LETTER FROM THE CHAIR

Dr. Wendy Kliewer

Greetings from 806 W. Franklin St.!

As I write this, we are wrapping up the spring semester and looking forward to the summer term. As you will see in this newsletter, our department had another large group of graduates this May, including 219 students who completed their B.S. degree. We continue to graduate the most students in the College of Humanities and Sciences as well as produce a significant percentage of the doctoral students at VCU. We are very proud of our graduates and look forward to continued interaction with them as alumni.

We had several special events this semester related to our teaching mission. On March 14, we hosted the sixth annual Brain Day, an event for local high school students enrolled in AP psychology and biology courses. A record number of students from four local high schools participated. Additionally, we were pleased to host Dr. David Myers from Hope College, author of the textbook we use in our Introductory Psychology course, who lectured on the scientific pursuit of happiness (see page 3).

High-quality research that engages the community is a hallmark of the psychology department. An excellent example of that is the work of Dr. Albert Farrell and the VCU Clark-Hill Institute for Positive Youth Development. On Page 6, you can read about the large-scale, community-based project at the institute targeting youth violence. The institute is one of only six Academic Centers of Excellence in youth violence prevention funded by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention and is the only location to have had continued funding for three rounds.

As a department with a strong focus on doctoral education, it is not surprising that our graduate students also are engaged in high-quality research. In this newsletter, we highlight a number of our students who received research scholarships or awards this year in recognition of the important work they are doing.

Although the pace is a bit slower, our department remains quite active during the summer, teaching a total of 51 summer courses, engaging in research and preparing for the next academic year. We are excited to welcome two new health psychology faculty to our department, Drs. Nao Hagiwara-Livingston and Robin Everhart. They will be joining us in the fall, and you will hear more about their work in our next issue.

In the meantime, we really appreciate all of your updates! It has been great to reconnect with many of you and learn about the exciting personal and professional developments in your lives. Please continue to keep us informed by completing our alumni survey.

Best wishes for a relaxing summer, and we hope to see you on campus sometime soon.
**Amy Jeffers Wins Research Awards**

Amy Jeffers, a doctoral student in the health psychology program, was recognized for submitting an excellent abstract to the Society of Behavioral Medicine Conference. She received a Citation Abstract award as well as a Meritorious Student award. The abstract was titled, "The misuse of prescription stimulants for weight loss, psychosocial variables, and eating disorder symptoms." The study examines the misuse of prescription stimulants, defined as those normally used to treat ADHD (e.g., Ritalin, Adderall), for the purpose of weight loss, the motivations behind it and how this use is related to various psychosocial variables and eating disorder symptoms.

**William & Mary and VCU Colleagues Speak to Congressional Subcommittee about Puller Veterans Benefits Clinic**

View the full article.

An excerpt: "Two members of the William & Mary Law School faculty, Patricia E. Roberts and Stacey-Rae Simcox, traveled to Washington on April 24 at the invitation of the Advisory Committee on Disability Compensation to brief its members on the work of William & Mary Law School's Lewis B. Puller, Jr. Veterans Benefits Clinic. Congress established this Advisory Committee in 2008 'to advise the [Veterans Administration] Secretary with respect to the maintenance and periodic readjustment of the VA schedule for rating veteran disabilities.' The committee also heard from Dr. Leticia Flores of VCU's Center for Psychological Services and Development, which works in tandem with the Puller Clinic to serve veterans. . . 'Since its inception, the Puller Clinic has trained nearly 100 law and psychology students in the intricacies of the benefit claims process,' Roberts said, 'and instilled in them a sense of responsibility for meeting the commitment that our nation made to its veterans.' She noted that the partnership with the VCU Center for Psychological Services and Development allows the Puller Clinic to serve veterans holistically by addressing both their legal and psychological needs."

**Dr. Michael Southam-Gerow**

Dr. Michael Southam-Gerow, of the clinical psychology program, will serve as an associate editor for the Journal of Clinical Child & Adolescent Psychology, the official journal of the Society of Clinical Child & Adolescent Psychology (APA Division 53), beginning in 2012.

**FACT:** At the recent graduate research symposium, Psychology student presentations accounted for 80 percent of those from the College of Humanities and Sciences and for more than 40 percent of the total. Congratulations to our productive and scholarly students!

