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# wisdom words &

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# women

## THE MSU WOMEN'S RESOURCE CENTER CELEBRATES MSU'S AWARD WORTHY WOMEN!

By Lydia Kauppi

### Sustained Effort Toward Excellence in Diversity Award: Dr. DeBrenna Agbenyiga



"It's one thing to be appreciated by colleagues, but to hear that it is in line with the values of the university and worth acknowledging—it's really special," DeBrenna Agbenyiga said of her recent Diversity Award. As the Assistant Dean of the School of Social Work, DeBrenna works tirelessly on a multitude of projects, some of which that have earned her awards on an international scale.

DeBrenna maintains that she couldn't have done it alone and owes her award to the many people throughout the university. She started out in 1999 as a research assistant at the school of Social Work, and by 2005 was an assistant professor before moving on to Assistant Dean in 2006. She is also currently penning two books, *Child Rights in Ghana* and *The Undefended Childhood in Global Context*. DeBrenna defines her job, both at the university and in life, as a commitment to finding imbalance and bring equality to it. "It's not just a job, it's a value," she explained. She compares the absence of equality in the world to a classroom full of preschoolers. "With kids, they don't care about race, or status... their interactions are so real." DeBrenna names her family as her biggest inspiration and clearly she has done the same for them—her son is currently teaching in Ghana. She also described her husband and young daughter as "her biggest fans." "It's not enough to say 'This is a problem,'" DeBrenna said. "Immerse yourself into as many cultural opportunities as possible and step outside of your comfort zone." Congratulations to Dr. DeBrenna Agbenyiga, and we look forward to seeing her work impact our world in the future!

### Excellence in Advancing Global Competency Diversity Award: Dr. Geri Alunit Zeldes



Geri Alunit Zeldes celebrated upon learning of her award by jumping up and down, dancing with excitement. "Its validation," she said, "that my work is appreciated by students and colleagues." Geri started out in 1996 at MSU as a PhD student and in 2004 she began her tenure track as an assistant professor in the College of Communication Arts & Sciences. She says that her particular teaching style is what motivates her students to succeed in class. "I require a lot of my students. I am tough, but fair. I really just want them to do well," she explained. Geri explained that the award was very special because two very strong women, President Lou Anna Simon and Senior Advisor to the President for Diversity, Paulette Granberry Russell, were on stage to present her with the award. She noted that she is surrounded by strong female role models in her

department, a fact that has helped her to recognize her strength as a woman. This is not the first award for Geri either; she was recognized for her work in the documentary "Arabs, Jews, & News," which received accolades at the Broadcast Education Association's Media Arts Festival and the International Family Film Festival. She has three kids, ages six, five, and one, whom she raises in an "interfaith, interethnic family." Geri recommends that women who are pursuing higher education or careers should always be grateful for the help that they receive. "Thank people for their time and wisdom," she said. Congratulations to Dr. Geri Alunit Zeldes for her efforts and we wish her luck in future endeavors!

### Distinguished Academic Staff Award: Ms. Cynthia Mark



Distinguished Academic Staff Award winner, Cynthia Mark, is very proud that her 29 years working at MSU Extension has been recognized among her peers. A proponent of community involvement and volunteerism, Cyndi worked as a 4-H Youth Educator at the Lansing Urban Office and at the time of her nomination as the Children Youth Family & Community (CYFC) Coordinator and Program Leader. "It is very important to me to help others volunteer and to develop teens into future leaders in their communities," said Cyndi, who has a daughter that is a legislative aid on Capitol Hill of whom she is extremely proud. Married for 30 years and living in Mason, Cyndi is enjoying her newly retired status as of January 2010, and has branched out into the art of cake decorating, a discipline she teaches. She is also spending her new-found free time traveling and operating as the president of the Lansing Lions Club. Cyndi wanted to thank Marian Reiter and Elizabeth Know for going through the arduous nomination process in her honor. Congratulations to Ms. Cynthia Mark from the MSU Women's Resource Center!

### Quality in Undergraduate Teaching Award: Dr. Louise Jezierski



Louise Jezierski, who has been with the James Madison College for thirteen years, is one of this year's recipients of the MSU Alumni Club of Mid-Michigan Quality in Undergraduate Teaching Award. Louise is extremely honored to win this award because, as she puts it, "MSU has excellent teachers. I have fabulous peers with extremely high standards and it is great to be recognized for the work you do every day." And her peers agree, showering her with congratulations upon the announcement of the award. "It's just the icing on the cake—it's nice to be part of the club." A sociologist and self-proclaimed feminist, Louise says she considers feminism a "humanist mission," and she thinks that many young women

*Continued on Page 2*

may hear the word and wrongly associate it with negative connotations. She is currently working on a paper that will be presented to state legislators on women's roles in the changing economy of Michigan, in conjunction with her interest in urban revitalization. "I love cities!" she said. "I want Michigan to care about Lansing and Detroit." Louise is known for the attention she gives as a mentor to her undergraduates. "Undergrads are producers of knowledge. Some of them are coming up with very interesting ideas but it is hard for an undergrad to find resources they may need for research." She cited the great mentors she has had in the past and says that they inspire her to do for others what they did for her. When asked what she would tell women pursuing a career in sociology or advanced education, she said that, "You can't have it all. Everyone is compromising somewhere—work, family, and so on...even in 2010, you can't have it all." Congratulations to Dr. Louise Jeziersky from the MSU Women's Resource Center!

### Jack Breslin Distinguished Staff Award: Ms. Christine Carter



Step foot into the Office of the VP for Finance and Operations and you will find that Christine Carter keeps it running like a well-oiled machine. Nominated by her superiors for her outstanding work ethic and amazing multi-tasking abilities, Christine has rightly won the Jack Breslin Distinguished Academic Staff Award this year for her role as the Office Manager. Christine has worked on campus for thirteen years, first with Human Resources before her move to managing the budget and operations at Finance and Operations. Her superiors cleverly arranged a fake meeting to present her with the award, and everyone was in on it but Christine. "I had no clue what was going on!" she said, remembering the day. "I remember thinking, 'Why is it [the budget meeting] in this room?'" As the person in charge of office projects, Christine is the brand of organized that makes other people jealous. She is also an inspiring story, graduating from Michigan State University in five years as a single mom on her own. Although she said it was hard work, she also cited the myriad of helpful options available to her on campus. In her spare time, Christine rides motorcycles, plays the drums, and remodels old houses for resale. She also had some advice for women who are looking to pursue higher education or a career. "Always go above and beyond what is expected, putting your best foot forward in all that you do. You never know what opportunities may come your way as a result." Christine also warned against the habit of regret: "Never live a life of regret...wishing, wondering, or thinking about it – be who you are and just do it." Clearly, Christine's stellar attitude is what set her apart from the rest and earned her the Jack Breslin Distinguished Staff Award. Congratulations, Ms. Christine Carter!

### 2009 Clerical-Technical Award: Nancy Lavrik



Thanks to Nancy Lavrik's position as a course secretary for organic chemistry courses, she has the pleasure of coming into contact with undergraduates, grad students, faculty, and staff in the chemistry department. "What a great variety of interactions on a daily basis and endless opportunities to learn about other people and cultures," Nancy said. The Clerical-Technical Award was established to recognize the clerical and technical employees on campus that assist both students and faculty and keep things running smoothly. After receiving the call from the Human Resources department that she was to be honored with this award, Nancy was thrilled. When she came to MSU in 1995 as a temporary for a secretary on maternity leave in the Teacher Education Department, Nancy says she was struck by how friendly and welcoming everyone was. After

transferring to Chemistry, she realized that the attitude is prevalent all across campus. Clearly, her dedication to the students and faculty that she assists is what made her worthy of such accolades. She noted that the award means a lot because it reinforces her personal attitude towards her job. "I consider it paramount to use my skills to be as helpful as possible to faculty, students, and co-workers," Nancy explained. She also said that it is easy to work on a campus that is so beautiful, with students that create an energetic atmosphere. "What a fountain of youth!" Nancy said. "Except that we all get older and the students all remain the same age! It's a lot of fun." Her advice to students and women pursuing careers is about staying true to what you love. "If you can identify an important passion in your life, and can make that passion part of your life's work, and earn a living doing that—you can't lose." Clearly, Nancy's passion for helping others is what has earned her this honor. Congratulations to Ms. Nancy Lavrik from the MSU Women's Resource Center!

### Excellence-in-Teaching Citation: Hillary Shulman



Graduate student Hillary Shulman dedicated herself to getting college students engaged in the classroom, and for her efforts she has been awarded an Excellence-in-Teaching Citation. She says that the key to this is relevance. "I try to identify concepts by using examples that are applicable for students," Hillary said, "so they can apply it outside of the classroom with confidence."

Hillary was at a convenience store in Chicago when she received a phone call from an unknown number, which turned out to be the Provost, telling her that she had won. She was extremely excited. "It is nice to be recognized at the university level," Hillary said. "My department is full of award winners, which makes it even more important to me." Hillary has been teaching in the College of Communication Arts & Sciences for three years now, both as a TA and as a stand-alone instructor. She is the captain of her department's IM basketball team. She is also very dedicated to helping students become engaged in politics, especially at the local level. When asked what kind of advice she would offer to women pursuing a career or high education, she replied, "Think about what you want to do, and get to know the program well. Don't rush into it." She also cited the difficulty of obtaining funding for research and said it is important to seek funding opportunities all the time. She wanted to thank Chuck Atkin, Tim Levine, and Gwen Whittenbaum for their support during the nomination process. Congratulations, Hillary Shulman, on your outstanding achievement!

**Susan G. Komen  
Race for the Cure  
Sunday, April 25, 2010, 2:00PM  
State Capitol**



The Susan G. Komen Race for the cure is a 5K run/walk that loops through downtown Lansing. It is open to people of all ages and athletic abilities. Festivities beyond the 5K include a Kids Sprint (12:45PM) and Kids for the Cure 1 Mile Run (12:50PM), as well as awards for teams such as "Best Team T-Shirt" and "Highest Fundraising Team."

**You can register for this day of fun and fundraising online or in person in the following ways:**

**Online:** Visit [www.komenmidmichigan.org](http://www.komenmidmichigan.org) to register yourself or a team, make donations, and even create a personal website to send to your friends and relatives.

**In Person:** Saturday, April 24, 2010. Registration at **Playmakers** (2299 W. Grand River Ave., Okemos) until 5:00PM **OR** register on day of race at the **Registration Tent** from 11:00am-1:45pm.

**For more information, visit: [www.komenmidmichigan.org](http://www.komenmidmichigan.org)**

## Excellence-in-Teaching Citation: Ms. Sheila Kelly



Sheila Kelly's dad always said, "If you could put school into a comedy movie, you would all be geniuses." With that sentiment in mind, Sheila tackles the task of educating young college students with humor as her weapon of choice. "When you make material applicable to their lives, it becomes fun and exciting to learn it," she explained. Clearly, this attitude is what has led to her receiving an Excellence-in-Teaching Citation, an honor that Sheila says is truly amazing. "It is a great feeling to know my teaching is making a difference," she said. Sheila also noted that her chosen field of kinesiology is largely male-dominated due to the fact that it is sports-related, so to be awarded is especially meaningful in that regard. She teaches six credits per semester, classes such as Sports Sociology and Growth and Motor Development. Sheila encourages her students to keep an open mind in every class, even if they aren't necessarily excited about it. She maintains that "there is always something you can pull from that class." Using tools like YouTube videos and movie clips, she engages the students and helps them be able pay better attention and stay interested. By staying relevant to her students, Sheila is able to make more of an impact in her classes, which is clearly why she has been honored with this award. Congratulations, Ms. Sheila Kelly!

