



# THE CAUCUS

A NEWSLETTER OF THE UW-RIVER FALLS POLITICAL SCIENCE DEPARTMENT  
**Spring 2010**

## CHAIR'S GREETING *by Wes Chapin*

Welcome to the Spring 2010 Newsletter. One of the themes of our last newsletter was change, and the 2009-2010 academic year was no exception. The University has hired a new Chancellor, Dean Van Galen, and a new Provost, Fernando Delgado, just to mention a couple of the more prominent personnel changes at the UWRf. At the department level we have also had personnel changes. We were thrilled to recommend unanimously that Dr. Neil Kraus be promoted from Assistant to Associate Professor. This will take effect this fall upon confirmation by the Board of Regents over the summer. During spring Dr. Davida Alperin chaired a very successful search and screen committee that hired Dr. John Evans to teach political philosophy courses this fall. The Department was also authorized to hire a fifth tenure-track person who will teach both international studies and political science courses. Neil Kraus will chair that search, and we hope to complete it by the end of this calendar year.

Some things that have not changed: our students continue to demonstrate leadership, complete internships, study abroad, present research at important forums, such as the National Conference on Undergraduate Research, and participate in model United Nations conferences, just to mention some of the more prominent activities. I hope you enjoy the stories covering some of their activities in this newsletter, along with the updates from faculty and alumni, and, as always, we look forward to hearing from you!

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## NATIONAL CONFERENCE ON UNDERGRADUATE RESEARCH



*Jonathan Lyksett (right) and Chancellor Dean Van Galen (center) reviewing a poster at NCUR. (photo courtesy of Timothy Lyden)*

April 15-17 Chancellor Dean Van Galen led a group of 75 UWRf students, staff, and faculty to the 2010 National Conference on Undergraduate Research (NCUR) in Missoula, Montana. NCUR is the premier conference for undergraduates and the UWRf sent the 3<sup>rd</sup> largest delegation of university students in the entire country. Political Science was well represented, with contributions by majors Cory Heaton, John Hanley, Jonathan Lyksett, and Jennie Maciosek, and by minor Adam Roberts. Jennifer Haug, a TESOL major, also worked on a political science project that was presented at NCUR.

John Hanley's presentation "The Fight for Irish Freedom: Colonial Ireland," focused on the English invasion of the island and subsequent efforts by the Irish to overthrow British rule. Jennie Maciosek's work looked at the impact that presidential State of the Union addresses have on presidential job approval ratings, and Adam Roberts' work reviewed the West's involvement in Afghanistan from 1838-1989.

Jonathan Lyksett, Cory Heaton, and Jennifer Haug presented the results of the 2009 UWRf Climate Change survey that

they completed under the direction of Dr. Erick Highum (see the separate article about this project in the Newsletter). Jennifer Haug said, “NCUR was an amazing experience. Seeing how much effort and work students put into their research was incredible. I feel my group represented River Falls well and had many students and faculty come by to see our poster on the Climate Change survey we distributed around campus. I met students from all around the nation . . . [and] I wish I would be around next year to go again. I highly recommend it.”

Jonathan Lyksett also said NCUR was a great experience. “We had a great time at the poster presentation and were able to chat with other students in political science and look at the work they had done to get to the conference. We truly enjoyed answering questions and getting feedback about our project and about climate change in general. Montana was a great place to have the conference, and the University in Missoula is absolutely beautiful. I hope to have a chance to go again in the future.”

For more information about UWRF undergraduate research, see <http://sursca-uwrf.blogspot.com/>.

## STUDENT LEADERSHIP BEGINS WITH POLITICAL SCIENCE

The Political Science Program has produced a great many leaders in politics, the military, the legal profession, business, and more. The very nature of the program, preparing people to work in government and related fields, lends itself to creating leaders, and we observe this even prior to graduation. For instance, the UWRF Chancellor’s Award is given to students who possess leadership qualities. Since it was created in 1980, ten political science majors have earned this prestigious leadership award. That is particularly impressive if one considers the relative sizes of the Political Science Program, the number of recipients over the years, and the size of the overall student body. To put it into numerical perspective, if award winners were drawn from programs based upon their relative size, only about two political science majors would have been selected, instead of the ten that have won the award. The leadership exhibited in the Student Senate is even more striking. We regularly have political science students who serve as senators, and quite a few who have served as officers. For instance, our students have served as Student Body presidents ten times over the last quarter century and the 2010 election concluded with another political science major, Lee Monson, being elected for next year. If students were drawn from programs proportionate to their relative size on campus, it is likely that no political science majors would have been elected, rather than the ten who have been elected to serve in that capacity. Of course, this pattern of leadership continues after graduation, as we’ve learned from so many of your personal stories.