**LISTEN TO VICKY SHIVY’S WRVA RADIO INTERVIEW**

**Click here!**

Vicky Shivy, Ph.D., of the counseling psychology program, was interviewed by Jimmy Barrett of Richmond's talk radio WRVA pertaining to two local workplace shootings that occurred in February. Shivy noted that these rare, but high-profile, events are traumatic for workplace witnesses and bystanders, who need time, support and a safe place to debrief. Workplace violence violates peoples' expectations about the safety of the workplace because it involves rare events that are very difficult to predict.
**Special Visitor: David Myers, Ph.D.**

In late March, David Myers, Ph.D., visited campus and gave a lecture to a crowd of 500 called, “The Scientific Pursuit of Happiness.” It was quite a treat for the 101 students in attendance as they got to hear from the very author of their textbook! While he was on campus, Myers also attended Ev Worthington’s Positive Psychology group to speak. Psychology honored Myers, an avid basketball fan, with a basketball signed by Coach Smart and the 2011-12 men’s basketball team. A reception was held in his honor that was well attended by faculty members and graduate students.

Myers is a professor of psychology at Hope College in Holland, Mich. His scientific writings, supported by National Science Foundation grants and fellowships, have appeared in three dozen academic periodicals, including Science, the American Scientist, the American Psychologist, and Psychological Science. His research and writings have been recognized by the Gordon Allport Prize, by an "honored scientist" award from the Federation of Associations in the Brain and Behavioral Sciences, by the Award for Distinguished Service on Behalf of Personality-Social Psychology and by three honorary doctorates.

From www.davidmyers.org

**Dorothy Fillmore Wins Service Award**

Dorothy Fillmore, associate director of academic operations in the Psychology Department, was awarded a faculty/administrator Burnside Watstein LGBT Award. The award is given annually by the LGBT subcommittee of VCU's Equity & Diversity Committee to individuals who enrich the community at VCU and make a significant difference in the lives of LGBT faculty, staff and students. Donna Coghill of VCU Libraries was also awarded the faculty/administrator award, and Morgan Krug was given a student award. The reception was held March 29 at the Scott House. VCU President Michael Rao, Ph.D., was in attendance and delivered words to honor the spirit of service exemplified by the three honorees.

In her acceptance speech, Fillmore read “10 Dorotheisms: a few things I have learned along the advocacy way” and was gracious enough to share them here as well for our newsletter readers:

1. It takes many hands to do this work, and we are blessed to have colleagues and allies all along the way. Thank you for the bridges you are building and the incredible support you provide.
2. Public displays of affection will change the world. I really believe this. So let’s get to it!
3. Are we making room at the table? Who is not there? Who is not here? Let’s make room.
4. I have many blind spots. While I may think that “Dorothy World” is the way things should be; there are other “worlds” which have merit.
5. The worst “isms” and “phobias” are the ones I swallowed from the culture and my upbringing. I sometimes need help in flushing these.
6. The past is not the future. Sometimes I get stuck here, but when I ask for help from my friends and colleagues at VCU, they are able to help me move forward.
7. We need everybody – we need the angry, creative, scholarly, dissenting, theatrical, in the closet, out of the closet, gay, straight, bi, trans, genderqueer. There is not one way to do this work. It is a rainbow flag, not a single colored flag.
8. It is good to be outrageous.
9. Do not wait for others to “get it” before you live your life. If I had waited for others “get it,” I would still be waiting.
10. Let’s continue to be tenacious and do the work. The work of the VCU LGBT Subcommittee is to add gender identity and its expression to VCU’s non-discrimination policy; to find a way to fund a domestic partner benefit plan; to work to expand services for LGBT students through a resource center; to educate ourselves and others about ways to combat bias and hate and about the ways oppression affects all of us.
Psi Chi Installation 2012

Psi Chi is an international honor society for students of psychology. The VCU chapter, led by Geri Lotze, Ph.D., is over 50 years old. Membership in Psi Chi lasts a lifetime! On March 31, 10 new members were inducted in a candle-lighting ceremony. Friends and family were in attendance to honor this wonderful accomplishment.


