**GEOGRAPHY LIVES! GRCC GEOGRAPHY NEWS**

**ISSUE # 2**

GRCC Geography News

*June 2016*

---

**FROM RAINFORESTS IN MADAGASCAR TO SEQUOIA GROVES IN CALIFORNIA ---**

**GRCC GEOGRAPHY FACULTY AND STUDENTS EXPLORE THE WORLD**

---

**GEography Student HONORED FOR LEADERSHIP**

At the GRCC Annual Student Leadership Banquet, Stacey Murphy, President of the GRCC chapter of the International Geographical Honor Society, was awarded the institution’s Benham Service and Civic Engagement Award, which is presented to the GRCC student who best shows leadership in service and civic engagement initiatives. A single mother, working full-time, and also taking classes every semester, Stacey understands the hardships faced by many community college students and is actively working to ameliorate those difficulties through her research, service, and leadership. She works at the YMCA to address the needs of local children, a number of whom live in poverty and find a place of refuge at the local Y.

---

**GeoGRaphy Students RAISE FUNDS FOR EDUCATION OF AFRICAN GIRLS**

Stacey Murphy and April Shirey led the GRCC GTU chapter in raising funds for the education of girls in Africa, continuing a partnership with the Campaign for Female Education (Camfed). Camfed maintains that “When you educate a girl in Africa, everything changes. She’ll be three times less likely to get HIV/AIDS, earn 25 percent more income and have a smaller, healthier family.” As women become empowered, towns and villages tend to achieve higher levels of prosperity. Economic and political stability are enhanced and the threat of civil unrest and war is reduced considerably. The $1200 sent this year from GRCC to Camfed keeps five girls in high school for a year.

---

**GeoGRaphy Students study POVERTY AND PRESENT FINDINGS AT CALIFORNIA CONFERENCE**

Stacey Murphy and April Shirey presented *Apathy is Not Acceptable: Taking on Poverty in American Community Colleges* at the annual meeting of the California Geographical Society. They showed that achievement of the baccalaureate offers some of the best insurance for keeping Americans out of poverty; but increased college costs over the past 40 years have been coupled with a decreased value in the minimum wage that have made a college education an unreal goal for many. Whereas a community college student in 1975 only needed to work full-time for 4 ½ weeks at minimum wage to cover the annual cost of tuition and books, today a community college student needs to work more than 18 weeks. To address this issue, they offer a multi-pronged approach, which includes attending to the food needs of community college students, a large proportion of whom are food-insecure, while also educating the public on the need for enhanced state funding of community colleges.

---

A recent survey of 639 GRCC students shows that most students have not been made aware of a food bank located on the GRCC campus. Whereas only 2% claim to have used the food bank, more than 30% indicate a need and a desire to use it. The survey also shows that 73% intend to go on to another institution to complete the bachelor’s degree; but only 24% of GRCC students actually transfer to complete the baccalaureate. Here, the question must be raised as to whether or not food insecurity plays a significant role in contributing to low rates of college completion.

Indeed, the bachelor’s degree is important. Although approximately 15% of Americans live in poverty, the poverty rate for those holding the baccalaureate is considerably less, and for the Non-White population, the impact of the B.A. is even more striking. Approximately 25% of Latinos and African-Americans live in poverty; however, the poverty rate for African-Americans holding a bachelor’s degree is 7% and for Latinos it is 8.4%. Given that, as they enroll 40% of American undergraduates, half of whom are not White, the transfer mission of community colleges is becoming increasingly imperative.

---

Stacey is the only GRCC Geography student to have made presentations at three different academic conferences before graduating with the Associate’s degree. After completion of the Geography B.A. at Aquinas College, she plans to pursue graduate studies in Geography.
Geographers are uniquely positioned to integrate responsible leadership with scientific knowledge for the resolution of social and environmental problems. The GRCC Geography program is dedicated to educating students with the knowledge and skills needed to address critical issues facing humanity in the 21st century.

JOBS IN GEOGRAPHY

According to the Bureau of Labor Statistics, the median pay for all workers was approximately $36,000 in 2015. The median pay for geographers in 2015 was more than $74,000.