Chancellor’s Award Recipients:	Student Body Presidents*
Calvin Scott, 1981	Wes Chapin, 1984-85 & 1985-86
Boyd Huppert, 1984	Chris Patton, 1995-96
Wes Chapin, 1986	Grant Staszak, 1996-97
Martina Barney, 1987	MacKenzie Guptil, 1998-99
Todd Elkerton, 1989	Cora Opsahl, 2001-02 (minor)
Wolanda Shelton, 1994 (minor)	Jessica Wermuth, 2002-03
Chris Patton, 1996	Nicholas Cluppert, 2005-06
Grant Staszak, 1997	Joe Eggers, 2006-07
MacKenzie Guptil, 1999	Derek Brandt, 2007-08
Nicholas Cluppert, 2006	Lee Monson, 2010-11
Joseph Eggers, 2007	

\* Our records extend back only through the 1980s. If you have any additions/corrections that you could provide us to help capture all those who should be included, please send them to [wes.chapin@uwrf.edu](mailto:wes.chapin@uwrf.edu). Thank you.

## POLITICAL SCIENCE STUDENTS STUDY GERMAN POLITICS



Students in front of the Berliner Dome, March 2010.

In 2006-07, the UWRF adopted three main strategic planning goals, including an emphasis on international learning experiences. This goal is shared by both the College of Arts and Sciences and the Political Science Department. As many of you know, in 2008 Professor Wes Chapin offered a course focusing on the Politics of German-Speaking Europe. In addition to the typical activities provided in the classroom, such as lectures, discussions, and debates, 22 participants traveled to Europe to learn about German history, culture, and politics. In 2009, the course enrollment increased with 26 people participating. In 2010, interest increased again, and 44 people signed up for two separate sections of the course, with one group traveling over spring break in March, and another traveling in May after spring semester ended.

The students traveled to Berlin, Nuremberg, Rothenburg ob der Tauber, and Munich, where they had opportunities to take historical tours and visit key cultural and historical museums. Students also explored the Deutscher Dom's exhibit on the development of democracy in Germany, reflected on the tragedies of World War II by visiting Dachau, visited the Dokumentation Center on the grounds used by the Nazis for their party rallies, enjoyed traditional German food, music, and dancing at the Festsaal of the Hofbraehaus, toured the Reichstag, and more.

Among the memorable activities were a tour of medieval Nuremberg, followed by a medieval dinner where students were required to eat with nothing more than a body-sized napkin and knife. Random members of the group were put into classical punishment "blocks" by the hosts and released after parading through the crowd.



*Dachau Concentration Camp (L-R: Robert Johnson, guide, Abbie Walsh, Jay Plemon, Erik Altmann, and Joe Nelson)*

Students also visited Rothenburg ob der Tauber during its annual festival where the local people reenacted the events of the Thirty Years' War of 1618-48.



*Students on the Night Watchman's Tour in Rothenburg ob der Tauber, May 2010.*

Reviews of the course have been overwhelmingly positive. Colt Wright, a Political Science major, remarked that "German speaking Europe is an amazing place. This experience offered a number of things to me, but perhaps the most important thing I took away from this trip was obtaining a new level of respect for the things we take for granted in the U.S. while keeping in mind the amazing things the European community has to offer." Maria McMahon, also a POLS major, said that, "Originally there were some levels of culture shock going over, [but] by the end of the trip . . . I was not prepared to leave Germany. I would definitely suggest that students consider taking this course." The course will continue to be offered as long as student interest remains strong.

### **INTERNING IN SCOTLAND** by *Emily Pfannes*

Study abroad is an amazing experience and having an internship abroad makes it better. For the past three months, I had an internship with the Edinburgh Justice of the Peace Court. During those months, I was moved to other sectors too, so I could gain more knowledge regarding the Scottish Court Service in general. I was placed in the civil department to help with adoption cases' paperwork, since the new law introduced was causing work to pile-up in that sector.



