

# THE SELF MONITOR

*The Official Alumni Newsletter of the  
Psychology Department of the State  
University of New York at New Paltz*

**Volume 9 - Summer 2016**

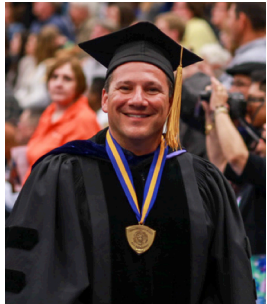
**Edited by Dr. Glenn Geher**

**(geherg@newpaltz.edu) & Dr. Karla Vermeulen  
(vermeulk@newpaltz.edu)**

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### A Note from the Department Chair, Dr. Glenn Geher



I'd like to start by putting out a call to all alum and other members of our academic community to come join the Department as we publicly present our new academic home in the fully renovated Wooster Hall! After more than half a decade of planning, demolishing the old, and building the new – I'm happy to say that the Psychology Department space has functionally doubled and, moving forward, we will work in a state-of-the-art, LEEDS-certified building that is based on the design of our faculty. In addition to great new office space for full-time faculty, we've got a large conference room, computer lab, graduate student community lab, TA office, Adjunct office, and an airy and fully up-to-date main office for Jane and her crew. Further, we've got approximately 20 rooms dedicated for scholarly research - each of which has been designed to best allow for data collection and analysis in the basic and applied behavioral and cognitive sciences. In short: Our new space rocks!

As a celebration of our new space (see the picture on page 2), which signifies a strong signal from the administration that the work of the Department is highly valued and is expected to continue along a positive trajectory, we will hold a special reception during alumni reunion weekend - it will take place on Saturday, 10/15 from 2:30-4:00 and will be FREE for all members of our academic community. We particularly hope to see several of our alum - we want to not only see you and check on how you're doing after all this time, but, to be honest, we want to show off our new digs! We plan to have a reception with food in our new conference room (yup, I just said that!) and we will have current students giving tours of lab spaces that will include descriptions of the research being conducted therein. We expect this to be a great celebration of our community, past, present, and future - and we hope to get a great turnout from our loyal alum! Don't hesitate to contact me at [geherg@newpaltz.edu](mailto:geherg@newpaltz.edu) with any questions about this event!

Beyond the Wooster craze, I've got something else for you. The big news this past year pertains to the retirement of long-standing departmental member, Dr. James Halpern. Dr. Halpern joined the departmental faculty in 1973 - when I was just a three-year-old boy watching cartoons! His 40+ years here have seen extraordinary success in the domains of teaching, service, and scholarship (leading to several published books on various psychological topics). Dr. Halpern started the antecedent of the Counseling Program (now one of our primary graduate offerings) and he started, perhaps more famously, our renowned Disaster Studies Minor and the Institute for Disaster Mental Health that surrounds the disaster-related academic programs.

Losing a colleague is a huge deal in an academic community - but losing Dr. Halpern is, for me, an even bigger deal. Since I came here in 2000, Dr. Halpern has been one of my closest friends and colleagues, providing me guidance, wisdom, and humor along the way. He is the kind of colleague who adds greatly to the community on behalf of both students and faculty members and, to be honest, I'll miss this son-of-a-gun dearly. We've got some special treats regarding the work of Dr. Halpern in this issue of the Self Monitor - and I hope you enjoy it!

Glenn Geher (geherg@newpaltz.edu).  
Chair, Psychology Department  
[www.newpaltz.edu/psychology](http://www.newpaltz.edu/psychology)



Introducing Wooster Hall, the new home of the Psychology Department! Join us for an official tour during Alumni Reunion Weekend, October 15, 2:30 – 4:00, or stop by any time to say hello.

Another highlight during Alumni Weekend (October 14-16, 2016): Glenn Geher will be leading his annual alumni hike on Sunday, with Dr. Alison Nash as co-leader. Watch for details at <https://www.facebook.com/groups/nppsyach/>

## Dr. James Halpern's Retirement

Included as a segment of our annual departmental end-of-year celebration in May 2016, Dr. Halpern's retirement party was a hoot! Brief talks were given by current faculty members (e.g., Alison Nash and Karla Vermeulen), emeritus faculty members (e.g., Phyllis Freeman and Mark Sherman), and our university president Don Christian. Dr. Halpern has been teaching at New Paltz since 1973 and in that time he has done a ton of great work (including, perhaps most notably, founding the internationally renowned Institute for Disaster Mental Health).

Presentations at the event underscored Dr. Halpern's "we can do this" attitude coupled with his long-standing reputation as a highly reasonable member of our academic community. This issue of the Self Monitor includes tributes to Dr. Halpern from several of his alum who have worked closely with him over the years. And as a long-standing colleague of Dr. Halpern, I'll just say, simply, that this guy will be deeply missed. And that we wish him nothing but the very best moving forward.