## Excellence-in-Teaching Citation: Ms. Jennifer Smith



A graduate student in the department of Zoology, Jennifer Smith knows that it is important to support women in the sciences. Jennifer was delighted to discover that she had been nominated for the Excellence-in-Teaching Citation by her department and she says that the award is incredibly rewarding. "It means a lot that I influence the professional goals of my students," she explained. When asked about the feedback she has received since being awarded, she replied, "My mom watched the ceremony online and started crying! But yes, everyone else in my department was really excited." And they very well should be—as a woman in the sciences, Jennifer knows firsthand that it isn't the easiest road. She leads an undergraduate research team of twelve women and says that it is important to establish a network of strong female scientists in order to surround yourself with strong role models. She thanked her research advisor, Dr. Kay Holekamp, for being that exact kind of role model for her. Jennifer spends time in Kenya researching the behavioral patterns of spotted hyenas, which she pointed out actually have a female-dominated society. She is involved with a variety of outreach programs, such as the 6<sup>th</sup> Grade Math and Science Conference for middle school girls. She is also in the process of reactivating MSU's chapter of Graduate Women in Science, which is an inter-disciplinary society of scientists who encourage and support women to enter and achieve success in science. For more information on the organization, you can visit [www.gwis.org](http://www.gwis.org). In her spare time, she enjoys cooking and playing with her dog, Cowboy. Clearly a talented and motivated scientist and teacher, we look forward to seeing many great things from Ms. Jennifer Smith in the future. Congratulations!

## Excellence-In-Teaching Citation: Staci Perryman-Clark



Although Staci Perryman-Clark has received accolades for her research in the past, this time she is being recognized for her involvement in the classroom. Although she was aware of the nomination, a surprise phone call from Associate Provost Theodore Curry during dinner informed Staci of the good news. Staci is a PhD candidate in the Department of Writing, Rhetoric, and American Cultures and on a King-Chavez-Parks Future Faculty

Fellowship. She worked as a teaching assistant when she first came to MSU in 2006 and became a research assistant for WRAC's Tier I Writing Program in 2007. She says, "My colleagues and professors have been extremely supportive of my receiving this award. I have received numerous emails and Facebook notes and my graduate program (Rhetoric and Writing) posted the notification on their website." Staci is in the process of finishing her dissertation, which she will defend in April. "The data results [from the dissertation] reflect much of the work for which I was nominated for the award," Staci explained. Her personal teaching philosophy is working to maintain cultural relevance with the students while sharing the material. Although teaching, especially writing, has historically been designated as a female occupation, Staci said, "What I typically call for is for the field to recognize the role that both men and women must play as managers, educators, and scholars." She also noted, "Women need to be supportive of other women of all races, ethnicities, and creeds, as we all work together in the discipline to solve social and disciplinary problems." Many congratulations to Staci Perryman Clark from the MSU Women's Resource Center!



## MSU Sexual Assault Program and Green Cab Company: Helping Victims Receive Treatment

The MSU Sexual Assault Program is committed to providing MSU with comprehensive crisis, advocacy, and counseling services for survivors of adult sexual assault and adults sexually abused as children. However, sexual assault services are often difficult to identify or access. Many survivors feel isolated or scared, or some might not even know where to turn. In fact, the vast majority of rapes go unreported – somewhere between 70% and 80% according to the US Department of Justice.

In our effort to serve all survivors of sexual violence, the MSU Sexual Assault Program has been identifying barriers to service, and exploring ways to overcome them. With money received from the Vagina Monologues' 2009 performance, the Sexual Assault Program was able to devote significant attention to improving victim services. A portion of their donation has been used to obtain free transportation. Survivors who report to Sparrow Hospital for a medical forensic examination (sometimes known as a "rape kit") are eligible to receive free transportation from Green Cab Company, who graciously agreed to contract with the Sexual Assault Program. We hope that this additional service will provide seamless service to survivors and remove transportation barriers that might prevent people from coming forward and receiving medical care.