I also spent time with a defense attorney and was able to meet with clients. I worked with the procurator fiscal (a public prosecutor) for a while too, so I could learn about both sides of the courtroom. When the program ended, I wrote a paper comparing the Sheriff Courts and Justice of the Peace Courts for my boss.

Working with the courts has been an educational experience that I will carry with me into law school. I learned more about the Scottish culture and the legal field. It helped me narrow down what branch of law I want to study - criminal law. This was a fantastic experience and I recommend that anyone interested in study abroad should also do an internship!

*Emily is graduating in May 2010 with a Political Science major*

## STAFF UPDATES

**Davida Alperin, Faculty** (*since 1991*) continues to teach courses in American politics and political behavior for the political science, ethnic studies, and women's studies programs. Davida's course on Congressional Politics this spring was particularly interesting since it took place while Congress was debating the various health care reform proposals. She and the students felt they were congressional experts when all of a sudden the public and the front pages of the newspapers were focused on such arcane congressional procedures as "reconciliation." This fall she realized that most of her freshman students were born the year she began teaching here. "Will I still be able to communicate with the students?" she wondered. Davida reported that she still is able to do so, although not able to decipher all the short-hand they use in text messages. On the other hand, she has an 8 year old and a 12 year old at home who keep her from getting too out-of-touch with the next generation.

**Wes Chapin, Faculty** (*since 1997*) continues to teach international and comparative politics courses in political science, and courses for international studies. During the 2009-10 academic year he led the effort to organize and host the 2010 Arrowhead Model United Nations Conference. In April, Wes led a *Pizza with the Times* discussion, focusing on nuclear proliferation, with more than 80 students, staff, and community members in attendance. He continues to serve on the Faculty Senate, and was elected to his fourth, three-year term in May.

**Erick Highum, Adjunct Faculty** (*since 2000*) continues to teach International Relations, Comparative Politics, and Politics of Developing States. During fall 2008 and spring 2009, he led a team exploring both views about and potential policy recommendations for the Iraq War (the UWRF Iraq War Survey). The participating students presented research at a regional undergraduate research conference. In fall 2009 and spring 2010 Erick worked with a team of students exploring UWRF students' views about the issue of global climate change (the UWRF Climate Change Survey). These students presented research at a national undergraduate research conference. (Full reports can be accessed from the Department's homepage: <http://www.uwrf.edu/polsci/>.)

**Rich Horton, Adjunct Faculty** (*since 2007*) This past academic year Rich taught his usual complement of Political Science and Philosophy courses. The only excitement came when he was interviewed for an article in the October, 2009 issue of *Washingtonian* magazine. Evidently, back in the early 2000's he had hired a woman for the bookstore he managed who was, with her husband, actively spying on Cuba. Who knew?

**Joan Kratt, Academic Department Associate** (*since 1999*) Joan has enjoyed working half-time in Political Science for 11 years. The other half of each day she can be found in Journalism and Marketing Communications. Each year has

been an interesting educational experience that has enhanced her "other life." During a trip to New York City, she visited the United Nations Building, Statue of Liberty, Ground Zero, Central Park, Rockefeller Plaza, Little Italy, Chinatown, and Greenwich Village: all places that have political significance. Assisting Wes Chapin in hosting the 2010 Arrowhead Model United Nations Conference was especially rewarding as she worked with some of the committee delegates.

**Neil Kraus, Faculty** (*since 2005*)

Neil taught a new Special Topics course during the spring 2010 semester entitled "Education Politics and Policy," and he hopes to make this a permanent course in the future. Neil will also teach a new course during summer of 2010, "Criminal Justice Politics and Policy," and has taught various political science courses as a volunteer at Stillwater Correctional Facility in Minnesota since 2007. In addition, he continues his work on the Board of Western Wisconsin Intergovernmental Collaborative, and is using this experience to begin research on the subject of collaboration among local governments.

## POLITICAL SCIENCE FACULTY LEAD PUBLIC DISCUSSIONS

The Department continues to regularly serve the campus community and the public, discussing political issues and providing expertise on a wide range of issues.



