

# Applied Developmental Press



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## On the Hill: *Current Social Policy*

Developmental psychologists strive to better understand children and improve their lives. An important aspect of this process is applying research findings into policy and practice.

The relation between developmental psychology and policy is crucial in creating new laws to benefit children. It is also essential for receiving funding and implementing/maintaining programs such as Head Start - the most successful, longest-running, national school readiness program in the U.S.



<http://watercharity.org/images/capitol.jpg>

Developmental Psychology Research has informed public policy on multiple topics, including child safety, child welfare, and child labor ([www.srcd.org](http://www.srcd.org)). A brief filed by the

*continued on page 3*

## Mason Campus: *New Buildings*



[publicagenda.org](http://publicagenda.org)

Anywhere you go on campus there seems to be some sort of construction. Whether it is new buildings or renovations, George Mason is expanding to accommodate more students, faculty, and staff.

The Rappahannock River parking deck recently opened this past Fall 2009 semester. It has the capacity for 2,650 cars.

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## ADPSG Executive Council



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## Welcome from the ADPSG President



Greetings ADP Students and Faculty,

Last semester, members of the ADP community joined Bikes for the World ([www.bikesfortheworld.org](http://www.bikesfortheworld.org))

volunteers to disassemble and pack bicycles into a shipping container to be sent to Kampala, Uganda. Through collaboration with the Women Prisoners Support Organization, bikes were distributed to recently-released female prisoners. These women have limited transportation, and the bikes aid them in commuting to work and supporting their families. A total of 453 bikes were packed and shipped.

This Spring we will be organizing a community service event through the National Park Service, working with the National Mall and Memorial Park branch of NPS, but first we need your input! With 15 or more volunteers we can spend a Saturday assisting in improving the National Mall, which is used by countless families and visiting school groups for education and recreational purposes. If we have fewer than 15 volunteers we will need to do a smaller scale project on a Friday. Potential activities include landscape work, minor tree pruning, gardening, painting, and general clean-up. All interested parties should email me at [acarlso8@gmu.edu](mailto:acarlso8@gmu.edu) so that we can decide on a date and activity.

- Abby Carlson, ADPSG President

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## On the Hill: *Current Social Policy (cont.)*

American Psychological Association in 2004 and research completed by Steinberg and Scott in 2003 on psychological development during adolescence was cited by the U.S. Supreme Court in its 2005 decision to abolish the death penalty for juveniles. Also, thanks to developmental research and program evaluation such as the research completed at the Connecticut Center for Effective Practice (Ford, Gregory, McKay, & Williams, 2003; Williams, Ford, Wolpaw, & Pearson, 2005) and the recommendations researchers have made based on the review of programs such as the Emergency Mobile Psychiatric Services Program (Vanderploeg, Schroeder, & Franks 2008), the standard of mental health care provided to children, adolescents, and families at the state level has been greatly improved. As mentioned previously, developmental scientists have also been heavily involved with the national Head Start program, during the inception of the program in 1965 and during the reauthorization of the program in 2008 (Ziegler & Styfco, 2004; [www.Carnegie.org](http://www.Carnegie.org)).

Social policy primarily refers to guidelines and interventions for the development, maintenance or creation of living conditions that are conducive to human welfare ([www.socialpolicy.org](http://www.socialpolicy.org)). There are several new social policy updates pertaining to developmental psychology:

1) The Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) Education and Outreach Act of 2009 has been introduced in the House. The bill was introduced by Representative Joe Sestak (D-PA) and aims to improve outreach and enrollment for SNAP.

2) In December 2009, the House passed the Jobs for Main Street Act, which would provide \$2.3 billion to increase eligibility for the refundable portion of the Child Care Tax Credit, making the tax credit available to all low-income working families with children in 2010. The bill would also provide \$305 million to freeze poverty guidelines at 2009 levels to prevent a reduction in eligibility for programs such as Medicaid, the Supplemental

Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP), and child nutrition. Additionally, \$500 million would be provided for summer youth employment programs, which reaches an estimated 250,000 disadvantaged youth.

