

The five-year grant will be used to develop and evaluate a youth violence prevention model that has the potential for being implemented nationwide, according to [Dr. Albert Farrell](#), psychology professor and director of the institute, which is part of the VCU [Department of Psychology](#). The VCU program is one of four university programs nationally to receive this CDC funding.

"This funding allows us to continue our work as a [national academic center of](#)

[excellence in youth violence prevention](#) — one of only six currently funded by the CDC—and we will use our resources to evaluate and improve the quality and quantity of programs offered in the community," Farrell said.

The three major components of the program involve community, school and family.

"This particular grant provides us with an exciting opportunity to work with our existing partners in shaping research and intervention possibilities," said [Dr. Kevin Allison](#), professor of psychology and associate dean for community activities at the [College of Humanities and Sciences](#).

The grant was announced during a Dec. 1 celebration with community partners at VCU's Scott House.

"We are excited about this grant and the opportunity it provides to further our goals of having full community involvement in the positive development of our children and youth," said Richmond Mayor Dwight C. Jones. "The efforts of the Clark-Hill Institute are to be commended and we are in full support and in partnership with them in the outstanding work that will be unfolding in our community over the next five years."

Click [HERE](#) to read the rest of the press release.



*Courtesy of VCU News Center*

## PSYCHOLOGISTS IN PRIMARY CARE

DR. BRUCE RYBARCZYK

The Department of Psychology has received two grants to expand mental health services to the uninsured and underserved.

A one-year, \$54,000 Health Safety Net grant from the [Virginia Health Care Foundation](#) supports a doctoral program project that provides mental health care to uninsured and underserved people in the Richmond metropolitan area. An additional two years of funding through the grant is possible, raising the total grant amount to \$120,000. Matching funds from VCU's Virginia Coordinated Care for the Uninsured program are supporting the effort.

A second \$390,000 grant was obtained from the federal [Health Resources and Services Administration](#) to expand the

“IT’S A HUGE STEP FORWARD IN HELPING US TO BECOME THE BEST ACADEMIC AMBULATORY CARE EXPERIENCE IN THE COUNTRY.”

training aspects of the project. This grant provides stipends for three doctoral students per year, offers training opportunities for as many as 45 doctoral students over three years, adds faculty members

from the departments of psychiatry, pediatrics and pharmacy to assist in the training and expands the settings to include pediatric and adolescent primary care training. The HRSA grant provides \$130,000 each year over the next three years.

"The Health Resources and Services Administration focuses on both primary care and underserved populations," said [Dr. Bruce Rybarczyk](#), associate professor in Psychology. "It is their hope that students trained through this program will ultimately take jobs in primary care and other settings that meet the needs of underserved populations."

Click [HERE](#) to read the rest of the press release.

## SUPPORTING VETERANS: THE LIFE SKILLS CENTER

DR. STEVEN DANISH

2 million U.S. Service members have served in either Afghanistan (OEF – Operation Enduring Freedom) and/or Iraq (OIF – Operation Iraqi Freedom), with 800,000 of them serving more than once (Tan, 2009). 740,000 veterans of all wars live in Virginia, giving our state the proud distinction of being home to six of the top 10 U.S. cities in veteran concentration per capita. In contrast to previous wars, OEF and OIF Service members are all volunteers. As a result, these particular Service members, although appreciated by the public for their sacrifice, are often misunderstood and feel separate from their communities, and sometimes even their families, when they return.

When the media writes about Service members, the focus is most often on those who have returned with post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD) or traumatic brain injuries (TBI) because they are among the most damaging war injuries. Although these combat-related injuries can be debilitating, researchers report more Service members return home having difficulty reintegrating into their families, jobs and communities. It is these often-overlooked individuals with reintegration difficulties who have been the major focus of our [Life Skills Center](#) programs.

The Life Skills Center has as its mission to develop, implement, and evaluate programs for individuals and families. With regard to the military, the Center seeks to promote well-being for Service members and their families. Toward this end, we have developed four projects in collaboration with military organizations and the [Richmond area VA](#).

Dr. Treven Pickett, the associate chief and supervisory clinical psychologist at the Richmond VA, and I have developed and taught a course for Psychology doc-

toral students, VA interns, and postdoctoral fellows. The course is designed to teach participants about military culture; enhance understanding about the physical and psychological injuries experienced by Service members and the difficulties they and their families face upon return; and give instruction on the various interventions designed to alleviate these problems. As a result, we have observed that many psychologists in the community and other mental health providers who work at community service boards lack this basic information, yet are seeing an increasing number of Service members and their families. We have developed a survey to assess providers' knowledge and interest in receiving continuing education in this area. If such education is warranted from our survey results, we will aim to develop online courses to reduce this critical training deficit.