*Pizza with the Times Discussion, April 14, 2010. (photo courtesy of Jens Gunelson)*

In April, **Davida Alperin** gave a health care presentation to the River Falls Chamber of Commerce Leadership Program. A group of about 15 members of the community meet monthly during the year to learn more about various aspects of River Falls. For April their topic was health, and she had the privilege of addressing them about the newly passed "Patient Protection and Affordable Care Act of 2010." The group took the information she gave them and engaged in a very lively discussion of views about the pros and cons of the new law.



*Davida Alperin spoke to the River Falls Chamber of Commerce Leadership Program*

In September, **Neil Kraus** discussed "Affordable Housing and Neighborhood Democracy in Minneapolis" at the American Political Science Association that was attended by more than 20 faculty and graduate students. In March he provided a lecture to more than 75 members of the community for the "Morning with a Professor" series on campus entitled "Preparing for the World that Waits - Education, Politics and Policy." Both presentations included significant audience participation, questions and debates.



*Neil Kraus led a discussion about education as part of the UWRF "Morning with a Professor" series*

**Erick Highum** led multiple efforts to guide students in research that resulted in public presentations (see separate stories about the NCUR and the UWRF Global Change Issue), both of which led to public debate and discussions.



*Political Science majors Cory Heaton and Jonathan Lyksett, and Jennifer Haug (L-R), who worked with Erick Highum, presenting the results of their UWRF Climate Change Survey (photo courtesy of Jennifer Haug)*

In April, **Wes Chapin** led a discussion of about 85 students, staff, and members of the Community who gathered at the UWRF Chalmer Davee Library to talk about nuclear non-proliferation. The group debated the merits of various nuclear treaties and initiatives, particularly those being addressed by the Obama Administration, and then evaluated the various advantages and disadvantages of nuclear energy and contemporary nuclear energy proposals. Chapin also provided the keynote address at the annual ceremony for Chancellors' Awards.



*Pizza with the Times Discussion, April 14, 2010. (photo courtesy of Jens Gunelson)*

## CAUCUS ROOM

Many alumni and friends of Tracey Gladstone honored her legacy by making financial contributions in her memory to support the Political Science Program. A total of \$2,050 was received and the Department considered several ways that we felt Tracey would have liked the money used to help students. One option we discussed very seriously was establishing a scholarship. The other main option that we considered was to use the donations to provide technology for student use. Ultimately, a decision was made to purchase two computers and make them available to students in the Caucus Room and in early 2010, the Department received the two best, most state-of-the-art computers on the entire campus. Because Tracey worked very hard to promote technology on campus, we think she would have appreciated how many students will benefit from the use of these computers. In addition, the availability of these computers enhances the Caucus Room's other purposes: promoting research, debate, and student/staff interactions, all activities that Tracey loved to both promote and participate in as well.



*Political Science majors Matt Dale (left) and Peter Wetzel (right), in the Caucus Room. Both Matt and Peter are May 2010 graduates, and are among the many students who have used the computer equipment in the Caucus Room.*

On behalf of both the Program and the students in our program, we would like to thank publicly all those who helped make this possible: Davida Alperin and Sharon Stiefel, Gene and Mary Ellen Blau, Colleen A. Callahan, Wesley and Tiffany Chapin, Nicholas D. Cluppert, Jacqueline C. Dahlstrom and Gail M. Nordstrand Dahlstrom (SSG Corporation), Helen M. Engelhart, Pedro L. Fernandez-Gimenez, Waldo and Suzanne Hagen, Stephen and Mary Jane Holly, Lynn M. Jermal, Joseph McIntosh, Ronald and Arminta Miller, Mary Alice Muraski, Robin E. Murray, Maxfield Neuhaus, Jennifer A. Oscarson, Nancy C. Parlin, Faye Perkins, Glenn and Jeanette Potts, Stanley Schraufnagel, William and Carin Simpson, Donald K. Sovell, Michael T. Sovell, and Kristen A. Tjornehoj.

## UWRF STUDENTS ATTEND MODEL UN CONFERENCE TO DEBATE GLOBAL ISSUES *by Elwood Brehmer*

The Arrowhead Model UN Conference (AMUNC) was held April 15-18 at UW-River Falls and included more than 350 participants overall and approximately 310 student delegates from colleges and universities throughout the Midwest. "The 21 UWRF participants is the most that we've had going back to at least 1998," political science Professor Wes Chapin said. Chapin attributed the increase in interest to UWRF hosting the event as well as the opportunity to learn about important topics in a unique setting. "There are certainly a lot of students who enjoy participating directly in debates about global issues as opposed to sitting in a classroom listening to a professor lecture about them," he said, "and this conference provides an excellent opportunity for them to both shape the debates and learn about international issues."

