



CU Trauma,  
Health, &  
Hazards Center  
(THHC)

Special  
points of  
interest:

- Veteran Faculty Fund campaign launches
- Psychology student wins prestigious grant
- 2016 Incoming Trauma Psychology PhD students

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Donate to the 4  
Veteran Faculty Fund

## Retired Generals and Community Leaders visit the VHTC

By Lori Bryan, Ph.D.

The UCCS Veterans Health and Trauma Clinic hosted members of the Retired General and Flag Officers and Senior Executives in the Colorado Springs area at a celebratory event at the Lane Center for Academic Health Sciences in late April, 2016.

The event honored the second year of VHTC behavioral health services to Military Service Members, Veterans and trauma survivors in the Pikes Peak region. Prominent community supporters and members of the Colorado Thirty Group and the Colorado Springs Business Alliance joined the Generals to learn more about THHC accomplishments.

The event also marked the launch of a fund raising campaign for a Military Veteran Psychology faculty member. UCCS Chancellor Pamela Shockley-Zalabak welcomed guests with introductory remarks. THHC Director Dr. Charles C. "Chip" Benight shared his vision for making UCCS the educational place of choice for Veteran/Military trauma and disaster work. Recruitment of a Veteran Faculty member in the Psychology Department is a crucial component of that vision.

Potential future faculty candidate and Tilman Military Scholar Andrew Smith from Virginia Tech delivered a thought-provoking keynote

address prompting lively conversations: "Empowering the Next Great Generation of Warriors: Towards Approaches that Harness Strengths and Address Vulnerabilities within the Veteran Community".

Attendees were invited to become actively involved with the Veteran Faculty Fund campaign and a select group have formed the UCCS Veteran Ambassador Club to advance this effort. For more information or to become a member, please contact Lori Bryan (lbryan@uccs.edu).

To contribute to the UCCS Veteran Faculty Fund, please follow the link on the last page of the newsletter.

Link to presentations (click):



Welcome



Vision



Keynote

**L to R:** Amanda Devane (Trauma Ph.D. student), Joshua LeVay (incoming Trauma Ph.D. student), Alisa Bartel (Trauma Ph.D. student), John Kelley, Jr. (Chairman and CEO, Cerescan), Dr. Chip Benight, Andrew J. Smith (Tilman Military Scholar), Austin Mullings (M.A. Trauma student), Dr. Kristi Samuelson (Asst. Prof. Psychology), Maj. Gen. Barbara Faulkenberry (USAF, ret.).



## VHTC Clinician blends creativity, humor with healing for trauma survivors

By Carrie Yeager, M.A.

Ms. Erin Fowler is a Clinical Therapist at the UCCS Veterans Health and Trauma Clinic (VHTC). Throughout her 13 years as a psychotherapist, Erin has served a variety of populations with AspenPointe, TESSA, and Urban Peak, before joining the VHTC team in 2014.

Erin has the unique ability to combine evidenced-based practices, creativity, and compassion along with a sense of humor while providing effective trauma care to a wide range of individuals. Her focus is treating clients with histories of complex trauma and severe mental health needs. Erin has a passion for working with underserved populations and is committed to increasing access

to the highest quality behavioral health treatment.

Erin is also a clinical supervisor, expert witness, community educator, and media consultant regarding mental health and PTSD. She is an EMDRIA Approved Consultant and holds a Disaster Behavioral Health Field Response Certification (MRC). Erin is a published Illustrator (*Innovative Practices from the East and West for Bodymind Health* by John Hartung, Ph.D.) and is currently writing a DBT manual for combat related PTSD. She likes cats and football and enjoys going on jeep adventures with her husband.



Erin Fowler, M.A., LPC

## Psychology students receive NSF awards

By Lori Bryan, Ph.D.

UCCS Psychology graduate students focused on trauma research received recognition from the National Science Foundation's (NSF) Graduate Research Fellowship Program. This program honors outstanding graduate students with up to three years of funding for stipends, tuition and fees.

Andrea M. Yetzer, M.A. candidate in Psychological Science (trauma), captured the highest distinction for her research proposal to investigate the etiology of moral injury (a condition that results from perpetrating, experiencing, or witnessing events that violate deeply held moral values and beliefs) using a self-regulatory framework. Andrea earned a 2016 NSF Graduate Research Fellowship that will fund her current

and future graduate research. Only the top 12% of applications received awards.

Alisa Bartel, Ph.D. student in Clinical Psychology (trauma), and Austin Mullings, M.A. student in Clinical Psychology (trauma), earned Honorable Mention awards, placing them in the top 29% of all applications. Alisa's proposal examines how personality traits influence chronic pain, neuropsychological performance, and perception of impairment. Austin's proposal examines motivation in post-trauma coping by assessing goals and coping capability beliefs in trauma survivors.

Congratulations to our students on these amazing accomplishments!



Andrea M. Yetzer  
M.A. Candidate  
Psychological Science with  
trauma concentration

## Trauma Psychology Ph.D. track to welcome new class

By Alisa Bartel

Four new students, including a military Veteran and a Reservist, will join the UCCS Trauma Psychology Ph.D. track this fall: Krista Engle, Mauricio Zumba, McKenzie Lockett, and Joshua LeVay.