- Glenn Geher, Chair of Psychology



Top row (L-R): Jonathan Rust, Tabitha Holmes, Glenn Geher, James Halpern, Karla Vermeulen, Laurie Bonjo, Jackie Berry, Maryalice Citra, Alison Nash, Doug Maynard, & Jonathan Raskin. Bottom row (L-R): Bob Presbie, Howard Cohen, David Morse, Mark Sherman, Phyllis Freeman, & Don Schiff. Photo Credit: Dr. Marvalice Citra.

## Dr. Halpern's Legacy

Dr. James Halpern's official biography at the time of his retirement after 43 years at SUNY New Paltz is, to put it mildly, impressive: Professor of Psychology and Director of the Institute for Disaster Mental Health at SUNY New Paltz, and co-author of *Disaster Mental Health: Theory and Practice* (2007) and the upcoming *Disaster Mental Health Interventions: Core Principles and Practices*, to be published in 2017 by Routledge. He has given numerous presentations on trauma and Disaster Mental Health throughout the US and abroad. He has received highly competitive federal and New York State grants to develop curricula and to provide training and education to response professionals. He has consulted for the United Nations on assisting victims of terror and has developed training modules for the United Nations Emergency Preparedness and Support Teams and UN mission leaders. And he's served in a leadership role at large-scale national and local disasters, including the attacks of September 11, 2001, and the Sandy Hook school shooting.



In short, Dr. Halpern is widely regarded as an international expert in the field of disaster mental health, and the conferences, trainings, and other programs he's overseen through the Institute for Disaster Mental Health (IDMH) have prepared literally thousands of people state- and world-wide to assist those in need. But his focus has not been exclusively external: He's also taught thousands of students at SUNY New Paltz, sharing his expertise and insight in more traditional forms of counseling as well as creating a program, the Minor in Disaster Studies, that is preparing the next generation of disaster mental health helpers.

Along the way, he's served not only as an educator, but as a mentor for many students who have been privileged to work closely with him – myself included. Our collaboration began in 2004 when I was a student in the Masters program at New Paltz. After I mentioned my then-slightly-weird interest in the field of disaster mental health, he generously disregarded my terrible roleplay performance in his Counseling Skills course and brought me on as the first IDMH graduate assistant. He encouraged me to go on to a doctoral program, and helped integrate me into the New Paltz faculty once I completed my degree. During that time I've worked with him as both student and colleague, on countless projects – including writing that upcoming book together, which we're finishing right now. We've traveled around the world together, or at least to highly select parts of the world like Israel and Buffalo. I've been privileged to have a front-row seat as he's built the IDMH up to the effective and well-respected organization it is today.

In thinking about how to honor Dr. Halpern at his retirement party I came up with an analogy that seemed to fit, which I'll repeat here. In disaster mental health, we talk about survivors' reactions being influenced by three measures of an event: scope, intensity, and duration. That's basically how big, bad, and long the disaster was. I'm going to flip those measures around to consider the scope, intensity, and duration of Dr. Halpern's influence on everyone he's encountered throughout his career.

First, scope, or how many people he's impacted. That, of course, is impossible to calculate accurately, but if we estimate an average of at least 50 students per semester times some 85 or so semesters, that's well over four thousand students who have learned from him directly – and who knows how many of them have gone on to help others using the skills they learned from him as counselors or disaster responders? Then there's the equally unknowable number of disaster survivors he's supported over the years after true catastrophes.



### Dr. Halpern's Legacy, continued

Which brings us to intensity. Usually that refers to how much suffering a disaster has caused, so in our flipped description, I'll make that a measure of how deeply and positively Dr. Halpern has impacted the lives of those who he's worked closely with. Not everyone who took his classes fell under his spell, of course, but for those of us who did it was a life-shaping experience. Between the descriptions of his work in the field, which so many of us were inspired to emulate, and his general Rogerian regard for people, he taught generations of students that they could dive in and actually help others in need. And again, the intensity of the good he's done for disaster survivors confronting the loss of a home – or a family member – is incalculable.

Finally, duration, which is best measured not in how long a disaster actually lasts, but in how long it affects people. So, we can take 43 years as a bare minimum for the duration of Dr. Halpern's impact as an educator, but we can also assume that duration will extend for at least as long as his former students are out there counseling others, and as long as the hundreds of professional disaster responders he's trained are out in the field helping survivors. And of course that duration will include the legacy he's created in the form of the Institute for Disaster Mental Health, which will continue under the leadership of a new director.