Psychology wishes Edith Allin a fond farewell as she transitions into a new position overseeing the fiscal and personnel operations for the departments of Chemistry and Forensic Science. As manager of this new "service center" pilot model of fiscal operations, Allin will have the chance to build a model from the ground up that could have implications for the other departments in the College of Humanities and Sciences as well. Edith has given her all to Psychology, and she leaves behind a legacy of integrity and responsibility in fiscal management. Edith, thank you for all you gave to our department and best of luck in your new position!

An excerpt: "Just a decade ago, people 65 and older were routinely rejected for heart transplants at all but a few institutions. But in 2006, the International Society for Heart and Lung Transplantation issued new guidelines saying that heart failure patients should be considered for transplants up to age 70 . . . Another study in the journal, published earlier this year, found that heart transplant patients 60 and older reported greater satisfaction with their quality of life, less stress and depression, and more compliance with follow-up medical regimens than younger patients. Older patients seem to be “a distinct group” with more ability to handle the psychological aftermath of a transplant, said Bruce Rybarczyk of Virginia Commonwealth University and several co-authors. The study was based on survey responses from 555 transplant patients at four medical centers."

Click here for more details about the study.
**DEPARTMENT NEWS AND UPDATES**

**DANA ANDREWS JOINS SHAKA, BASKETBALL TEAM, GOVERNOR AT LOCAL SCHOOL**

*Read Gov. McDonnell’s press release.*

*View the news clip.*

In her day job, Dana Andrews, M.P.A., is the assistant director of research operations and school project coordinator for VCU’s Clark-Hill Institute for Positive Development (housed in Psychology). In her spare time, she enjoys being a member of John McGuire’s SEAL Team Physical Training. Andrews and her fellow SEAL Team members recently enjoyed partnering up with Gov. Bob McDonnell and the VCU men’s basketball team to promote hard work, team building and fitness in body and mind at Overby-Sheppard Elementary School in Richmond. “I got picked up in the air by basketball players to demonstrate an activity,” Andrews says. “Let’s just say that was the highlight of my year!”

Head men’s basketball coach Shaka Smart is on the left; freshman guard Treveon Graham is back left; Andrews is in the right middle helping lift student Khalil Taylor, 11, in a character-building activity. Photo by P. Kevin Morley/Times-Dispatch

**AL FARRELL’S AND KELLY PUGH’S RESEARCH FEATURED IN PREVENTION ACTION**

*View the article featuring their research.*

An excerpt: What are the pathways that link maternal depression to adolescent aggression? . . . The findings suggest that maternal depression can influence both parenting practices and family functioning in ways that contribute to teenage aggression. However, depressed mothers, rather than having a distorted view of their adolescents’ aggression, were found to be more accurate in their views than less depressed mothers. . . . In contrast to the many previous studies that have included predominantly Caucasian families with higher levels of economic status, this study used a high-risk, predominantly minority sample of adolescents from families with a diverse range of socioeconomic backgrounds. This focus is appropriate because research has found high rates of depression among minorities and low-income families that place children at a higher risk for negative outcomes.”

**TOM EISSENBERG’S HOOKAH SMOKING RESEARCH FEATURED IN USA TODAY**

*Click here to read the article.*
In September 2010, the VCU Clark-Hill Institute for Positive Youth Development received a five-year grant of $6.5 million from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention to support its continuing efforts to develop programs for youth that promote their positive development and reduce involvement in problem behaviors such as violence and bullying. Youth violence represents a serious public health issue in terms of the prevalence of violence-related injuries and other negative effects. The CDC has assumed a leadership role in addressing youth violence in the U.S. based on their successful application of a public health approach to addressing other health-related issues. Part of its effort involves the funding of Academic Centers of Excellence in Youth Violence Prevention (ACE). The CDC currently funds six such centers across the country. VCU is the only university that has been continuously funded as an ACE since the inception of this program in 2000.

The Clark-Hill Institute was formally established in 2005. The institute was named in honor of two former VCU faculty members – John P. Hill, whose model for adolescent development continues to serve as a framework for the field, and Maxine Clark, who conducted important work on the development of minority youth. The institute’s mission is to empower youth, schools, families and other stakeholders to promote the healthy, safe and positive development of youth in the Richmond community from early adolescence through young adulthood. In addition to its research agenda, it provides training opportunities in applied community-based research for graduate students and postdoctoral fellows.