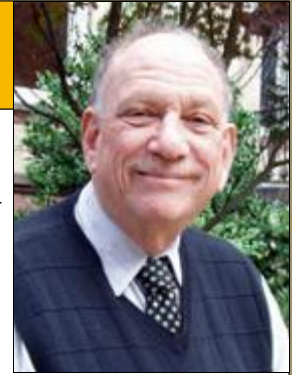


Suicide is a serious problem in the military. From January through Nov. 25, 2009, 334 military personnel, both active-duty and inactive forces, committed suicide. Astonishingly, this number exceeded the total number of combat deaths in Afghanistan (297) and Iraq (144) for the same time period. Moreover, the Army reported 1,713 known *attempted* suicides during the same period. To further add to these dismal numbers, the Army National Guard reported 76 suicides from January through Sept. 23 of 2010; almost half of these soldiers had never been deployed. The Army National Guard Readiness Center in Arlington asked for our help. It is important to remember that National

Guard soldiers drill one week-end a month and two weeks during the summer when they are not deployed. The rest of the time they lead civilian lives with nonmilitary jobs, mortgages, and families. The Readiness Center sought a psychological first aid model and a corresponding training program. U.S. Army Capt. Brad Antonides is a second-year doctoral student with VCU Psychology who has been deployed twice to Iraq and is still in the Reserves. He and I worked together to develop a survey for both the soldier and his or her squad leader to complete based on the three basic psychological needs identified in Self Determination Theory— autonomy, competence and relatedness. We are currently working to pilot-test its effectiveness.

Another National Guard project we are working on focuses on the difficulty Guard members often have in reintegrating into their families. We have designed a pre-deployment intervention to prevent problems upon return and reintegration. All Service members want to see their work as meaningful and important. There are hundreds of thousands of veterans who have indeed found their service experiences to be meaningful and valuable, and it is important that these experiences are validated by others upon their return to civilian life. If returning home elicits a sense of boredom, ambiguity, isolation, powerlessness or lack of meaning in their lives, reintegration will likely be difficult and could cause other problems such as substance abuse and/or depression.

*(Continued on Page 9)*



Psychology is proud to announce that our department chair, [Dr. Wendy Kliever](#) (see [Page 1](#)), and a [counseling program](#) graduate student, HaNa Kim, are recipients of the prestigious Fulbright scholarship. The Fulbright Program, America's flagship international educational exchange program, is sponsored by the U.S. Department of State's Bureau of Educational and Cultural Affairs. Recipients of Fulbright awards are selected on the basis of academic or professional achievement as well as demonstrated leadership potential in their fields.



HaNa Kim is nearing completion of her doctorate in counseling psychology.

Recipients of Fulbright awards are selected on the basis of academic or professional achievement as well as demonstrated leadership potential in their fields.

Kliever has been awarded a Fulbright Scholarship to spend January through June in Durban, South Africa, at the [University of KwaZulu Natal](#) (UKZN). She will work with UKZN faculty and students on a study of caregiver perceptions of the challenges facing adolescents and messages caregivers

convey to their adolescent children regarding coping with violence, alcohol and drug use and sexual risk-taking behavior.

"I am very excited about this opportunity to live and work in Durban, South Africa, with colleagues from the University of KwaZulu-Natal,"



Kliever said. "This opportunity to extend the NIH-funded research I have conducted at VCU on violence, parenting and drug use to South Africa is a dream come true for me."

HaNa Kim, who is nearing completion of her doctorate in counseling psychology, will be examining self-concept in South Korean adolescent cancer survivors. Building on work she has done in the United States, Kim wants to look at differences that might result from cultural distinctions. Kim is originally from St. Petersburg, Fla.

We congratulate Kliever and Kim and are proud to call them two of our own!

