

Special
points of
interest:

- Peer Support broadens its reach
- Psychology faculty member to lead Concussion Clinic
- THHC poster receives APA recognition
- Huts for Vets program offers outdoor healing

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Peer Support Program to expand throughout Southern Colorado

Firefighters face numerous daily stressors in their work in one of the most hazardous civilian professions. Since 2004, the THHC has coordinated a Peer Support Program at the Colorado Springs Fire Department (CSFD).

Led by Dr. Judith Bock, PsyD, the Peer Support Program offers services designed to build awareness among first responders, train new peer supporters, and provide ongoing training and consultation with existing peer supporters. Dr.

Bock rides along with firefighters on calls to fully understand their daily work experiences.



Dr. Judith Bock is leading the expansion of the UCCS Peer Support Program in Southern Colorado.

In late 2015 and early 2016, this program will likely expand beyond Colorado Springs to Canon City and Pueblo Fire Departments. “It is

a good feeling to have these departments recognize the psychological toll the job takes on their firefighters and to dedicate resources to helping them.”

Dr. Bock was interviewed by Al Jazeera America’s *Fault Lines* program, airing in late October 2015. The episode focuses on the behavioral health issues of firefighters including posttraumatic stress and suicide as well as the programs, like peer support, that have been shown to help.

Veterans Health and Trauma Clinic receives integrated care funding

The UCCS Veterans Health and Trauma Clinic received a \$10,000 gift from the Luther T. McCauley Charitable Trust to expand its Client Scholarship Program. The award opens the Scholarship Fund to

all clients -military, veteran or civilian- facing economic hardships. For clients who qualify, the gift may cover costs of consults with the UCCS Center for Active Living and Peak Nutrition Clinic.

“Our clients benefit physically and emotionally when we are able to improve quality of life through integrated care in spite of economic hardship,” says VHTC Clinical Director Valerie Anderson.

Psychology faculty member to lead Mind-1 NeuroAssessment Clinic



Dr. Brandon Gavett, PhD

Dr. Brandon Gavett joined the UCCS faculty in 2011 as an Assistant Professor of Psychology. Dr. Gavett teaches graduate level Clinical Neuropsychology and Research Statistics classes and leads the Neuropsychology and Cognitive Aging Laboratory at UCCS. His research program focuses on the study of changes in cognition over time to understand aging and neurodegenerative disease. Dr. Gavett is Board Certified in Clinical Neuropsychology by the American Board of

Professional Psychology.

In early 2016, Dr. Gavett will bring his clinical and research expertise to the Mind-1 NeuroAssessment Clinic as the Director of Neuropsychology within the Veterans Health and Trauma Clinic, where he will lead clinical services, student training, and expand his research program to examine the longitudinal effects of traumatic brain injury on cognition and aging.

In public behavioral health, over 90% of clients have experienced trauma – National Council for Community Behavioral Health Care

THHC Poster receives APA Recognition

UCCS Clinical Psychology Master's student, Austin Mullings (left), along with THHC Postdoctoral Fellow Kotaro Shoji and Dr. Chip Benight (left) were honored with an Outstanding Division 56 Poster Award during the American Psychological Association's annual conference in Toronto, Canada.

The poster examined whether there was an abrupt change in posttraumatic stress symptoms triggered by diurnal cortisol and/or coping self-efficacy in motor vehicle accident survivors. The results suggest that attempts to retain a positive sense of coping

capability and decreased cortisol level when posttraumatic stress symptoms are not improving contribute to a shift in subsequent posttraumatic stress symptoms. High beliefs of coping capability immediately before the individual's posttraumatic stress symptoms increase suggests an attempt to retain a sense of control while struggling to maintain current negative distress.

Austin is a second year student working on his thesis which focuses on coping self-efficacy and goals. He is interested in the interaction of coping self-efficacy and goals in posttrauma coping trajectories as well as eHealth interventions for trauma survivors.