The institute has its roots in a collaboration between Dr. Albert Farrell and several community partners to develop effective violence-prevention programs for middle school students that began in 1992. This work has been continuously funded by CDC for nearly 20 years through six cooperative agreements. One recently completed project, the Multisite Violence Prevention Project, involved a collaboration among VCU, Duke University, the University of Georgia and the University of Illinois at Chicago. The seven-year, multisite study involved random assignment of 37 middle schools across the four sites to determine the impact of two approaches to youth violence on school-level changes.

Although housed in the Department of Psychology for administrative purposes, the institute fosters collaborations among faculty across the university including the departments of African American Studies, Education, Epidemiology and Community Health, Government and Public Affairs, Nursing, Psychology, Psychiatry and Social Work. In addition to the current CDC project, it is also implementing an evaluation of an expressive writing intervention to reduce trauma among youth exposed to community violence being led by Dr. Wendy Kliewer with funding from NIMH, and a project to evaluate an effective school-based violence prevention program being led by Dr. Terri Sullivan with funding from the Institute of Education Sciences.

The current CDC-funded project is a large-scale study to evaluate the community-level impact of a comprehensive prevention approach that combines evidence-based school, family and community interventions for middle school-aged youth. The team of researchers led by Dr. Farrell includes Drs. Kevin Allison, Rose Corona, Wendy Kliewer, Saba Masho, Terri Sullivan and Kevin Sutherland. The focus of the project is on three Richmond communities defined by middle school attendance zones. The project uses an innovative design that represents the application of a multiple-baseline design. Such designs are typically used to evaluate the impact of an intervention on an individual. In this case the individual represents a community. Community-level impact will be evaluated based on community-level indicators, such as the number of ambulance calls and visits to the emergency room for violence-related injuries. More positive benefits of the intervention such as improving the social climate within schools will also be examined. If successful, this approach could provide a model that could be applied in other communities across the country.

Al Farrell, Ph.D., is professor of psychology and director of the Institute. See “Spotlight on the Director” on next page.
Albert D. Farrell, Ph.D., is professor of psychology at VCU and the director of the VCU Clark-Hill Institute for Positive Youth Development. Farrell received his Ph.D. in clinical psychology from Purdue University, with a minor in quantitative methods, and completed his clinical internship at Brown University. He has been on the faculty at VCU since 1980. In 1992, he became involved in assisting a collaboration of city agencies in their evaluation of a violence prevention program. That collaboration led to a series of projects focused on the application of an action-research model to develop and evaluate the effectiveness of prevention programs for high risk adolescents. This work has been continuously funded by the Centers for Disease Control since 1993 through a series of six cooperative agreements. These included his involvement as one of the four principal investigators for the CDC-funded Multi-site Violence Prevention Project that involved the random assignment of 37 schools across four sites to school-level intervention conditions. Additional support for his work has been provided by the U.S. Department of Education, and National Institute of Child Health and Human Development.

Farrell has a particular interest in identifying factors that promote the positive development of youth in high-risk environments (e.g., those exposed to community violence). This is reflected in a series of qualitative and quantitative studies designed to improve the understanding of risk and protective factors related to aggression and other problem behaviors in adolescence. In 2001, he founded the VCU Center for Promotion of Positive Youth Development to promote collaborations among faculty involved in developing programs for urban adolescents. In 2005, this center merged with an ACE developing center initially funded by CDC in 2000, was renamed the VCU Clark-Hill Institute for Positive Youth Development and has been funded as an ACE since 2005. “ACE” refers to the CDC’s Adverse Childhood Experiences study—one of the largest investigations undertaken to date to examine the adult health outcomes of those exposed to maltreatment as youth. This has provided opportunities for collaborations among faculty from different departments within VCU which have led to collaborative research projects funded by the Institute of Education Sciences, the National Institute on Drug Abuse and the National Institute of Mental Health. It has also provided numerous training opportunities for doctoral students and postdoctoral fellows. It has also fostered collaborations with CDC researchers and faculty from other ACEs as exemplified in a recently completed cooperative agreement for secondary analysis of data from the Multi-Site Violence Prevention Project with faculty from the University of Chicago ACE (i.e., David Henry, Michael Schoeny and Pat Tolan).