Krista graduated in 2013 from the University of Pennsylvania with a B.A. in Psychology and worked as a Clinical Research Coordinator for the Psychiatry and Neurology departments at Children's National Health System in Washington, DC. In 2015, she became a Research Assistant for the Center for the Study of Traumatic Stress in Bethesda, MD.



Mauricio received his B.A. in Psychology and B.S. in Applied Developmental Psychology in 2014 from Eastern Washington University. He is a Staff Sergeant in the U.S. Army Reserves Engineer Corps and served a tour in Iraq in 2009 and in Afghanistan in 2010. In 2014, he became one of just 59 U.S. service mem-



bers, veterans and military spouses to be named a 2014 Tillman Military Scholar.

McKenzie graduated in May 2016 with a B.A. in Psychology from the University of Missouri, where she assisted with and conducted research related to trauma, stress, emotion, and resiliency. At UCCS, she joins Dr. Thomas Pyszczynski's lab researching traumatic stress, coping, and belief systems.



Joshua is recently retired from the Army at Fort Carson, CO. He served in the military for over 20 years as a medic, infantryman, recruiter, and Special Forces Medical Sergeant. Joshua seeks to find ways of improving the quality of life for veterans through obtaining a profound understanding of stressors inherent to the military population and combat related trauma.



**The Trauma Psychology Ph.D. track received 189 applications for 2016. 47% more than last year!**

## VHTC Research Director shares program growth

By Amanda Devane

Dr. Lori Bryan has a Ph.D. in neuroscience from the University of Pennsylvania and is Director of Research Operations at the Veterans Health and Trauma Clinic (VHTC). She was integral in the development of the VHTC; deciding on the assessments clients are given and creating the database to hold this information to track client outcomes. The VHTC has collected outcome data for over 500 clients who are improving in depression, social activities, posttraumatic stress, mental health and trauma coping self-efficacy.

Currently Dr. Bryan is working on several new projects: the Mind-1 Neuroassessment Clinic, the Strategic Memory Advanced Reasoning Training (SMART) study, and the Military Veterans Pathways to Success Program (MVPS). Dr. Bryan works with P.I. Dr. Kristi Samuelson

on the SMART study, which has the potential to improve cognitive functioning in veterans with traumatic brain injuries.

Dr. Bryan also assists Dr. Phillip Morris in the Office of Veteran and Military Student Affairs on MVPS, which focuses on recruiting veterans and service members to higher education and on increasing veteran graduation rates.

Dr. Bryan is in her 12<sup>th</sup> year at UCCS and has been with the VHTC for the past 3 years. She loves seeing the growth of the clinic; from the increase in clients seen to the expansion of research. Dr. Bryan enjoys running marathons in her spare time.



# Director's Corner

By Charles C. "Chip" Benight, PhD

In deciding what to write about for this edition of the Newsletter, I thought about all the great work that is going on by faculty and students associated with the THHC and the Psychology Department at UCCS that focuses on trauma. This summer we are lucky to have the American Psychological Association Convention in Denver. UCCS will be well represented with a multitude of presentations focused on trauma.

Carrie Yeager, third year trauma Ph.D. student, will present her human trafficking work on the psychometric properties of an Attitudes Toward Victims of Human Trafficking Scale. Shaun Stearns will present two posters. One focused on the effects of dietary preference on emotional affect and autonomic response to a stress task. The second, looking at moral disengagement and post-traumatic symptoms. Dr. Tom Pyszczynski will present a paper focused on the importance of Terror Management Theory in understanding the role of fear on political attitudes and support for political violence. His student Young Chin Park will present a paper "Reducing Defensive Responses to Thoughts of Death: Meditation, Mindfulness, and Buddhism". Dr. Kristi Samuelson, Assistant Professor focused on trauma and traumatic brain injury, is chairing a symposium "Assessment of Mild Traumatic Brain Injury Outcomes" and presenting a paper "Neurocognitive Functioning and Self-Perception of Cognitive Problems in Veterans with mTBI and PTSD". Finally, I will be providing two talks. The first will focus on the challenges and opportunities of web-based interventions for trauma. The second will be on the dynamics of coping for trauma survivors and offering a new theory called self-regulation shift theory to help explain how people shift from a healthy state to an unhealthy state following a severe trauma.

This is just a small sample of the important trauma research being conducted at UCCS. It is an exciting time to be at the THHC with an amazing group of people.



Dr. Benight founded and is the Director of the CU Trauma, Health & Hazards Center. He is Chair Veteran Health & Trauma, Professor of Psychology, and Director

***Mobile apps can be useful tools to reduce stress and improve well-being. Breathe2Relax is a free App and portable stress management tool. Users record their current stress level and Breathe2Relax delivers a sophisticated, immersive experience using graphics, animation, narration, and videos.***

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## Join our campaign!

**You can help us bring a Military Veteran Psychology Faculty Member to UCCS**

Tax-deductible donations may be made through the University of Colorado Foundation:

**Click: [GIVE NOW](#)**

or go to: <https://giving.cu.edu/fund/uccs-military-veteran-faculty-member-fund>

The University of Colorado Trauma, Health, & Hazards Center is a multi-disciplinary center established at UCCS in 1999. Our work includes cross-disciplinary scholarship, scientifically informed policy, clinical interventions, and educational and community programs aimed at reducing the effects of traumatic stress exposure and improving health.

