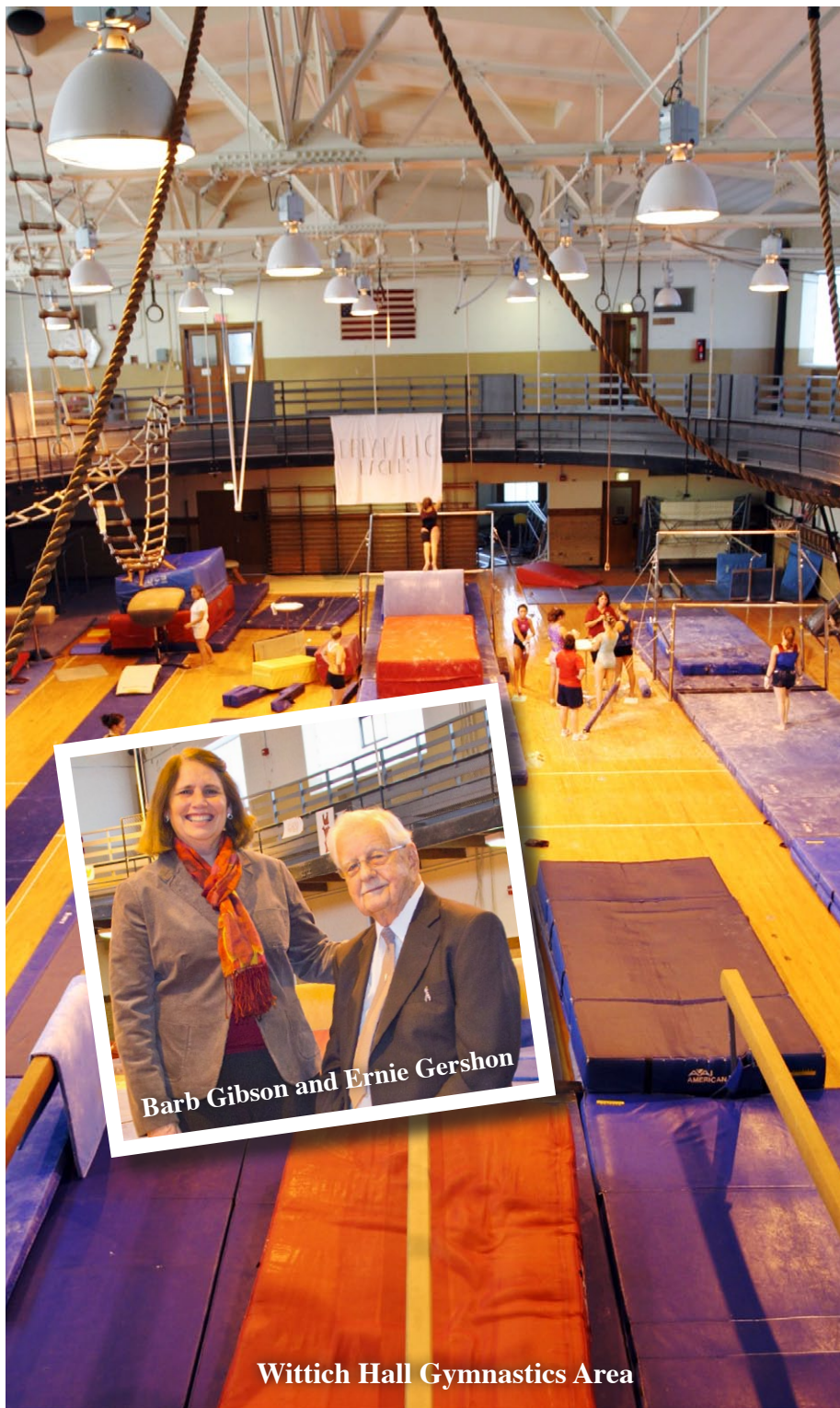


# SCIENCE & HEALTH NEWS

## Q & A With Dr. Ernie Gershon



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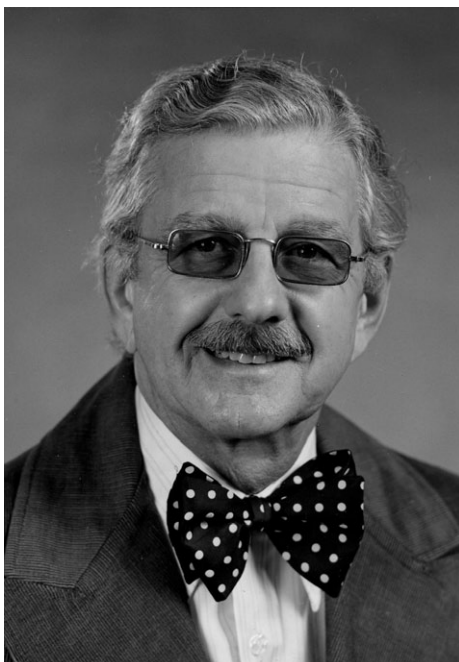
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(Editors note.... Ernie Gershon, Professor Emeritus of the Exercise and Sport Science Department, was a student at UW-L in the early 30s and a “Gym Teacher” within the Physical Education Department from 1946 until his retirement in 1983. He always referred to himself as a “Gym Teacher”.

As an indication of Ernie’s scholarly pursuit and intellectual interest, consider the following “colleges and universities attended” after graduating from the then Wisconsin State University in 1937: Miami University (Ohio), 5 summer sessions from 1932 to 1939... University of Wisconsin- Madison, 1939-1940... Ohio State University 1943... InterAmerican University (Panama, R.P.)... and to conclude with his P.E.D from Indiana University (summers) from 1948 to 1952. QUITE AN EDUCATION FOR OUR “GYM TEACHER”.)

Barb Gibson, Exercise and Sport Science Department and Women’s gymnastics coach, was a student of Ernie’s at UW-L, and has been a “very good and long time” friend. We are fortunate to have Barb as the interviewer of this Q and A session).

**Introduction** As indicated, Ernest Gershon was a student at UW-La Crosse from 1933-1937. He was a four-time letter-winning



1959 Wisconsin State College at La Crosse Gymnastics Team.

gymnast, and also participated in variety of intramural sports, drama and music. After earning a bachelor degree in Physical Education he taught at Spooner high school in Wisconsin from 1937-1939 and Maple Park School in Middletown, Ohio from 1940-1943, before joining the Navy during World War II.

When he got out of the military in 1946, he returned to the UW-L campus where he was an instructor in Biology, Nature Recreation and Physical Education, until retiring in 1983. In that time he’s credited with beginning the first post-WWII men’s gymnastics team on campus in 1948. He coached the team until 1966.

During his tenure as coach his teams won eight Northwest Championships, five Wisconsin Open Championships, four WSU Conference Championships and three Wisconsin AAU Championships. He was WSU conference “Coach of the Year” four times, and NAIA District 14 “Coach of the Year” in 1966. His teams earned an NAIA district championship in 1965, 30 team championships and 145 individual titles.

Ernie retired in 1983 and continues to live in the La Crosse area.

**Q:** Ernie, in preparation for this interview, I read a book and a thesis by George Gilkey and Anna (A.B.) Beth Culver respectively. (Ed note... Both George Gikey and Anna Beth Culver were long time UW-L faculty members...George in the History Department and A.B. in the Physical Education Department.) What do you know about the beginning of the physical education program at UW-L?

**A:** The physical education program was established in 1913 under Mr. Carl Sputh. The PE program was the first and only such training program to be offered in the state of Wisconsin, and it was also at that time the only School of Physical Education known to exist in the United States, supported by state funds. The initial enrollment was 10 students and within 7 years had grown to 175 students.

The president of the university (President Cotton, 1909-1924), viewed physical education as very important component of a students individual development. Cotton believed a comprehensive course in physical education should be provided in every school in the nation - public, private and parochial. In his vision, some organized

(Continued on page 3)



**Barb Gibson and Ernie Gershon with 2009 National Championship Team**

form of physical education should be compulsory for all boys and girls attending elementary and secondary school, and every high school should be equipped with a good gymnasium and required to maintain a systematic physical training program. To implement his vision, Cotton realized the necessity of training skillful, highly knowledgeable and well motivated teachers and instructors. Hence, Cotton hired Walter Wittich (1918-1954) to lead the La Crosse School of Physical Education.

**Q: Ernie, how did Wittich Hall compare to other universities facilities at the time?**



**A:** For me personally, to teach in Wittich Hall was a dream realized. It was a dream gym for a gym teacher. It had everything a gym teacher needed for a comprehensive curriculum in gymnastics. When the gym

was cleared of the apparatus, it was usable for all the other aspects of a good indoor physical education program. It was one of the very best equipped gyms in the United States.

It consisted of a 7,000 square foot gym, a pool, offices, and classrooms. Wittich Hall served as the heart of the La Crosse physical education program. The popularity of the physical education program within the state and its amazing growth in enrollment contributed to the university to quickly become recognized throughout the United States. Wittich Hall was very significant in the development and growth of the university.

**Q: Who was Walter Wittich?**

**A:** He was a wonderful man. He was extremely knowledgeable and hard-nosed as well. He was a demanding teacher with high expectations. Interestingly at that time, he was against boxing and would not allow it in the curriculum. His class room teaching area was health and first aid.

**Q: Ernie, who had the most impact on you as a teaching professional at UW-La Crosse?**

**A:** Hans Reuter was one of my teachers and gymnastics coach. He was a great teacher and equally good coach. In my case, he excused me from practice on Wednesdays when I had to attend orchestra practices. I told him I would make up the missed practice on Saturday mornings, along with a friend or two. Our trips to gymnastics meets were via trains. He would be carving soap and would encourage us to do the same. Our practices were low key, without pressure and always an enjoyable experience. Reuter was a member of the La Crosse Sketch Club and an avid and successful bow and arrow hunter.

Walter Wittich was much like a father to all of us. He had high expectations for all of his students and gymnasts. Wittich set the standard for all professors within the then named College of Physical Education.

**Q: Ernie, it sounds like UW-L was a leader in Physical Education across the nation. What were some of the firsts for the College of Physical Education on the UW-L campus?**

**A:** The College of Physical Education was a leader on the campus in many ways. It was the first college to have one or more of its faculty participate in and deliver research papers at international conferences abroad. We were the first to have an electric calculator and the first to have a computer terminal for use by its faculty, staff and students. We were also the first on campus to develop an audio visual facility with motion picture, film editing, and slide projectors.