Austin Mullings
and Dr. Benight

Trauma Psychology PhD students submit NSF Proposals



After just beginning the Trauma Psychology PhD Track in August, 2015, Ms. Alisa Bartel and Ms. Amanda Devane are already pursuing prestigious funding opportunities to augment their research

and training. The National Science Foundation supports a Graduate Research Fellowship Program that recognizes outstanding graduate students with up to three years of funding for stipends, tuition and fees.

Ms. Devane is seeking to capture real time data on the trajectory of belief in coping abilities after trauma. She predicts that a person who believes they can cope with their trauma who has severe symptoms

will experience mental distress due to their inability to alleviate their symptoms and, as a result, will no longer feel they have the ability to cope.

Ms. Bartel's project bridges neuroscience and personality psychology in an effort to reduce pharmacological treatment of chronic pain and emphasize psychotherapeutic intervention. She proposes that certain personality factors will partially influence the relationship between chronic pain, executive functioning (*e.g.* attention), and self-reported perception of functional impairment (*e.g.* quality of life).

Awards will be announced in early April. Good luck to our students!

Mobile apps can be useful tools to reduce stress and improve well-being. Yoga Studio is used by some VHTC clinicians with their clients and provides 65 ready-made yoga classes for use anytime and anywhere.

Yoga Studio download (Click on icon):



Huts for Vets Leader visits UCCS

The THHC welcomed Dr. Gerald Alpern, a Korean War Veteran and clinical psychologist with the Huts for Vets Program, to speak at the October Brown Bag Series. Huts for Vets is a nonprofit organization founded in 2013 that provides wilderness and communal healing for Veterans and active-duty service members in Aspen, CO. The groups are limited to no more than twelve participants and involve three days of hiking in the wilderness, communal living at the 10th Mountain Huts, group discussions, and time for personal contemplation. The program is provided at no cost to participants.

Referring to himself as “the shrink,” Dr. Alpern facilitates group discussions, contemplative thought, and spiritual and emotional healing among the Veterans.

In his presentation to clinical psychology students and staff, Dr. Alpern emphasized the rewards of working with Veterans in a wilderness setting.

“Reach out. Get to know a vet and you’ll find a quality person who has more to offer than you could ever imagine.” Several Veterans and program participants in attendance provided testimonials on their positive experience with Huts for Vets.

For more information on this program, please visit hutsforvets.org



Director's Corner

By Charles C. "Chip" Benight, PhD

The picture was of a young girl sitting on top of a factory building at the end of WW-II in Warsaw Poland staring off into the distance. Dr. Roman Cieslak queried the audience "I wonder what she was thinking? Was she thinking about the past and the destruction or about the future and what is possible?"

This was the beginning of a fantastic conference for the European Society for Research on Internet Interventions held in that same factory which is now the



SWPS Warsaw School of Social Psychology and the Humanities in Warsaw Poland. The take home message from this conference was, in my mind, Internet interventions are the

wave of the future (in addition or combination with phone apps) for mental health difficulties.

The evidence is mounting that these interventions when combined with either professional or peer guidance are as effective as face-to-face therapy.

At the Trauma, Health & Hazards Center we have developed a series of websites for trauma recovery specific for adults, teens, and first responders. We are working hard in our human/computer interaction lab to determine how these types of sites work and for whom they work best. What is clear is that the future will include a mix of technology leveraged to help our trauma survivors with skill building and support as they move through their recovery.

The future of the THHC is built one project at a time with a commitment to helping those who have faced life's darkest challenges. If you see the value of the THHC future I ask you to provide whatever you can through our new donate button (ahh, technology again!).

Thank you for your support.



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.

Join our mission!

Help our team continue reducing the impact of trauma at local, national and global levels.

Tax-deductible donations may be made through the University of Colorado Foundation:

Click:

GIVE NOW

or go to: www.cufund.org/GiveTHHC



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.