*Submitted by Jessica Kota*

**"The emotional, sexual, and psychological stereotyping of females begins when the doctor says, 'It's a girl.'" Shirley Chisholm**

**"You don't have to signal a social conscience by looking like a frump. Lace knickers won't hasten the holocaust, you can ban the bomb in a feather boa just as well as without, and a mild interest in the length of hemlines doesn't necessarily disqualify you from reading *Das Kapital* and agreeing with every word." Elizabeth Bibesco**

# CALENDAR OF EVENTS



Friday, April 9, 2010: Young Women, Strong Leaders Conference. Kirkhof Center, Grand Valley State University. For more information and to download a schedule of events and/or register online, please visit: [www.wrc.msu.edu/ywsl.php](http://www.wrc.msu.edu/ywsl.php).

Saturday, April 10, 2010: 7th Annual "Girls Get Going" Free girls Sports Clinic for 3rd-8th Grade Girls. 8:30AM-1:00PM. MSU IM Sports West. Pre-registration is required and space is limited. Visit [www.imsports.msu.edu/monthly/ggg/index.php](http://www.imsports.msu.edu/monthly/ggg/index.php) for more information or to obtain a registration form.

Saturday, April 17, 2010: Woman-to-Woman Sale. 10:00AM-4:00PM. Offering new and gently used articles of clothing. Information for shoppers and those wanting to rent a table can be found at [www.wrc.msu.edu](http://www.wrc.msu.edu).

Thursday, April 22, 2010: Take Your Child to Work Day. "Future Spartans in Training: 1 Youth, 1 Dream, 2morrrows Leader" 10:00AM-3:00PM. For girls and boys, ages 8-14. Information about this event and a complete listing of tour sites and activities can be found at [www.wrc.msu.edu](http://www.wrc.msu.edu).



Friday, April 23, 2010: Young Women, Strong Leaders Conference. North Central Michigan College—Main Campus. For more information and to download a schedule of events and/or register online, please visit: [www.wrc.msu.edu/ywsl.php](http://www.wrc.msu.edu/ywsl.php).

Tuesday, April 27, 2010: A Dialogue with Dr. Frances Kendall. Please hold the date . . . Details to follow at the WRC website at: [www.wrc.msu.edu](http://www.wrc.msu.edu).

## Thank you!

Our "2-4-1" Women's History Month Coupon was a smashing success, and wouldn't have been possible without the support of



The Division of Residential & Hospitality Services

A big thanks to all of those who made this event possible from the MSU Women's Resource Center!

**Correction:** In the March edition of Wisdom, Words, & Women, we incorrectly reported that Elizabeth Cady Stanton's Declaration of Sentiments mirrored the U.S. Constitution. The Declaration of Sentiments is actually based on the Declaration of Independence.

# Announcements!



**Cooking for Social Justice: Recipes for the Head, Heart, & Spirit**  
23 recipes sure to warm the heart, plus an 18-month planner!

\$20 or 3/\$45

A perfect gift for Easter or Mother's Day!

*April is...*

## National Sexual Assault Awareness Month

This year's theme is:

**"Preventing Sexual Violence... on our Campuses"**

For more information or ideas for organizing an event, please visit:

National Sexual Violence Resource Center  
[www.nsvrc.org/saam](http://www.nsvrc.org/saam)

## Date Saver!

Monday, May 3, 2010

Women Matter Celebration

More information to follow at:  
[www.wrc.msu.edu](http://www.wrc.msu.edu)

So please stay tuned...



**Don't forget to mail in your 2010 Census form!**

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**WRC Staff:** Patricia M. Lowrie, Director; Jayne Schuiteman, Associate Professor and Personal Safety Coordinator; Jodi Roberto Hancock, Educational Program Coordinator; Audrey C. Smith, Office Manager; Evette Chavez Lockhart, Administrative Assistant; **WRC Students:** Ebony Jennings, Lydia Kauppi, Maria Mattson, Bennetta Thomas Department Aides.