



Nov. 2009

## PBK Chapter Receives National Award

Randolph-Macon College's Zeta Chapter of Virginia was selected by the Phi Beta Kappa (PBK) Senate to receive the Triennial award for the most outstanding chapter at a liberal arts college in the United States. The chapter was recognized at the Triennial Convention for PBK on Saturday, October 3, 2009 in Austin, Texas.

Randolph-Macon College Professor Mark Malin, Ph.D. (modern languages), the secretary of R-MC's PBK chapter, traveled to



(Continued on page 2)

## Environmental Studies Program Receives Award

Randolph-Macon College's Environmental Studies Program has received the Urban Forestry Award from The Virginia Association of Soil and Water Conservation Districts. The award will be formally presented on December 7, 2009 at the Sheraton Richmond West Hotel in Richmond, Virginia. Professors Chas. Gowan, Ph.D. and Michael Fenster, Ph.D. (environmental studies) will accept the award on behalf of the Environmental Studies Program.

"We are really honored to receive this award, and gladly accept it on behalf of all the students who have worked so hard over the years to improve and protect the environment in the Ashland area," says Gowan. Fenster added, "The award demonstrates that the environmental studies problem-solving curriculum enables our students to combine excellent learning opportunities with real-world results."

The purpose of the award is to give recognition to those groups who are leaders in environmental protection and education. The Hanover/Caroline Soil and Water Conservation District nominated R-MC's Environmental Studies Program for the award. State-level award winners will compete in a national competition.

R-MC received the award for its work restoring the natural setting and improving the water quality of the Mechumps Creek watershed. The project began in 2003, when Gowan and his students developed a Watershed Management Plan for the creek. "This plan was quite a proactive approach at the time, to voluntarily develop a community-supported management plan that had buy-in from government, business and citizens," says Gowan. The plan was developed by students enrolled in Gowan's First-Year Experience (FYE) course, "A River Runs Through

(Continued on page 4)

## Office of International Education Hosts Week of Activities

Randolph-Macon College celebrated International Education Week (IEW) November 16-20. The annual event included a week full of programs designed to help the R-MC community explore their cross-cultural competency as global citizens. This year's theme was "Think Globally, Act Locally: Foreign Policy, Food & Folklore." Events included a panel discussion, lectures, movies and more.



Above: Kendall Davis '13 at the Passport Around the World event. Left: A panel discussion featured three R-MC faculty members and a U.S. State Department diplomat.

INSIDE: Your News Faculty & Staff Spotlights Department Spotlight and More!

The Buzz: Helping Build Community Through Communication

# YOUR NEWS

*Greg Daugherty* (classics) published in the fall 2009 International Journal of Comic Art an article titled *The Greatest Story Ever Drawn! Cleopatra in American Comics*, demonstrating once again that he is the leading authority on the figure of Cleopatra in popular culture.

*Gregg Hillmar* (arts) recently celebrated the second-edition printing of his book, *Light Plot Deconstructed*. Hillmar developed proven methodologies for drafting light plots over his more than 15 years of experience using Vectorworks.

*Megan Hodge* (library) was awarded a \$2500 scholarship from the Virginia Library Association on October, 30, 2009.

*Kimberly Dutton '11*, *Jennifer Shotwell* (French and language lab), *Lynda Wright* (library) and *Laurie Preston* (library) presented a program, "Capturing the Voices of

Randolph-Macon College" at the Oral History Association annual conference in Louisville, KY on October 16, 2009.

*Alphine Jefferson* (history) served as commentator for the program.

*M. Thomas Inge* (humanities) recently learned that Oxford American magazine conducted a poll among 134 critics, academics, and writers to determine the ten best Southern novels and the ten best Southern non-fiction books of all time. Included in the final list of titles that were nominated in the non-fiction category and that received one or more votes was *The New Encyclopedia of Southern Culture: Literature*, edited by Inge.

*Jack Trammell* (disability services) was named president-elect of VA AHEAD, the Association for Higher Education and Disability. The organization is a primary group in the Disability Rights Movement as it pertains to higher education.

## (PBK continued from Page 1)

Austin to attend the Triennial Council of PBK and to accept the award on behalf of the college. "This is a real distinction for the chapter that reflects the hard work we do to keep the chapter active," says Malin. "The reason we received the award is that there is a dedicated leadership team and an active membership who participate in events, and this is what the Committee on Chapters notes. Ultimately this is important because students at R-MC know what Phi Beta Kappa is, and we have remarkable success in our acceptance rate: 100% of the students elected to and offered induction into the organization accept."

