

Kent State University Psychology Newsletter

# ● THE PSYCHE

## Greetings from the Chair

Hello, alumni and friends! I hope this edition of the *Psyche* finds you well. Since I last wrote, we have many new faces in the department. In this issue you will meet three new faculty members who joined our department this fall: Dr. Christopher Flessner, Dr. Aaron Jasnow and Dr. Mary Beth Spitznagel. We have also hired a fourth new faculty member, Dr. Amy Sato, who will be joining the faculty in January. Look for more information about Sato in the next issue of the *Psyche*. As we continue to build the department, we are currently conducting a faculty search for a health psychologist, a position we seek to fill this year.

Just as we welcomed many new colleagues to the department, we also said goodbye to old friends. After decades of helping to make the department a better place, staff members Pat John and Kathy Floody have left to pursue retirement, and we wish them well in this new phase of their lives.

One of the high points of last year was seeing so many of our alums at the Festschrift the department hosted for Dave Riccio last May. The Festschrift was a resounding success, with 29 of Riccio's former Ph.D. students in attendance. We heard scientific papers delivered by his former Ph.D. students during the day and shared stories about Riccio at social gatherings in the evenings. In this issue, we feature the Festschrift events, including several photos of the many students – current and past – who returned to Kent to pay tribute to their mentor.

Did you know that we now have art in Kent Hall? Thanks to the generosity of an anonymous donor, our walls now boast several museum-quality art pieces that were given to us in honor of the late Lloyd G. Butler. A decorated war hero, highly successful businessman and KSU alum, Butler's life will serve as an inspiration to KSU students for many generations to come. You can read about these art pieces and the remarkable man they honor in this issue of the *Psyche*.

In this issue we also shine a spotlight on Dr. John Gunstad's ground-breaking research on the cognitive benefits of weight loss following bariatric surgery. Gunstad's findings received widespread media attention in news outlets nationwide, including a guest appearance on "ABC's World News Tonight."

As we have done in the past, this issue features "In the Loop", an in depth interview with a former Ph.D. alum. However, I'd also like to call your attention to a new column that we hope to start with the next edition of the *Psyche* entitled "News From Our Grads". We envision this column as a place where we can post the personal milestones and professional accomplishments of our grads each year. So, please don't forget to send us your latest news – we look forward to hearing from you.

In closing, we hope you enjoy this edition of the *Psyche*. Once again, we invite you to keep in touch, as we always enjoy receiving updates about the activities and accomplishments of our greatest source of pride, our alumni.

For up-to-date information on the happenings in the department, be sure to check out our website at <http://dept.kent.edu/psychology/>.

Maria Zaragoza



## Research in the News

Over the past year, research conducted by Associate Professor John Gunstad, Ph.D. captured national attention which led to several print, Internet and television stories, including an appearance on the "ABC World News Tonight." Gunstad is a clinical health and neuropsychologist who reported findings from a study demonstrating yet another health benefit to getting a handle on one's body weight. Specifically, losing weight may in fact help restore cognitive functioning such as recognition memory and learning.



Gunstad and his colleagues assessed overweight adults seeking gastric bypass surgery on a battery of neurocognitive measures and found that approximately one quarter of the sample showed mild impairment on some cognitive indices. Following the surgery and the subsequent weight loss, the post-surgery participants showed normalization of cognitive functioning when compared to participants who had not yet had the surgery or perhaps declined to have the surgery.

This suggests that the reduction in body weight – on average 20 to 25 pounds – may have improved brain functioning as measured by cognitive tests. Given these tantalizing findings, Gunstad and his colleagues are following up on this study to see if the benefits of weight loss through other means such as diet and exercise produce similar benefits. Gunstad joined Kent State in 2005, following graduate study at Ohio University and postdoctoral work at Brown University. From the start of his time here, the only thing faster than his meteoric rise in stature is the rapidity with which he speaks. Still, all signs are pointing to this work representing the very beginning of many features in the pages of the *Psyche*.

