



Religious Studies at UNO

June 2008

Scholarships are awarded; students recognized 9 April



Dr. Dale Stover presented Mandy Randall (center) with her scholarship certificate as the winner of the 2008-2009 Dale Stover Scholarship. Dr. Michele Marie Desmarais introduced Randall.



David Swensen (second from left) was named the Ron Burke Scholar for 2008-2009. Dr. William L. Blizek introduced Swensen. Mary Burke and Denis Burke made the presentation.



Denis Burke and Mary Burke presented Blythe Fox with her certificate as a Ron Burke Memorial Scholar. Dr. Guy Matalon (right) made the introduction.

The Ron Burke Scholarship includes a \$2500.00 scholarship. Each of the Ron Burke Memorial Scholarships is worth \$1250.00.

The Dale Stover Scholarship has a value of \$750.00.



Denis Burke and Mary Burke presented Humaira Qasimyar (right) with her certificate as a Ron Burke Memorial Scholar. Dr. Bridget Blomfield (second from right) introduced her.



Dawn Staszko honored

Dawn Staszko was given the 2008 Alumni Award on 9 April at the Religious Studies Banquet. Staszko, who graduated in 2005, has worked in health related areas for over 16 years. A respiratory therapist, she teaches smoking cessation, Tai Chi and has just published a CD, *Now Imagine*, which offers four 15 minute “get-aways” to help deal with stress. A cancer survivor, she also works with cancer patients. Her web site is <http://ladyinthemoonproductions.com/Welcome.html>



Lindsay Newton is Religious Studies Honour Student

Lindsay Newton was recognized at the 2008 Religious Studies Banquet 9 April.

She was the Religious Studies Honour Student for the 2007-2008 school year. She received her certificate from Dr. Guy Matalon.

Pearl Blizek Religion and Art Lecture is established

Dr. William L. Blizek has established the Pearl Blizek Religion and Art Lectures in the Religious Studies Program.



The lecture fund will provide funding for expenses related to lectures at UNO on religion and art. The lectures will be joint project of the Religious Studies Program and the Department of Art & Art History in the College of Communication, Fine Arts and Media at UNO.

The lecture is named in honour of Blizek’s mother, Pearl Blizek, who was a strong advocate of education although she herself did not attend college. In addition to this fund, Dr. Blizek has also established the Pearl Blizek Scholarship in Native American Studies in her honour.

Batchelder Family recognized at Religious Studies Banquet



The Clifton Batchelder family was recognized at the 2008 Religious Studies Banquet on 9 April. Annie and Tom Pratt represented the family at the banquet.

The Clifton Batchelder Family Foundation has committed to a giving \$250,000.00 to endow the annual Batchelder Biblical Archaeology Conference held at UNO.

(See Pratt on page 3)

Pratt continued from page 2

"Over the years, the Batchelder Conference for Biblical Archaeology has gained the prestige of a high-quality international conference that attracts scholars and laypeople from around the world," said Rami Arav, director of the Bethsaida Excavations Project at UNO. "It brings to a large audience the most updated discoveries and thoughts."

The conference is co-sponsored by International Studies and Programs at UNO, and the Greenberg Center for Judaic Studies at the University of Hartford.

October 16 is date for Goldstein Lecture

The 2008 Shirley and Leonard Goldstein Lecture on Human Rights will be held Thursday, 16 October in the Dodge Room at the Milo Bail Student Center, beginning at 7 p.m.

Additional information will be released as soon as it becomes available.

Faculty Notes

Dr. Paul Allen Williams, chair of Religious Studies, was quoted in an April 17 Omaha World Herald article about Pope Benedict XVI's recent visit to the United States.

Dr. Rami Arav recently published entries in *The Encyclopedia of the Historical Jesus* (Routledge) and *The New Encyclopedia of Archaeological Excavations in the Holy Land, vol. 5, Supplementary Volume* (Israel Exploration Society). The articles in the first encyclopedia were about 'Bethsaida' and 'Cana in Galilee.' An entry on 'Bethsaida' was published in the supplementary volume.