Farrell has published more than 100 articles and book chapters. He is a licensed clinical psychologist and a fellow of the American Psychological Association. He has served on several national task forces related to youth violence and on grant review panels for CDC, NIMH and IES. Farrell also serves on the editorial boards of several scientific journals and recently completed a term as associate editor for the Journal of Consulting and Clinical Psychology. He has a particular interest in methodological issues. He taught the core graduate course in statistics for our department for 20 years and has taught an advanced seminar in clinical research methods for the past 30 years.

Farrell grew up outside Detroit where his father was a police lieutenant. He is the first generation in his family to attend college. To pay his tuition, he worked summers in a steel mill in Detroit and played drums in a band that played at bars and fraternity parties. He has been married for 18 years and has three daughters, a stepdaughter and four grandchildren. He and his wife are very active bicyclists and ride several times a week with a local bike club. They ride their own “single” bikes but also ride together on a tandem bicycle. They take annual cycling vacations with a group of friends who also ride tandem bicycles. Their bicycling trips have taken them to California, Michigan, New York, Ohio, Vermont, Nova Scotia, the Netherlands and Belgium.
Spring break is typically a quiet time on college campuses. Not so at VCU where 275 Henrico County high school advanced placement students and their teachers attended the sixth annual Brain Day conference on March 14.

Brain Day is a neuroscience initiative held in connection with National Brain Awareness Week, which took place March 11-17. The conference is a joint initiative between the VCU Psychology Department and Henrico County Public Schools and is directed by Joseph H. Porter, Ph.D., professor of psychology and director of the biological psychology program, and Tim Donahue, a graduate student.

“We want the students to come away from this experience with a good appreciation for how important the brain is to human function,” Porter said. “I also see this as a recruitment tool for VCU. They are juniors and sophomores, who may not have decided yet on a college. It would be fantastic to have some of these best and brightest students come to VCU.”

The conference featured guest speakers on topics related to the brain and behavior as well as a poster session in which students presented posters and interactive activities on a wide range of issues relating to the neurological and biological basis of human behavior.

David Cifu, M.D., professor and chair of the department of physical medicine and rehabilitation, VCU School of Medicine, and national director for the U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs' Physical Medicine & Rehabilitation Program, delivered a presentation titled, “The Miracle of Gabrielle Giffords: Understanding How the Brain Rehabilitates.”

Alex Meredith, Ph.D., professor of anatomy and neurobiology, VCU School of Medicine, delivered a presentation titled, “What is ‘reality’ to the brain?”

“We’re trying to give the students an outstanding learning experience,” Donahue said. “These disciplines (psychology and biology) are not as separate as you think they are. The students are getting a better idea of how the brain processes thought and language and perception.”

The conference was instituted to provide advanced placement psychology students with an academic experience highlighting the intersection of research in neuroscience and psychology.

Attending this year were AP psychology students from Hermitage, Mills Godwin and Douglas Freeman. Students in the biological psychology VCU dual-enrollment course at the Maggie L. Walker Governor's School also attended.

Which playing card is larger? They are actually both the same size but this research project on optical illusions shows how issues such as light and shadow, texture gradient, linear perspective and relative size can create a perception that the card on the left is larger.

Mike Porter
VCU Communications and Public Relations
CPSD CORNER

NEWLY AWARDED COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT GRANT

On April 26, 2012, the VCU Council for Community Engagement awarded about $17,000 to psychiatry's Center for Human Animal Interaction, Virginia Treatment Center for Children, psychology's Center for Psychological Services and Development and the Faison School for their project, "Animal Assisted Therapy for Children with Autism." The funding will be available about July 1, 2012, and lasts for one year.

According to the grant proposal, VCU psychology graduate students and medical students will have an opportunity to observe animal-assisted therapy sessions with Faison students, assist with the collection of observational data during sessions, become familiar with the special educational needs of children with Autism Spectrum Disorder and learn skills involved with the delivery of AAT with special needs students. Through their project experiences, the collaborative team anticipates that VCU students will gain knowledge and skills related to AAT and community-based instruction for children with ASDs as well as appreciation for the value of community partnerships and engagement. The Faison School will gain a needed community-based complementary approach, known to be attractive to its students to facilitate goal achievement. Guidelines for the use of AAT in programs for children with ASDs will be made available to the greater Richmond community through agreed upon dissemination by Commonwealth Autism Services and the Autism Society, Central Virginia. These organizations provided valuable letters of support for the proposal.