## Meet the New Faculty

*In the past year, we have been very excited to welcome three new faculty members to the department.*

### Beth Spitznagel



Beth Spitznagel completed her Ph.D. in clinical psychology at Ohio University, and internship as well as post-doctoral training in neuropsychology at Brown Medical School in Providence, R.I. Looking to escape the traffic of the east coast, Spitznagel and her husband, John Gunstad, first moved to the Kent area in 2005. Prior to joining the faculty at Kent State, Spitznagel served as director of neuropsychology at Summa Hospitals in Akron, where in addition to running a clinical service, conducting research and teaching medical students and psychiatry residents, she opened new inpatient and outpatient neuropsychology training opportunities for Kent State graduate students.

As a clinical neuropsychologist, her research focuses on neurocognitive implications of medical and neurologic disease, with particular emphasis on older adults. One current line of inquiry examines metabolic mechanisms, including how changes in insulin sensitivity, hormones and physical fitness might improve memory and other thinking skills in older adults.

Originally from Cleveland, Spitznagel is happy to be settled near her old stomping grounds. In her spare time, she contributes her loud pipes to the Psychology Department band, "Wire Mother." She also likes to stay active by circuit training and gardening, and enjoys regular walks with her husband and the family dog, Oreo.

### Chris Flessner



Chris Flessner received his doctoral degree in clinical psychology from the University of Wisconsin-Milwaukee and recently completed his postdoctoral training at Brown Medical School. From a clinical research perspective, he is interested in understanding risk factors implicated in the pathogenesis and treatment of childhood anxiety and related disorders, particularly obsessive-compulsive disorder (OCD), hair pulling disorder (trichotillomania), and Tourette's syndrome.

He is especially interested in examining the role of neurocognitive deficits and family functioning in these disorders. In turn, he hopes to translate these findings into more efficacious therapeutic interventions for these and related forms of child psychopathology.

Flessner recently published an article in *Depression and Anxiety*, examining the impact of neuropsychological functioning on treatment

outcome in pediatric OCD. He and his colleagues found that "treatment responders" and "non-responders" differed significantly at baseline with regards to their performance on the percent recall subtest of the Rey Complex Figure task. In general, children who performed worse on this task were less likely to respond well to treatment. This finding was particularly true with respect to those receiving cognitive-behavior therapy, the most efficacious behavioral intervention for children with OCD. Flessner's future research will attempt to examine these and related findings further.

When he is not teaching or conducting clinical research, Flessner enjoys spending time with his family – wife, Amy, and newborn son, Landon. Flessner is an avid sports fan and supporter of the Green Bay Packers, Milwaukee Brewers and Bucks, and Wisconsin Badgers football and basketball teams. He and his wife are excited to be back home in the Midwest.

## Aaron Jasnow

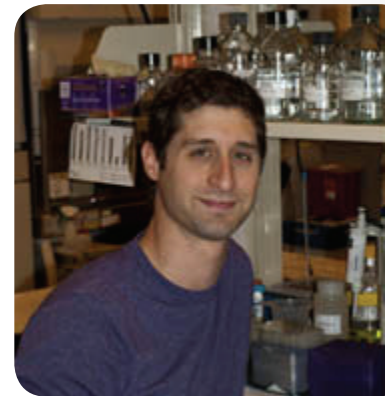
Aaron Jasnow completed his Ph.D. in psychology with an emphasis in behavioral neuroscience at Georgia State University's Center for Behavioral Neuroscience. He then completed his first postdoctoral fellowship at The Rockefeller University in the laboratory of Donald Pfaff, where he studied the effects of estrogens on gene expression within the amygdala and resulting changes in fear and anxiety.

During a second postdoctoral fellowship at Emory University School of Medicine in the labs of Kerry Ressler and Donald "Tig" Rainnie, he examined the molecular and cellular mechanisms underlying fear. Jasnow joins the experimental program which focuses research on the neurobiological basis of behavior. In particular, his lab is interested in how

genes and the environment interact to alter social behavior, stress responses and emotional learning.