UWRF senior and International Relations Club (IRC) Secretary Beth Biagi said that though the large UWRF contingent brought many new faces to the competition, the IRC represented itself and the University very well. "Everyone did their part to study their country, prepare speeches and participate," she said. "We all had a ton of fun in the process. One of our strengths was confidence because it can be a rather daunting task at first to improvise speeches in front of 60 some students, especially when you know you are being judged."

Participants traveled from Minnesota, Michigan, South Dakota, or Wisconsin, but universities from other states, such as North Dakota were also represented. The UWRF represented the Russian Federation, Germany, Peru, Italy, and Switzerland.

The Conference includes an opening session of the General Assembly where delegates provide policy speeches, followed by two full days of committee meetings and a concluding session of the General Assembly meeting that ratifies the work of the committee. The highlight of the Conference for many delegates is a banquet that includes a keynote speaker and awards. Verena Nowotny, the spokesperson for the Austrian delegation to the United Nations Security Council, provided this year's address. Ms. Nowotny's speech focused on the work of the Security Council from Austria's perspective, and she received standing ovations after both her remarks and a question period that followed.

The banquet also included an awards ceremony, and the top award for Best Overall Delegation went to the contingent from UW-Eau Claire who represented the Islamic Republic of Iran. The UWRF was also recognized. Matt Dale was nominated for a Best Delegate Award for representing Russia in the Security Council debates while Tom Justesen was nominated for a Best Delegate Award on the Social,

Cultural and Humanitarian Committee, also representing Russia.

The conference is modeled after the United Nations, which is based in New York City. Though the conference is designed to give students a feel for the real UN and provide them with experience debating tough issues, Chapin said they often take away much more. "Many students develop lasting friendships with students from other universities," he said. Biagi said the conference provided her with a better understanding of how much give-and-take goes into the UN decision-making process, among other things. "I will take away from this experience a better understanding of how complex global issues actually are," she said. "It is really something when you put away your personal bias and find yourself understanding why countries act the way they do. This experience will definitely help me. I will be graduating this fall with a double major in political science and international studies, and I want to devote my life's work to solving domestic and possibly international issues. By participating in the AMUNC conference I got a chance to experience how policies are made, revised and agreed upon, as well as rejected, at the global level."

The AMUNC was founded in 1975 by multiple schools in the upper Midwest and central Canada looking to further their students' knowledge on international issues, and derives its name from Minnesota's Arrowhead region which was a central location for the founding institutions. The UWRF was a founding member. The host school is rotated, with different members hosting the event each year. It is often held in either Minnesota or Wisconsin, but has also been in South Dakota, Michigan, Ontario, and in other locations over the years. Additional information can be found at its website: <http://www.arrowheadmun.org/>.

*Adopted, with permission, from an article that appeared in the Student Voice, Friday April 23, 2010.*



*UWRF Students (L-R) Randi Chantrill, Chris Olsen, Katie Van Putten, Beth Biagi, and Jason Larson during a caucus of the Political & Security Committee*



*UWRF members of the German and Swiss delegations at the opening General Assembly meeting (L-R) Logan Villebrun, Randi Chantrill, Sarah Stoffa, and Maria McMahon.*

## **STUDENTS RECEIVE SCHOLARSHIPS AND HONORS**

Each year UWRF recognizes students for outstanding educational achievement and/or community service. Political Science majors received a significant number of honors and scholarships. Political science senior Jennie Maciosek graduated Magna Cum Laude. Maria McMahon was awarded the Dr. Ray Anderson Scholarship and the Denis P. Hickey Memorial Scholarship. Ashley Goettle and Brianna Klaras received the Robert L. Berg Scholarship. The Kenneth S. White Memorial Scholarship was awarded to Michael Ritter. Kayla Godes was the recipient of the Charles & Patricia White Scholarship. Adam Sarnstrom and Jayne Dalton were awarded the Dominic Svec Family Memorial Scholarship.

## **RICHARD J. AND MAURINE K. BRYNILDSEN SCHOLARSHIP**

A new scholarship has been established by the Brynildsen Estate to support political science students. Recipients must be sophomores, juniors, or seniors in good academic standing, who have a demonstrated interest in international affairs. The scholarship will be open for applications in spring 2011 and will become effective that fall. Dick retired from the UWRF Political Science Department in 1993 after 26 years of teaching at the University.

## **TO MAKE A GIFT**

Thank you for considering a gift that will help educate the next generation of University of Wisconsin-River Falls students. You may make your contribution in many ways: See <http://www.uwrf.edu/alumni/Giving-Ways.php> for more details. Be sure to indicate special instructions for directing your gift. Our sincere gratitude and many thanks for supporting our students!

## GLOBAL CLIMATE CHANGE ISSUE

by *Erick Highum*

During fall 2009 and spring 2010, I led a team exploring students' views about the issue of global climate change. The team included Cory Heaton, Jonathan Lyksett, and Jennifer Haug who helped create the survey and gathered responses from more than 350 students on campus. We gathered responses in classrooms representing many departments on campus, and with students one-on-one from many different parts of campus.

We wanted to build on the research done on the campus last year on policy views of students towards the Iraq war, and to determine whether or not students thought that global climate change was both an important issue and the result of human industrial activities. We also wanted to compare various policy approaches to the global climate change issue contained in the United Nations' Kyoto Protocol, as well as policy positions put forward by leading developed and developing states of the European Union, United States, Brazil, China, India, and Russia.

We were not sure what to expect from the results of the survey. Overall they suggest that UWRF students who participated in the survey:

- 1) agree that global warming is real, the result of human industrial activities, and that individuals can make a difference in preventing future global climate change.
- 2) are unsure of the reliability of climate change models, and whether or not global climate change is less important than having a strong economy.
- 3) are in strong agreement that industrialized countries should try to stabilize greenhouse gas emissions; and that there is a heavier burden on industrialized developed nations to find a solution for climate change than developing nations. This finding supports the policies of leading developing states such as India, Brazil, and China, and is surprising given the strength or level of support for this policy position.
- 4) have mixed support for the principal provisions of the United Nations' Kyoto Protocol on Climate Change, specifically, UWRF students surveyed do not support an emissions trading scheme that allows countries with little or no emissions to sell emissions to countries that are over their targets. This finding runs counter to many current legislative initiatives in Congress on the climate change issue.

Cory Heaton, Jonathan Lyksett, and Jennifer Haug presented the overall findings of the survey and the crosstab analysis of the results broken down by gender and political leaning in a poster presentation at the 2010 National Conferences on Undergraduate Research.

## ALUMNI NOTES

We are incredibly proud of the many and amazing accomplishments of our graduates. Please share your stories, news, and greetings. Simply email us at [POLSnewsletter@uwrf.edu](mailto:POLSnewsletter@uwrf.edu) so we can include your news in a future newsletter.

**Manley Olson (1959)** "To celebrate 50 years of marriage my wife Ann (whom I met at RF) and I went on a 10 day Caribbean cruise. Much time in the past year has been spent as chair of the Committee On Local Arrangements for the General Assembly of the Presbyterian Church (USA) which will meet in Minneapolis for 10 days in July. There will be about 7,500 attendees and 2,000 volunteers. I also continue to serve on several boards and foundations. In March I participated in the inauguration of President Dean Van Galen and also was back on campus for several UWRF Foundation events."

**Paul Arneson (1965)** lives in Fond du Lac, WI, and has an e-mail address of [paularneson@charter.net](mailto:paularneson@charter.net). Paul spent 34 years working for IBM and 5 years for Metavante (now FIS) in sales and product management. Today Paul works as a contractor for financial industry software companies.

**Ken Green (1967)** earned an MBA-CPA, worked for US Treasury (IRS), taught Accounting & Taxation at UW-Eau Claire, then finished this career as a private sector CPA practicing in taxation and financial consulting and doing real estate acquisitions and development. He continue to practice in Eau Claire on a limited basis while enjoying frequent trips to Tokyo visiting son Chris, who became a Japanese-English translator after doing a "semester abroad" in Tokyo and years of study in Japan.

