Innovative Social Work Program Helps Grieving Pet Owners

by Ethan Tate, Professional Writing Senior

In many households, animals are seen as important members of a family, often on par with the humans living in the home. It is no surprise then that the loss of a cat or dog can have unbearable emotional effects. The Veterinary Social Work Services program at Michigan State University helps to ease that pain.

The program, which began in 2006, is a collaboration between the School of Social Work and the College of Veterinary Medicine. It brings a plethora of social work services into MSU’s renowned Veterinary Teaching Hospital (VTH) to help people deal with the loss of a companion animal.

The program provides grief support for both community members and clients of the hospital when they lose a companion animal. Linda Lawrence, Social Work faculty member and program coordinator, said the loss of a companion animal is often equivalent to the loss of any other family member.

“This is what animal companions have become for so many people,” Lawrence said. “The grief they experience is as devastating as the loss of a human member of the family. That is why we are such a necessary part of the VTH.”

Aside from the grief counseling services, the program also provides a safe place for VTH employees to discuss the day-to-day trials of their work. According to Lawrence, compassion fatigue is one of the biggest issues for the medical and support staff at the hospital.

“The things they see and must do are very difficult for these people who love animals so much,” Lawrence said.

In addition, Lawrence helps run a support group for those who have lost a companion animal. The group meets twice a month and has had visitors from as far away as Sault Ste. Marie, Ontario, Canada.

Recent contributions to the Veterinary Social Work Services program will help to ensure that it continues to flourish. In June, alumni Gerry Myers and his wife Marti, a former social worker, announced a $500,000 planned gift to the program. The couple has relied on the VTH in the past to help their dog, Andre.

As a volunteer and donor, Sally Lloyd has watched the Veterinary Social Work Services program grow from the basement of the VTH to the well-traveled axis of the Oncology and Emergency waiting rooms. In 2011, she established an endowed fund through a planned gift annuity in support of the program. She now volunteers at the VTH each week.

“I’ve been going to the VTH on Wednesday mornings, and every day is different,” Lloyd said. “I get to pat a lot of dogs and a few cats but my main service is to the humans.”

For information on the program or making a donation, contact Assistant Director of Development Alex Tripp at 866-276-2425 or actripp@msu.edu.
In the fall of 1962, MSU was still officially known as the Michigan State University of Agriculture and Applied Science. John A. Hannah was the president of the university, and our administrative home, Berkey Hall, was a young, 15-year-old building, the largest classroom building on campus at the time.

While the study of the social sciences has been an integral part of the university since the early days, it seems appropriate to look back to 1962 specifically as that was the year that the College of Social Science as we know it came into being. As such, this academic year marks the 50th anniversary of action taken by university trustees to acknowledge the important distinctions among the liberal arts and sciences disciplines and to divide one large college into three separate colleges: Social Science, Arts and Letters, and Natural Science.

While the history of the social sciences at the University encompasses more than the past fifty years, this half century point is still a milestone worth noting. We continue to adapt to meet new societal needs while maintaining our original mission. The research our faculty and students accomplish each day reflects our goal to create diverse solutions to improve life for citizens of the world. We cross disciplinary boundaries to tackle difficult challenges knowing that answers to the world’s most complex problems are no longer rooted in any one academic field.

I am proud to serve as dean of this wonderfully diverse college, full of energy and talent, dedicated to human problems in this increasingly complex world. You, our alumni, are around the globe doing the same thing, and I am proud of that as well.

Each of the social, behavioral and economic science disciplines and professions advance knowledge in distinctive ways. But collectively, we are better able to address major problems because of the synergies that we inspire. What may seem to have been an administrative decision made 50 years ago has in fact enabled us to fulfill our mission more boldly and completely. I believe that the next fifty years will be an equally exciting time.

Sincerely,

Marietta L. Baba, Dean and Professor

Around the College

- Alan Arbogast has been appointed Chair of the Department of Geography. A physical geographer, Dr. Arbogast’s research focuses primarily on the geomorphic history of coastal sand dunes along Lake Michigan. He teaches a variety of courses in physical geography and is the author of a popular textbook in the discipline. In addition, Dr. Arbogast has led a study abroad program to Australia and is an MSU Lilly Fellow.