He believes it is important to use an integrative approach when studying questions about the neural basis of complex behaviors. Jasnow's laboratory will approach the study of social stress and emotional learning by examining their separate molecular, physiological and behavioral components, and integrate the findings into an overall understanding of how animals (including humans) learn and process emotionally salient stimuli.

Outside of work, he enjoys spending time with his wife, Kristy, his 7-month-old daughter, Avery, and his dog. When he finds time, he enjoys playing tennis, swimming, running, hiking and camping.



## Recent Graduate Student Awards

*In this issue, we are pleased to highlight the accomplishments of our current graduate students, who received numerous awards and special recognitions in the past year.*

### Awards/Honors:

**Jessica Flynn** received the Francisco Valera Research Award from the Mind and Life Institute

**Amanda McCleery** is the recipient of the Friedman Award

**Kristel Gallagher** was selected as the Kent State University nominee for the Midwestern Association of Graduate Schools excellence in teaching award

### Fellowships:

**Kristel Gallagher** was awarded a University Fellowship

**Shannon Siener** was awarded the Jeanette and Louis Reuter Graduate Fellowship in Developmental Science

### Conference Presentation Awards:

**Adam Morris** received a student poster award from the International Society for Traumatic Stress Studies

**Laura Buchholz** was selected to participate in the Early Career Poster Session, sponsored by the National Institute on Drug Abuse (NIDA), National Institute on Alcohol Abuse and Alcoholism (NIAAA), and APA, at the 2011 APA Convention

**Rachel Hemphill** was selected for a special poster session to recognize Graduate Student Superstars, sponsored by the APA Science Student Council and the APA Board of Scientific Affairs, at the 2011 APA Convention

## Recent Ph.D. Dissertations

**Marsheena S. Murray** (Dr. Neal-Barnett)

The “acting white” accusation, racial identity and psychological well-being in African American adolescents.

**Susaye Rattigan** (Dr. van Dulmen)

Childhood maltreatment and adolescent antisocial behavior: Aspects of adolescent romantic relationship as mediators/moderators.

**Brittain E. Lamoureux** (Dr. Fresco)

Predictors of psychological well-being in innercity women: Examining trajectories of resistance, resilience, and distress.

**Adam R. Bogart** (Dr. Riccio)

Susceptibility of reconsolidated memories to retrograde amnesia.

**Robert M. Dempster** (Dr. Wildman)

But what will people think? The role of stigma in the process of parental help-seeking for child behavior problems.

**Keri L. Pinna** (Dr. Delahanty)

The cumulative effects of chronic and acute stress on HPA activity and depression in children who witness violence.

**Leah Irish** (Dr. Delahanty)

Development, reliability and validity of the health risk behaviors inventory: A self-report measure of seven current health risk behaviors.

**Katie J. Chipman** (Dr. Ciesla)

Terror management theory and the theory of shattered assumptions in the context of trauma.

**Marie L. LePage** (Dr. Crowther)

Exercise and eating disordered beliefs and behaviors: A study using ecological momentary assessment.

**Gary W. Barnes** (Dr. Riccio)

Retrograde amnesia and reconsolidation of a context – no US association.

**Kelly Stanek** (Dr. Gunstad)

Body mass index, age and neurocognitive functioning.

**Elizabeth A. Goncy** (Dr. van Dulmen)

Conflict and temporal and relational spillover of conflict in young adult romantic relationships: Impact of interparental and parent-child relationships.

**Elissa M. Lampe Deggelman** (Dr. Wildman)

Coping and quality of life for siblings of children with chronic illness.

**Stacy L. Lipowski** (Dr. Merriman and Dr. Dunlosky)

Preschool children's judgments of learning: The effects of delay and practice.

**James P. Seghers** (Dr. Docherty)

Psychosis and psychological stress.

**Therese Anne Keary** (Dr. Hughes)

The role of inflammation in the association between autonomic nervous system dysregulation and cognitive dysfunction in cardiovascular disease.

## Looking for News From Our Grads!

We would like to start a new column in which we could feature brief updates from Kent State graduates in psychology. Do you have anything special that has happened to you in the last year – maybe something noteworthy at work or a personal milestone you would like to share? We would love to hear from you so we can include your news in next year's issue. Please send your items to Peggy Soltis at [psoltis@kent.edu](mailto:psoltis@kent.edu).



# THE PSYCHE

## New Art for Kent Hall

Thanks to a generous donation, we now have art displayed in both Kent Hall and the Kent Hall Annex. These paintings were donated anonymously to honor Lloyd G. Butler, a Kent State Outstanding Alumni in 1970.

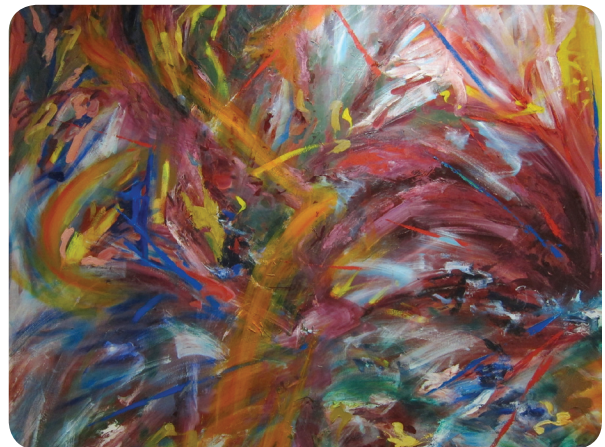
Butler was raised in rural farmlands not far from Kent, Ohio. He was a hero in World War II, serving his country as a pilot. Butler was sent to the Pacific theater and as an elite B-29 pilot, flew 35 missions over Japan. (Less than 10 percent of pilots and crews survived 10 combat missions. The Air Force required no man to fly more than 12.) When Butler left the Air Force, he held the rank of major and had received 4 Distinguished Flying Crosses along with many other citations for bravery under fire.

After the war, Butler came to Kent State on the GI Bill to study business administration. He completed his four-year degree in only 20 months while maintaining a perfect 4.0 grade point average and he graduated number one in his class. He was named Phi Beta Kappa and awarded the Delta Sigma Pi Key Award.

Following graduation, Butler joined Harris Seybold Company in Cleveland. Throughout his career as an international executive, he helped to greatly increase the business of the Fortune 500 firm but also mentored many people who went on to their own successful careers. A generous and forgiving man, he bore no ill will to his former enemies. Instead, he made a point of welcoming Japanese businessmen into his circle of friends throughout the rest of his life. He also began raising a family — a daughter, Lyn, and a son, Mark. Butler's wife and lifelong partner was Martha Jean McFadden. They were together until his death, two days after his 89th birthday on June 8, 2010.



*Painting by William Fares:  
"Deacon" 1985  
(Adjacent to Psychological Clinic)  
84" tall x 96" wide Acrylic on Canvas*



*Painting by James Wang:  
"Arion on Dolphin's Back", May 1983  
(First Floor of Kent Hall Annex)  
72" x 84" Acrylic on Canvas*

*Lloyd G. Butler  
35 Missions over Japan, 4 Distinguished Flying Crosses  
First pilot to fly over the North Pole (spy mission)  
Completed a four-year undergraduate degree at Kent State  
in 20 months  
Perfect 4.0, first in his class, Phi Beta Kappa,  
Delta Sigma Pi Key Award  
Business leader, beloved husband and father  
Honored Kent State alumnus*

## In the Loop

*In this issue we catch up with former graduate student Nancy Sherwood, who attended Kent State University from 1990 to 1996, and currently lives in Minneapolis, Minn.*

**Psyche:** What kind of research did you conduct during graduate school?

**Nancy Sherwood:** My primary research interest was in the area of eating disorders, and Jan Crowther was my advisor. My research focused on factors that contribute to the maintenance of disordered eating symptoms for women with bulimia nervosa. I also worked with Yossi Ben-Porath and Jack Graham as a project director. That was my first experience managing a large-scale research project and I have carried the lessons I learned with me ever since!