**Tom Kohls (1975)** worked as Plant Superintendent at Daybreak Food near Cambridge, WI, until April 1. He currently works for Jones Dairy Farm as a supervisor making sausage (which he loves doing). Even though he always said, "I don't farm," his last two jobs have been on farms so he concedes that he DOES farm. His political science background came in handy when he was unemployed because he was able to teach social sciences at the local high schools and work on some local campaigns. His wife Donna (he met her in River Falls) is a playwright doing commissioned plays for local theatre groups.

**Brian Alton (1979)** has practiced law for the past 28 years. His practice is focused on land use, real estate, business and estate planning. He is licensed in both Minnesota and Wisconsin and is a partner at McClay Alton PLLP in St. Paul, MN. He has recently completed four years as Chairman of the St. Paul Planning Commission. (In this capacity he had the privilege of working with Donna Drummond, another UWRF Political Science alum who is the Planning Director for the City of St. Paul.) Brian serves as a board member of The Jeremiah Program and as Chairman of the Board of Trustees of the Presbytery of the

Twin Cities. He resides in St. Paul with his wife, Bonnie who owns Great Harvest Bread Company. Together they have three children and three grandchildren.

**Todd Corbo (1989)** has been an Army Reservist for 25 years (actually received his commission as a 2<sup>nd</sup> Lieutenant through ROTC while an undergraduate at UWRF). He is currently stationed at Ft. Riley, Kansas as a JAG officer. His job title is Chief of Administrative Law for the 1<sup>st</sup> Infantry Division. He is scheduled to come off active duty in January 2011 and will then return to his firm, Grant Thornton, as a tax attorney.

**Scott Schmidt (1991)** is married to Louise and has two daughters, Leigha (10) and Ellie (7). He is an Operations Analyst and Programmer for a banking industry data center in Grafton, WI.

**John Robert Behling (1995)** currently serves as the Vice President of the Weld, Riley, Prenn & Ricci law firm. The Weld firm is a 65-employee company which specializes in all areas of the law and practices throughout Wisconsin. In addition to being a lawyer, John is also a licensed lobbyist and represents national and international clients on employment, business and environmental matters. John also has an extensive government practice which includes representing a number of school districts, cities and counties throughout Wisconsin.

John is a graduate of the University of Wisconsin with a Bachelor of Science in political science and economics. He received his law degree from the University of Wisconsin Law School and has been recognized four times by *Law and Politics* and *Milwaukee Magazine* as a Rising Star in administrative law.

Previous to practicing law, John served as an aid for over a decade on Capitol Hill in both Wisconsin and Washington, D.C. John previously served as an advisor to previous Governor Tommy G. Thompson and United States Senator Bob Dole.

**Sarah (Nyhus) Isaacs (2001)** and Joe will celebrate their 3<sup>rd</sup> wedding anniversary on July 7<sup>th</sup>. Sarah divides her time between a home in Woodbury and her cabin in Northern Minnesota. She is the owner of 12 rental homes and is also a realtor working with a large pool of investors. She is looking forward to going Scuba diving with Great White Sharks in San Francisco later this year.

**Marnie Burau Kesler (2004)** is working for Senator Prettner Solon (DFL-Duluth) and also for the committee she chairs – Energy, Utilities, Technology & Communications.

**John Byers (2008)** is in a Special Education Master's Program at St. Thomas University in St. Paul.

## CONDOLENCES

Please join us in extending our most sincere condolences to the family of John McGough, 1945-2010. John, of Mount Prospect, Illinois, was a graduate of the Rice Lake High School Class of 1963, and completed his degree in political science from the UW-River Falls in 1968. John married Mary Milito and spent his career working for Wilson Sporting Goods. He passed away on March 25.

Please let us know if you have any suggestions for future newsletters. We would love to hear from all of you- where you are, what you are doing, or any other interesting things you would like share. If you have not yet filled out our online alumni information form at <http://www.uwrf.edu/polsci/alumniform.htm>, please do so. If you would rather not have a profile listed, but would like to make sure we can contact you with future electronic newsletters and other information, please send an email to [POLSnewsletter@uwrf.edu](mailto:POLSnewsletter@uwrf.edu).

If you would prefer to receive an electronic version of the newsletter rather than the 'hard copy' you receive in the mail, please email [POLSnewsletter@uwrf.edu](mailto:POLSnewsletter@uwrf.edu). An electronic version with color photos is also available online at <http://www.uwrf.edu/polsci/alumni.html>

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