



FEBRUARY 2009

## Mike Wessells Receives Grant

Psychology Professor Mike Wessells recently received a \$10,000 grant from Psychology Beyond Borders to conduct research in Sri Lanka on how psychosocial assistance in the aftermath of armed conflict and natural disasters can inadvertently cause harm.

According to Wessells, "Some of the greatest suffering in these situations is psychological.

It is now widely recognized that psychosocial support is a fundamental part of the humanitarian response to people in emergency settings."

"Professor Wessells is one of Randolph-Macon's finest and his research efforts are an inspiration to us all," said R-MC president Robert Lindgren. "His scholarly work reflects his dedication and commitment to the College and to the betterment of humanity on a global scale."

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## J-term 2009: A World of Possibilities



Guatemala was one of the college's J-term 2009 destinations.

Nearly 200 R-MC students jetted off to 11 destinations as part of the college's January Term (J-term) travel-study program. Once again, J-term travelers sent blog entries back to R-MC. *Blogs*—web logs—are virtual "diaries" that enable travelers to share their adventures with the R-MC community and beyond. At R-MC we call them *J-term Diaries*.

Travel destinations for 2009 were: Haiti, South Africa, Australia, China, Brazil, Spain, India, Turkey, England, France and Guatemala.

Professors Alphine Jefferson, Ph.D. (history) and Reber Dunkel, Ph.D. (sociology) traveled with 20 of their students to Brazil during J-term. The group explored the cultural terrain of Rio de Janeiro, ascended the magnificent Pão de Açúcar (Sugar Loaf Mountain) and attended a workshop on capoeira (an Afro-Brazilian

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## Kelly Lambert Honored by Virginia General Assembly

**Kelly Lambert, Ph.D.**, the Macon and Joan Brock Professor of Psychology at Randolph-Macon College, was honored with a joint resolution by the Virginia General Assembly on Tuesday, February 10, 2009. House Joint Resolution No. 768 recognized Lambert for being named the 2008 Virginia Professor of the Year by the Carnegie Foundation and the Council for Advancement and Support of Education (CASE). The center aisle

presentation was led by Delegate Frank Hargrove (R-55th District) with support by Delegate Chris Peace (R-97th District), Delegate Chris Jones '80 (R-76th District) and Delegate David Marsden '70 (D-41st District). Lambert's family joined her during the presentation along with R-MC President Robert Lindgren and Provost William Johnston.

Lambert was presented with the distinguished Professor of the Year award during a luncheon and celebration recep-

tion in Washington, D.C. The Carnegie Foundation and CASE have been partners in offering the awards since 1981. Lambert is among winners from 44 states, the District of Columbia and Guam. Recipients were selected from a pool of nominated faculty members from colleges and universities throughout the country.

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*The Buzz: Helping Build Community Through Communication*

# YOUR NEWS

**James Doering** (music) performed the piano accompaniment for the 1914 silent film *Antony and Cleopatra* on Saturday, January 31 at Richmond's 6th Annual Italian Food & Film Festival. Doering reconstructed George Colburn's original score from surviving sources in the Library of Congress.

**Brian Turner** (political science) was recently elected secretary of the Assembly of State for the American Association of University Professors (AAUP) Conferences. The AAUP is a faculty membership organization that develops the standards and procedures that maintain quality education and academic freedom in colleges and universities in the United States.

**Michael Fischbach** (history), **David Brat** (econ/business), **Tom Badey** (political science) and **Scott London** (sociology) will give guest lectures at the Virginia Historical Society (VHS) as part of its *Great Decisions* lecture series. *Great Decisions* is America's longest-standing global affairs education group. Contact the VHS for more information: 804-358-4901.

**Amy deGraff** (romance languages) was awarded the prestigious *Palme Académiques* by the French government for the exceptional work she has

done to support and promote French language and culture in the United States.

**Kelly Lambert** (psychology), the Macon and Joan Brock Professor of Psychology, has been named the 2008 Virginia Professor of the Year by the Carnegie Foundation for the Advancement of Teaching and the Council for Advancement and Support of Education (CASE).

**David Brat** (econ/business) arranged for speakers for the January 2009 Richmond Association for Business Economics (RABE) "State of the Commonwealth" economic summit. Brat is the vice president of membership for RABE.

**Brian Gienza** (English) coordinated a conference in September 2008 titled "Lost Colonies: Ireland and the American South." The conference was sponsored by the Watson-Brown Foundation and took place in Thompson, Georgia at the home of a former governor.

**Gayla Mills'** (English) article, "Good Question! Philosophical Discussions Improve Thinking Skills," was published in the February issue of *Richmond Parents Monthly*.

## *Wessells continued from page 1*

Wessells co-chaired the InterAgency Standing Committee Guidelines on Mental Health and Psychosocial Support in Emergency Settings. "My goal, through this research, is to enable psychosocial humanitarian support to be most beneficial to people in their hour of need," says Wessells.