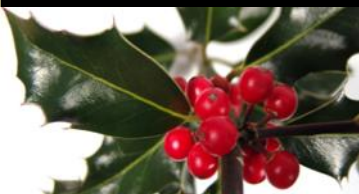
*Jennifer Elswick*

**DID YOU KNOW  
THAT YOU CAN  
SUPPORT  
*VCU PSYCHOLOGY*  
IN HONOR OF A  
FRIEND OR  
FAMILY MEMBER'S  
SPECIAL  
OCCASION?**

**CLICK [HERE](#) FOR  
MORE DETAILS.**



On Sept. 30, we honored a cherished employee, [Mary Ann Ryan](#), as she headed into retirement after 11 years in Psychology. Mary Ann has been assistant to the chair for [Ey Worthington](#), [Scott Vrana](#) (pictured in background) and briefly for [Wendy Kliever](#). Though we wish her well in the next chapter of her life, her charisma and energy will be missed by all who so greatly benefitted from working alongside her.



## NEW DOCTORAL PROGRAM IN HEALTH PSYCHOLOGY

DR. ERIC BENOTSCH

At the beginning of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, the average life expectancy in the United States was 49. Many people died in infancy, and the leading causes of death included influenza, pneumonia, tuberculosis, gastroenteritis and diphtheria.

Since that time, advances in medicine and public health have reduced infant mortality and dramatically increased lifespan. Today, the average life expectancy in the United States is 78. Although infectious diseases still take a heavy toll in the developing world, the aging population in developed countries increasingly succumbs to diseases with significant lifestyle components such as heart disease, cancer, stroke and diabetes. These conditions have roots in biology - genes are important - but behavioral choices play a crucial role: smoking, excessive alcohol consumption, unhealthy eating and physical inactivity are among the factors that lead to these health problems. These conditions also tend to be chronic rather than acute. A person who died of gastroenteritis in 1900 may have only been ill for a brief period, but a person with heart disease today may have to cope with illness for years or even decades.

Health psychology is a relatively new field that focuses on how people stay healthy, why they become ill and how they manage their illness when they are ill. It also explores interactions between patients and the healthcare system. The field is organized around the *biopsychosocial model*, which recognizes that a person's physical and mental health are influenced by biological processes, psychological factors and the social and cultural context in which they live.

Examples of questions explored by health psychologists include:

*Why do people choose to smoke even though they know it is bad for them?*

*How does differential access to healthcare impact life expectancy in different socioeconomic groups?*

*What is the influence of peers on the initiation of substance use in adolescents?*

*How can we motivate people to stay physically active?*

*What are the best approaches to help a person with diabetes adhere to dietary recommendations?*

*How does personality influence health?*

*Which aspects of the patient-physician relationship influence patient adherence to medical regimens?*

*How does social support help (or hinder) a person with a chronic disease?*

For many years, faculty and students in the VCU psychology department have investigated questions such as these, but VCU has never offered a [degree in health psychology](#) - until now.

Because of this longstanding interest in health, the psychology department has started a new doctoral-training program in health psychology. This is a research-focused rather than clinically focused degree. Students entering this program will take courses in areas such as statistics, research methods, ethics, epidemiology and various aspects of health psychology and health policy. Students will also maintain an active research program, beginning with working on a mentor's project and ultimately independent work through the completion of master's theses and dissertation research projects. It is a four-year program for someone entering without a master's degree. The program is intended to train future researchers and scholars. We anticipate that graduates will find employment in academic and government settings. The health program currently has two full-time faculty and 10 affiliate faculty from each of the other psychology doctoral training programs and from the MCV Campus. The department will hire two additional faculty members to join the program in August 2011.

The program's first class of students began this last fall. We are accepting student applications for 2011 (deadline Jan. 10).



### Introducing the first graduate students in the new health psychology doctoral program!

(left to right): Amy Ganuelas, Michell Pope, Jasmine Abrams



Though our web address has changed, our “bricks and mortar” address remains the same!

**White House  
806 W. Franklin St.**

## ATTENTION ALUMS!

Please send the newsletter editor your updates and/or pictures so she can consider their inclusion for the next newsletter’s new Alumni Updates feature.

You can submit information about marriages, births, career particulars or other details you would like to share with your fellow newsletter readers. Be sure to include your full name and year of graduation so we may place you with others from the same time frame.

We want to keep in better touch with you, so please e-mail Jennifer Elswick at [jlelswick@vcu.edu](mailto:jlelswick@vcu.edu) and tell her what you’ve been up to recently!

**Come and visit us at our  
NEW website:**

[www.psychology.vcu.edu](http://www.psychology.vcu.edu)

## GRADUATE STUDENT SPOTLIGHT

KRISTINA HOOD

Kristina Hood is a doctoral candidate in the [social psychology program](#). She obtained a bachelor’s in psychology from Christopher Newport University in 2002 and has master’s degrees in criminal justice, sociology and psychology from Virginia Commonwealth University.