**Psyche:** What is your current professional position? In what ways do you see your current work relating back to your time at Kent State?

**Nancy Sherwood:** I am currently a senior research investigator at the HealthPartners Research Foundation and an adjunct associate professor in the Division of Epidemiology and Community Health, School of Public Health at the University of Minnesota. My joint position creates a “best of both worlds” situation, allowing me to conduct my research within a real-world health care system while maintaining a connection with more traditional academia. The Psychology department was an excellent combination of a challenging yet nurturing environment. One of the things I most appreciated was support for pursuing independent research — this allowed me early on to develop the skills for taking a project from the idea phase to implementation and analysis, critical for success in the world of soft money and seeking National Institutes of Health funding.

**Psyche:** Is there a particular professional accomplishment in your career for which you are especially proud?

**Nancy Sherwood:** I am proud of the fact that I have successfully built a research program in the area of pediatric obesity prevention, in partnership with the local community, that will hopefully inform our understanding of the vexing public health problem of childhood obesity. My most exciting grant right now is a seven-year NICHD-funded grant, “Now Everybody Together (NET-Works) for Amazing and Healthy Kids”, on which I am co-principal investigator with my colleague, Simone French, Ph.D. We are evaluating the efficacy of a multi-component intervention targeting low-income parents of preschool children.

**Psyche:** What are the most enduring memories of your time at Kent State?

**Nancy Sherwood:** My best and most enduring memories of Kent State involve the people – department faculty and staff, and my fellow students. I can’t help but remember Dr. Lilly’s stats class and his dry sense of humor, Drs. Riccio and Triechler’s warm smiles and friendliness. Jan and Yossi were great mentors for me. And, of course, who could forget the annual get-togethers at the 11th Frame and the faculty/student softball games? I wish I could go back for a visit!

**Psyche:** What are some things you would like to share about you or your life outside of your psychology career?

**Nancy Sherwood:** My children, Luke (9) and Summer (7), have brought my husband, Tom, and I more joy than we had ever anticipated! They certainly keep us busy but we thoroughly enjoy parenting and watching them develop their interests, unique personalities, etc. I ran my first marathon while I was at Kent State and have remained a regular runner ever since, though running marathons is certainly a less frequent occurrence.

**Psyche:** Are there any pearls of wisdom you have acquired over the years that would have helped you during graduate school that you might like to pass on to the many current graduate students pursuing their Ph.D.s at Kent State?

**Nancy Sherwood:** I think one of the most important pearls of wisdom has to do with having confidence in your abilities and the willingness to persist in the face of the setbacks that inevitably happen in one’s career. Whether it is in the manuscript writing process, the grant submission process, or the client who you are not feeling like you are making progress with, there can be a lot of moments of discouragement. However, I’ve learned that the thing that matters is how you approach these problems and whether you embrace them as learning opportunities to do better work. Also, I’ve learned that it is so important to be open to new opportunities and collaborations. I had some pretty clear ideas of what I thought I would do after graduate school, but I couldn’t really have envisioned what I would be doing now. For me, that different path has been entering the world of public health and I have thoroughly enjoyed the multidisciplinary nature of this discipline.

## Kent State Associate Professor Angela Neal-Barnett Receives Harold K. Stubbs Humanitarian Award

Dr. Angela Neal-Barnett, an associate professor in Kent State University's Department of Psychology, was awarded the 2011 Harold K. Stubbs Humanitarian Award recognizing her important work in the study of anxiety disorders among African Americans. Sponsored by the St. Paul African Methodist Episcopal Church of Akron, the Harold K. Stubbs Humanitarian Award recognizes those who have made contributions in areas such as social action, government, business, medicine and law. The awards program honors Stubbs, a former Akron Municipal Court judge and Kent State alumnus.

Neal-Barnett is a nationally recognized expert in the area of anxiety disorders among African Americans. She earned her bachelor's degree from the University of Mount Union in Alliance, Ohio, and both her master's and doctoral degrees from DePaul University in Chicago. Her work has focused on fears and social anxiety in African American children as well as sister circles for panic disorder and stress in African American adults. Her research is supported by the National Science Foundation, the National Institute of Mental Health, the Kent State University Foundation and the Ohio Commission on Minority Health.

"I was shocked and humbled when I heard about this honor," Neal-Barnett said. "Judge Stubbs was such a man of honor and integrity. The point of everything we do is to try and make a difference in the emotional well-being of African Americans, and to be recognized for the work is truly incredible."

## Festschrift for David C. Riccio

On May 19-21, 2011, the Department of Psychology hosted a Festschrift in honor of Prof. David C. Riccio. Having completed 46 years as a faculty member at Kent State University and with no plans to retire, Riccio is the longest-serving faculty member in the College of Arts and Sciences. The Festschrift was an opportunity to mark this milestone and pay tribute to Riccio's distinguished career as a scientist, teacher and mentor.

The Festschrift was a two-day scientific meeting consisting entirely of research presentations by Riccio's former graduate students, including keynote addresses by Harry Haroutunian, Charlie Mactutus and Rick Richardson. A total of 29 of Riccio's former Ph.D.'s (he has mentored more than 40 graduate students in his career) traveled from as far away as Australia to be part of this historic event. Other attendees included longtime colleagues Skip and Linda Spear (Binghamton University) and members of his extended family (see pictures next page). The scientific papers were first-rate, and the topics were wide-ranging, making it clear that Riccio's former students are making important contributions



*Assoc. Prof. Angela Neal-Barnett*

in all areas of psychology, from molecular neuroscience to flamingo social behavior and even clinical psychology. Social events included a kickoff reception at – you guessed it – the 11th Frame, and a banquet at the Rusty Nail restaurant in Kent. Attendees shared their favorite Riccio stories, and paid tribute to the man who had played a singular role in their intellectual and professional development. A fine time was enjoyed by all and Riccio still boasts a subtle tan from having been roasted so relentlessly!

## Efforts to Endow New Lecture Series

In honor of Riccio's many contributions to the department and his profession, the Department of Psychology seeks to endow a distinguished lecture series in his name. We invite our alums to make a donation. To help make this project a reality, please send your contributions to the David C. Riccio Distinguished Lecture Series Fund, Department of Psychology, Kent State University, Kent, OH 44242.





*Pictured left to right:*

*Front Row: Angie Burch-Vernon, Russ Morgan, Marsh Dopbeide, Michael Robrbaugh (sunglasses), Bob Riccio, Harry Haroutunian (partly bidden), Tony Santucci, Debbie Ebner, Rick Richardson, Dick Riccio, Jeanne Frieman, Dave Riccio and Scott Riccio*  
*Second Row: Charlie Mactutus, Katy Bryan, Steve Ahlers, Xenia Coulter (partly hidden) and Jerry Frieman*  
*Third Row: Susie Mechan, Rob Jensen, Jim Briggs, Chuck Hinderliter, Elayne MacArdy Thompson and Lynda Colbie*  
*Last Row: Steve Kissinger, Yi Li Zhou, Steven Harrod, Paula Millin, Beth Caldwell and Mark Riccio*

## ***Photos from the Festschrift for Prof. David C. Riccio***



*Pictured left to right:*

*Charlie Mactutus, Jeanne Frieman, Dave Riccio, Harry Haroutunian and Rick Richardson*



*Pictured left to right:*

*Front Row: Christy Schultz, Jeanne Frieman, Tony Santucci, Debbie Ebner, Xenia Coulter and Rick Richardson*  
*Middle Row: Patrick Cullen, Matt Anderson, Erin Fleming, Rob Jensen, Dave Riccio, Charlie Mactutus, Chuck Hinderliter, Paul Millin, Michal Robrbaugh and Brian Hock*  
*Last Row: Gary Barnes and Steve Ahlers*



*Scott Riccio, Dave Riccio and Mark Riccio*