In the next pages, we'll profile three of the IDMH graduate assistants who took over from me and who have been equally enriched by their time working with James Halpern. First, I'll close with Dr. Halpern's favorite quote, by another wise leader, Sir Winston Churchill:

*"To every person there comes in their lifetime that special moment when you are figuratively tapped on the shoulder and offered the chance to do a very special thing, unique to you and your talents. What a tragedy if that moment finds you unprepared or unqualified for work which could have been your finest hour."*

On behalf of all of us who you've worked so hard to prepare for our own finest hours, thank you, James Halpern!

-Dr. Karla Vermeulen  
MA in Psychology, New Paltz Class of 2005  
Assistant Professor of Psychology  
IDMH Deputy Director



Dr. Halpern leading a group of students who provided mental health support at the 2010 commemoration ceremony at the World Trade Center, including three former IDMH graduate assistants: Jessica Purcell (fourth from left), now an advisor in the New Paltz Educational Opportunity Program, and Meredith Johnson (fifth from left) and Rachael Bisceglie-Dieckmann (far right) whose bios follow.

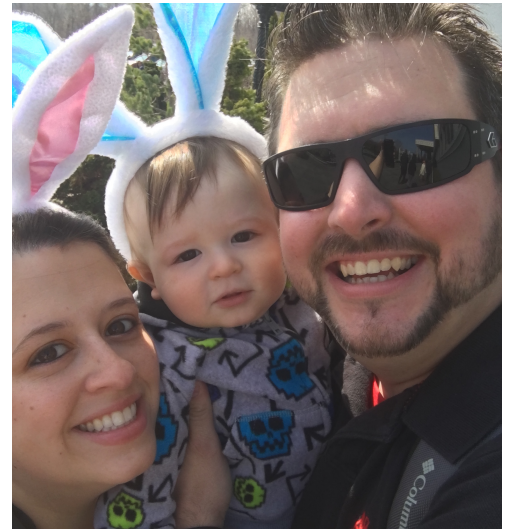


## ALUMNI PROFILES: Past Institute for Disaster Mental Health Graduate Assistants

### Rachael Bisceglie-Dieckmann

M.S. in School Counseling, 2011

Working at the IDMH as the Graduate Assistant from 2008-2011 was such a meaningful experience for me. James and crew not only respected me as a fellow colleague, but trusted and had faith in me. From advising students to conference planning to writing grants and establishing and deploying interns to American Red Cross shelters, I was allowed to not only participate in, but also lead a wealth of experiences. Since working at the IDMH, I've gone on to work as a counselor in the schools working with students struggling with alcohol/substance issues, and most recently as a group/individual counselor for adults with severe and persistent mental illness. My husband, Rick, and I welcomed the birth of our son, Ryder, in May of 2015. Just like at the IDMH, work in these settings is never-ending yet truly meaningful – and always serves to keep me on my toes!



The Bisceglie-Dieckmann Family  
celebrating Easter

Throughout my experience in knowing James as both his colleague and student, there are two lessons that I took from him that stand out clearly in my mind. The first came from a story shared while I was a student of James' in a disaster-related class. A family had recently experienced a disaster, which displaced them from their home with little to nothing in regards to personal mementos/items. In helping bring this family back a sense of "normalcy," James went and bought them food (a turkey, I believe). It served as a model for me then, and a great reminder to me now of Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs. We can't move forward towards self-actualization (or in this case, getting "back on one's feet") if our basic needs aren't met. I think of this story often in the work that I do, remembering that for some, meeting a client where he/she is at means getting basic needs met. The second lesson is, "Don't just say/do something, stand there." There's something to be said about a presence of support during times of loss – sometimes just being there is the greatest gift that one can offer. Thank you, James, for your work and dedication to not only the IDMH, but to your students and colleagues – I am forever grateful for the ways in which you've helped me to become better person and counselor!



Meredith Johnson, IDMH Coordinator  
Rebecca Rodriguez, SUNY New Paltz  
President Don Christian, and James  
Halpern at the 2012 IDMH conference

### Meredith Johnson

M.S. in Mental Health Counseling, 2009

While studying Mental Health Counseling at SUNY New Paltz, I had the great honor of having Dr. James Halpern as a primary clinical mentor and professor. I brought a longstanding interest in trauma recovery to my graduate studies, and was quickly inspired to get involved in Dr. Halpern's impressive work at the Institute for Disaster Mental Health. During my years as a conference coordinator and research graduate assistant, the Institute also provided me with valuable training in disaster mental health and formative community response opportunities.