The federal government recently announced many positions are now open for geographers interested in careers with the Bureau of the Census, Bureau of Land Management, U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, National Science Foundation, Department of Homeland Security, National Park Service, National Geospatial-Intelligence Agency, Department of Commerce, Department of Health and Human Services, National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration, Department of the Air Force, Department of Agriculture, and Department of State.

Geographers are employed in a variety of occupations, ranging from environmental conservation to diplomacy. The GRCC Geography web site entry for careers in Geography offers details concerning employment and careers in the field: http://www.grcc.edu/socialsciences/geography/careers

THE SIGNIFICANCE OF ACADEMIC CONFERENCES FOR GEOGRAPHY MAJORS

GRCC Geography majors are expected to participate in academic conferences, for they provide opportunities for learning innovative concepts, sharing ideas, engaging in intellectual debate, and challenging the status quo. Since 2009, GRCC geography majors have made 15 presentations at academic conferences, a record that is unmatched in community college geography. Because of the geographic discipline’s eclectic nature, conferences in other disciplines can be relevant to practitioners of geography. The Levin College of Urban Affairs at Cleveland State University is ranked seventh by US News and World Report as one of the leading American graduate programs in urban affairs. Megan Hornyak, B.S. Aquinas, was recently awarded a doctoral assistantship to pursue the Ph.D. at Cleveland State.

ALUMNI ACCOLADES, HONORS, AND ACTIVITIES

Cady Korson, B.A. Aquinas, M.A. Missouri, Ph.D. Kent State (below), was awarded the Ph.D. in Geography at Kent State University in 2015. She took a postdoctoral fellowship at the University of Oulu in Finland and continues to see her research published in peer-reviewed scholarly journals. In addition to her work “Political agency and citizen journalism: Twitter as a tool of evaluation,” which was published in 2014 in The Professional Geographer, “Framing Peace: The Role of Media, Perceptions, and United Nations Peacekeeping Operations in Haiti and Côte d’Ivoire,” was published last year in Geopolitics, and “The Comparison of a Thematic vs. Regional Approach to Teaching a World Geography Course,” was published in the Journal of Geography.

Currently on a Ph.D. fellowship at Rutgers University, Ben Gerlofs, B.A. Aquinas, M.A. Syracuse, is conducting fieldwork in Mexico City, which is devoted to his doctoral dissertation. His article, “Edge city or bust: dismantling a regime of aesthetic governmentality in Oak Brook, Illinois,” appeared last month in the peer-reviewed journal, Urban Geography.

The Levin College of Urban Affairs at Cleveland State University is ranked seventh by US News and World Report as one of the leading American graduate programs in urban affairs. Megan Hornyak, B.S. Aquinas, was recently awarded a doctoral assistantship to pursue the Ph.D. at Cleveland State.

Welcome to the second issue of GEOGRAPHY LIVES! --- a newsletter designed to provide the Grand Rapids Community College student body, faculty, administration, staff, trustees, and members of the GRCC community with information and news about the institution’s Geography program and its alumni.

Inquiries and comments may be directed to the newsletter editor, Dr. M.S. DeVivo, via e-mail: mdevivo@grcc.edu

Alyson Mabie, B.S. GVSU (below), recently completed the Geography baccalaureate at Grand Valley State University, and she was invited to deliver a plenary lecture at a forum commemorating the GVSU Department of Geography and Sustainable Planning. Alyson has accepted an assistantship to pursue graduate studies in geography at Western Michigan University.

Marina Pavletic, B.A. Davenport, M.A. Western Michigan, recently completed the Geography M.A. at Western Michigan University. She became the first GRCC Geography adjunct instructor in more than 15 years. Marina taught World Regional Geography while also managing her business in travel and tourism.

While continuing to serve as a Lead GIS Technician for Greenpeace, Lindsey Harris, B.A. GVSU, is pursuing a master’s degree in geographic information systems at the University of Maryland.

Tyler Frank, B.A. Michigan, is a Peace Corps Coverdell Fellow, enrolled in the University of Arizona’s master’s program in Language, Reading, and Culture. Tyler is also an Instructor at Pima Community College.

Marina Islas, B.A. Aquinas, M.A. Ohio, is the Culture and Arts Education Coordinator at the Emma S. Barrientos Mexican American Cultural Center in Austin, Texas.