**Q: What did the physical education curriculum consist of throughout your tenure as a faculty member?**

**(Continued on page 4)**



**A:** The physical education curriculum utilized block scheduling for the professional classes. These block classes were the foundation of the professional curriculum, providing the necessary experiences in preparing our students and soon to be teachers, in a wide variety of subjects. Students were prepared to teach body mechanics, gymnastics apparatus, tumbling and stunts, and dance (social, tap, modern, folk, square and even aerobic dance.) The students were also prepared to teach swimming, diving and lifesaving. Additionally, other skills and necessary teaching ability were tennis, basketball, softball, volleyball, soccer, speedball, field hockey, badminton, and track and field.

**Q:** I understand that teaching and coaching were closely aligned. When you began your teaching career, did you have a vision for what UW-L gymnastics was or what it could become?

**A:** I had no “vision” for UW-L gymnastics. I was hired as a “gym teacher”, which was my goal as a career in teaching. First, students asked me to advise them in a tumbling club, which they wanted to form. They then expressed an interest in forming an actual university gymnastics team, and wanted to know how to do it. I encouraged them to petition the athletic board, and they needed to ask for a coach and a budget. That occurred in 1947. Mr. Reuter had been the coach prior to WWII and was the logical choice, but he instead recommended me. The Board granted their request, awarded a budget of \$300, and I became the coach.

**Q:** I was a student of yours during the 1970’s when there were 1200 physical education majors on campus. I enjoyed all of your classes. You have said your grade book had 20,000 names in it, at the end of your career. What do you think your students thought of you?

**A:** Oh, I don’t know, you would have to ask some of them about what they thought of me as a gym teacher. I was humbled to receive a student nominated and student selected teacher of the year award. The award was sponsored by Wisconsin Regent Eugene Murphy and Mrs. Murphy. I also received a state WAHPERD Teaching Honor Award in 1981. But an award that I will always remember was a hand printed certificate and a portable radio from the boys in one of my 1963 graduate classes. It’s the personal stories and thanks that you receive that bring the most gratification as a “gym teacher”.

[Images courtesy of University Communications]

### College Hyperlinks

You can learn more about the college, its departments, and the campus by visiting us on-line.

College of SAH Homepage:  
[www.uwlax.edu/sah](http://www.uwlax.edu/sah)

UW-L Homepage:  
[www.uwlax.edu](http://www.uwlax.edu)

UW-L Alumni Association:  
[www.uwlalumni.org](http://www.uwlalumni.org)

UW-L Athletics:  
[www.uwlax.edu/athletics](http://www.uwlax.edu/athletics)

## UW-La Crosse Faculty Contribute to Great Lakes Mercury Report



**James Wiener, University of Wisconsin Distinguished Professor**

An extensive scientific research report on mercury in the Great Lakes region has La Crosse ties. Four UW-L faculty researchers played key roles in the extensive regional assessment.

James Wiener, Wisconsin Distinguished Professor, was a co-author of the report, "Great Lakes Mercury Connections: The Extent and Effects of Mercury Pollution in the Great Lakes Region." The summary of scientific research found that the impacts of mercury pollution in the Great Lakes region are much greater than previously reported. The report reveals that general mercury levels in the Great Lakes environment, fish and wildlife over the past four decades have declined because of pollution controls. Yet, studies show mercury concentrations still exceed human and ecological risk thresholds in many areas and may be on the rise in some species and locations.

"The research reveals that most mercury is coming from the atmosphere," notes Wiener. "Coal-fired power plants are the dominant source of human mercury emissions, accounting for more than half of the regional emissions."

The reports draws on 35 peer-reviewed papers published in special issues of two scientific journals, "Ecotoxicology" and "Environmental Pollution." It represents the work of more than 170 scientists and researchers who analyzed data from more than 300,000 mercury measurements to better understand its impact. The project

is a collaboration of UW-L's River Studies Center, along with the Biodiversity Research Institute in Gorham, Maine, and the Great Lakes Commission, based in Ann Arbor, Michigan.

Since coming to campus in 2001, Wiener has helped put UW-L on the map with mercury research. "The UW-L River Studies Center has achieved world-class standing in mercury contamination research," explains Wiener. "Much of that credit goes to our outstanding undergraduate and graduate students who do a lot of the extensive field and laboratory work needed for this complex area of study."

Other leading researchers from UW-L with findings in the report are Chemistry Professor Kristofer Rolffhus, who studies mercury in the lower food web, Biology Professor Mark Sandheinrich, an authority on the effects of mercury contamination on fish, and Biology Professor Roger Haro, who is examining the utility of larval dragonflies as widespread indicators of mercury pollution.

Wiener says while mercury contamination doesn't typically cause fish or wildlife kills, it is responsible for diminished reproduction of some species. More importantly, pregnant women who eat large quantities of mercury contaminated fish risk impacting the development of their fetuses through mercury's effects on fetal brain tissue and intelligence.

Wiener says steps taken in past decades to reduce mercury contamination in the region's rivers and lakes have produced encouraging results. "But we still have a substantial problem," he notes. "Conditions in the Great Lakes themselves look good, but we still have a serious problem with many inland lakes and rivers. Observations of recent increases in mercury concentrations in some fish and wildlife populations in the region are a cause for concern, particularly because we do not understand why these increases are occurring." Wiener says the extensive report will spark more conversation among scientists, policy makers and citizens. He hopes discussion will influence management decisions to further reduce the risks of mercury in the Great Lakes region and beyond.

UW-L faculty, and their students, continue to investigate environmental pollution in the upper Midwest's rivers and lakes. Wiener is pleased that UW-L's expertise and advanced capabilities have contributed greatly to scientific understanding of the environmental mercury problem.