Dr. Rami Arav was interviewed for an article, 'Coming to Light' in the 2008 *Holyland Magazine: Christian Tourism to Israel*. The article was on Bethsaida.

Dr. Rory J. Conces has been named as a Fulbright Scholar to Kosovo and will be teaching a conflict resolution course in the Department of Political

Brooks Lecture held March 27

Close to 100 people came to hear Alan E Steinweis, Hyman Rosenberg Professor of Modern European History and Judaic Studies in the Department of History at the University of Nebraska – Lincoln talk about "Diagnosing and Combating Holocaust Fatigue" 27 March.

Alan E. Steinweis joined the Department of History at UNL in August 1993. He



specializes in the history of the Holocaust and Nazi Germany, and teaches courses on those subjects in addition to courses on European history, Jewish history, and historical methodology.

He discussed the difficulty of keeping people involved in the discussion of the Holocaust and what can be done to ease the attitudes of those who have grown tired of facing the issue head on.

Science at the University of Pristina. He will also conduct research in the same area during his fall stay there. He will be presenting a lecture in Bosnia prior to his arriving in Kosovo.

Dr. Michele Desmarais has been named the new editor of the *Journal of Religion and Film*. She has been associate editor since 2004. Her first issue of *JR & F* will be the October 2008 issue. Desmarais replaces **Dr. Paul Allen Williams** who has served as editor from October 2004 to 2008. He will continue to serve *JR & F* as an associate editor on the editorial board.

Brady DeSanti has spent part of this summer doing research in Washington, DC at the National Archives and in Philadelphia on material for his dissertation.

Dr. Dale Stover participated in the 150 celebration of the founding of the Canadian church he served as pastor for 24 months while he was working on his Ph.D. at McGill University.

Graduates

Adam Hicks and **Heather Labrie** graduated in May 2008 with religion majors. Both received a Bachelor of Arts degree. Hicks also had a minor in Native American Studies.

Paul Smith received his 2008 Bachelor of Arts degree in English with an emphasis on American Literature. He had a religion minor.

Dr. Nicolae Roddy, (1979) Co-Director, Bethsaida Excavations Project, was interviewed for an article, 'Coming to Light' in the 2008 *Holyland Magazine: Christian Tourism to Israel*. The article was on

Bethsaida. He also had some photos from the Bethsaida site appear in the publication.

The North High (School) Magnet Holocaust Commemoration Committee, of which **Nikki Strayer-Gass** (2004) is a member, received a mini grant from the National Council of Jewish Women, Omaha Section.

Molly Helgesen Paskach (2005) and **Greg Paskach** (2004) are back in Omaha. She just completed a tour with AmeriCorp in the Boston area where she worked with a non-profit while Greg worked on his master's degree.

Share your milestones

Please send news about your milestones (new positions, promotions, marriages, births, future education, etc.) by sending it to Religious Studies Program, UNO, ASH 205,

6001 Dodge Street, Omaha, NE 68182-0265 or to Kathy Schwartz at kschwartz@mail.unomaha.edu.

Religious Studies has several NU Foundation options for donating

The Religious Studies Program has two scholarship funds, the Ron Burke Scholarship Fund and the Dale Stover Scholarship Fund.

The UNO Religious Studies Fund for Excellence is a fund that benefits and supports the religious studies program. Money donated to that fund can be used to supplement funding for lectures. It can be used to provide special awards for students. For example, the Essay competition awards were given last year from this fund. It can also be used to support special projects of faculty members. This fund is not an endowed fund.

There is also a *Journal of Religion & Film* Fund for Excellence which supports the Religious Studies program's *Journal of Religion & Film* activities and events. Those

activities have included co-sponsorship of the Native American Film Panel which brought a native film maker, Gail Maurice, to UNO in the spring of 2006 to meet with students, faculty and the public and the attendance of editors at various film festivals to study and review new film offerings as they relate to religion.