## Library Receives Books from Nippon Foundation

R-MC's McGraw-Page Library was selected as one of this year's recipients of "100 Books for Understanding Contemporary Japan" from The Nippon Foundation.

"We are thrilled to add the Nippon Foundation donation to our circulating collection. The titles in this gift will enhance our excellent historical holdings in Asian studies and promote a deeper understanding of contemporary Japan," says Lynda Wright, assistant professor and library liaison to the history department.



Friday, December 4 -  
Thursday, December 10

*A Christmas Carol* by **Marilyn Mattys** will be performed in R-MC's Cobb Theatre. In R-MC's 20th annual edition of this classic, student, staff and faculty actors as well as local children and residents join talents to launch the holiday season with this favorite that draws families year after year to delight in Dickens' heart-warming tale of charity, mercy, forbearance and benevolence. Call (804) 752-7316 for reservations and ticket rates.

Friday, December 4

**The Ujima Gospel Choir** is a Randolph-Macon College multicultural organization. Come listen to the 35-member choir as they perform songs of inspiration and hope in this free concert at **8:30 p.m. in Duncan Memorial Methodist Church**. Call (804) 752-3712 for more information.

Sunday, December 6

**The R-MC Winter Choral Concert** will take place at **7 p.m. in Duncan Memorial Methodist Church**. The R-MC Concert Choir and Chamber Singers will present music of the Reformation and Counter-Reformation, as well as music by composers from Germany, Austria, Hungary and Switzerland. Call (804) 752-3798 for more information.



## The BUZZ on faculty member Joan Conners, Communication Studies

Communication Studies Professor **Joan Conners** teaches courses in mass communication and media. Every day brings something new for Conners, and that's exactly how she likes it.

Conners earned her B.A. in broadcasting and electronic communications at Marquette University and her Master's degree from Marquette in mass communications. She earned her Ph.D. in mass communications from the University of Minnesota.

The position at Randolph-Macon couldn't have come at a better time for Conners. Her husband's job was moving him from Denver, where they had been living for some time, to Richmond. Conners was working as an adjunct professor at the University of Richmond while also working part-time at R-MC. She loved the R-MC campus. "I really got a sense of community here," she says.

Soon after, a full-time position at R-MC opened up. "It was as if the stars

just aligned," she says. "I landed in the right place at the right time in my life."

In addition to her other courses, Conners has taught several First-Year Experience courses throughout the years, including one that combined criminology and media in a "CSI"-type course. "R-MC gives me a great opportunity to interact with students in a meaningful way," says Conners. "Everything I teach and everything I do at R-MC has been significant to me."

Conners is a huge fan of television and movies. "I will try and watch any new show at least once," she says, laughing. "But if it turns out I don't like it, at least I can say I gave it the benefit of the doubt."

Conners also tries to stay connected to current trends involving media and communications. If she finds some research particularly intriguing or interesting, she'll bring it into her classroom discussions. She enjoys this type of "free research" and



Joan Conners

loves when her students get involved with what she has found.

Conners is also a hardcore Green Bay Packers fan. She is "dismayed that Brett Favre can't stay retired," she says jokingly. "If he wasn't ready to quit, he should have stayed with my team!" She grew up in Wisconsin and the Packers is her all-time favorite team. "I went to my first real game in December 2007," Conners says proudly. "They lost but it didn't matter. I was there to see them in person. That was so cool!"

*Chris Lambert '10*

## The BUZZ on staff member Grant Azdell, Dean of Students

Randolph-Macon College's Peele Hall features hard-working, dedicated staff and administrators. **Grant Azdell**, R-MC's dean of students, works to oversee student services on campus.

Before coming to the college, Azdell served as associate vice president of student affairs at Lynchburg College, Virginia for 10 years. He earned his bachelor's degree from Lynchburg and his master's degree from Vanderbilt before attending the University of Virginia, where he is



Grant Azdell

completing his doctorate. His decision to come to R-MC was influenced by the "beautiful campus, the good professional opportunities, a dedicated staff and the engaging students,"

Azdell was involved in emergency medical services for over 15 years while in Lynchburg. In fact, he was EMS Chief for over 10 of those years. In situations where EMS has been there for someone in need, "You feel like you've made a difference," says Azdell. "That's worthwhile for me."

Azdell's day includes "many meetings," but his work does not stop there. He works with the student affairs staff while addressing issues concerning students and the general R-MC community. He strives to remain proactive in his work with students as he partners with them to try to make the campus a better place to live and learn.