[Article and images courtesy of University Communications]

The UW-La Crosse River Studies Center, created in 1972, focuses on research and informational programs with an emphasis on resources of the Upper Mississippi River basin and the Great Lakes region. The center has extensive interdisciplinary partnerships with several state and federal agencies and other universities. Among them: the U.S. Geological Survey, Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources, Minnesota Pollution Control Agency, National Park Service, UW-Madison, the Biodiversity Research Institute, and the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency. For more information, please visit [www.uwlax.edu/biology/rivercntr/](http://www.uwlax.edu/biology/rivercntr/)

## UW-L Alumnus Dr. Thomas Rosandich Receives the Liberty Medal

(Editors Note... Dr. Rosandich received his undergraduate degree in Physical Education from UW-L in 1954. In 1963 he earned a master's degree at the University of Indonesia and in 1978 a doctorate at Union Graduate School in Yellow Springs, Ohio. He was inducted into the UW-L Wall of Fame in 1983. In 1989 Rosandich was the recipient of the UW-L Maurice O. Graff Distinguished Alumnus Award.)

For all his contributions and service to improving sport education in the United States and around the world, Dr. Thomas P. Rosandich has received the Liberty Medal. The Liberty Medal presented by the Statue of Liberty Club and The Wiegand Foundation goes to individuals and organizations that do excellent work in promoting Freedom and Liberty throughout the world. Honorees received the medal that shows August Bartholdi sculpting the Statute of Liberty and commemorates the 125th anniversary of the dedication of the statue, October 28, 2011. "It is my great pleasure to present Dr. Rosandich with the Liberty Medal, one of the first given," said Jack Scharr, President of Fine Art Ltd which worked with the Statute of Liberty Club to commission Sculptor Don Wiegand to create the piece.

Dr. Rosandich is the founder and president of the United States Sports Academy. A native of Sheboygan Falls, Wis., and son of Croatian immigrants who arrived through Ellis Island, he has led efforts in several capacities throughout his lifetime to enhance sport training and education around the world. As founder of the Academy in 1972, the institution that is well known as "America's Sports University," Dr. Rosandich has delivered sport related services and education programs in more than 60 countries. From the beginning, the Academy's general mission has been to serve the nation and the world as a sport education resource, upgrading sport through programs of instruction, research and service.

Through his career in the U.S. Marine Corp and with the U.S. State Department's "Ambassadors of Sport" program, Dr. Rosan-



Jack Scharr, President of Fine Art Ltd and Dr. Thomas Rosandich.

dich was directly responsible for bringing the Peace Corps to Southeast Asia in the 1960s. As an American sports ambassador, he worked with athletes, coaches and programs in more than 60 countries. He also founded what is now called the South East Asia (SEA) Games.

Dr. Rosandich served as a coach or consultant in 10 different Olympic Games from the 1956 Melbourne Olympics to the 1996 Atlanta Olympics. For his service to the Olympic Movement, he received the highest award of the International Olympic Committee (IOC), the Olympic Order, in 1997. He was bestowed the highest honor given by the United States Olympic Committee (USOC) when he was awarded the President's Medal in 2000. He also earned the Ellis Island Medal of Honor in 2008, which has recognized six Presidents and many other prominent Americans in science, business, sports and other areas.

"This prestigious Liberty Medal is particularly significant to me since my mother and father both came to this country through Ellis Island," Dr. Rosandich said. "I am very honored to receive it. For 40 years, the Academy has devoted its efforts to improving the profession of sport in America and around the globe."

Wiegand and The Wiegand Foundation, Inc., in Chesterfield, Mo., along with the

Statue of Liberty Club recently created the Liberty Medal for the 125th anniversary. In 1985, Wiegand was first commissioned to sculpt and cast a Bartholdi Sculpting Liberty piece for the 1986 reopening and centennial celebration of the Statue of Liberty. The first bronze cast is on exhibit at the Bob Hope Memorial Library on Ellis Island.

For the statue's 120th anniversary, Wiegand sculpted a bas-relief of the Bartholdi Sculpting Liberty composition which was presented by the Statue of Liberty Club to Musée Bartholdi in Colmar, France. A bronze 100th anniversary Bartholdi medallion, patterned after the bas-relief, was commissioned by the Statue of Liberty Club and made available to club members worldwide.

The United States Sports Academy is an independent, non-profit, accredited, special mission sports university created to serve the nation and world with programs in instruction, research, and service. The role of the Academy is to prepare men and women for careers in the profession of sports. For more information about the Academy, call 251-626-3303 or visit [www.ussa.edu](http://www.ussa.edu).

[Article and images courtesy of University Communications]

## Planetarium Astronomy and Music Programs are Back



### Physics Professor Emeritus Bob Allen.

Retired Physics Professor Bob Allen is back behind the console in UW-L's Planetarium. Allen returned as Director of the UW-L Planetarium this fall after a five-year hiatus that saw him still volunteering with the program, all but two of those years. The other three, he and his family were living in his native Florida.

Back at the helm, Allen has re-started monthly programs in the planetarium, as well as the long-time popular weekly laser

and light shows to rock music. Both had been discontinued in 2009 because of budget cuts. The Public Planetarium Programs begin at 1 p.m. Saturdays, with a talk on the current evening sky, that leads into a multimedia audiovisual presentation. Admission is \$2 for students/children and \$3 for others.