- Mike Morrow was voted President of the College of Social Science Alumni Association (CSSAA) at the CSSAA annual meeting in May. Board member Kevin Sutton was elected secretary.

- In other CSSAA news, departing from the board were Christine Mason Soneral and Jennifer Shimp who were honored at the annual meeting after serving two terms. Wade Higgeson and Jennifer Wallace were elected to return for second terms, and Aimee Argel, Katrina Kelly, and Rondi Wightman were elected as new board members with terms from 2012-2015.

- Nick McLaren has been promoted to the position of Senior Director of Development and Alumni Relations in the college, replacing Sarah Blom. Nick has served the college since 2008 as Associate Director of Development, significantly strengthening the major gifts program among other accomplishments such as achieving 100% fundraising participation from the School of Human Resources and Labor Relations Advisory Board. Sarah was promoted to the position of Executive Director of Individual Giving for MSU after seven years of development and alumni leadership in the college.

- In September, Karen and Richard Wampler of the Department of Human Development and Family Studies (HDFS) were each recognized with the 2012 American Association for Marriage and Family Therapy (AAMFT) Outstanding Contribution to Marriage and Family Therapy Award at the AAMFT conference in Charlotte, North Carolina. At the same conference, Karin Tichenor, a doctoral student in HDFS, received the AAMFT Minority Fellowship.
Although complete immersion into life in a foreign land may seem daunting to some, recent MSU graduate Kirstie Sieloff relishes it. Sieloff was awarded a Fulbright U.S. Student Program scholarship and recently began a coveted position in Germany as an English Teaching Assistant working with children and young adults. She is among a select group of students in the U.S. to earn this honor.

“While I was working on senior-level classes at MSU, I was constantly thinking about my Fulbright application,” she said. After months of waiting, she finally received the good news and immediately shared it with those around her. “I received the email notifying me of the award while in a meeting and was overwhelmed with excitement. I blurted out the news to my teammates, called my family, and then told everyone who had encouraged me during the application process.”

Sieloff, who graduated in Spring 2012 with a Bachelor of Science in Urban and Regional Planning and a Bachelor of Arts in German, is no stranger to the act of bridging cultures. “I applied for a Fulbright U.S. Student Program scholarship after a year-long MSU exchange to Germany, where I participated in the ‘Rent an American’ program in my free time,” Sieloff explained. As a Traverse City native, she compared the location in Germany to her picturesque home. “The region’s natural features are absolutely breathtaking, much like those found within Michigan.”

As she travels abroad a second time, she’ll face added responsibilities and increased community involvement required by the Fulbright program. “I will be assistant teaching at Gymnasium Gosheim-Wehingen. The school has grades 5-12 and offers multiple subjects in English,” Sieloff said. “My role will be to assist in classes taught in English and provide guidance as a native English speaker. In my free time I will immerse myself in the local culture and participate in the community.”

Sieloff credits the faculty and staff of the Urban and Regional Planning program for helping her excel academically and achieve this honor. “There are multiple professors and staff members who supported my education above and beyond what is expected,” she said. “I am extremely thankful for their support. I graduated feeling confident in my abilities and with the breadth of my education.”

Her studies at MSU guided her desire to travel and make a positive impact on lives across the globe. “Over the next months, Fulbright will allow me to interact with children and young adults, improve my own language competence and professional skills, and gain a greater worldview.”

For Sieloff, the Fulbright Award is likely just the beginning of her professional and personal journey toward success in international and cultural understanding. “I am proud to call myself a Spartan,” she said, “and I will come home often.”

College of Social Science Associate Professor Adrian Blow, a family and marriage therapist in the Department of Human Development and Family Studies, will lead two projects to help Michigan National Guard members and their families in the often stressful transition from battlefield to civilian life. The projects have received a total of $1.5 million in funding from the U.S. Department of Defense and the Detroit-based Ethel and James Flinn Foundation.

Meijer senior vice president of human resources and College of Social Science alumna Karen Morris has been honored as one of 25 Influential Black Women in Business by The Network Journal, a New York-based monthly African American business magazine. Morris currently serves on the School of Human Resources and Labor Relations Advisory Board.