To make your tax deductible donation to the UNO Religious Studies Fund for Excellence, *Journal of Religion & Film* Fund for Excellence, or either of the scholarship funds, make your check out to the University of Nebraska Foundation and write the fund name on the memo line.

Sending your checks to the Religious Studies Program, ASH 205, 6001 Dodge Road, Omaha, NE 68182-0265, allows the program to make certain acknowledgements of gifts are done promptly by the department.

From the front desk

Listening to a local public radio station the other evening as I headed home from work my ears perked up when I thought heard a familiar name. My shirt buttons started to pop as I listened to the announcer give her name again - "For more information, contact Hanna Wanzonried..." It was then that I was reminded, once again, just what it is that makes my job in the Department of Philosophy and Religious Studies worth doing. (And, I needed

it that day!) Oh, the money helps pay the bills and the people I work with at UNO are great (most of the time at least), but the big reason my job is worth doing is the students.

I guess it is the 'Mom' or 'Big Sister' in me that makes me want to know that all those students I've watched grow with since I came to UNO in January (See Desk on page 5)

Desk continued from page 4

2001 are pursuing their dreams and meeting the challenges of the real world. You can preach to me 24/7 about what a university is all about but you will never convince me that there is anything *more important* than being able to help every student reach for their dreams, refine them and finally attain them. (I've heard that called being a dream maker.)

Yes, research is important because it is with research that faculty continues to grow so they can keep ahead of their students. Yes, pretty buildings make the work environment much more pleasant. But the nurturing that goes on with students as they prepare to meet the challenges of a global work world are what I feel must be the root of the reason we are here. People can do research without teaching (I do that every time I visit a library or sit at the computer). I could work from my home without ever having to get dressed and some days that looks pretty attractive.

However, in doing that I would miss seeing our students walk tentatively through the door on their first visits. I would miss hearing as they speak almost in a whisper as though fearful the glass windows may break if they talk in the voice they use with their friends during those first visits. They peak sheepishly around the doorway as though something will consume them as they walk through the door (I've never thought of myself as being that scary). As they grow, their walk changes first to a confident walk and then to almost a march as they come through the door, announcing they are here. Their voice changes to a low, self conscious tone, then moves to a confident tenor and finally to that voice that says, "I'm Here! I know who I am and where I belong." Although some are still exploring their options when they graduate they always seem to find a place where their time and talent shines

and where they can help make the world a better place for being in it. Some of those students are even back here making UNO a better place for those who follow them.

Here in religious studies four great former students, **Brady DeSanti** (2002), **Christian Haunton** (1998), **Julien Fielding** (1992) and now **Janet McClearen** (2005), will teach for us this fall. **Karen Kempkes** (2006) is business manager for the Division of Continuing Studies at UNO and has put her photography skills to work taking notice board/web site photos of some of our professors and doing the cover photo for Michele Marie Desmarais' book. **Nikki Strayer Gass** (2005) is teaching at North High School. **Lance Ferguson** (2002) was just recently ordained. **Hanna Wanzenried** (2007) is working for Project Interfaith as their program coordinator. **Dawn Staszko** (2005), our distinguished alumna this year, continues to make an impact on my life as she takes time out of her busy teaching and school schedule to check in from time to time just to see how I'm doing and to say hello. And, just this month **Molly Helgesen Paskach** (2005) stopped by to say hi.

I know I have not mentioned every former student who has come through my door. Some of you have moved on to bigger and better things and not kept in touch. It would be great to be able to share your news here on these pages in August.

And so, to students graduated and those who are still around, I say a huge thank you for filling my days with wonder and for allowing me to be a part of the joys, excitement, and tears of your lives. You are most precious to me and have enriched my life immensely. I miss you when you are not here!

— Kathy

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