Fridays, the planetarium rocks with Album Encounters at 8 p.m. Allen started the show in the mid-70s when planetariums through-

out the country began doing special effects and laser-light shows to rock music. The show alternates between a current release and a classic. It includes lighting and laser effects, along with images and video clips of the musicians. Admission is \$3.

Allen did his graduate work at the University of Colorado, and the University of Michigan where use of a planetarium was part of lab instruction. He also gave public planetarium presentations there. When he came to UW-L (then Wisconsin State University at La Crosse) as an astronomy instructor in 1969, he took over planetarium duties in Cowley Hall. He held the teaching position until 2003, and the planetarium position until 2006.

Both programs are in the planetarium, Room 20 of Cowley Hall. School or private groups may arrange programs by contacting Allen at [allen.robe@uwlax.edu](mailto:allen.robe@uwlax.edu) or 608-785-8669. See more at: <http://www.uwlax.edu/PLANETARIUM/>.

[Article and images courtesy of University Communications]

## Learn more about our Academic Programs and Interdisciplinary Centers

The web is an excellent place to learn about our many academic programs and interdisciplinary centers. Links to each are conveniently located on our web page ([www.uwlax.edu/sah/html/programs.htm](http://www.uwlax.edu/sah/html/programs.htm)). For questions about the College of Science and Health, please contact the Dean's office at [science@uwlax.edu](mailto:science@uwlax.edu) or (608) 785-8218.

## New Faculty

**Docktor, Jennifer**, Physics, Assistant Professor...BS (Physics) North Dakota State University, MS and PhD (Physics) University of Minnesota...specialty in physics education research.  
608-785-8485, [jdocktor@uwlax.edu](mailto:jdocktor@uwlax.edu).

**Hepler, Teri**, Exercise and Sport Science, Assistant Professor...BA (Psychobiology) Ripon College, MS (Sport Behavior and Performance) Miami University (Ohio), PhD (Kinesiology) Michigan State University...specialty in sport psychology, motor behavior and decision-making.  
608-785-6184, [thepler@uwlax.edu](mailto:thepler@uwlax.edu).

**Hoskins, Reed**, Exercise and Sport Science, Instructor and Assistant Football Coach...BS (Fitness Management) Wartburg College, MS (Sports Management) St. Cloud University...specialty in athletics and coaching.  
608-785-5172, [rhoskins@uwlax.edu](mailto:rhoskins@uwlax.edu).

**Kobs, Lisa**, Biology, Lecturer...BA (Dietetics) College of St. Benedict, MS (Nu-

trition Science) University of Georgia...specialty in foods and nutrition.  
608-785-6457, [lkobs@uwlax.edu](mailto:lkobs@uwlax.edu).

**McHugh, Maggie**, Mathematics, Associate Lecturer...BS (English and Mathematics) University of Wisconsin-La Crosse, ME-PD (Education) University of Wisconsin-La Crosse...specialty in social justice and mathematics education.  
608-785-8828, [mmchugh@uwlax.edu](mailto:mmchugh@uwlax.edu).

**Muehlenhaus, Ian**, Geography and Earth Science, Assistant Professor...BA (International Studies and Geography) University of Minnesota-Duluth, MS (Geography), Pennsylvania State University, PhD (Geography) University of Minnesota...specialty in maps and interactive information visualization.  
608-785-6675, [imuehlenhaus@uwlax.edu](mailto:imuehlenhaus@uwlax.edu).

**Tischler, Amy**, Exercise and Sport Science, Lecturer...BS (Physical Education) Wayne State University, MS (Education) Wayne State University...specialty in

K-12 physical education and masculinity research.  
608-785-8167, [atischler@uwlax.edu](mailto:atischler@uwlax.edu).

**Whitney, Emily**, Health Education and Health Promotion, Assistant Professor...BS (Community Health Education) and MS (Community Health Education) Utah State University, PhD (Health Education), Southern Illinois University...specialty community capacity, social capital, college health and aging.  
608-785-6794, [ewhitney@uwlax.edu](mailto:ewhitney@uwlax.edu).

**White, Jim**, Exercise and Sport Science, Lecturer...BS (Coaching, Kinesiology, Physical Education) University of Calgary, MS (Human Performance) University of Wisconsin-La Crosse...specialty in strength training and conditioning, program design and exerciser techniques.  
608-785-6543, [jwhite@uwlax.edu](mailto:jwhite@uwlax.edu).

## FOCUS...ON DEPARTMENTS

### Microbiology Department and Elementary/Middle Working Together



#### Young scientists excited about observing microscopic samples.

The UW-L Microbiology Department and St. Patrick's School in Sparta have teamed up this Fall to provide elementary and middle school students exposure to the field of microbiology. The Microbiology Department brought microscopes to St. Patrick's School to help students gain an understanding of microscopic organisms that surround us every day. By incorporating microscopes into their science curriculum, the Microbiology Department is helping St.

Patrick's School increase academic performance through use of technology.

Lori Lazzari, who works as a 2nd/3rd grade teacher at St. Patrick's, helped to incorporate the microscopes into the school's science curriculum. She feels that, "pictures in a textbook do not always give the best visual effect, compared to actually observing microscopic organisms. By having these microscopes available for our science classes, students can look first-hand at algae from pond samples and bacteria commonly found in the human body. This type of exposure creates memorable experiences for the students, and hopefully many will become more involved and interested in science."