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## ALUMNI PROFILES: Past Institute for Disaster Mental Health Graduate Assistants

### Meredith Johnson, M.S, continued

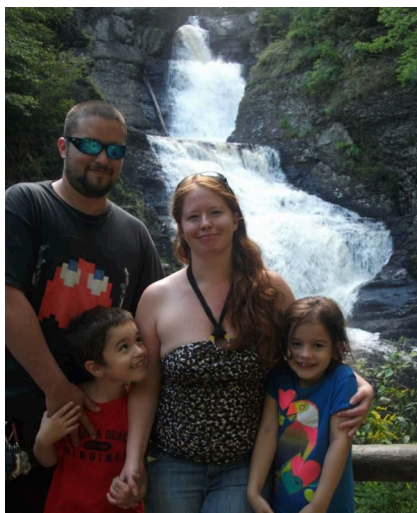
Among all the refined, evidence-based clinical tools Dr. Halpern transmitted to me, I was particularly inspired and impacted by his abiding insight into what to do when, and when do to nothing. He advised to "not just do something, but stand there" and be fully present for those in crisis or bereavement, a golden teaching he exemplified as a supervisor to me and my peers at the annual 9/11 memorial events.

After completing my M.S. in 2009, I worked as the Coordinator of IDMH for two years and was continuously afforded remarkable professional opportunities by Dr. Halpern. He was a joy to work with and for, and always pursued and offered me chances for ongoing learning and growth, including guest lecturing, supervising practicum students, coordinating trainings and response efforts, and participating in unforgettably rewarding projects in Israel. It was through Dr. Halpern's excellent supervision and unwavering professional support that I was able to pursue and refine a special interest in maximizing helpers' and responders' resilience and well-being, culminating in the memorable opportunity in 2011 to co-author a training with Dr. Halpern for the United Nations' Emergency Preparedness and Support Team. I now bring the many lessons learned from my time with Dr. Halpern and IDMH to my work as a community educator, body-centered psychotherapist, and programming coordinator at Wellness Embodied: A Center for Psychotherapy and Healing in New Paltz, NY.

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### Rebecca Rodriguez

M.S. in Mental Health Counseling,  
2014



The Rodriguez Family  
enjoying the great outdoors

I had already been accepted into the Mental Health Counseling program here at SUNY New Paltz when I started to have doubts that I wanted to be a counselor or a therapist. I was finishing up an internship for my undergraduate Disaster Studies Minor that challenged me to think about a career in emergency management or planning. To keep my options open, I asked Dr. James Halpern to include me in work the Institute for Disaster Mental Health was doing.

What I had hoped would be me volunteering some of my time became a job as the IDMH graduate student assistant. It was also the beginning of an important lesson that I'm still learning: Ask. Ask for the job. Ask for more responsibility. Ask for less responsibility when you are overwhelmed. Ask to be included in that project you really want to learn more about. Ask to be a part of something great.

It helped that I had an incredible mentor in James, who encouraged me to make the work my own and gave me the space to do it. After I graduated, I applied for and accepted a full-time position as Program Coordinator at the Institute for Disaster Mental Health expanding on the work I began as a graduate student. Who knows what I'll ask for next!

## ALUMNI PROFILES

### **Daniel Gambacorta, Ph.D .**

B.A. in Psychology, Class of 2010  
danielgambacorta@gmail.com



When I began attending SUNY New Paltz I didn't know what I was going to do with my life. I felt like I was going to college merely because it was expected of me. I didn't really like high school and didn't think college would be any better.

Everything changed when I took various psychology courses, especially the class I took in evolutionary psychology. It was after studying psychology that I decided I wanted to become psychology professor. I applied to graduate schools and ended up attending New Mexico State University. There I earned a PhD in social psychology. I currently work as a psychology professor at the University of Texas Rio Grande Valley. The path to where I am now began at SUNY New Paltz. I am very fortunate to have found the environment and mentors that have allowed me to succeed.

### **Jessica Restivo**

B.A. in Psychology, Class of December 2015  
jessicarestivo14@gmail.com  
Graduate Student for Occupational Therapy,  
Starting Summer 2016



As a freshman my interest in psychology stemmed from a yearning to want to understand people. Then through my psychology major and sociology minor I found myself destined to want to help people. Although New Paltz does not have an OT Masters Program, helpful professors and Dr. Geher, as a supportive chair, guided me as I incorporated OT prerequisites into my undergraduate track. By utilizing programs at New Paltz, such as cross course registration, I was able to fulfill all of my requirements and graduate a semester early.

My experience at New Paltz shaped me into a dedicated and passionate student. After being accepted into Suny Downstate Medical Center, Columbia Medical Center, New York University, Seton Hall University, and Kean University, I am eager to be continuing my education at Suny Downstate this upcoming summer. New Paltz has thankfully given me genuine and dedicated professors, inspiring peers, and a campus that has always encouraged cooperation, rather than competition. Psychology courses such as Crisis Intervention and Physiological Psychology have captivated my brain, as well as my heart. I truly thank New Paltz for giving me such an incredible foundation to build upon as I embark on my journey at graduate school!