Rachel Salim, B.S. Western Michigan, M.S. Western Michigan, recently completed the Geosciences M.S. at Western Michigan University. She holds a position with the Michigan Department of Agriculture & Rural Development.

Amanda Colegrove, B.A. Aquinas, M.A. Missouri, continues to fight human trafficking as the Director of the Coalition Against Trafficking and Exploitation in St. Louis, Missouri.

Megan (above) is anticipating completion of the Geography M.A. at Kent State University in August. In April, she was honored with the institution’s Weston Jones Master’s Award, presented in recognition of “the student who, through scholarship, leadership, and friendship, fosters greater understanding of Geography as voted by her peers.”
GRCC GEOGRAPHY NEWS

ISSUE # 2

GRCC GEOGRAPHY WEB SITE
An enhanced GRCC Geography web site was launched in 2015. In addition to a program description (http://www.grcc.edu/socialsciences/geography), details concerning the International Geographical Honor Society chapter (http://www.grcc.edu/socialsciences/geography/gamma thetaupsilonlonu), the Conversation with a Geographer oral history series (http://www.grcc.edu/socialsciences/geography/conversationwithageographer), Distinguished Speakers on Film (http://www.grcc.edu/socialsciences/geography/distinguishedspeakersonfilm), the GRCC Geography Field Cap Award (http://www.grcc.edu/socialsciences/geography/grccgeo graphyfieldcapaward), Course Offerings (http://www.grcc.edu/socialsciences/geography/geographycourses), and Careers in Geography (http://www.grcc.edu/socialsciences/geography/careersingeography) are easily examined by clicking on the pertinent links.

CONVERSATION WITH A GEOGRAPHER: AN ORAL HISTORY SERIES IN ITS 6TH YEAR
Inspired by Geographers on Film, the discipline’s famous oral history series created by the late Maynard Weston Dow, Conversation with a Geographer was founded in 2011 at Grand Rapids Community College. Broadcast on the GRCC TV YouTube network (and exceeding 9000 views), a number of filmed interviews have taken place. Included among them are a past president of the International Geographical Honor Society, the current president of the American Geographical Society, a notable columnist for the New York Times (whose father was a distinguished political geographer), and a geographer coordinating a fight against human trafficking, as well as a number of feminist geographers known for stellar fieldwork. The additions in 2016 include Jessie Clark, Assistant Professor of Geography at the University of Nevada-Reno and Maria Fadiman, Associate Professor of Geography at Florida Atlantic University. The interviews are valuable in teaching, for students have commented they’ve learned much about what geographers do and gained inspiration from viewing the films. Indeed, as the only current oral history series devoted to academic geography, Conversation with a Geographer has proven to be pedagogically priceless. Links to all interviews can be found at: http://www.grcc.edu/socialsciences/geography/conversationwithageographer

GEOPOLITICS AND THE WORLD AFFAIRS COUNCIL OF WESTERN MICHIGAN
As GRCC is an institutional member of the World Affairs Council of Western Michigan, which is devoted to educating leaders in higher education and business on matters pertaining to global affairs, GRCC faculty in Geography and Political Science collaborate with representatives of other institutions to determine the speakers for the Great Decisions Lecture Series. The Foreign Policy Association states this is “America’s largest discussion program on world affairs.” Among those selected as Great Decisions speakers in 2016 was Jessie Clark (below), an assistant professor of geography at the University of Nevada-Reno. Dr. Clark, who has conducted substantial fieldwork in the Middle East, spoke on Our Allies in the Middle East: The Future of Kurdistan. Her lecture can be viewed at: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=94jOFRI7OB8.

GRCC CELEBRATES 8TH CONSECUTIVE YEAR OF PARTICIPATION IN THE VISITING GEOGRAPHICAL SCIENTIST PROGRAM WITH TEDx SPEAKER
Maria Fadiman, associate professor of Geography at Florida Atlantic University and author of numerous publications devoted to ethnobotany and sustainable development, delivered the 8th consecutive Visiting Geographical Scientist Program lecture at GRCC on 21 April, titled: People and Plants: Conservation of Forests and Cultures. Maria, known for her TEDx talks in the U.S. and Mexico on people and plants in tropical ecosystems, engages in fieldwork in Latin America and Africa. She has received funding from the National Science Foundation and National Geographic Society for research relating to cultural geography and ethnobotany.

In 2006, she earned distinction as a National Geographic Emerging Explorer and in 2015, she was honored as one of only 42 geographers listed by the International Geographical Honor Society as distinguished Visiting Geographical Scientists.

GRCC GEOGRAPHY COURSES
During the 2015-2016 academic year, students enrolled in 23 sections of Geography courses at GRCC, including two sections of GE 120 Cultural Geography, three sections of GE 233 Regional Geography of the U.S. and Canada, six sections of GE 132 Physical Geography, and twelve sections of GE 235 World Regional Geography. Online courses continue to be popular, enrolling students from across the globe. The Physical Geography course satisfies a general education lab science requirement; students engage in an analysis of the natural environment in terms of climate, water resources, vegetation and animals, soil, and landforms. Students that complete all assignments show high levels of success. The World Regional Geography, Cultural Geography, and Regional Geography of the U.S. and Canada courses are social sciences courses. Each requires students to engage in substantial reading and writing, as this
strategy has been shown to foster analytical thinking and problem-solving — skills that are not only desired by prospective employers, but also essential for knowledgeable public citizens in an era characterized by marked globalization.

Descriptions of each course can be found at: [http://www.grcc.edu/socialsciences/geography/geographycourses](http://www.grcc.edu/socialsciences/geography/geographycourses)

**GRCC GTU**

Founded in 1928, Gamma Theta Upsilon (GTU) is an international honor society devoted to Geography. Standards of excellence for membership are imposed by the Association of College Honor Societies, the only certifying agency for college and university honor societies in the United States. The Lambda Upsilon chapter was chartered at Grand Rapids Community College (GRCC) in 2007, and since that time, its membership, though small in number, has been highly active. Students have taken part regularly in field trips, academic conferences, and the raising of funds for the education of girls in Africa. Lambda Upsilon is one of relatively few chapters that have been awarded GTU Honors. In addition to maintaining stellar academic records, its members are tasked with engaging in extra-curricular geographical research and humanitarian service.

GRCC GTU members are recognized throughout the geographical community. They’ve served as an inspiration to not only other students, but other faculty, including at least one Visiting Geographical Scientist, as well. Stacey Murphy, the outgoing President, and April Shirey, the current Vice-President (and incoming President), each hold full-time jobs, complete excellent academic coursework, conduct geographical research outside their classes, and raise funds for the education of African girls, while also organizing food drives. Stacey is also a very devoted single mother. In recognition of their efforts, both Stacey and April were awarded the Lambda Upsilon Global Citizenship Award and the Lambda Upsilon Academic Service Award, as well as the GRCC Geography Field Cap Award. Stacey was awarded the Lambda Upsilon Leadership Award.

The success of past members shows the value of GRCC GTU. Indeed, Lambda Upsilon members are among the best undergraduate students in academic geography today. Further information can be found at: [http://www.grcc.edu/socialsciences/geography/gammathetaupsilongtu](http://www.grcc.edu/socialsciences/geography/gammathetaupsilongtu)

**GEOGRAPHY AND RESPONSIBLE LEADERSHIP**

Arguably, among the notable leaders in the history of academic geography, none matched Carl Sauer. As chairman of the Geography department at Berkeley for 31 years, he took on the responsibility of selflessly looking after subordinate faculty and students in an effort to facilitate their opportunities for advancement. Like other stellar leaders, Sauer was an inspiring figure with a reputation for integrity, and one who demonstrated exemplary academic scholarship. Moreover, with keen insight, he anticipated situations in advance, and proactively exercised some control over them, making things happen instead of simply reacting to events as they unfolded.

The transformational leadership attributes of inspiration, integrity, selflessness, scholarship, and proaction, which characterized Sauer and other leaders in academic Geography, have been shown to be imperative in the achievement of success. Thus, leadership that accentuates these traits should be encouraged, and in Geography, as well as in other disciplines in the liberal arts and sciences, responsible leadership education is needed.