St. Patrick's 7th grade teacher and 6th-8th grade science teacher, Charles Burnett, has wanted to incorporate more microscopic

examination for years. In his classes, students receive an understanding of the parts of the microscope and the function of each part. Students can now work in pairs with each microscope instead of sharing one microscope per class as before. With these microscopes, his classes can observe water samples, prepared slides of bacteria, epithelial (skin) cells, and blood smears. A new objective for the science curriculum is to have all outgoing middle school students recognize various microscopic organisms in the environment, and be able to identify the different cell types found in human blood.

For further information please contact Michael Lazzari at [mlazzari@uwlax.edu](mailto:mlazzari@uwlax.edu) or 608-785-6479.

## UW-L'S Fungi Expert Leads Students on Mushroom Forays



Mushrooms are fabulous fried in hot, garlic butter. Others have medicinal value. They grow in the desert, in the snow and on the rainforest floor. What amazes UW-L Biology Professor Tom Volk most about mushrooms is their great variability.

Volk takes his UW-L mycology class on mushroom forays to get a taste of the diverse kinds that grow in La Crosse's Hixon Forest near campus. Students must find 20 mushroom species and identify them by the end of fall semester. While it may seem like a lot of fungi to find, consider there are about 15,000 species of mushrooms in the world. And there is no shortage on the Hixon trail. During a class period in the woods, students stumble upon a new species every few feet. Some peep up from the forest floor. Others grow on old, dead logs. "This would be a nice boutonniere," jokes Volk holding up a colorful, flower shaped mushroom called false turkey tail to his coat pocket.

Students in Tom Volk's mycology class must identify 20 species of mushrooms. Other mushrooms are identifiable not only by their shape and color, but their smell. You can only imagine, notes Volk, why the mushroom dog stinkhorn has such a name. "There is no imagination," explains UW-L student Matt Rittenhouse, a junior biology

major. "I picked one last week and they smell awful."

Mushrooms range in size from microscopic to a meter or more in diameter, says Volk. One in his lab, plucked from Hixon Forest, is about two feet wide. Students must use two hands to hold the large clumps of honey mushrooms, one of the edible species of mushrooms, which is particularly good in soup, notes Volk. The small nest-shaped mushroom is so tiny, it's the perfect size for a raindrop to splash inside and spread its spores. With so much to explore about mushrooms, Volk has created a website dedicated to fungi facts, including a "Fungus of the Month." It's obvious Volk's fascination with mushrooms extends far beyond his classroom. He developed an interest in mushrooms as an undergraduate student in a mycology class. "I found out you could get free food as long as you were careful," he jokes.



Volk is entering his 16th year at UW-L. He teaches mycology; plant/microbe interactions; Latin and Greek for scientists; organismal biology; and medical mycology.

[Article and images courtesy of University Communications]

### Mushroom Q & A with UW-L Professor Tom Volk

**Q: When do most edible mushrooms grow in this area?**

**A:** The most biomass of edible mushrooms probably comes in the middle fall season with abundant honey mushrooms, oyster mushrooms and hen of the woods. Although there are quite a few in spring (morels) summer (chanterelles) and early fall (chicken of the woods.)

**Q: How do you determine what mushrooms are OK to eat?**

**A:** You have to be able to identify the mushroom absolutely to species to be certain it is edible. It is a myth that you can cook a mushroom with onion and a silver coin to determine if it is edible. Some people say if the coin turns black it's edible or if it doesn't turn black it's edible. Either way it isn't true.

**Q: In your opinion, what is the No. 1 misconception about mushrooms?**

**A:** People think everything is poisonous and they are afraid of them. Volk notes on his website ([http://botit.botany.wisc.edu/toms\\_fungi/](http://botit.botany.wisc.edu/toms_fungi/)), "of the 70,000 species of fungi, about 250 species are considered good delicious edibles. Another 250 species can kill you, or at least make you wish you were dead. Everything else is somewhere in between."

**Q: What is a good time of the year to find mushrooms?**

**A:** Mushrooms grow year round. By the third week in October, most of the fleshy mushrooms are gone. However, shelf fungi will continue to grow throughout the winter.

## River Studies Center Report



Students and faculty at UW-La Crosse have a long tradition of conducting research along the upper Mississippi River. The 40 plus year record of the River Studies Center (RSC) is testament to that fact. However, the RSC has not relegated itself to the confines of “Ole Man River.” Over the years, faculty and students conducted research on inland lakes, across the Great Lakes, and on numerous wetlands. An area of intense, but less known, research has been studies on the local tributaries that flow into the Mississippi River, which course through what is known as the Driftless Zone (or Area).



The “Driftless Zone” is geographic region of southeast Minnesota, southwest Wisconsin, northeast Iowa, and northwest Illinois that was untouched by the most recent period of continental glaciation. This area is characterized by a rugged topography dominated by flat valleys and rounded ridge tops. Land use is slope dependent with ridge tops and valley floors used for row crops or pastures, and valley walls dominated by woodlots. Most streams draining watersheds in this area originate and are maintained by groundwater.

RSC researchers have focused their studies on numerous small, coldwater streams in the Coon Creek Watershed near Coon Valley, Wisconsin, which is an easy 25 minute drive from the UW-L campus. Research

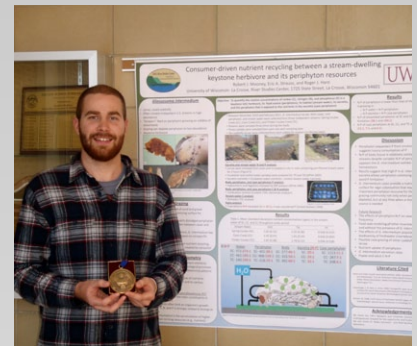
is also facilitated by a network of easement agreements between local, private land owners and the State of Wisconsin. These easements provide ready access to fishermen, Wisconsin DNR managers and College of Science and Health faculty and students alike. Many of the streams are managed as an economically important recreational trout fishery. These streams are characteristically clear and have high water quality. In addition to trout, these streams support lesser known, but equally as important organisms. These include other species of fish, a variety of aquatic plants and algae, and a diverse array of invertebrates.