Azdell spends a great deal of time with his wife, Jane, and two kids, 14-year-old

Andrew and 11-year-old Caroline. "We enjoy outdoor activities," Azdell says. "That can be everything from attending a sporting event to hiking." He has tried his hand at numerous hobbies and activities. "I tried to be a golfer...but I always lose the golf balls," he says.

There are always days when things don't go according to plan. "When I don't feel good," he admits, "I dig into the 'Thank You' file." In this folder, Azdell keeps positive feedback he has received from students. Azdell was encouraged by a former boss to keep such a folder in times of need. Azdell himself has sent out personalized 'thank you' letters, most recently to his fifth-grade teacher when she retired.

"It's important to acknowledge those who make an impact," he says, "whether it's from something that you learned or a compliment you've received." Azdell's file is a good reminder that he truly does make a difference in the lives of R-MC students.

*Chris Lambert '10*

## Award continued from Page 1

It,” which was team-taught with R-MC Professor Lauren Bell, Ph.D. (political science). One goal in the management plan was to repair damage to the creek ecosystem caused by development in Ashland. To help achieve this goal, Gowan received a \$40,000 grant from the National Fish and Wildlife Foundation (NFWF) to install rain gardens on campus. Students then turned their attention to repairing the damaged creek itself. A preliminary analysis of the feasibility of restoring Mechumps Creek was performed by students enrolled in the FYE course, “Repairing Nature,” which was team-taught with Professor Reber Dunkel, Ph.D. (sociology).

“The Town of Ashland became the students’ ‘client,’” says Gowan. “They convinced the Town to proceed with the restoration work—even at an estimated cost of \$300,000.” The Town pledged the first \$100,000 towards the project, and then Gowan obtained an additional \$130,000 in grants from the NFWF. Some of the grant writing was done by students in a special course devoted to the topic and taught by R-MC Professor Jeter “Bud” Watson, J.D. (environmental studies). The funds now available are sufficient to begin the first phase of the restoration work, which will begin in the spring of 2010.

## The BUZZ on this month's department: The Arts Department

-- Submitted by Joe Mattys, chair of the Arts Department

**Gregg Hillmar** (drama) did a half-day professional development workshop at the USITT-Chesapeake Expo on September 19. He teamed up with John McKernon, a Broadway lighting designer, to discuss the use of Vectorworks and McKernon’s software, Lightwright, the leading lighting paperwork software used in theatre. The respective pieces of software are designed to work interactively. The two designers repeated the workshop in November at LDI, the world’s largest lighting convention, in Orlando. Hillmar was recently re-elected treasurer of USITT-Chesapeake Section (United States Institution for Theatre Technology).

**Jim Doering** (music) presented a paper in September at a joint meeting of the Capital and Southeast chapters of the American Musicological Society. The paper was titled *Curing Mahleritis and Other Philharmonic Ailments: Arthur Judson, Clarence Mackay, and the 1923 Fix*. The conference took place at Christopher Newport University and included musicologists from colleges and uni-

versities throughout the mid-Atlantic region.

**Chris Ryder** (music and director of choral activities) returns for his second season as music director of the Fredericksburg Community Chorus. The chorus annually presents Handel’s *Messiah* with chamber orchestra. This year marks the chorus’s 40th season. (Performances are 7 p.m. Friday, December 4 and 2 p.m. Saturday, December 5 at Fredericksburg Baptist Church, 1019 Princess Anne Street, Fredericksburg VA 22401. Admission is free.)

**Andrew McEvoy** (instructor of guitar) and **Chris Ryder** presented a faculty recital on September 19 in the St. Ann’s Performing Arts Building. The program included works for voice and guitar, as well as solo guitar repertoire. The musical selections represented music ranging from the 1600s through the 20th century, and included music of Great Britain, France, Spain, South America and Mexico.

## R-MC Volleyball: ODAC Champs!

Behind 15 kills from Tournament Most Outstanding Player Raena Winton '11, the R-MC volleyball team claimed its first ODAC Championship in school history with a 3-1 victory over Roanoke. The team capped its 2009 regular season with three wins at the Emory University Halloween Tournament. The Yellow Jackets defeated teams from LaGrange, Birmingham Southern and Berry to finish the regular season 25-6.

Congratulations, Jackets!



Randolph-Macon  
College  
Ashland, Virginia

**The Buzz** is published monthly for the faculty and staff of Randolph-Macon College. **Please submit your information, news, suggestions and calendar items via e-mail to Pam Cox at [pamelacox@rmc.edu](mailto:pamelacox@rmc.edu).**