3) In January 2010, bill H.R. 4223 was referred to the Subcommittee on Early Childhood, Elementary, and Secondary Education. This bill is an effort to increase funding for evidence-based social and emotional learning programming and is sponsored by Representative Kildee of Michigan. This bill is a part of the Academic, Social, and Emotional Learning Act of 2009.

For more information on current social policy, or to learn about current bills that are on the floor in congress, please visit the websites for United States House of Representatives ([www.house.gov](http://www.house.gov)), the United States Senate ([www.senate.gov](http://www.senate.gov)), or the Library of Congress ([thomas.loc.gov](http://thomas.loc.gov)).

### References:

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- websites: [www.Carnegie.org](http://www.Carnegie.org); [www.srcd.org](http://www.srcd.org); [www.socialpolicy.org](http://www.socialpolicy.org)

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## Research Spotlight: *The Masters Thesis*



For this issue of the ADPSG newsletter, we wanted to highlight the work that one of our current M.A. students is doing for her masters thesis. Nicole Turygin is a second year M.A. student and a member of Dr. Rojahn's lab. The working title of her thesis is: Visual Scanning of Facially Displayed Affect by Individuals with Autism Spectrum Disorders.

**Nicole Turygin:** Individuals with autism spectrum disorders exhibit social deficits in many respects, one of which relates to the ability to recognize the facially-expressed emotions of others. My study will explore differences in how children with autism spectrum disorders differ from typical

children when viewing static faces of individuals expressing sadness, anger, surprise, disgust, happiness, and fear.

Previous researchers have hypothesized that individuals with autism tend to fixate on the mouth instead of the eyes when viewing emotional faces, and that emotionally relevant areas of the face (such as the eyes and mouth) are less salient to individuals with ASD compared to typical individuals. An eye-tracker will record the gaze paths of the individuals, and I will compare the amount of time that individuals spend viewing the eye area, mouth area, and non-emotionally relevant areas. Studies such as these can help researchers to understand the social deficits observed in autism spectrum disorders.

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## Poster Printing for the Psychology Department

Strolling through David King Hall can be arousing with all the stimulating research eye-candy. You too can create a conference-style poster for presentation! The best format for creating a poster is Microsoft PowerPoint. This format allows the user to arrange all content within one 'slide', rendering a miniature of the soon-to-be poster. Remember that everything at this phase will be blown up to poster size so details are critical—small, barely noticeable errors become *big*, blatant errors at 5x4 feet!

To schedule an appointment to have your poster printed, e-mail Aikwan Chong ([achong@gmu.edu](mailto:achong@gmu.edu)).

Alternatively, a signup sheet is available in David King Hall, room 3043. On the day and time of your appointment, bring a flash drive with your poster PowerPoint to room 3043, where the assistant will unlock room 3050. Room 3050 is where the poster printer is located. More importantly, this room has the instructions for using the poster printer. When completed, you're one step closer to being a professional member of the scientific community. Happy presenting! Special thanks to Dan Zapp for providing a walkthrough of the poster printing process.

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**ADP Information:** For more information on the Applied Developmental Psychology program at George Mason University, including information on practica, theses, and dissertations, please visit the following sites:

**Program Handbook:** <http://psychology.gmu.edu/Graduate%20Student%20Resources/handbooks.htm>

**Supportive Services:** <http://psychology.gmu.edu/Graduate%20Student%20Resources/supportive.htm>

**Dissertation and Thesis:** [http://psychology.gmu.edu/Graduate%20Student%20Resources/diss\\_thesis.htm](http://psychology.gmu.edu/Graduate%20Student%20Resources/diss_thesis.htm)

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## Practicum Spotlight: *A M.A. student's experience*



In order to graduate from the ADP program, M.A. students are required to complete either a practicum or a master's thesis, and Ph.D. students have the option of completing a practicum during their program.

Practica involve working at an external site that is of interest to, and arranged by, the student completing a practicum to get hands on experience either by working directly with children or by working for a family policy or advocacy agency.

To get a better idea of what a practicum entails, we asked second-year M.A. student, Cameron Mittelman about his practicum experience.