RSC faculty and their students have been conducting research in the Coon Creek Watershed for over 20 years. Some of the more recent studies have addressed questions on the interactions among organisms and their stream ecosystem. For example biology graduate student Katri Laukkanen and her advisor, Mark Sandheinrich, have been quantifying the habitat usage of the slimy sculpin in relationship to sunlight and aquatic plants. Another biology graduate student Stephanie Gatyas and her advisor, Eric Strauss, are conducting manipulative experiments in these streams to understand the role of aquatic plants in retaining a wide range of biologically important carbon sources ranging in size from the molecular scale to large woody debris. The picture shows Stephanie introducing a non-toxic fluorescent dye into Poplar Creek to trace the storage and pathways of water and particles in the stream. Most recently, former UW-L undergraduate and now graduate student Robert Mooney and his advisors, Roger Haro and Eric Strauss, has been exploring the complex nutritional relationship among stream water chemistry, aquatic algae, and an abundant invertebrate grazer. This system involves a number of fascinating connections between limiting nutrients, aquatic insect behavior and physiology, and algal food resources, which are an important base for the stream food web.

For additional information about the activities of the River Studies Center and the Aquatic Science Program in the De-

partment of Biology, please refer to <http://www.uwlax.edu/biology/RiverCntr/index.html> and <http://www.uwlax.edu/biology/Biology-Tracks/Aquatic-Sciences/>.

### UW-L Biology Student Wins Award at International Science Meeting



Robert Mooney (Biology – Aquatic Science Concentration), was awarded a medal for “Superior Graduate Poster in Ecology” at the 2011 Sigma Xi Annual Meeting and International Research Conference, which was held November 11 – 13, 2011 in Raleigh, North Carolina. Sigma Xi is the international and multidisciplinary research society, whose programs and activities promote the health of the scientific enterprise and honor scientific achievement. There are nearly 60,000 Sigma Xi members in more than 100 countries around the world. Robert’s research poster was titled, “Consumer-driven nutrient recycling between a stream-dwelling, keystone herbivore and its periphyton resources.” Judging is rigorous at this meeting, taking place in two parts: one without the author present and one with him/her in front of the judges. So research posters must be extremely well designed to communicate to the broadest audience. What’s truly notable about Robert’s achievement is that this was research he conducted as an undergraduate here at UW-L!

## FOCUS...ON STUDENTS

### Physical Therapy Update and Outreach

Physical therapy continues to be a growing and evolving profession in the health care community. Students enrolled in the physical therapy program at UW-L are excited about what the future holds as they embark on taking an active role in managing patients in a variety of different settings. As a result, many students have assumed a leadership role to promote the profession. From grade school students to practicing physicians, students are promoting the profession and the positive aspects of their future roles in managing different patient populations.

Recently, Carissa Melk, a student in the first year of the three year physical therapy program, provided an educational experience for the Global Connections pod at Lincoln Middle School in La Crosse. The audience included more than 50 children. She taught them what good posture looks like and why proper posture is so important, using the guidelines she learned in her Physical Therapy Examination course. She integrated the use of bar graphs, which the middle school students are learning about

in their math class, to emphasize how different postures can influence the length-tension relationship of muscles and affect stresses placed on joints. She finished by demonstrating different tests on students to emphasize how posture can influence the role of trunk muscles in stabilizing the spine. Dawn Salzwedel, a teacher at the school, has this to say: "Carissa is a very intelligent, confident and knowledgeable student of physical therapy. Implicit in her message was that learning how to create and interpret graphs can actually be a very useful skill in real-life. She represented the program well."

Nathan Olson, a second year student in the physical therapy program, enthusiastically took on a similar challenge. Growing evidence in the medical literature has found early physical therapy intervention in the management of acute back and neck pain improves outcomes of care and reduces long term health care costs. Unfortunately, this information is not well known among physicians who manage patients with back pain. Nathan, fresh off an internship at

Lakeview Medical Center in Rice Lake, was provided an opportunity to promote his profession and share recent evidence-based guidelines for best practice. His audience was a group of family practice physicians and orthopedic physical therapists. Nathan's presentation was about the benefits of early physical therapy intervention in the management of spine pain. The material presented was an emphasis in the UW-L physical therapy curriculum course, Orthopedic Examination of the Spine. He presented the material in a way that highlighted his understanding of reading and interpreting the literature as experienced in all of the four evidence-based practice courses in the curriculum. His clinical instructor stated that Nate "provided a strong argument of why early physical therapy intervention is currently thought to be best practice, and stimulated excellent discussion among the physical therapists and the physicians."

For further information contact Paul Reuteman at [preuteman@uwlax.com](mailto:preuteman@uwlax.com) or 608-785-8469.