Wessells is the author of *Child Soldiers: From Violence to Protection* (Harvard University Press, 2006).

## R-MC Events Calendar

Wednesday, February 25

**Author, lawyer and journalist Mark Weston** will discuss his book, *Prophets and Princes: Saudi Arabia from Muhammad to the Present* at 6:30 p.m. in the Topping Room. A reception and book signing will follow in Washington Franklin Hall. RSVP to Charlotte Parrish at cparrish@rmc.edu.

Saturday, February 28

**The First Annual R-MC Habitat for Humanity Chili Cook-off** will take place from 10 a.m. to 2:00 p.m. at the R-MC fountain. Enjoy some chili and support R-MC's Habitat for Humanity organization.

Wednesday, March 4

The History Department hosts the **annual J. Earl Moreland Lecture on Asia** at 7:30 p.m. in the Washington room. Dr. Matthew Strecher's lecture is titled "Confessions of a Haruki Murakami Addict."

Thursday, March 5

R-MC will host "**An Evening with Newt Gingrich**" at 7:30 p.m. in Blackwell Auditorium. The event is sold out; however, **a limited number of student tickets are available**. Contact Charlotte Parrish at cparrish@rmc.edu.

Friday, March 6

**Amy deGraff will be honored at a reception** at 5:00 p.m. in the Trustees Room. deGraff was recently awarded the *Palme Académiques* by the French government. RSVP to Charlotte Parrish at cparrish@rmc.edu.

Wednesday, March 11

**The film "Running in High Heels"** will be shown at 7 p.m. in the Campus Center. For information, contact Shalise Bates-Pratt at sbatespratt@rmc.edu.

## The BUZZ on faculty member Michael Fenster, Environmental Studies

It seems unlikely that a geologist whose passion lies in studying the coast would come from the Midwest, but **Michael Fenster** (environmental studies) fits that exact description.

He grew up in St. Louis, Missouri, where he lived the typical Midwestern lifestyle, complete with plaid shirts, bluegrass instruments and soccer cleats. His interest in geology goes back to his childhood, but his fascination with coastal geology did not develop until he went to an eight-week summer undergraduate geology field camp at Boston University. While studying New England coastal geology, Fenster realized he could combine his love of the beach, outdoors and geology into a career.

"I get to study what I love for a living," he says. "You can't beat that."

Fenster got married while working on his Ph.D. at Boston University. He and his wife (who worked on her M.S. degree at Boston College) got through school by working as nannies for the editor of the *Boston Globe*. They were given free rent at the editor's

house in exchange for helping with the children.

After completing their studies, the couple moved to Charlottesville, Virginia where Fenster began working on his post-doctorate at UVA. The Fensters now have a daughter and two sons. The children are involved in lots of activities, from sports to dance to music.

"They're awesome," says Fenster. "We have a lot of fun."

Fenster, who currently serves as the co-chair of R-MC's Strategic Planning Committee, does make time to enjoy a few hobbies. He plays guitar, mandolin and cello, and sometimes tries to incorporate music into his classes. He also enjoys gardening, sports, painting and hiking.

Fenster has had several unique opportunities to travel, including excursions on a two-person submersible and a stint on an oil rig in the Gulf of Mexico. In 2006 he took a six-month leave to conduct research in Vienna and develop a new travel course on the geology of Austrian castles.



Fenster at Cedar Island with students

During his 2007 sabbatical, Fenster walked the length of all 14 barrier islands on Virginia's eastern shore and much of Assateague Island, a total of about 80 sandy miles.

Fenster explores the Chesapeake Bay with his students aboard the *Miss Jane*, the department of environmental studies' teaching and research boat. The chance to teach and learn in the outdoors is always something he enjoys.

"A bad day in the field is better than a good day in the lab," says Fenster.

## The BUZZ on staff member Kim Cressy, Office of International Education

Living and traveling abroad is a dream for some, but for **Kim Cressy** (Office of International Education) it is a



Cressy traveled to India in 2008.

dream come true. Cressy lights up when asked about her international experiences. She has interned with a cross-cultural consulting firm in Germany, taught English in Mexico, driven on the Grand Trunk Road in Pakistan and met with genocide survivors in Rwanda.

Cressy also studied abroad in Austria before returning to the States. After completing her studies in Boston, Cressy moved to Germany on a government scholarship. Drawn to Latin American cultures, she later spent four months backpacking through South America. "I wanted to prove that a woman can do that type of traveling on her own," Cressy says. "It's one of the accomplishments in which I take the most pride."

Cressy then moved to Oaxaca, Mexico, where she taught English. Sitting in a movie theater one evening, she remembers observing "the idyllic picture of the U.S. that the film portrayed and seeing why so many people in that theater wished they could get there." That was when she decided to move back to the States.

"I thought about the privileges I had by being born in the U.S. As a citizen of one of the most powerful countries in the world, it dawned on me that the best place to increase intercultural understanding and tolerance was from within my country's borders. I wanted to make sure more U.S. Americans knew what was going on in the world."