**Cameron Mittelman:** This semester I am completing my practicum at Matthew's Center for Visual Learning in Manassas, Virginia. Matthew's Center is a private educational facility for children with developmental disabilities, specifically autism. This non-paid internship consists of assessing and evaluating student abilities at various ages and time points in the newly created vocational program. The focus of this practicum will be to help prepare these children for future employment in the workplace. Too often children with autism age out of their education programs without the tools necessary to be productive members of society. Many who do enter the working world find that they are inadequately prepared for the demands of organized employment. A vocational program is designed to provide formal practice performing tasks and activities in a more structured environment that simulates the work they may be doing in the real world. In addition to this job training, the vocational program at Matthew's Center seeks to determine factors that would predict and influence future job performance for children with developmental disabilities, and apply those findings to the children at the center.

For the purposes of this practicum, I have divided the semester into three parts. The first part, dubbed

"Information Gathering," will consist of amassing a pool of information on vocational training and current vocational assessments in order to provide a guide for the direction of the program. In addition to a review of the current literature on vocational training and job placement for persons with autism, this phase of the practicum will include touring the established vocational programs in the area, such as the ones at St. Coletta, Ivymount, and The Philips School, as well as consulting with other professionals in the field.

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### What's Happening?

#### At GMU:

Daily calendar of campus events: <http://today.gmu.edu/>

GMU Center for the Arts event calendar: <http://www.gmu.edu/cfa/calendar/>

#### In DC/Northern Virginia:

Volunteer activities: <http://www.volunteermatch.org/>

Farmer's Markets: <http://www.arlingtonfarmersmarket.com/default.shtml> or <http://www.fallschurchva.gov/community/recsandparks/FarmersMarket.html>

Information on restaurants, events, and activities in the DC metro area: <http://www.washingtonian.com>



image: <http://www.learningtheory.org/colt2003/Washington-DC-collage.jpg>

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## Spring Colloquia Series is Underway!

**The Spring 2010 DBS Colloquia Series has begun!**

**Take a look at the exciting talks being given by scholars from Mason and beyond! All are welcome to attend these events, which take place every Wednesday at 11:30, on campus in Enterprise Hall, Room 274.**

*March 17th:*

Dr. Marilou Hyson - National Association for the Education of Young Children, George Mason University  
"Applying Developmental Knowledge in Developing Countries - - The Case of Indonesia"

*March 24th:*

Dr. Rachel Chazan Cohen - Office of Planning, Research, and Evaluation, Administration for Children and Families, DHHS  
"Lessons Learned from Early Head Start Research"

*March 31st:*

Dr. Steven Breckler - Executive Director, Science Directorate, APA  
"APA Science Directorate: Mission, Activities, and Opportunities for Students and Graduates"

*April 7th:*

Dr. Greg Wallace - Research Fellow, Brain & Cognition Lab, National Institute of Mental Health  
"Clinical and Subclinical Autistic Behavior, Social Cognition, and Cortical Thickness: Converging Relations"

*April 14th:*

Dr. Dale Schulz - Director of Clinical Services, Childhelp  
"Child help: Services, Goals, and Opportunities for Students and Graduates"

*April 21st:*

Dr. Michael Lopez - Executive Director, National Center for Latino Child & Family Research  
"Topic TBA"

*April 28th:*

Dr. Taryn Morrissey - Congressional Staffer and ex-SRCD Congressional Fellow  
"Sequence of Child Care Type and Child Development: What Role does Peer Exposure Play? (+ Policy Options in DC)"

**A colloquia speaker schedule can also be found online at:  
<http://psychology.gmu.edu/ADP/>**

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## “This Emotional Life”: *Series Spotlight*

“This Emotional Life” is a three part series on PBS that aired January 4<sup>th</sup>, 5<sup>th</sup>, and 6<sup>th</sup> of this year. It is hosted by Daniel Gilbert, a Harvard psychologist and best-selling author of “Stumbling on Happiness.” The series is a result of a multi-year project to promote awareness and elucidate emotional welfare in order to bring assistance and hope to those who are attempting to improve their wellbeing. Other aspects of this campaign also include a national outreach campaign, a multifaceted website, and special help in communities focused on early childhood attachment and reintegration of those who have served in the military.

The first episode was titled, “Family, Friends and Lovers: Information to help us navigate our relationships with family, friends, and lovers.” It delves into topics such as adolescence, attachment, bullying, grief and loss, postpartum mood disorders, and intimate relationships. The second episode was “Facing our Fears: Information to help us understand

and manage the challenges in our lives.” Addiction, anger, stress, anxiety, and other disorders (such as ADHD, bipolar and borderline personality), were the focus of this installment. Finally, the third episode, “Rethinking Happiness: Positive strategies to help us build resilience and lead fuller, happier lives,” discussed forgiveness, altruism, humor, resilience and many other pathways people use to find and maintain happiness. Each of the three episodes ties together information about recent research in the field and gripping personal stories about real people and how they are coping.

For more information, please visit <http://www.pbs.org/thisemotionallife/>. All episodes are also available for purchase on iTunes or at the PBS online store.



[www.blog.beliefnet.com](http://www.blog.beliefnet.com)

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## Practicum Spotlight: *Another M.A. student's experience*



There is a vast range of practica opportunities for ADP students at George Mason University. To show this, in addition to Cameron Mittelman’s account of his practicum experience, we also asked second-year M.A. student,

Alejandra Loyola to give us an account of her practicum experience.

**Alejandra Loyola:** I’m doing my practicum with Parenting Playgroups under the supervision of Dr. Rene Hackney, a development psychologist and the founder. Parenting Playgroups is dedicated to helping parents deal more effectively with a range of parenting issues and providing a learning environment that fosters children’s optimal development. My practicum entails providing

support to the teachers with whom I work during preschool and social skills classes; attending Dr. Rene’s lectures, which cover a wide variety of parenting topics; and gathering additional research for these lectures.

In the long run, I think that this experience will be beneficial to my career and personal interests because of the insight I will gain. This will be especially helpful because I would like to create a similar organization some day. The purpose of my organization will be to provide low SES/minority parents with the necessary parenting resources to raise children under the best conditions possible.

If you would like to learn more about Parenting Playgroups, Inc., please go to their website at [www.parentingplaygroups.com](http://www.parentingplaygroups.com)

# Applied Developmental Psychology Student Group



## Haitian Earthquake Relief Drive

The ADPSG is collecting formula, baby food, diapers, etc. to send to orphanages and families in need following the devastating earthquake in Haiti.

Bring your donations to the collection box in the ADP suite, David King Hall (Rm 1021). While all donations are appreciated, please make sure that the items are immediately usable (i.e. canned food poses problems because not everyone has access to can openers).

Space for your donations has already been reserved on a United Nations flight bound for Port-au-Prince later this spring.

If you have any questions, contact Kate Zinsser at [kzinsser@gmu.edu](mailto:kzinsser@gmu.edu)

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## Practicum Spotlight: *A M.A. student's experience (cont.)*

The second stage of the practicum will be designated "Program Preparation." As the name implies, this phase will be devoted to obtaining and developing the materials necessary to run the vocational training program. Specifics include generating a reference timeline of skills, requirements, and abilities that will be needed in order to prepare for the children's eventual aging out of child services and into adult workshops, as well as the creation of a questionnaire for parents to help evaluate what they want from their current child services, what direction they wish to go, and where they would like their child to be when they age out. In addition, I will coordinate with organizations around Manassas that would be willing to allow our students to practice vocational skills in a more real-world setting. This time will also consist of producing a data collection system for later analysis and reporting, and the gathering of materials for in-house practice.

The final part of the practicum will be "Program Implementation." The current plan is to have a pre-vocational program in addition to the standard vocational program. This pre-vocational program will provide students an opportunity to practice important base components required to perform most of the potential job tasks, such as basic matching, sorting, and assembly, as well as certain visual scanning and fine motor skills. The other program will include a place within Matthew's Center where the duties of the adult workshops and organizations will be simulated. In addition, the children will be provided with the opportunity to work in collaborating companies and businesses in order to gain more real world experience and practice.

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## Mason Campus: *New Buildings (cont.)*

There is parking for students and faculty/staff permits on Levels 1-2 and one bay of parking just for faculty/staff on Level 3. All floors are first-come first-serve.

