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Welcome from Department Head Keith Campbell

Welcome to the inaugural edition of the UGA Psychology Department Newsletter. The purpose of this newsletter is to promote a sense of connection among our current students, staff, faculty, alumni and other supporters by getting us up to speed on the latest news from the Psychology Department. We will introduce you to some of our outstanding students and other members of the UGA psychology community, both old and new. Finally, we will shine a spotlight on some of the fascinating research going on in the department. If you have any news to share please drop our editor, Erin Colbert-White, a line at colbere@uga.edu.

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Research Spotlight

Dorothy Fragaszy's Monkey Lab



Department News

Melissa Bright (Life-Span/Developmental) was awarded a National Science Foundation Graduate Research Fellowship. Her research integrates physiological and self-report measures of stress to examine such issues as the impact of prenatal maternal stress on infant temperament and cognition.

Dr. Lillian Eby (Applied) recently signed a contract to co-author a book project titled *Personal Relationships: The Effect of Supervisory, Co-worker, Team, Customer and Nonwork Exchanges on Employee Attitudes, Behavior, and Well-being*.

Dr. Rheeda Walker (Clinical) was recently awarded a second renewal via the National Institute of Health Loan Repayment Program and will be able to



Thanks to Dorothy Fragaszy and her graduate students, the capuchin monkeys in UGA's monkey colony have a new way to voice their opinions: laser pointers. Recently two unique projects in Dr. Fragaszy's lab required the monkeys to use a joystick-controlled laser pointer as a communicative device to select objects out of reach. The monkeys can move the laser pointer anywhere in their indoor space, across floors, walls and ceilings to contact a desirable target that can be affixed to any location in the room. According to graduate student Brian Stone, laser pointer training allows researchers to investigate the interaction of distance with spatial reasoning, memory, choice and other variables in a controlled, laboratory setting.

For his master's thesis, Stone gave the monkeys a three-dimensional choice task (quality of food item, size of food item, distance of food item from monkey) and recorded the sequence in which each subject selected and received the eight food items with the laser pointer. As predicted, the subjects

spontaneously pointed in a consistent rank-ordered fashion, demonstrating a significant preference for higher-quality, larger foods and by-passing closer foods in favor of larger and/or higher-quality foods that were farther away. In another experiment, second-year graduate student Allison Eury is using the laser pointer paradigm to simulate a traveling salesman problem, where the monkeys choose travel routes to multiple distant goals (pieces of food laid out on the floor in front of them). This task parallels the problem wild monkeys face in navigating efficiently between feeding areas, for example. Dr. Fragaszy says, "Giving our monkeys a way to communicate their interest in and preferences for objects that are beyond reach has opened up many new methods to answer questions about their reasoning processes in a three-dimensional space. It is also fun for them—the monkeys seem to enjoy having us wait on them!"

Laser pointer training allows researchers to investigate the interaction of distance with spatial reasoning, memory, choice, and other variables in a controlled, laboratory setting.

continue as a National Center on Minority Health Disparities scholar. She is also a co-investigator for a \$4.5 million National Institute on Drug Abuse-funded project titled, "A Transdisciplinary Prevention Center Focused on African-American Families."

The UGA chapter of **Psi Chi** will be hosting the 33rd annual convention of the Behavioral Sciences in March 2010. To stay up to date on Psi Chi's events and announcements, please visit www.uga.edu/psichi

New research on the department's history was just published by **Roger Thomas** in the *American Journal of Psychology*. UGA's own, Professor Ludwig Reinhold Geissler was principal founder of the *Journal of Applied Psychology* and was its chief editor for the first four years. The American Psychological Association acquired it in the mid-1940s, and the *Journal of Applied Psychology* continues to be a major journal today. Geissler, who appears to have been the first bona fide psychologist at UGA, began establishing the journal while he was on the UGA faculty in 1916, although by the time the first issue appeared in March 1917, he had relocated to Clark University in Worcester, Mass.

Thomas, R. K. (2009). Ludwig Reinhold Geissler and the founding of the *Journal of Applied Psychology*. *American Journal of Psychology*,



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Profiles

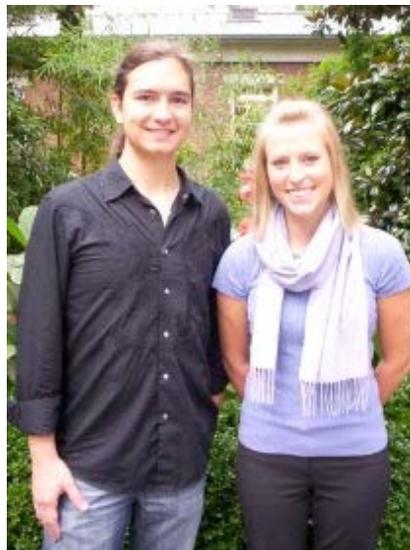
Staff: Tracey Villaveces

If you're an undergraduate psychology major, chances are you know **Tracey Villaveces**, the undergraduate advisor, very well! What you may not know is that when she isn't advising students, Villaveces is an avid golfer and traveler, highlighting Mexico as her and her husband, Alvaro's, favorite relaxation destination. She has three college-aged children, and has recently taken on the role of mom for her two-year-old nephew. Villaveces considers the undergraduate advisor position a job that was made "just for her." She enjoys helping incoming and current psychology majors, and after almost 19 years of service to the UGA psychology department, she feels very fortunate to have made such an impact on so many students' lives. Even if you're not an undergraduate, stop by room 219 and meet Villaveces. She always has candy, hand sanitizer and a great story to tell!