## Departments

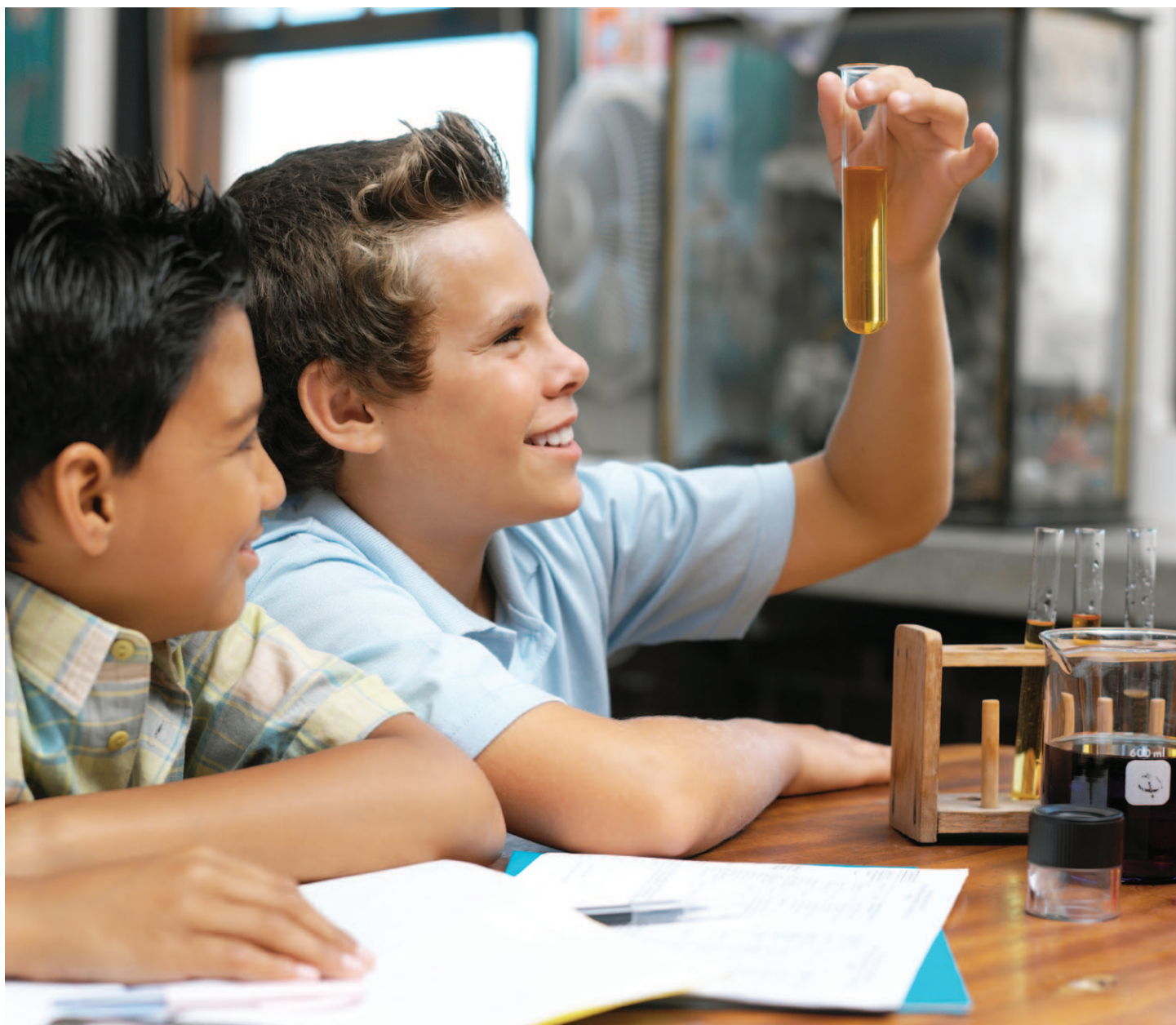
The College of Science and Health is home to the following 11 academic departments:

- Biology
- Chemistry
- Computer Science
- Exercise and Sport Science
- Geography/Earth Science
- Health Education and Health Promotion
- Health Professions
- Mathematics
- Microbiology
- Physics
- Recreation Management and Therapeutic Recreation



Learn more about them here: <http://www.uwlax.edu/sah/html/departments.htm>

## Team Launches Boys Science Explorer Camp



After a dozen years of the highly successful Girls in Science program, UW-L is very pleased to have celebrated the introduction of a new program, Boys Science Exploration. The goals of these programs are to offer hands-on academic exploration, provide students with the opportunity to work with other young women or young men, respectively, of similar abilities and interests, and create an environment in which everyone wants to further their knowledge and talent in science and mathematics. The Boys Science Exploration and the Girls In Science programs run concurrently the

same weekend on campus. Mark your calendars for these renowned programs: June 23-24, 2012.

Instruction is provided by UW-L faculty and college student teaching assistants. Co-directors of these programs, Sandy Grunwald (Chemistry & Biochemistry) and Susan Kelly (Mathematics) both agree that UW-L faculty participation is truly what makes these programs outstanding! The experience includes an overnight camp, so students get to eat meals on campus and stay overnight in the residence halls with

fun evening activities led by their Resident Assistants.

These dynamic programs are the result of a strong partnership between the UW-L College of Science and Health, UW-L Office of Continuing Education, Mississippi Valley Talented and Gifted Network, and the Wisconsin Center for Academically Talented Youth. For more information, please visit <http://uwlax.edu/conted/youth/index.html> or contact Beth Theede, Youth Programs Outreach Specialist, at [etheede@uwlax.edu](mailto:etheede@uwlax.edu).