The RAC (Recreation and Athletic Complex-formerly the PE building) is a 120,000 square foot recreation facility. The two story facility houses three gymnasiums, two racquetball courts, and two squash courts. The fitness gallery includes one level for cardiovascular machines and one level for weight training. Additionally, the RAC has classrooms and offices for the School of Recreation, Health and Tourism.

The Mason Inn Conference Center and Hotel is an exciting project that is planned to be opened for business July 2010. The Mason Inn is a 148-room hotel with a restaurant and lounge,

large conference center that includes two ballrooms, as well as 10 other meeting rooms of varied sizes. The complex is based at Mason's Fairfax Campus just off Route 123 near Braddock Road and is convenient to major interstates, public transportation and airports. Its location will be situated near the Center for Performing Arts, the Recreation and Athletic Complex and the Patriot Center



[www.gmu.edu](http://www.gmu.edu)



If you would like to become more involved in ADPSG, have questions or suggestions, or would like to learn more about ADPSG, please go online to our website:

[www.gmu.edu/org/adpsg](http://www.gmu.edu/org/adpsg)

## Conference Update

Below are just some of the many conferences coming up in our field. Students: Remember to tell the ADPSG if you plan to attend a conference!

Conference	Date	Location	Website
American Educational Research Association (AERA)	April 30th - May 4th 2010	Denver, CO	<a href="http://www.aera.net/Default.aspx?id=7590">http://www.aera.net/Default.aspx?id=7590</a>
International Society on Infant Studies	March 10th - 14th 2010	Baltimore, MD	<a href="http://www.isisweb.org/isisconferences.html">www.isisweb.org/isisconferences.html</a>
American Psychological Society (APS)	May 27th - 30th 2010	Boston, MA	<a href="http://www.psychologicalscience.org/cfs/index.cfm">http://www.psychologicalscience.org/cfs/index.cfm</a>
Society for Prevention Research	June 1st - 4th 2010	Denver, CO	<a href="http://www.preventionresearch.org/meeting.php">http://www.preventionresearch.org/meeting.php</a>
Head Start National Research Conference	June 21st - 23rd 2010	Washington, DC	<a href="http://www.acf.hhs.gov/programs/opre/hsrcl/">http://www.acf.hhs.gov/programs/opre/hsrcl/</a>
International Society for the Study of Behavioral Development (ISSBD)	July 18th - 22nd 2010	Lusaka, Zambia	<a href="http://www.issbd2010.com/">http://www.issbd2010.com/</a>
American Psychological Association (APA)	August 12th - 15th 2010	San Diego, CA	<a href="http://www.apa.org/conf.html">http://www.apa.org/conf.html</a>
Human Development	April 9th - 11th, 2010	New York, NY	<a href="http://www.fordham.edu/">http://www.fordham.edu/</a>
Virginia Psychological Association (VPA) Spring Session	April 21st - 24th 2010	Norfolk, VA	<a href="http://www.vapsych.org/cde.cfm?event=230177">http://www.vapsych.org/cde.cfm?event=230177</a>
National Association for Persons with Developmental Disabilities and Mental Health Needs (NADD)	April 14th - 16th 2010	Toronto, Canada	<a href="http://www.thenadd.org/cfp/index.shtml">http://www.thenadd.org/cfp/index.shtml</a>
Gatlinburg Conference on Research and Theory in Intellectual and Developmental Disabilities	March 17th - 19th 2010	Annapolis, MD	<a href="http://www.waisman.wisc.edu/gatlinburg/call.php">http://www.waisman.wisc.edu/gatlinburg/call.php</a>

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## Research Spotlight: *The Masters Thesis*



We have already heard from second year M.A. student, Nicole Turygin about her masters thesis experience, but to give readers further insight into the thesis process, we also asked second-year M.A. student Ashley Simpkins to give us an overview of her thesis.