## ALUMNI PROFILES

### **Denise Donatien-Coder**

B.A. in Psychology, Class of 2010

donatien.coder@gmail.com

Research Assistant



Shortly after receiving my BA in Psychology from SUNY New Paltz in 2010, I became a mom to an amazing little person. I stayed at home with her until last year when I started working for Clinical Tools, Inc., a medical education company affiliated with UNC-Chapel Hill that develops continuing medical education courses for doctors, physicians-in-training, and other medical professionals. I'm currently a Research Assistant working on a few research projects, including the Obesity Tx Challenge, a web-based program designed to improve clinical interactions between physicians-in-training and overweight and obese patients regarding weight loss and management. Later this year, I will be working on an endeavor involving the creation of a Virtual Reality-based (VR) brain exploration program for students on the neurobiology of addiction using Oculus Rift®.

The Psychology Department at SUNY New Paltz prepared me for the work I'm doing now in so many ways. I have a solid background from courses including, but not limited to: Statistics, Psychological Research Methods, Psychology of Memory and Thinking, Introduction to the Psychology of Learning, Cognitive Neuroscience, Introduction to Psychological Testing, and all the research experienced I amassed while doing Independent Study.

I knew when I graduated from SUNY New Paltz I received a world-class education that could take me anywhere. I plan to attend graduate school in the future, and will always look back on my time at SUNY New Paltz with fondness. I cannot thank all of the professors and faculty of the Psychology Department enough for giving me the educational foundation and Hawk wings with which to soar.

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### **George James Ramos Jr, LMHC**

BA in Psychology, Class of 2006

Georgeramosjr@gmail.com

School Mental Health Consultant at the

City of New York Department of Health and Mental Hygiene

*Treasure!*

When I think about my time at SUNY New Paltz I often remember what a treasure the campus, people and instructors were. In my opinion the crown jewel of that treasure is our renowned Psych department (maybe I'm biased).

Any success I have had in the counseling field can be attributed to my time at New Paltz, especially the Oasis/Haven crisis hotline. Volunteering at Oasis helped me mold a therapeutic presence and attending skills that are critical in developing a therapeutic alliance with clients.



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## George James Ramos Jr, LMHC (continued)

Since I've graduated from New Paltz, 10 years ago, I have earned a Masters Degree in Mental Counseling with a license to practice in New York State. I am currently a Mental Health Consultant for the Department of Health and Mental Hygiene in New York City and I have a small counseling practice where I provide home based therapy. Many of the skills I honed in during my graduate studies were developed during my formative years at Oasis in New Paltz.

Currently, I am a student at Harvard University in pursuit of another Masters Degree in Management. I am also mulling over an offer to join a CACREP accredited PhD program in Counselor Education and Supervision. Maybe I'll teach at a University some day. *(I hope they don't call Dr. Geher or Dr. Holmes to inquire about my psych stats grades. Yikes!)*

I am hopeful that my clinical skills with management education will position me for a future commissioner position with the city of New Year. I can trace all of these opportunities back to walking through the doors of my first psych class, not really knowing what to expect or where I would land.

While I was heavily focused on pathology and treatment, New Paltz's psych department had many different courses with professors of who are leaders in their respective fields. I'm grateful for my New Paltz experience. Grateful for the challenges, successes and access to such talented and dedicated professors. Go Hawks!

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**Dr. Gökçe Sancak Aydın**  
sancakag@gmail.com  
Visiting Researcher of the  
New Paltz Psychology  
Department, 2014-2015



I am an academician in the Psychological Counseling field in Turkey. Two years ago, I was a doctoral student and research assistant at Middle East Technical University (in Turkey) trying to figure out my dissertation study. One day, while reading about mate selection that was the topic of my dissertation, I met with "Mating Intelligence: Sex, Relationships, and the Mind's Reproductive System" book edited by Professors Glenn Geher and Geoffrey Miller. It was impressive and provided new perspectives to me about mate selection. Suddenly, I decided to write to Glenn to visit and study in the Psychology Department at New Paltz. At that point, my journey to New Paltz had started. I had studied as a visiting scholar in the New Paltz Psychology Department for a year (2014-2015). It was a unique experience for me both academically and personally. I engaged in some important studies in Glenn's Evolutionary Psychology (EP) lab providing me new angles about mate selection. I learned much not only about my dissertation topic but also about other alternative designs and studies thanks to Glenn and the hard-working students of EP lab. Indeed, I learned a lot about the importance of teamwork in research and acquired some publications and presentations due to our ambitious studies in the New Paltz EP lab. Those experiences contributed to my career development a lot. Even now, as luck would have it, I have connections and collaborations with Glenn Geher and the EP lab. As a student of Glenn, feeling his support all along my career is great. Now, I have finished my doctoral dissertation and I plan to start very soon as an assistant professor in the Psychological Counseling and Guidance Department in Bozok University in Turkey. I would like to express my thanks to Glenn, the EP Lab, and the Department of Psychology at SUNY New Paltz - I look forward to studying there again and always I look forward to studying with academics from New Paltz.