This project aligns primarily with VCU’s Quest for Distinction goal III.B.: “Increasing interdisciplinary/interprofessional scholarship and practice focused in areas of public health” by focusing on interdisciplinary collaboration to develop and evaluate a model for incorporating AAT into individualized educational plans for children with ASD and goal II.B.: “Through our student participants, grow the next generation of researchers and scholars who will focus on the discovery of new knowledge and the advancement of clinical applications,” such as AAT.

In September 2013, a final written report is due to the Council for Community Engagement to report on the findings and future directions of the project. All groups are optimistic that this collaborative venture will blossom into additional opportunities for working together and possibly using therapy animals for different populations, such as children with ADHD and veterans with anxiety-related disorders.

And, of course, everyone at the CPSD is eagerly anticipating the arrival of their canine guest therapist, Jelly Bean. Jelly Bean has already visited the CPSD and can rest easy, knowing that there will be plenty of doggy treats available after a day's work.

Leticia Flores, Ph.D., is director of the CPSD and an assistant director in the clinical and counseling programs.

Q: My 11-year old son recently told me that a boy at his bus stop said, "Shut up or I'll cut you!" to him and another friend. According to my son, this particular boy has been increasingly bullyish as the school year has gone by. Is this cause for concern? Or just boys being boys?

A: Good for your son to bring this up with you, an adult he obviously believes will help him out with a potentially scary and confusing event. While boys (and girls) can often engage in social and behavioral aggression at school and in their other social circles, this kind of comment is still cause for concern. Even if there were no real, concrete threat of a weapon present, the level of aggression being expressed indicates that the child making the statement is feeling pretty frustrated and angry, and this might be the most effective way he knows to express his feelings. Unfortunately, this kind of behavior usually breeds uglier behavior and could result in someone getting hurt.

This is probably something that you would tell your son’s teacher or the school principal about. Especially if there has been escalation in this child’s aggression, there could be something that has occurred or is still occurring in the boy’s life that is creating increased anger, frustration and aggression. The boy making threats might need the chance to speak with another responsible adult with his best interests and the interests of other children in mind about what might be troubling him.

And encourage your son to keep you in mind should something upsetting happen again. Oftentimes, kids might avoid telling their parents when something or someone at school is bothering them, for fear of being called a “tattle-tale” or backlash by other students. If a child can feel he can go to an adult for help, he can avoid small problems turning into big ones. Leticia Flores, Ph.D.
1990s

Sandy Goolsby (B.S. ‘91) received her master's degree from the VCU's School of Social Work in 1995. In 1998, she obtained her LCSW and began work for The Center for Child and Family Services. Currently, she is the program manager/clinical supervisor for the center’s Mental Health Support Services in Richmond. She has one grown son, still loves learning and enjoys an ongoing connection with VCU.

Dr. Kristin Perrone McGovern (Ph.D. '98) is a tenured, full professor in the Department of Counseling Psychology and Guidance Services at Ball State University. She is married with 7-year-old twins (a boy and a girl).

2000s

After graduating from VCU, Dr. Genevieve Smith Bohac (B.S. ‘01) went on to Arizona State University where she obtained two master's degrees and a doctorate in Educational Psychology. She is currently working as a school psychologist in the Paradise Valley Unified School District in Phoenix, Ariz. She has a husband, Brandon, and a 2-year-old daughter, Seton. She loved her time at VCU and is still in touch with many of her Alpha Gamma Delta sorority sisters.

Oscar Holmes IV (B.S. ’02) is currently working on his PhD in Management/Organizational Behavior at the Culverhouse College of Business Administration at The University of Alabama. His dissertation examines the psychological process through which people use justifications to discriminate in personnel situations. He recently published a book chapter titled, "Hazing and Pledging in Alpha Phi Alpha: An Organizational Behavior Perspective" ("Alpha Phi Alpha: A Legacy of Greatness, The Demands for Transcendence,” University Press of Kentucky). His research examines how organizations can mitigate conflict and foster more supportive work environments.

Dr. Alyssa Hershberger Ward (Ph.D. ’07) lives in Los Angeles with her husband, Geoffrey. They are expecting their first child in September. She is the co-director of the Child STEPs community-based clinical trial testing modular treatment for childhood anxiety, depression, disruptive behavior and trauma. She is also the training director for Prac ticewise and has trained more than 1,000 therapists nationwide in the Managing and Adapting Practice (MAP) system of evidence-based care.

Hope in the Cities and the Virginia Center for Inclusive Communities held a community convocation May 18 in the student commons that focused on the work being done to address the causes and impacts of poverty within the Metropolitan Richmond region. Bonnie Dowdy, Ph.D., (Ph.D. ’94), of the developmental program, presented findings from surveys that were completed by more than 650 participants who had attended facilitated discussions on the topic, "Unpacking the Census: Differences in Poverty Across Race, Class and Jurisdiction in the Metro Region" over the past year. Dowdy and VCU undergraduate psychology student Chelsea Wilkinson spent a week working together running the analyses needed for this presentation. Panel and group discussions about possible future steps needed to make changes in patterns of poverty in the Richmond area followed. Other speakers included Mayor Dwight Jones and John Moe ser, Ph.D., emeriti faculty member of the L. Douglas Wilder School of Government and Public Affairs.

Chelsea Wilkinson (Class of 2013)
## Congratulations to our 2011-2012 Award and Scholarship Recipients

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<th>Award or Scholarship</th>
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<td>Outstanding Biopsychology Graduate Student Award</td>
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<td>Outstanding Social Graduate Student Award</td>
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<td>Outstanding Child Clinical Track Graduate Student Award</td>
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<td>John P. Hill Award for Adolescent Research</td>
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<td>Deborah Braffman Schroeder Award to Outstanding Clinical Student</td>
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<td>Outstanding Graduate Student Teacher Award</td>
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<td>Melvin V. Lubman Scholarship</td>
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Dace Svikis, Ph.D., says that her student Leila, “...possesses a unique set of interpersonal as well as intellectual skills,” and that, “her background in basic science, coupled with her interest and dedication to clinical psychology, have placed her in perfect alignment with current NIH priorities in the field of translational research.” That is high praise coming from the deputy director of the Institute for Women’s Health, director of AWHARE (Addiction & Women’s Health: Advancing Research and Evaluation), the coordinator of VCU’s Academy of Mentors, and professor in psychology, psychiatry and obstetrics/gynecology.

Leila, a clinical student in the behavioral medicine track, came to the department in 2007 after having obtained her master’s in Physiology from the VCU School of Medicine in 2003. A Portsmouth native and William and Mary alumna, Leila will soon take the next big step in her graduate studies as a 2012-2013 intern at the VA Connecticut Health Care System in West Haven, Conn. Concurrently, Leila will recruit participants and collect data for her R36 dissertation grant, “Behavioral Incentives to Increase Exercise Compliance in Women with Cocaine Dependence.” This research aims to determine if an exercise regimen will be a useful and feasible adjunct to residential substance-abuse treatment programs. People with substance-use disorders, Leila notes, are often in treatment numerous times because of frequent relapse, and they most often present with psychological co-morbidities such as depression. Because of other promising work on exercise’s stabilizing effects on depression and smoking cessation rates, she says that exercise may also serve as a helpful tool in addressing cocaine dependency co-morbidities, and thus may improve the overall chances of recovery. However, the mechanisms through which exercise might work are not fully understood at this time, and this is in part due to poor compliance rates with exercise protocols. “It’s really hard to get people to exercise!” says Leila. Specifically, her study addresses the compliance aspect of an exercise regimen by using a behavioral incentive program (participants in the experimental condition receive chances to win prizes for adherence to the regimen). Of Leila’s dissertation work, Svikis says, “I have been impressed by the fact Leila has never, amidst the challenges of doing her dissertation, lost sight of the overarching goal, which is to have research inform (and improve) clinical practice.”

Just before her 10 internship interviews in eight different states kicked off this past winter, Leila and her three sisters joined their mother for a memorable trip to Bangladesh, with a quick stop in Istanbul, Turkey. The Islams spent most of their trip with family in the capital city, Dhaka, but had the unique opportunity to travel to a village in the district of Magura where Leila’s great-grandparents were from. It was the very village where her mother was born and where generations of family members call home – a place that even her mother had not seen in 40 years. It was an emotional journey for her coming face-to-face with her origins and witnessing her mother’s joyful reunion with the many people and relics of her childhood. Though they had few creature comforts of Western living, the experience of retracing the journey their mother took as a child on her school holidays and eating sweets made from family recipes reinforced the already strong bonds between them.