Students participating in Gamma Theta Upsilon at GRCC are able to enhance their competence in responsible leadership while engaging in the practice of Geography, and this experience provides a solid foundation for their pursuits following graduation. Whether it is in public policy, environmental conservation, social justice, or academia, GRCC Geography graduates are tasked with taking on leadership roles in American society throughout the 21st century—-and they can be expected to perform with excellence. Lambda Upsilon Presidents play a special part in the Geography program’s success. They seek to achieve long-lasting goals with limited resources by applying the transformational leadership attributes of inspiration, integrity, selflessness, scholarship, and proaction. Indeed, GRCC is fortunate to have had exemplary leaders among Geography students that have been committed to serving humanity.

### “WHY GEOGRAPHY?”

**A STUDENT’S VOICE: APRIL SHIREY**

When I started at Grand Rapids Community College I was a returning nontraditional student. With no clue what I wanted to accomplish I set out on my journey towards a higher education. For one of my required credits I decided to take the Cultural Geography class that is offered at GRCC. I started reading a book called Half the Sky and from then on I was hooked on the expansive world that geography has to offer. I immediately changed my major and then discovered that GRCC has a geographical honor society. I joined and was beyond thrilled.

Gamma Theda Upsilon has given me the chance not only to help people but to grow as an individual both in my education and personally. I have been given the opportunity to travel and present papers that I have written; this was beyond anything I could have ever imagined at GRCC. GTU has given me more than this as well, I have been able to figure out what direction I want to take my major, which for a returning college student sometimes can prove to be quite difficult. From helping send girls to school in Africa all the way to locally helping collect food for our campus food pantry, GTU is assisting to expand and enrich GRCC as a whole.

### “WHY GEOGRAPHY?”

**AN ALUMNA’S REFLECTION: ALYSON MABIE**

When I was younger, my father liked to play this fun game… well, fun for him. Unbeknownst to me, the game would begin in the car. Dad would be driving to anywhere: the grocery store, school, or a soccer game, while I daydreamed out the passenger window. He would stop suddenly in a random parking lot and I knew it was coming. He would turn to me, as my heart sank, and ask, “Where are you on the planet?” -- as if I knew-- and then, “What are you going to do about it?” The game was on and it was now up to me to navigate to our destination. This often ended poorly because, though my father was one of those happy people born with a natural internal compass, I was not so blessed. And this exercise did not cultivate one, as I believe my father hoped.

However, whether by repetition or fate, the questions stuck. They strike me today as fundamental to what geography as a discipline is. Where are you on the planet? And what are you going to do about it?

I struggled to choose a major during my undergraduate studies because I wanted to pursue everything, more specifically the connections between everything. I found myself in a World Regional Geography course at GRCC out of curiosity more than anything. I expected maps,
capital cities, and mountain ranges. About five minutes into the course it became apparent that geography wasn’t just maps; it was people, the environment, economics, politics, history, and culture. Geography is the study of all the things that intersect in a certain place at a certain time and has given me the tools to make sense of where I am and what I can do about it.

From the Association of American Geographers

YOUR MOM SAID YOU SHOULD MAJOR IN SOMETHING THAT WILL GET YOU A GOOD JOB. YOU REALLY DO WANT A GOOD JOB AFTER YOU GRADUATE. BUT DON’T YOU WANT TO DO SOMETHING YOU LOVE? WHAT IF YOU COULD DO BOTH? WHAT IF YOU COULD ENJOY YOUR WORK, GET PAID FOR IT, AND HAVE A REAL IMPACT ON THE WORLD? AFTER ALL, WE ALL WANT TO MAKE A DIFFERENCE. YOU REALLY DO KNOW WHERE YOU WANT TO GO. GEOGRAPHY CAN TAKE YOU THERE.

For more information about Careers in Geography, go to: http://www.grcc.edu/socialsciences/geography/careersingeography

GRCC Geography students and alumni demonstrate excellence, as they take on the challenge of going out into the world and making a difference.

GEOGRAHPY LIVES! GRCC GEOGRAPHY NEWS

ISSUE # 2

GEOGRAPHY PRE-MAJOR AND TRANSFER OPPORTUNITIES

The GRCC Geography pre-major offers students preparation for further study in a number of fields, such as Global Studies, International Development, Sustainable Planning, Tourism, Environmental Conservation, and Meteorology. Moreover, students in the upper 35% of their class with a 3.5 GPA in at least three Geography courses are eligible for International Geographical Honor Society membership. Students that graduate with an Associate of Arts degree, while completing four courses in Geography (GE 132 Physical Geography, GE 235 World Regional Geography, GE 210 Cultural Geography, and the Regional Geography of the U.S. and Canada) satisfy a large proportion of the coursework required for the major in Geography at a number of transfer institutions. Although GRCC Geography students have transferred to several colleges and universities for completion of the baccalaureate, Aquinas College, Grand Valley State University, and Western Michigan University are their most common destinations.