## PSYCHOLOGY STUDENT ACTIVITIES



### Hiking Our Way to the Skies

By Vania Rolon

(MA student in Psychology, class of 2017)

On Thursday, May 12, while most undergraduate seniors enjoyed a toast to their last days in college, a group of adventurous psychology students, two professors, and a baby seized a perfectly warm, sunny day and hiked the strenuous but impressive trail known as Bonticou Crag. One of the many gems of Mohonk Preserve, this trail consists of 3 miles of cedar trees, giant talus

deposits, hidden caves, crevices and steep ascents that will take those confident enough to take on the challenge to one of the most breathtaking views in the Shawangunk Mountains.

Led by Dr. Glenn Geher from the Psychology department, and Dr. Alex Bartholomew from the Geology department, we began the trip ready to conquer this giant's steep ascends. The road began like your average hiking experience, with a short trail uphill leading us to the top of a rise, where a broad panoramic view gave us a small taste of what was to come. We kept on walking forward, protecting ourselves from the sun under the shades of some cedar trees. As the road took us higher and higher, some of us ventured to try some "organic snacks," also known as edible plants that Alex pointed out along the road.

Through curves and hills, we went until we eventually reached the start of the Bonticou Ascent Path, the crag's jagged rock face daring us to make it to the top. Alex lost no time rushing through the ledges and crevices with his baby, Annabeth, secured against his back. He gradually became smaller and smaller as he made his way up and quickly disappeared from sight. Those of us who weren't quite as agile made our way through more slowly, using our arms and legs to pull ourselves from one giant rock fragment to the next. Some parts required imagination, forcing us to visualize the best spot to place our feet in order to get that extra push without slipping. One part even required cooperation, with one girl having to prop her friend up while my own friend and lab colleague Brittany Mabie had to pull me up after she managed to climb one uniquely tall ledge.

Halfway through, we took a few minutes to gather our breath and drink some water, as Glenn pointed out a few hidden caves. Needless to say, we all chose to explore these before continuing our climb. The inside of the caves was a cool, refreshing change from the sun we had been exposed to, although dragging our bodies all the way in was nigh impossible, considering the caves were slightly small for a fully grown adult. A couple of brave students tried, getting dirty and crawling as far in as they could. Among them was graduate student Rich Holler, who got so deep in that he was lost from sight, and only his voice could be heard from somewhere within the boulders.

While most people stayed within the welcoming shades of the caves, Brittany and I chose to resume the hike. Soon we could no longer see our group, although their voices were still softly audible. We met with Alex at the top and waited for the rest of our party to catch up with us. The view from the summit was definitely worth the effort. By now we were higher than the trees, so close to the sky that I felt I could touch the birds flying above us. We were surrounded by a sea of green as far the eye could go. Here and there we would see some houses, and straight ahead was the SUNY New Paltz campus, the Jacobson Faculty Tower and the Haggerty

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## PSYCHOLOGY STUDENT ACTIVITIES

### Hiking Our Way to the Skies, continued

Administration Building the only clearly discernible buildings. Alex shared his knowledge on how the Gunks, and even the Adirondacks, were created, and after taking a group selfie as proof of our victory over the crag, we began our descent through an easier trail, straight through the middle of the pine trees.

Our way down was by no means less exciting than our hike up. As a rattling sound startled us, we spotted a snake sliding through the plants. Alex channeled his inner Steve Irwin by seizing the snake. Cell phone cameras immediately shot up as everyone took pictures. Meanwhile, baby Annabeth did not seem shocked by the reptile her father was so easily holding. The final stretch of the trail was less uneventful, and our tired bodies made it back to the parking lot. The hike was over, but the experience was deeply embedded in our memories (at least it was in mine). Naturally, a New Paltz group trip would not be complete without some learning, and Alex truly imparted much of his knowledge. His fun facts, plus his impressive agility to carry Annabeth all the way through, and Glenn's effort to assemble a group of interested students and make the trip possible make these inspiring professors the real MVPs in this adventure.

Bonticou Crag is a place I cannot recommend enough for anyone who enjoys nature. The journey to the top may be strenuous, but, if anything, this is what makes the trail unique and worthwhile. You can be certain that I will be returning whenever another opportunity presents itself.