Leila’s father, who passed away when Leila was a teenager, was a beloved physician of internal medicine in the Portsmouth area.

After the war that liberated East Pakistan from West Pakistan to form Bangladesh in 1972, Leila’s parents married and came to the United States for higher medical training. To honor their father and his commitment to serving those in need, the Islams built an outdoor clinic and courtyard waiting area for patients at the Centre for the Rehabilitation of the Paralysed in Bangladesh. In fact, the family attended a dedication ceremony and toured the facilities (Continued on Page 13)
(Continued from Page 12)

on their first day in the country. Leila, having visited the CRP previously in 1997, was inspired anew by the work done there and described it as the highlight of her trip. "It was just amazing to see the work that they do on a Third World budget and the ways they adapt services and equipment to meet the needs of their patients." For example, Leila noted that the villagers’ main venue for socialization in the area is squatting on the ground in circles, particularly as people gather around a fire. To avoid the isolation that someone in a standard wheelchair might feel sitting above others, the CRP builds wheelchairs that sit low to the ground for their patients. Furthermore, the wheelchairs are built on-site because it is too expensive to have them made elsewhere and because of the CRP’s dedication to the use of local materials and workers. “Patient-focused care like this has obviously stood out to me throughout the years,” Leila says. In fact, the CRP’s work was a primary driving force in her decision to become involved with VCU’s DaVinci Center to build a low-cost operating table for use in Third World countries, a project that earned top honors in the category of “Greatest Potential for Patient Benefit” at the Center for Integration of Medicine and Innovative Technology Congress poster contest in Boston in 2009.

As Leila looks ahead to completion of her internship and dissertation, she envisions herself in a career as a clinical and research member of a multidisciplinary team in a medical setting addressing both physical and mental aspects of patient functioning. Leila is passionate about the role of psychologists in health management and notes that such a large portion of patient adherence to regimens is behavioral. Leila credits her family and close friends for giving her the strength and focus to pursue her goals, saying, “I think your family is often where you get the idea that you can do anything you set your mind to.”

One particular family member is a daily source of strength for Leila and is a fellow clinical doctoral student — her youngest sister, Nadia. On sharing the graduate experience at VCU with Nadia, Leila says:

Though she is eight years younger than I am, we have been the best of friends for quite some time. I still find it amazing how she turned from the curly-haired kid I used to try to leave at home to one of the first people I turn to for anything. I tell everyone that the best way I could ever vouch for my positive experience at VCU is the fact that I "let" her come to school here!

In the very little time that she has outside of her busy life as a student and researcher, Leila enjoys running, traveling and cooking, though she enjoys eating more — a fact, she says, that will surprise no one who knows her! Having lived in Richmond for more than a decade, and in Virginia her entire life, she especially enjoys exploring the various mountains, bodies of water and urban areas the state offers and is already nostalgic for all that she will miss when she moves. She is a social person and enjoys time with her family and friends. In fact, because her mother still lives in the house Leila grew up in, she remains very close with friends from as far back as elementary school.

As Leila moves on to internship, the department wishes her well in this next exciting step in her studies. We take great pride in calling her one of our own and look with excitement toward her unique impact on the field of psychology as well as the patients’ lives she will invariably touch.

Jennifer Elswick is assistant to the department chair, director for strategic initiatives, publisher of the e-newsletter and president and CEO of the Leila Islam fan club!

Hannah Lund Receives Writing Prize for Undergraduate Work

A 2010 research paper authored by Hannah Lund, a doctoral student in the clinical psychology program, and her undergraduate adviser, J. Roxanne Prichard, Ph.D., was recently awarded the Stephan D. Weiss, Ph.D. Mental Health Fund for Higher Education Writing Prize. The fund seeks to encourage the development of creative initiatives that will enhance mental health service delivery to students and the award goes to a pivotal publication in college mental health. The title of the winning paper was "Sleep patterns and predictors of disturbed sleep in a large population of college students." The project, which was Lund’s undergraduate senior thesis, demonstrated that the insufficient sleep and irregular sleep patterns documented in younger adolescents also are present at alarming levels in the college student population.

Reference:

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