

Special
points of
interest:

- UCCS-developed technology aids community recovery
- Psychology faculty member publishes 30 years of work
- Team RWB enriches lives of local veterans, students

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Benight aids Community Recovery

By Tom Hutton, reprinted from UCCS Communique

Charles “Chip” Benight, professor, Psychology Department, and director, Trauma Health and Hazards Center, is featured in a new City of Colorado Springs effort to help community members recover from recent violent events.

The City of Colorado Springs announced Jan. 26 the launch of a new web-based psychological trauma recovery program developed by Benight. This site is designed to help those affected by the Nov. 27

Centennial Boulevard shooting or Oct. 31 downtown shootings but is available to anyone who has experienced a traumatic event.



Dr. Charles C. “Chip” Benight developed My Trauma Recovery to aid trauma survivors and first responders.

Pikespeakstrong.com, offers an interactive platform for teaching

skills people can use to overcome trauma. The site is intended as a self-help tool for affected individuals, offering advice to those seeking support and guidance about when professional help is needed.

Benight created the website through his company, BlueSun, Inc. He has built several other trauma and disaster recovery websites following events including the Aurora theater shootings and hurricanes. The website is also available in Spanish.

Veterans Health and Trauma Clinic celebrates 2nd birthday, continued growth

By Lori Bryan, PhD

The UCCS Veterans Health and Trauma Clinic celebrated its 2nd year of operations this February. To date, more than 450 clients have been seen in over 5,000 contacts. The VHTC is a primary referral source

for the Colorado Springs VA, Operation TBI Freedom, and Peterson AFB, among others. The demand for specialized trauma mental health services continues to be high and Carol Tomeo, MA, LPC recently joined

the VHTC, expanding the clinical team to eight clinicians with expertise in trauma. The VHTC has also added evening hours for appointments for those unable to attend sessions during the work day.

Distinguished Professor publishes 30 years of research on terror management theory

By Alisa Bartel



Dr. Tom Pyszczynski, PhD

Dr. Tom Pyszczynski has been a professor at UCCS for 29 years. As a social psychologist, Dr. Pyszczynski has been a major contributor to the emerging sub-discipline of Experimental Existential Psychology by applying experimental methods to the study of existential problems such as death, meaning, self-esteem, and morality.

Along with colleagues Jeff Greenberg and Sheldon Solomon, Dr. Pyszczynski proposed Terror Management Theory (TMT), which asserts that self-esteem, worldviews, and cultural belief systems serve as protective fac-

tors in confrontations with fearful stimuli such as death. These worldviews provide hope of symbolic immortality by infusing life with purpose and a sense of something greater outliving the individual (e.g. fame, lineage, etc.). TMT proposes that this innate fear of death drives many facets of human behavior in an effort to transcend mortality.

Over 30 years of this research is summarized in a recent book by Dr. Pyszczynski and colleagues titled, "The Worm at the Core: On the Role of Death in Life," currently available on Amazon.

Engaging trauma survivors with technology

By Carrie Yeager



Trauma Track PhD Student, Carrie Yeager

With the rapid growth of technology there has been increased provision of mental health treatment over the internet for disorders including posttraumatic stress disorder (PTSD). Web interventions can augment existing therapy or provide services to those with difficulty accessing treatment. These interventions can reduce PTSD symptoms, however, it can be challenging for people to engage with technology. A person's engagement can have a strong effect on treatment outcomes, therefore, it is an important area of intervention research.

UCCS Clinical Psychology Ph.D. student, Carolyn Yeager, is focusing her thesis on understanding what

factors affect how people engage with a web intervention. Ms. Yeager's interest in technology stems from her background in computer science. Her current research is focusing on intention to use a web intervention and how that intention translates into action.

Though many of us have good intentions, most of us have experienced times when our intentions did not lead to the desired action. For those experiencing trauma, this can be especially problematic. Carrie is hoping that her research can help inform the future development of effective and engaging web interventions that can be made available to those who otherwise may be unable to get the help they need.

Clinical Psychology PhD Interview Day

By Lori Bryan, Ph.D., photo courtesy of Laura Chandler

Twenty-six candidates for the UCCS Clinical Psychology Ph.D. program braved the Colorado snow on February 1st for the annual interview day. These top-tier applicants were selected from a combined pool of more than 200 applications. The trauma track, in its second year, experienced a 47% growth in applications received with a total of 189 reviewed. This impressive pool was narrowed down to just 13 interviewees for the trauma track and 13 for the geropsychology track.

Despite an official UCCS campus closure due to challenging weather conditions, faculty, staff and students alike came together (in the words of Psychology department chair, Dr. Mike Kisley) “and helped demonstrate our awesomeness to the applicants”.

Final selections and offers to candidates are made in mid-February. The next cohort begins classes in August, 2016.



Clinical Psychology PhD interview day, 2016. Five to seven candidates will comprise the entering class of 2016.

Connecting with Veterans through Team RWB

By Amanda Devane

Team Red White and Blue (Team RWB) is a national organization that creates a community for current and former service members and civilians through physical activities ranging from weekly runs to bouldering and yoga. The objective is to build relationships and break down the stereotype that veterans are in need of a handout.

Mike Greenwood is the Team RWB Chapter captain here in Colorado Springs and is active in educating the community on the strengths service members and veterans have to offer. Alisa Bartel and Amanda Devane, first year doctoral students in the Clinical Psychology PhD trauma track, are active members of Team RWB and serve as liaisons between Team RWB and UCCS. Mike Greenwood says, “The students at

UCCS have a unique opportunity to really understand who these leaders are and what they have to offer.

I personally am super excited about this relationship over any other one we have developed here. I see this as a win for both sides.” Civilians as well as current and former service members are encouraged to join.

If you're interested please go to www.teamrwb.org to find your local chapter.



Director's Corner

By Charles C. "Chip" Benight, PhD

I write this director's corner with a heavy heart. In the past few months our community has been the nexus of two acts of violence that have taken innocent lives and injured many more. When I was 23 years old I worked in West Germany as a Fulbright Scholar and had the chance to visit the Dachau Concentration camp. Being where so much pain and suffering existed left me without words; I only could feel the tragedy.

About 12 years later I was interviewing survivors of the Oklahoma City bombing and again was reminded of the inhumanity of hate. But in the darkness emerges light. Viktor Frankl, in his deeply moving book "Man's Search for Meaning", eloquently shows the way toward making sense of the senseless. He described that meaning is in love. Love for our wives, husbands, children, and fellow human beings. It is in the act of loving that we can see the light within the darkness.

This segment took me awhile to write because I was trying to find the light following these recent events. Each of us has a responsibility to not let the victims of these atrocities be forgotten through our own dedication to create more light. Sometimes I feel a loss of meaning and struggle to find a way forward; many of you may as well.

Let's join together to make a difference so that someday love will be the headline instead of hate.



Dr. Benight founded and is the Director of the CU Trauma, Health & Hazards Center. He is Chair Veteran Health & Trauma, Professor of Psychology, and Director of Clinical Training.

Mobile apps can be useful tools to reduce stress and improve well-being. Stop, Breathe, & Think is a free App that offers mindfulness meditation, loving-kindness meditation, and body scan practice, ideal for short practice at work or longer sessions at home.

Stop, Breathe, & Think download (Click on icon):



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The University of Colorado Trauma, Health, & Hazards Center is a multi-disciplinary center established at UCCS in 1999. Our work includes cross-disciplinary scholarship, scientifically informed policy, clinical interventions, and educational and community programs aimed at reducing the effects of traumatic stress exposure and improving health.