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### Remember the Pleistocene

#### *Return of the Kickball Tournament!*

By Nicole Wedberg, MA in Psychology, 2016

The annual Psychology Department Kickball Tournament took place this year on Earth Day, and I think it's fair to say that we celebrated it appropriately. Four different teams comprised of at least 12 members each (and a couple of dogs!) came out to the Old Main quad to run around in the grass and celebrate a little friendly competition. The Kickball Tournament, started by our own Dr. Corwin Senko, began as a tradition in 2009. Since its conception, faculty and students alike have looked forward to the annual spring tournament. I know there have been an injury or two in years past, and maybe even a trip to the ER, but this year's tournament left everyone unharmed. Physically, anyway - there may have been some bruised egos...

The tournament began at 5:30 pm with all teams showing up to the quad in their matching shirts. The UPA/EvoS Club team came in their neon green shirts, The Non-Binaries came prepared in their white shirts, Team What If We Had a Different Name? showed up with actual printed teal shirts sporting counterfactual trees on the front, and Team Pleistocene arrived sporting matching red and black shirts that each had an image of Darwin on the front, and a couple of relevant hashtags

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Photos by Maryalice Citera

## PSYCHOLOGY STUDENT ACTIVITIES



written on the back. #anythingcanhappen was one of these and was meant as a little reminder to our competition that just because Team Pleistocene had never won the tournament before.... ever... #anythingcanhappen. Oh, did I mention the face paint? Team Pleistocene also showed up wearing terrifyingly horrible black and red face paint that turned into mostly indiscernible sweaty blobs by the end of the tournament.

As usual, the tournament was set up for double elimination – no team could officially ‘lose’ or be kicked out of the tournament (pardon the pun) until they had lost a game twice. It was a long stretch for tensions to be high, and boy were they. Nearly 3 hours long and working our way past sunset into dusk, players continued to push on. Everyone truly gave their best effort, and I saw some of the most genuine excitement I’ve ever seen from my friends. Just when everyone was getting tired, the tournament went into the final round. Team Pleistocene thought they had won, and had started to (prematurely) let their hair down.... But right at the end, The Non-Binaries hit a grand slam! Because of the double elimination rule, we went into the ultimate last final game – the ‘game 7’ of the tournament. Members of both teams were sweating and tired, but still fighting. The final game was tied, and so we went into an extra inning. Team Pleistocene was only ahead by one run – we just needed to hold our lead for 3 more outs and the championship would be ours. Sure enough, The Non-Binaries gave us a hell of a run for our money. With 2 outs, they had a man on 1<sup>st</sup> and 3<sup>rd</sup> and one of their strongest kickers was up to bat. The field was silent. Players were in position and ready. Hairs were standing on end. Our pitcher, Glenn Geher (long time participant and non-winner), rolled the ball to The Non-Binaries’ William Borchert. With all his might, William kicked the ball high into the air for a pop fly – way into right field. Team Pleistocene’s outfielder Lauren Smith (recently nicknamed “Buster”) put out her hands, and everyone froze and watched with clenched fists.... She caught it! Team Pleistocene jumped in the air and ran toward each other with open arms and big smiles. They won the Kickball Tournament for the first time in history, and it was no easy feat.

Later the team celebrated and took pictures with the trophy which now stands in the Evolutionary Psychology Lab. I can honestly say that it was some of the most fun I’ve had here on campus, and needless to say, there are a lot of people already looking forward to next year’s tournament.



### **New Paltz Hawks take flight to Halifax, Nova Scotia to Celebrate Evolutionary Psychological Science as *NEEPSters***

By Rich Holler

MA Psychology student, Class of 2017

Several students and one professor thought upstate New York got cold... but the brisk mornings and chilly nights of Halifax, Nova Scotia (NS), Canada could not restrain these New Paltz hawks from early morning runs or late night ventures. Four psychology graduate students in the Evolutionary Psychology Lab at SUNY New Paltz (Kian Betancourt, Christopher Farrington, Richard Holler, and Vania Rolón) and Dr. Glenn Geher (SUNY New Paltz psychology department chair and professor) seized the opportunity to attend the tenth annual Northeastern Evolutionary Psychology Society conference at Saint Mary's University in Halifax, NS; otherwise known as, NEEPS X.

For Christopher Farrington, however, this would be his second trip to Halifax and in his own words, "...it has changed a bit." The city of Halifax resembles a typical suburban-like town with a placid harbor that connects to the blue Atlantic Ocean. Moreover, downtown Halifax resembled what Kian Betancourt described as 'downtown Manhattan.' "This is a city?" was his first thought after arriving to Halifax. Kian exuberantly recalled "the first thing I smelled was the fresh beach air that was so unfamiliar to me as a New Yorker. Seeing gorgeous citadels, parks, art, and Halifax's culture was truly an eye-opening experience. Despite never having been in Canada in my life, something about being in Halifax made me feel right at home."