The summer before joining the psychology program, Kristina was selected for an internship in Kenya by VCU’s [College of Humanities and Sciences](#) and the [Christian Children’s Fund](#).

This internship involved working with [Dr. Faye Belgrave](#) and other VCU faculty to conduct an evaluability assessment of a Christian Children’s Fund (CCF) program called “Weaving the Safety Net.” This program aided children and families affected by HIV in the region of [Kiambu](#) and [Thika](#), Kenya. Through this experience, Kristina learned more about working with culturally diverse populations and developed a passion for HIV prevention.

Her research interests include preventive health behaviors among minorities and underserved populations, specifically HIV prevention research, and promoting positive health out-

comes among minority populations. Kristina’s current research involves examining how women’s attitudes and their perceptions of their partners’ attitudes toward condom use influence intentions and behaviors.

She was recently awarded an NIMH pre-doctoral fellowship. This research will involve developing and implementing an empirically based attitude-focused session to an existing intervention with the goal of changing attitudes and promoting consistent condom use among minority women. After finishing her dissertation, Kristina plans to pursue a career focused on bridging the divide between academic research and community intervention.

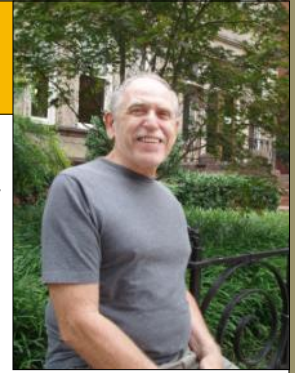
Kristina also enjoys playing with her nieces and nephew, dancing and listening to music, cooking and baking, reading and recently earned her first-degree black belt in taekwon do.



## EMERITI FACULTY SPOTLIGHT

DR. JOHN "JACK" HARTNETT

*Interview and Article by Jennifer Elswick*



Emeritus faculty status is, according to university guidelines, "an award for exceptional service and outstanding dedication to the university" and is reserved for "full-time faculty members who have given long-time consecutive service to the university prior to retirement." John "Jack" Hartnett joined the VCU faculty in 1968 and was promoted to associate professor in 1974. While a faculty member at VCU, Hartnett was an industrial-organizational specialist in the social psychology program who taught courses and provided consultations to local businesses on I/O issues. He regularly taught courses in I/O psychology, tests and measurements and introductory psychology. In the later part of his career, his primary role was as teacher of four sections of PSYC 101 every year, with each section of the course enrolling upward of 300 students (about 1,200 students per year!). His energy and commitment makes him **the** face of the psychology department for a great deal of our alumni readers.

Hartnett retired in May 2006 after a 38-year career and recently took time from his busy schedule to give us his perspective on current events and to let us know what he has been up to since leaving the classroom.



The evolution of the VCU logo from 1968 (the year Hartnett began) through present.

Courtesy of: [Special Collections and Archives, VCU Libraries](#)

**Dr. Hartnett, you are an expert in industrial and organizational psychology at a time when the U.S. is still reeling from a financial meltdown due in large part to the failings of large corporate entities. What is your unique perspective on this situation?**

I wouldn't say my perspective is unique. I believe American companies are trying to adjust to the changes that are taking place throughout the world. It is a new ballgame now. We are in a global economy where countries such as China, India, Japan and others are now strong competitors. As a country we have to find new ways to compete both economically and po-

litically as well as regain the work ethic that made this country a power in the first place.

**Are efforts at reform addressing these issues? Why or why not?**

I certainly hope so. I'm not sure economists themselves truly understand all of the variables that are involved with a global economy. We certainly have lost the stronghold on manufacturing that we enjoyed for so long. Unfortunately, according to a new study, we have also fallen behind in education in reading, math and science.

**What qualities make an effective leader of an organization? Are these different in the public vs. private sector?**

I really don't think there are significant differences in leadership demands in the private and public sector. In both instances you are dealing with people. As for qualities, I believe you have to have above-average intelligence, appropriate technical skills, people skills, the ability to recognize when changes are happening and how to adapt to those changes.

**What are some basic steps our readers could take in their careers to promote excellence in the workplace? And, how would excellence generally be defined?**

Since technology is changing so rapidly I would say that you have to keep abreast of the new technology and keep-up-to-date with what is happening in your particular field. The more you know, the more valuable you are to the organization and the easier it is to find employment elsewhere.

**What are some tips you can give us for increasing employee engagement in times of financial difficulty?**

I don't want to appear flip here, but I would suggest that any employee today better stay engaged or they won't have a job. There are so many individuals looking for a job today who would probably work for less than the current job holder. Unfortunately, I do not see this economy changing soon.

**Looking back over your career, are you satisfied with the degree to which your field of research has contributed to tangible, "real world" improvements for the modern workplace? Please give specifics.**

*(Continued on Page 8)*

***(Emeriti Faculty Spotlight, Continued from Page 7)***

I don't know if I would say I am satisfied, but I do see improvements. I see it in the selection processes of many companies, but particularly I see it in what is called "organizational development," a view of organizations from a systems approach. Improvements in organizational communication both horizontally and vertically are classic examples.

**In the spirit of our upcoming exam week, here's an essay topic for you : Compare and contrast undergraduate students from 1968 with those from 2006, the year you retired. What qualities remained unchanged over time, if any? Please address student engagement, aptitude, work ethic, achievement orientation, priorities and social consciousness.**

Different times, different students. In 1968, students were more active in the social movements of this nation. There was the Vietnam war, the rising social consciousness of race, gender and sexual orientation. Times are different today. Students and people in general are more passive and are more hesitant to express their opinions. Some of this is due to the "political correctness" that is so prevalent today. I really believe that this country made a mistake in the elimination of the draft. We



have been in two wars now that have been going on for 10 years in both Iraq and Afghanistan, and they are now talking about exiting Afghanistan in 2014.

The two world wars combined did not last 10 years. If the draft was still in existence, chants of "hell no, we wont go" would probably be resounding through most campuses. While many students today have an excellent work ethic, I think it has fallen on the average. VCU is an urban campus with a heterogeneous student population. Some of our students are brilliant and would be successful at Harvard, Stanford or any other elite school. This is why it is so challenging to teach at VCU. There is such a wide range of aptitude and work ethic that it becomes a considerable challenge to keep each student engaged in class.

**To many undergraduate alumni of this university, you are THE face of our department because of the multitude of PSYC 101 courses you taught. Does the bachelor's degree still hold the value, in your opinion, in 2010 that it did in 1968?**

The bachelor's degree will always be extremely useful. If students really apply themselves, they will come away with considerable knowledge in many fields. With this degree you may not

have a starting salary comparable to degrees in engineering or business, but you will find this is an excellent degree in the long run. Many corporate leaders today have a bachelor's degree in the humanities. Graduate degrees are a necessity in some fields, but there are many areas in which they are unnecessary.

**Kindly share a favorite VCU memory with us – it could be something funny that happened in the classroom or perhaps a historic event that really changed the culture of VCU.**

There were many events that stand out. One semester I was teaching an undergraduate course in I/O. It was a night class and I had a student who continually fell asleep in class. I let it go until one night when he started snoring. It was near the end of class, so I asked students to exit the class as quietly as possible so as not to awaken him. We all left and I turned out the lights. Next week he told me that a janitor woke him up sometime after 11 p.m. He stayed awake the rest of the semester.

There was also the student who came to see me after the second test in Psych 101 and didn't understand why he was missing so many questions on the exam. It took a while to figure out what his problem was. The class met every Monday and Wednesday and he was only showing up on Monday because he said "nobody told me about Wednesdays."

**Please give our readers an update on what you have been up to lately.**

I have been enjoying retirement immensely. I have added six tiers to my back deck, which now extends out more than 70 feet. The project is now finished, so I am looking for something else to do. I have recently volunteered for [CASA](#) in Chesterfield and will start classes in February to become a court-appointed special advocate for children. As such, I will be working as an advocate on behalf of abused children and will make recommendations to the court as to what would be in the child's best interest. The past few years my wife and I have been busy with our five grandchildren. We have attended more school plays and ballgames than I thought were possible and we have enjoyed every minute of it.



***And just for fun.....***

**Favorite book:** Whichever mystery book I am presently reading.

**Favorite website:** [Big blue interactive](#)...I am a New York Giants fanatic.

**Best role models for leading an organization:** I have been impressed with the leadership of [Dr. Trani](#). I think he was extremely effective in his tenure as the president of VCU.