Cressy returned to the U.S. and earned her master's degree in international education from the School for International Training in Brattleboro, Vermont. In 2005, she accepted a position as assistant director of international education at R-MC, and in 2008 she entered a doctorate program in educational policy and administration. For Cressy, working at R-MC has been an invaluable learning experience. She assists international students with immigration and cultural matters and encourages and prepares students to study abroad. "Working at R-MC has allowed me to establish strong connections with students, staff and faculty."

## J-term continued from Page 1

martial art) in Salvador, Bahia. "J-term travel places our students in cross-cultural situations on a personal level," says Dunkel. "That interaction is a mutually beneficial experience in learning about the differences and common bonds among people."

An important component of many J-term courses is *service learning*, a teaching and learning strategy that meshes community service with instruction to enrich the learning experience, teach civic responsibility and strengthen communities.

R-MC students who traveled to Guatemala built ventilated stoves as part of their service learning. The leading cause of mortality in Mayan communities is upper respiratory infections, which is linked to the practice of cooking over open fires in unventilated homes. Ventilated stoves are healthier, more fuel efficient and better for the environment. Erica Horseman '11 described in a blog entry how she felt after helping build stoves in Guatemala:

*February 16, 2009*

*My group was building a stove for a church and the members of the church were right there with us, digging through the cement! We were able to finish our stove today...it was really fulfilling to see how grateful the people were.*

You can read all of the 2009 J-term Diaries by visiting [www.rmc.edu](http://www.rmc.edu).

## The BUZZ on this month's department:

### History

-- Submitted by Tom Porter, chair of the History Department

#### **Department Responsibilities:**

The Department of History includes eight full-time faculty, two adjuncts plus a Classicist who teaches history. Todd Munson teaches Japanese and Asian Studies as well as history, and we are pleased to have first-year faculty Anne Throckmorton and Pat Watkinson as colleagues.

#### **What are the recent accomplishments in your area?**

We registered 26 majors for graduation in May 2009, plus five minors; in total, the department taught 929 students during 2007-08. In the midst of a world undergoing rapid change, there is a need to understand the process of change. Historians study that process in the only societies where it can be fully observed: those of the past. In addition, the history department aims to train students to think critically, research effectively and write lucidly.

The history department looks forward to an exciting spring 2009, with diverse general education and major courses and co-curricular activities.

Mathias Bergmann and Mark Malvasi will represent the department at the Majors/Minors Fair on February 27, while Alphine Jefferson and Michael Fischbach are working with Anthony Keitt on programming for Black History Month.

The history department will co-sponsor several Women's History events in March, including the annual Empowerment Luncheon and a March 11 screening of the film "Running in High Heels." Anne Throckmorton is organizing a multi-disciplinary event for Women's History Month around the documentary "The Pill," which chronicles the history of the birth control pill. The event takes place on March 10.

Finally, the history department is pleased that Todd Munson and Tom Porter are involved in organizing the 22nd annual Moreland Lecture on Asia, which takes place on March 4, while Mathias Bergmann and Pat Watkinson are again planning a program for Native American Month, slated for November 2009.

## Welcome

A warm welcome to R-MC's newest faculty members: Jonathan Allen (biology), Amy Armenia (sociology), Brandon Bucy (physics), Timothy Brown (religious studies), Peter Capuano (English), David Clark (math), Marisa Cull (English), Brian Ciemza (English), Amanda Glover (sociology), Emily Golden (chemistry), Ellen Gonzalez (education), Kevin Harding (music), Sarah Huber (biology), Mary Elena Johnson (Asian studies), Roland Karnatz (music), Andrew McEvoy (music), Jeremy McIntire (music), Anna Minich (education), Mary Ann Owens (journalism), Robert Rankin (political science), Patricia Reagan (romance languages), Leslie Roberson (education), Ted Salins (film studies), Anne Throckmorton (history) and Patricia Watkinson (history).  
Welcome back to Mitzi Batterson (biology).

A warm welcome to R-MC's newest staff members: Will Aycock (development), Sarah Burgess (career counseling), Ashley Crockett (psychology), Juan Carlos Castillo Gonzalez (Amity Scholar intern), Ashley Gilroy (athletics), Elyse Hall (admissions), Cary Hastings (admissions) Zachary Nedbalski (athletics), Nancy Phillips (advancement) and Caitlyn Provost (admissions).

### Editor's Note

*The Buzz* is back! Look for this monthly newsletter on the third Friday of each month.

The purpose of this publication is to enhance internal communication among faculty and staff. We welcome story ideas and news about your professional accomplishments. Please e-mail information about any honors, key presentations, awards or grants to Pam Cox at [pamelacox@rmc.edu](mailto:pamelacox@rmc.edu).

In addition, we would love to hear your feedback regarding ways to continually improve *The Buzz* and hope you enjoy reading this newsletter.

Pam Cox  
Editor