Of the three, Aquinas remains the most popular. Most traditionally-aged GRCC Geography students that transfer to Aquinas are awarded scholarships, currently valued between $10,000 and $33,500 per year, which makes the cost of attending the private liberal arts college on par with the cost of public universities. Scholarships are based upon academic performance. The faculty in the Aquinas Geography Department provide students with the challenging courses and close mentoring needed for graduate school preparation. GRCC Geography students that transfer to Aquinas have a strong record of success in attaining graduate assistantships, which normally include waiver of graduate tuition and stipends of approximately $12,000 to $23,000. GRCC Students completing the Geography pre-major have 13 of the 32 credits required to complete the major at Aquinas; thus, with 40% of the major requirements completed before entry, transfer students have the opportunity to complete a second major at Aquinas as well. For information on Aquinas Geography: https://www.aquinas.edu/geography

With seven full-time faculty, Grand Valley State University’s (GVSU) Department of Geography and Sustainable Planning offers students rich opportunities to enhance their geographical knowledge. Concentrations in planning and the environment are especially sound, as are those in the geospatial technologies. A GIS Certificate is offered, which requires students to complete 13 credits in courses devoted to geographic information systems. Some GRCC Geography students that transfer to GVSU go on to pursue graduate studies; a number of them take positions in geospatial technologies and planning immediately after award of the baccalaureate. GRCC Students completing the Geography pre-major have 13 of the 36 credits required to complete the major at GVSU. For information on GVSU Geography and Sustainable Planning: http://www.gvsu.edu/geography/

The Department of Geography at Western Michigan University (WMU) offers both undergraduate and graduate programs in Geography. With 14 members on the faculty, a diverse curriculum is offered; students in pursuit of the baccalaureate may major in community and regional planning, secondary education, tourism and travel, or Geography. GRCC students completing the Geography pre-major have 13 of the 36-38 credits required to complete the Geography major at WMU. GIS certificate and M.S. degree programs are open to students that already hold B.A. or B.S. degrees. A number of teaching and research assistantships are available to stellar students interested in graduate study. For information on WMU Geography: https://wmich.edu/geography

In essence, GRCC students interested in completing the Geography baccalaureate have opportunities in the local region to do so. Programs at Aquinas, GVSU, and Western enhance the success of GRCC Geography transfer students. That being said, a total of 512 Geography programs in the US are listed by the Association of American Geographers. Students interested in other colleges and universities have plenty of opportunities. Those interested in further exploring the possibilities of Geography are welcome to contact Dr. M.S. DeVivo at: mdevivo@grcc.edu

GRCC GEOGRAPHY FACULTY

Mike DeVivo has been privileged to continue to teach several courses and offer guidance to students in their studies and their careers. Among other things, his book, Leadership in American Academic Geography: The Twentieth Century, was included among works devoted to the history of geography that were reviewed in a recent issue of Progress in Human Geography. Over the past year, he gave a number of talks devoted to the history of geography, leadership, geopolitics, geographic education, and African wildlife conservation. A list of selected publications, conference papers, and invited lectures can be found at: http://www.grcc.edu/socialsciences/msdevivo

Mike also reviewed manuscript for the Geographical Review and Oxford University Press, and he produced the 2016 Faces of African Wildlife calendar. Additionally, he interviewed visiting academic geographers for the Conversation with a Geographer oral history series on GRCC TV’s YouTube Channel. Mike was the recipient of a grant funded by the National Science Foundation and presented by the Association of American Geographers to selected senior scholars for participation in the International Geographical Congress in Beijing. He also was honored as one of 42 Visiting Geographical Scientists listed by the Association of American Geographers and the International Geographical Honor Society.

Mike has continued to engage in research in Africa with special reference to African wildlife conservation and community development. His more recent fieldwork has been carried out in Madagascar, Zimbabwe, and South Africa.