## UNDERGRADUATE ALUMNI SPOTLIGHT

DRISTI BASNET (CLASS OF '08)

Interview by Katharine Stoddard

Article by Katharine Stoddard and Dorothy Fillmore

Dristi Basnet has been on an incredible journey since she was 6 years old. Expelled from her [Bhutan](#) school on the grounds of her race, religion and ethnicity, Dristi fled with her family to [Nepal](#) where they lived as refugees. At age 15, she traveled to the United States with her mother and siblings. When it was time for Dristi to begin college, she instantly knew that VCU was the right fit because she “never felt out of place in the diverse campus atmosphere.”

Equally at home in the psychology department, Dristi took advantage of the opportunity to conduct research alongside a faculty member. As a senior psychology major, she registered for a section of PSYC 494, the research internship course, with [Jeffrey Green, Ph.D.](#) and became part of his research team. Through this internship, Dristi gained valuable information and skills that have proven essential to her role as a research coordinator. For example, it was through this internship that she achieved competency in the regulatory aspects of human subjects research such as Insti-



tutional Review Board (IRB) submissions and the procedures for proper administration of informed consent with research participants.

Since graduation, Dristi has worked in the [Department of Pediatrics](#) at the VCU Medical Center, first as a clinical research assistant and now as a clinical research coordinator for a cystic fibrosis research team. Passionate about her work, Dristi says that “working in a hospital environment is great experience and gives me the experience in working both with patients as well as in conducting research. Most of all, it is exciting to me to see that the research I am part of could potentially lead to drugs that will combat and cure cystic fibrosis disease.”

Dristi values her undergraduate education at VCU and credits her research internship opportunity with opening a door into her current career. Dristi plans to apply for a graduate program in physical therapy where she will be able to combine her passion for research and people.

(*'Support for Veterans,' continued from Page 3*)

In an effort to prevent these undesirable outcomes for veterans, we have developed a prevention program, “Getting a G.R.I.P (Goals Reached through Improved Planning) During the Deployment Cycle.” The program is designed to teach Service members and their families how to set individual goals as well as joint family goals to work on during the deployment period. Trained monitors check in with both Service members and families about every six weeks to assess progress toward their goals and to assist them with any problems they are having. Goals can be chosen from one of the following areas: relationships (family and friends),



health, employment, finances, education, spirituality or other. By incorporating both individual and joint goals as part of the prevention effort, we hypothesize that boredom and isolation will be reduced and a sense of purpose and meaning in the lives of both the Service members and their families will be enhanced.

Finally, I have developed two self-directed programs that aid our veterans through skill assess-

ment and enhancement. *F.R.E.E. 4 Vets*, which stands for family, relationships, education and employment, is designed specifically for the individual veteran, and *H.E.L.P 4 Families*, which stands for health, empowerment, lifestyles and parenting, is geared toward the larger family unit. The programs focus on giving veterans and their families the skills needed to overcome the debilitating aspects of these injuries and reintegration. A second goal of both programs is to enhance skills for moving forward in life - dreaming and setting goals for the future, developing plans to reach these goals, overcoming roadblocks to reaching goals, making effective decisions using social support and career development skills.

The modest goal of our four projects is to improve the quality of life for our Service members and to impart to them the sense that their investment in our country's future was worthwhile. When President Obama signed the new GI Bill in August 2010, he noted that the passage of the bill was not simply payback for the services provided by the men and women who had served, but instead an investment in preparing the leaders for our 21<sup>st</sup> century. These individuals may be the core of what we might be our next greatest generation and it is our hope that the [Life Skills Center](#) is able to make a small contribution toward this end.

Best wishes for a safe, healthy, and restful holiday season for you and your loved ones.

*VCU Psychology Faculty and Staff*

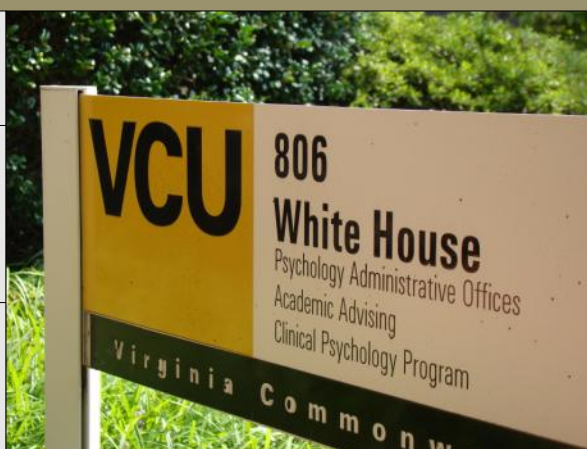
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