

# UNIVERSITY OF MEMPHIS ANTHROPOLOGY DEPARTMENT NEWSLETTER

## Spring 2013



### **Dr. Ruthbeth Finerman Wins Dunavant Professorship**

At the annual August 2012 meeting of the College of Arts and Sciences faculty, Dean Henry Kurtz awarded Dr. Ruthbeth Finerman a Dunavant University Professorship. This award is given in recognition of exceptional achievement in teaching, scholarship, service, and outreach. Such accomplishments are reflected in the leadership Dr. Finerman provided for the Department of Anthropology's recent celebration of the 35<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the Master's program in applied anthropology. The reunion surrounding the celebration drew legions of alumni from across the country and from around the Mid-South, and its great success is a testament, in part, to Professor Finerman's vision, energy, and commitment.

Dr. Finerman received her PhD from the University of California at Los Angeles in 1985. She specializes in research and teaching in applied medical anthropology, focusing on family health and caregiving, international health services delivery, medical choice and change, human sexuality and childbirth, ethnomedicine, and mental health. She was a Fulbright Scholar in 1999 and has received The University of Memphis Outstanding Young Researcher Award, the University of Memphis Distinguished Teaching Award, the College of Arts and Sciences Excellence in Teaching Award, and the Thomas Briggs Foundation Excellence in Teaching Award.

**Dr. Michael Duke** began research on the complex and multifaceted needs of victims of intimate partner violence (IPV). Victims who are methodically cut off from social support networks, household finances, and transportation by their abusive partners are rarely able to leave those relationships without substantial logistical (law enforcement, housing) and emotional (counseling, medical treatment) support. Providing support to victims in relationships that lack this controlling element is also challenging, both because they may lack access to these services, and because they may wish to remain in the relationship, despite its difficulties. IPV victim advocates and law enforcement officials have become increasingly aware of the need to co-locate victim services under one roof to holistically and expeditiously address the needs of these victims. Under the leadership of Olliette Murry-Drobot (MA Anthropology, U of M, 1997), the Family Safety Center (FSC) uses this organizational model to provide comprehensive services to domestic violence victims in Memphis, TN and Shelby County. In fall 2012, Dr. Duke and graduate students Kristen Schebler and Traci Petty carried out a process evaluation documenting the agency's initial year of existence. Data collection consisted of qualitative, semi-structured interviews with case managers and representatives from partner organizations. The research team also analyzed client exit survey data provided by FSC. The particular focus of the research was to identify and describe the agency's procedural, spatial, and inter-personal strategies for: a) fostering a culture of collaboration and teamwork between organizations that may lack a history of successfully working together, and b) creating a welcoming and accessible location for IPV victims to receive services. In November 2012 Dr. Duke and his team submitted a draft report and presented findings to the FSC Board of Directors. Dr. Duke continues to collaborate with the organization to develop a logic model and action plan based on the study findings. He also regularly consults with the Board about client data and outreach issues.



*Dr. Michael Duke*



Rachel Wright

**Rachel Wright**, a 2007 MA alumna, received the 2012 Eric R. Wolf Prize from the Society for the Anthropology of Work at the American Anthropological Association meetings in San Francisco. This award is given to the paper that best demonstrates an anthropological approach to the study of work in the tradition of political economic scholarship modeled and encouraged by Eric Wolf. Rachel's winning paper entitled "Who's the Boss? The Mytoshka of Power in Nonprofit Organizations" is undergoing peer review for publication in the fall 2013 issue of *Anthropology of Work Review*.

Rachel is a PhD candidate in anthropology at Syracuse University in New York, supervised by Dr. John Burdick, a former student of Wolf's. She is in her final year of dissertation writing with the support of a Doctoral Fellowship from the American Association for University Women. Her dissertation research, funded by the National Science Foundation, investigated the conditions that strengthen and weaken oppositional consciousness among employees in nonprofit social service organizations in Memphis. Rachel spent a total of fifteen months collecting data from eighty participants in seven small organizations. She interviewed a stratified sample of nonprofit employees from high-ranking executive directors to low-ranking program coordinators. She also volunteered at several organizations each week and participated in monthly intra-organizational staff meetings and inter-organizational networking meetings.

Memphis provided an ideal research site for Rachel since prior to pursuing doctoral studies, she worked for at the Soulsville Foundation, the parent organization of the Stax Museum. Over the course of six years, she performed a variety of roles, including assisting in policy development, grant writing, program evaluation, staff development, and community engagement. Rachel, who completed the MA program while working fulltime, used her practicum to evaluate the nutrition program at the Soulsville Foundation's public charter school; she enjoyed seeing several of her program recommendations

implemented. Although her interests evolved at the doctoral level, these experiences helped her formulate a dissertation research project that was feasible, organic, and potentially beneficial to those who participated. Also, the relationships she built through Soulsville and the anthropology department enabled her to quickly gain entre and build rapport.

Rachel's submission for the Wolf Prize discusses the multiple sites of governance within nonprofits such as boards, funders, managers, and even more nebulous influences such as volunteers, the media, and the public writ large. With all these different groups governing or otherwise influencing the nonprofit work environment, the decision-making process is murky to say the least. For the employees embedded in these circles of power, understanding and navigating these rings can be a challenge: they feel pressure or tension but were unsure from which source it emanates. This paper is a chapter from her dissertation, which her committee is currently reviewing in preparation for her defense in the spring. She will graduate in May 2013 and is in the process of applying for positions throughout the country.

**Jeanne Hanna**, senior Anthropology Honors major, received a special invitation to present her research at the Posters and the Capitol event in Nashville, TN on February 13, 2013. Her poster is entitled "The Role of Religion, Identity and Activism Among the Islamic Community in Tennessee in Combating Stigmatization and Islamophobia." Dr. Katherine Lambert-Pennington served as Jeanne's faculty mentor for this project.

**Congratulations to Anthropology's 2012 Master of Arts Graduates!** Kevin Baune, Irene Goddard, Stephanie Harrison, Angela Helt, Megan Keener, August Marshall, Whitney Maxwell, Elizabeth McGee, Laura Meyer, April Ransom, Susanne Salehi, and Alan Swistak.

**Congratulations to Dr. Ross Sackett** on winning the Alumni Association Distinguished Teaching Award for spring 2013! The prestigious award recognizes outstanding instruction across the entire university, based on nominations by current and former students, and faculty members. The award will be presented at a special ceremony on April 25, 2013.



Dr. Ross Sackett