**Ashley Simpkins:** For my thesis, I'm using data from Dr. Winsler's Miami School Readiness Project. My study will include approximately 12,000 children who attended pre-kindergarten programs in Miami. I'll be looking at whether there are differences in the

school readiness skills (as measured by the LAP-D and DECA) of children who attend different types of pre-kindergarten programs. I'll also be looking at whether the relationship between school readiness skills and later academic achievement in elementary school is moderated by the quality/characteristics of the elementary school that the child attends (such as teacher education/experience, school resources, etc.). I hope to be able to publish my findings and add to the school readiness/school quality literature, especially since the sample is so large and diverse.

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## ADP Faculty and Research Labs

### **Dr. Susanne Denham**

*Dr. Denham's Lab:* Social and emotional development, social processes in children, developmental psychopathology, and ethnographic and observational research methods

### **Dr. Robert Paskak**

*Dr. Paskak's Lab:* Perceptual learning and cognitive development in children, age-appropriateness of cognitive constructs, populations at risk for cognitive delay, and socio-emotional concomitants of increased cognitive competence

### **Dr. Koralý Pérez-Edgar**

*Dr. Pérez-Edgar's Lab:* Impact of emotion and attention on the way individuals interact with the social world, temperament, behavior, cognitive functioning, psychophysiology, and neuroimaging

### **Dr. Johannes Rojahn**

*Dr. Rojahn's Lab:* Intellectual and developmental disabilities, challenging behaviors, psychopathology, applied behavior analysis (ABA), socio-emotional competence, and interpersonal functioning

### **Dr. Adam Winsler**

*Dr. Winsler's Lab:* Children's transition to school, the development of self-regulation, children's private speech, Vygotskian sociocultural theory, bilingualism, parent-child interactions, and prevention of behavior disorders

### **Dr. Tim Curby**

*Dr. Curby's Lab:* Teacher-child interactions, achievement, socioemotional development, classroom observational measurement, and quantitative methods

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Smile, ADP!



Amanda Mahoney volunteering at the ADPSG fall 2009 community service event



Volunteers at the fall 2009 ADPSG community service event: Abby Carlson, Craig Bailey, Kate Zinsser, Amanda Mahoney, Siria Rioja, Erin Tarpey, and Chavaughn Brown

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## Smile, ADP! (cont.)



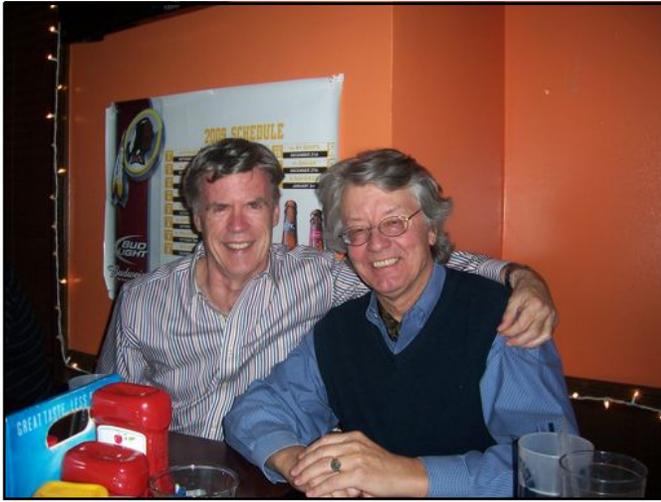
Craig Bailey and Chavaughn Brown help Kate Zinsser load bikes into a cargo truck for the Bikes for the World organization. The donated bikes will be sent around the world to help children and families in need.



Dr. Pasnak with students Kate Zinsser and Nicole Turygin at the ADP Happy Hour

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## Smile, ADP! (cont.)



Dr. Pasnak and Dr. Rojahn at the ADP Happy Hour



Ameena Sweeting, Dr. Curby, and Naomi Watanabe at the ADP Happy Hour



Nicole Turygin, Chavaughn Brown, and Amanda Mahoney at the ADP Happy Hour



Siria Rioja, Rebekah LaRacque, and Craig Bailey at the ADP Happy Hour

**Do you have any pictures that you would like to submit for the next ADP Newsletter?  
Please email your pictures to Erin Tarpey at [etarpey@gmu.edu](mailto:etarpey@gmu.edu)**