Puerto Rico has experienced an island-wide increase in homicides while the clearance rate for homicides has decreased. To address this problem, the U.S. Department of Justice has chosen MSU School of Criminal Justice Professor David Carter to be a team leader for a project that will perform a comprehensive assessment of homicide investigations by the Puerto Rico Police Department.

MSU Department of Psychology graduate student Katherine Cloutier received the mtvU-Fulbright award for developing youth leadership through Dance for Life to combat the spread of AIDS in Barbados.

Department of Sociology graduate students Leigh-Anne Goines and Angela Nurse received the 2012 American Sociological Association Teaching Innovations & Professional Development Award.

Do you have news about a Social Science Spartan that’s not included here? Send it to us at alumni@ssc.msu.edu.
College of Social Science Alumni Association Board Secretary Kevin Sutton was recently recognized as one of five recipients of the Winning Futures Mentor of the Year Award. Winning Futures is a non-profit school-based mentoring program that offers programs and workshops for middle school and high school students in Southeast Michigan.

This past academic year, Sutton was a mentor at Warren Mott High School in Warren where he met weekly with four students, three seniors and one junior, for one-hour sessions. The weekly sessions involved hands-on activities, written exercises, and group discussions. Sutton was also able to share his work as an attorney with his mentees. “We went to the United States District Court and toured the courthouse, met members of the judiciary, and watched oral argument on a case in which I represented one of the parties,” he said.

Sutton said that his involvement with the College of Social Science has shown him the importance of community involvement like student mentoring. His time as a student in the college taught him the best way to find solutions to real world issues is to “get engaged and work one-on-one with those in need. My mentoring is an extension of these fundamental concepts of the College of Social Science philosophy,” he said.

Sutton also sees crossover between his work as a mentor and his position within the CSSAA. “One of the missions of the CSSAA is to support student ambitions and help students achieve their goals. Though not specifically tied to MSU, my work with these young men is an extension of that objective by equipping the students with the resources they need to be productive and successful members of society.”

“Students really appreciate talking to someone who can talk to them about real-world experience,” said Vicki Essenmacher, associate director of alumni relations for the College of Social Science. “As an alumni board member, Kevin has always been willing to step in and help our students.”

Sutton graduated from MSU in 1999 with a B.A. in Political Science. He is a Senior Attorney at Lusk & Albertson.
Social Science Student Takes Grand Prize at Research Forum

by Ethan Tate, Professional Writing Senior

Evan Gross of the College of Social Science earned the Grand Prize award for the Humanities, Social Science, and Communication Art and Sciences division in the 2012 University Undergraduate Research and Arts Forum (UURAF).

Gross was one of approximately 560 students who participated in the 2012 UURAF event on April 13, 2012. He received a first-place award in his category which put him in the pool of possible candidates for the Grand Prize awarded in June. Only two grand prize awards were given, the other going to the top presenter from the science and engineering categories. Gross was awarded a prize of $500 for his win.

After graduating in May of 2012 with a B.A. in Urban and Regional Planning, Gross interned over the summer with the City of Lansing Planning Office. He is currently serving in AmeriCorps, working for the American Red Cross in Traverse City.

His award-winning research, “The Emergency Manager Law Relative to Local Government Fiscal Stress in Michigan,” analyzed the history of Michigan’s Emergency Manager law, comparing its applications across cities and predicting which cities are on the cusp of being taken over by emergency managers.

“It was a great opportunity for me to study a topic of interest in depth and answer some of my own questions through original research,” Gross said.

Gross’ mentor on the project, Dr. Matt Grossmann of the Department of Political Science, said that after a year of intensely studying the law, Gross “knows more about it than most state policymakers and is probably among the two or three most knowledgeable citizens on the subject.”

The research was made possible through the College of Social Science Dean’s Assistantship Program. The program provides exceptional students with support to conduct advanced mentored research projects. Through the program, Gross was able to interview key political players on both sides of the issue and have access to data currently being collected on Michigan cities.
The College of Social Science is excited to announce a new web site with features that allow alumni to stay connected with other Social Science Spartans and the College of Social Science.

Just visit mysocialscience.msu.edu and see how easy it is to get connected. Simply select “First Time Login” in the upper right corner of the page and follow the easy instructions to establish a profile.

Alumni will be able to search for and contact fellow Spartans, register for events, update contact information, and set email preferences.

Check it out!