Aside from immersing themselves into the history and culture of Halifax and Canada, the hawks joined forces with other scholars who attended NEEPS X, also known as the *NEEPSters*, to present on-going research projects revolving around evolutionary psychology. Vania Rolón is a passionate evolutionary scholar and beholds that "the interdisciplinarity of evolutionary studies is often emphasized as one of the field's biggest strengths, and the talks and posters—which varied from female choice in popular romantic fiction such as *Pride and Prejudice* and *Sex and the City*, to seating preferences at restaurants, and even the possibility of intelligent extraterrestrial life from other planets and how to



Dr. Glenn Geher receiving a special ceramic chalice set crafted by Halifax artists and presented by fellow NEEPster Dr. Rosemarie Sokol-Chang during NEEPS X for his persistent contributions to the NEEPS tradition.

understand it—presented at NEEPS X were no exception. The degrees held by the other NEEPSters were not limited to psychology; they ranged across disciplines like anthropology, biology, economics, and even engineering. The most rewarding NEEPS X experiences were (1) being able to see the variety of topics that can be studied through an evolutionary lens and (2) the chance to socialize and network with professors and students like ourselves.

Concealed behind the aura of excitement of the tenth academic celebration was a tribute to our very own, Dr. Glenn Geher. Glenn is recognized as the founder of the Northeastern Evolutionary Psychology Society - which began its life at SUNY New Paltz with its first conference in 2007. Glenn's four graduate students proudly joined in with the other eighty NEEPSters in Glenn's standing ovation for his effort and passion as a true NEEPster.

For Glenn, NEEPS represents the kind of intellectually vibrant and student-focused approach that should characterize any academic experience. We all look forward to future meetings of "the little evolutionary society that could" - with its roots right in the Hudson Valley!



## PSYCHOLOGY DEPARTMENT NEWS

Psychology **Professor Doug Maynard's** Positive Psychology Practicum class held a special poster session as part of our campus-wide EAP series designed to help cultivate a positive work environment. The event took place in a packed SUB 418 - with employees from a wide variety of offices on campus participating. Students from the class presented work from their projects, which focused on the use of positive psychology research to help cultivate beneficial outcomes for individuals in various contexts (such as one project that sought to study the emotional benefits of altruism). Needless to say, this was a VERY POSITIVE event!



Back row: Johnny Coxum (University Police), Doug Maynard, Bruce Fischetti, Leah Bernstein, Michael Persico, Annamaria Palumbo, Samantha Cosentino, Andy Elliott. Front row: Stephanie Padich, Beverlie Fleurinay, Katherine Sutton, Edward Kralles, Brett Linehan. Photo By Maryalice Citera

Long-standing Psychology Adjunct Faculty Member, **Rosemarie Sokol-Chang, PhD**, has just been promoted to the position of Acting Publisher of Journals for the American Psychological Association (APA). The APA journals have a long-standing international reputation as elite in the field of psychology and holding this position is a sign that Dr. Sokol-Chang has earned an extraordinary reputation in the domain of publishing psychological research. In addition to serving as a long-standing adjunct faculty member in the psychology department at New Paltz, Dr. Sokol-Chang was employed by the SUNY Research Foundation for part of an NSF grant awarded to our Evolutionary Studies (EvoS) program. Her work in this capacity involved the launching of the open-access, peer-reviewed EvoS Journal, for which she served as the founding editor. She also served as founding co-editor of the Journal of Social, Evolutionary, and Cultural Psychology (now Evolutionary Behavioral Sciences) which is the official journal of the NorthEastern Evolutionary Psychology Society (NEEPS), which also was founded at SUNY New Paltz.

**Dr. Laurie Bonjo**, Assistant Professor of Psychology, had her band, Batala NYC (the ONLY all-women Afro-Brazilian Samba Band in NYC) featured in the trailer for the Paramount Pictures film Teenage Mutant Ninja Turtles 2. The trailer starts out with a scene from New York's Halloween parade and Batala NYC is featured loudly and prominently therein. The band was asked to play at the Red Carpet premiere of the film. Congratulations Dr. Bonjo!

Follow the latest on faculty and student awards, publications, and other accomplishments at <http://www.newpaltz.edu/psychology/news.html>



### SPOTLIGHT ON YOU!

Would you like to be featured in an upcoming newsletter? Do you have any news you'd like to share? We want to hear from you! Please contact the editors:

- Dr. Glenn Geher ([geherg@newpaltz.edu](mailto:geherg@newpaltz.edu))
- Dr. Karla Vermeulen ([vermeulk@newpaltz.edu](mailto:vermeulk@newpaltz.edu))