Graduate Students: Benjamin Austin and Taylor Sparks

Benjamin Austin is a fourth-year student in the Cognitive/Experimental program from Augusta. Since earning his M.S. in 2007 from UGA, Austin's accomplishments have included such prestigious recognitions as the Dean's Award and a Dissertation Completion Award from the Graduate School and being named an ARCS Foundation Scholar. Currently he is writing his dissertation prospectus, an fMRI study investigating practice-based neural plasticity among normal and schizophrenia subjects. The goal of this study is to help determine whether engagement in daily executive functioning tasks can reverse the known prefrontal cortex deficits associated with



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Faculty Spotlight Anne Shaffer



1. What is your favorite thing about being at UGA?

I genuinely enjoy my interactions with colleagues and students; there are great people here. In particular, the graduate students and undergraduates who work in my lab are a fantastic source of hard-working help, new ideas and entertainment. I also love being in a town with a high concentration of great restaurants, music, and arts—there's always more to do than I can manage to fit in!

2. What is the overarching theme of your research?

My research focuses on outcomes of family stress and dysfunction, which includes different forms of maltreatment and neglect. I approach these issues from a developmental psychopathology perspective, meaning that I look for factors that can increase the risk for negative outcomes, or can protect against the development of problems. Also consistent with a developmental psychopathology perspective, I'm interested in investigating these questions at multiple levels of analysis, to look at how experiences like family stress and maltreatment "get under

schizophrenic patients.

Taylor Sparks is in her third year in the Applied (I-O) program from Greensboro, N.C. Along with serving as president of the Applied Psychology Student Association, Sparks has been involved in many projects, including working for the Institute for Leadership Advancement's Leonard Scholars program in the Terry College of Business, first-authoring a peer-reviewed article on leadership competency with respect to the attacks on 9/11, and then participating in the SIOF Annual Conference in April where she took home the Top Poster Recognition Award. All the while, Sparks is preparing to defend her thesis, entitled "Navigating the Leadership Labyrinth: Perceived Career Outcomes for Men and Women."

Undergraduate Students: Nathan Raley and Holly Barmore

Nathan Raley ('10) is a pre-dental psychology major from Lawrenceville. As a Center for Undergraduate Research Opportunities (CURO) scholar, Raley worked in the UGA Child and Family Emotions Lab with Dr. Cynthia Suveg collecting data on families' emotion regulation, anxiety, and social functioning. His Honors thesis assessed how parent-child quality of relationship and parental emotional socialization affected youths' psychosocial functioning, and the work was presented at the CURO 2009 Symposium. Currently, Raley holds executive positions in the UGA Pre-dental Club and UGA Habitat for Humanity. With all this, he still finds time to play bass guitar for local band Vanillin. Before applying to dental school, Raley hopes to be accepted as a Fulbright Scholar to extend his Honors thesis work to include a cross-cultural sample in China.



Holly Barmore ('10) is a pre-med psychology major and biology minor from Thomson. Also a CURO scholar, Barmore works on two projects in Dr. Jennifer McDowell's lab; one assesses the effects of exercise on executive control in overweight children, and the other uses neuroimaging methods to investigate the manner in which schizophrenics' brains respond to practice of eye-movement tasks. Barmore's list of volunteer and community service is extensive and includes work at the VistaCare Hospice center, TutoringZone, Athens Church Waumba Land Preschool Ministries and philanthropic work with her sorority Kappa Alpha Theta. Upon graduating, Barmore plans to attend medical school and later to practice family medicine in medically underserved areas.

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Final Thought

Our construction site (before) is now a beautiful and functional state of the art seminar and conference room (after) that is already serving the department well! Come visit

the skin," and can be measured through biological aspects of reactivity.

3. What is something unique about you?

In addition to psychology, I have a background in dance, and I performed with various modern dance groups throughout college and afterward, which included several collaborations with visual artists and musicians. Just recently, I started taking a modern dance class again, though just for fun this time around.

4. What made you choose your field of study?

I've been interested in psychology since taking a course in high school, so it wasn't such a surprise to declare it as an undergrad major. Before graduate school, I had the opportunity to work on research projects involving child maltreatment and high-risk families, and I became interested in why some individuals were able to do well despite experiencing significant adversity. This led me to read more about resilience, and about developmental psychopathology in general, and it quickly became clear that these were the areas I wanted to learn more about. I chose a graduate program that included training in both clinical psychology and developmental psychology so that I could gain an understanding of both normal and abnormal development, which is important for seeing how mental disorders and other problems develop in specific contexts.

5. What is your favorite movie and why?

This is a hard question! I love all kinds of movies, but I have a soft spot for teen movies—a few years ago, a colleague and I developed an undergraduate course called "Exploring Adolescent Development through Film," and it was really interesting to apply academic theories of adolescence to their depictions in feature films and documentaries. I also love 80s movies that include cheesy dance montages—Footloose, Dirty Dancing, Girls Just Want

and see for yourself.



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to Have Fun. And Harvey is a long-standing favorite.

6. If you weren't a psychologist, what would you be? A librarian; specifically, either a reference librarian or children's librarian.

7. What's one piece of advice you can give to undergraduate psychology majors?

If you're thinking about grad school, start planning early—getting relevant work or volunteer experience, developing contacts with professors to write letters of recommendation, etc. If it's getting late in your undergrad career and you're not sure what to do next, don't approach grad school as a default option because you're not sure what else to do. Graduate training can be a lot of hard work, so it helps to be sure it's what you want to do before you start. And if you want to get a graduate degree but don't feel ready to go right after undergrad, don't hesitate to take a year (or a few) to work, build your application, and clarify your goals. I took four years between undergrad and starting graduate school, and that time was very valuable for both figuring out my career goals and avoiding the potential burn-out of attending school for 22 years straight!

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