Psychology Happenings:

This semester has been rather quiet for Psychology students. Unfortunately, with college life becoming busier every year, it was decided not to resume Psych Club. Although it is somewhat disappointing not to maintain this group, the students are keeping active as teaching assistants and tutors, introducing the underclassmen to the fascinating world of psychology. Statistics and Research Methods students are keen to begin their research for next semester, and we look forward to hearing their work in the annual Psychology Student Research Symposium in the spring.

Psychology Department Updates:

As much as we miss Vic’s big grin and amazing stories, the students and faculty of the Psychology department are pleased to welcome to campus the newest member of the department: Christine Noria.

Noria received her undergraduate degree in Spanish and Psychology from the University of Notre Dame, and, after a brief stint at Lehigh University where she received her Master’s of Education degree in human development, Noria returned to Notre Dame to earn both a M.A. and Ph.D. in developmental psychology. Noria makes the commute from South Bend to teach Developmental Psychology, Statistics and Research Methods, and Senior Internship.

Before arriving at Goshen College, Noria served as the project coordinator for a Prevention of Child Neglect project. Her research has allowed her to work extensively with high risk families and 20-30 year old mothers, identifying characteristics that predict positive developmental outcomes for children. In turn, this information is used to recognize points of intervention and identify those in need and create services for them. Communities in need are greatly helped by implementing research into practical programs and preventative services. Noria, with a strong background in statistics and data analysis, recognizes how important it is to translate the science of psychology for
those in need and hopes to inspire her students to do likewise.

**News of Grads:**

**Jonathon Gingerich** ('07) has completed a year of Voluntary Service in Fresno working at Valley Teen Ranch - a group home for teenage boys coming out of juvenile detention centers.

**Bob Bontrager** ('80) is the director of consulting for a nonprofit higher education association based in Washington, D.C., advising schools on programs to improve student services and academic success.

**Wesley Bontreger** ('81) is currently serving as the moderator-elect of the new Indiana-Michigan Conference Missional Leadership Team. Wes continues to pastor at Yellow Creek Mennonite Church, Goshen, IN.

**Nadine Zook Miller** ('82) is working with Mennonite Central Committee as a material resource coordinator at the Depot in Goshen, IN.

**Dan Miller** ('81) is the lead conference minister for the Indiana-Michigan Conference.

**Ken Eastman** ('86) is the director of nursing at Streamwood Behavioral Health Center at St. Mary of Nazareth Hospital Center in Chicago, IL.

**Heiki-Lara Eigsti Nyce** ('89) is a behavior specialist and mobile therapist for Penn Foundation.

**Dana Graber Ladek** ('97) with husband, Stephen Ladek, welcomed Kylan Jordan Graber Ladek into the world on August 3, 2008. They are living in Budapest, Hungary where Dana works as the head of the regional support unit for the International Organization for Migration.

**Brooke Kandel** ('97) and husband, Kumar Cisco, celebrated the birth of Anika Elizabeth Kandel Cisco on June 16, 2008. Brooke is a senior research associate at Texas A&M University.

**Amanda Johnson Sensenig** ('03) has completed her master's degree in cognitive psychology in December and is working on a doctoral dissertation and teaching courses at Colorado State University.

**Rebecca Allen** ('04) coordinates the citizenship and ESL programs at El Centro de la Raza, a Chicano/Latino civil rights organization in Seattle.

**Anna Herdeck** ('06) is serving her second year as a Peace Corps volunteer in Gracias Lempira, Honduras, working in HIV/AIDS awareness and prevention, and nutrition, hygiene and breastfeeding education and promotion.

**In the Literature:**

Positively psychology has spent the last decade declaring itself as a new branch of psychology. With Martin E.P. Seligman’s continuous and pervasive research on subjective wellbeing, there is no longer any doubt that positive psychology is here to stay. Seligman’s most recent findings suggest that incorporating assertiveness, optimism, and flexibility into classroom lessons will decrease a child’s risk of depression and improve grades and the child’s outlook on life (Novotney, 2009).
Seligman, Jane Gilham, and Karen Reivich have developed two education programs to produce these results. The second program, the Positive Psychology Program, explored how identifying students’ personal strengths as well as the strengths of the main characters in literature impacted learning. After being randomly assigned to a literature class with or without a Positive Psychology component, those students with Positive Psychology incorporated into the classroom displayed better grades, a greater love of learning, and improved social skills in comparison to the control group (Novotney, 2009). From this Seligman concludes that “under conditions of high well-being, more classroom learning occurs” (as cited in Novotney, 2009).

Seligman hopes to apply this knowledge beyond the classroom to U.S. Army training (Burling, 2009). Ideally, the positive psychology and resiliency components of the program “Comprehensive Soldier Fitness” will increase the resilience of soldiers and improve the how soldiers respond to the trauma and stress of war (Burling, 2009).

Sources: