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Welcome to this issue of the newsletter for Kansas State University's marriage and family therapy program. We're pleased to share with you the strides that our students and faculty are making in the profession and in research.

We hope you'll see the impact that private support has on our program and the awesome opportunities available to our students. Catch up with us online by visiting [www.he.k-state.edu/fshs/](http://www.he.k-state.edu/fshs/)

## Message from Program Director Sandi Stith

The K-State marriage and family therapy program has experienced a year of highs and lows, as you will discover in this newsletter.

One of the founders of the program and a beloved faculty member, Tony Jurich, died unexpectedly in October while vacationing with his wife, Olivia Collins. He had been with the program for 38 years and we all miss him deeply.

The second founder of the program, Candy Russell, retired in May after 37 years. As you will read later, we had a great celebration for her retirement. We will miss her wisdom and guidance, but expect her to be a friend of the program and its students for many years.

While we cope with these losses, we are happy to welcome two new faculty members into the program. Jared Durtschi and Amber Vennum both graduated from Florida State University and joined us in July. You'll enjoy reading more about them. They both are delightful individuals and bring unique gifts to the program. I encourage alumni to welcome them to K-State, when you see them at AAMFT or in the community. I also encourage new and prospective students to get to know them.

Sandra Stith

## Spotlight on faculty

*Catching up with the people who make the marriage and family therapy program possible*

**Sandra Stith, Ph.D.,**  
program director and professor



This has been another great year for me. My son, Nathan, was admitted into the doctoral program in theater at the University of Colorado. He and his wife, Sarah, had a new baby, Owen, who joins their daughter, Zoe, 3. My daughter, Kristen, and her husband, Dennis, live in Tulsa and have four children, ages 16 to 2: Dani, Hannah, Jacob and Brayden.

Last year my husband, Gary, moved from Maryland and joined me in Kansas. He teaches part time in K-State's regional and community planning program and does stone sculpturing as a hobby. We took our granddaughter, Hannah, to Mazatlan for Thanksgiving on her 10th birthday. This summer we're traveling to Alaska and to Washington, D.C.

Professionally, I presented papers at the International Family Therapy conference in the Netherlands, at the American Association for Marriage and Family Therapy conference and the National Council on Family Relations conference. In addition, I spoke at a joint U.S. Department of Agriculture and Department of Defense conference and at two U.S. Air Force conferences.

I continue to manage two large funded military projects, one focusing on developing a risk assessment instrument to assess domestic violence in the military, and the second involving managing a variety of Air Force projects, including a study on engaging fathers in prevention programming and a quality assurance project for secondary prevention of family maltreatment. My research passion is in the treatment of couples experiencing domestic violence, and my new book was published this year, "Couples Treatment for Domestic Violence: Finding Safe Solutions," by S.M. Stith, E.E. McCollum and K.H. Rosen, 2011, American Psychological Association, Washington, D.C.

I also was honored to receive the College of Human Ecology's Faculty Research Excellence Award in May. My research teams focus on dating violence, couples treatment for domestic violence, and developing a clinical/research specialization in marriage and family therapy.

## Partner with the program

If you would like to support the work of the marriage and family therapy program by contributing to the Marriage and Family Therapy Excellence Fund, please contact Jennifer Rettele-Thomas, director of development, at 800-432-1578 or [jenniferr@found.k-state.edu](mailto:jenniferr@found.k-state.edu).

## Spotlight (cont.)

**Nancy O’Conner, M.S.,**  
clinical director and instructor



Professionally, I’m teaching the Marriage and Family Therapy III class, which focuses on working with children. It’s a very practically based class where students are introduced to play therapy. Through the work with the state contract to provide home-based family therapy training, C.R. Macchi and I had an article accepted for publication: "Common Components of Home-Based Family Therapy Models: The HBFT Partnership in Kansas," by C.R. Macchi and N. O’Conner, 2010, in *Contemporary Family Therapy*, 32: 444-458.

In addition, I have completed the requirements for mediation certification and will be submitting my application to become a certified mediator. For several years now I have been teaching the Family Mediation course and will now be able to provide co-mediation with students as they pursue their certification.

This past March I was able to participate in a study abroad program on peace and conflict in Northern Ireland. Last fall I was asked to join the Mercy Regional Health Center board of directors. This has been an interesting and rewarding experience.

When I went to Northern Ireland with the study abroad program, my husband was able to travel with me. It was such a great trip for both of us. We learned so much about the conflict and peace efforts, did some sightseeing and had lots of laughs with friends. Jack and I are looking toward retirement and more travels abroad. Each year I have a sibling reunion and this year we’re going to Tampa. It should be great fun.

**Joyce Baptist, Ph.D.,**  
assistant professor



This has been a productive year for my students and I with six papers accepted for publication and eight presentations at the American Association for Marriage and Family Therapy and the National Council on Family Relations conferences. In addition, I received a grant to develop marriage and family therapy-related courses for distance education that was completed with the assistance of six instructors.

I co-led the supervisor refresher workshop at this year’s Kansas AAMFT meeting and participated on the Speak Out for Military Kids – Interactive Theater panel. I head off to Malaysia during winter intersession to expand my research program with faculty from two institutions of higher education and to begin the groundwork for a study abroad program on the sociopolitical impact on families.

On the personal side, I had an amazing time last summer with family visiting Paris, Versailles, Lourdes and London. It was great to share the experience with my nieces and nephews who are in their emerging adult years. Never a dull moment with conversations pertaining to relationships and marriage – and I thought I was prepared for the questions!

What has your experience been in the clinical program?



"Now that I’m approaching my third year, it’s interesting to look back and remember how uncertain I was as a beginning therapist – how

much doubt I had in my ability to be a therapist. With the encouragement and clinical guidance I’ve received in the program I, and the rest of my cohort, have come such a long way in such a short time. I feel so much more confident about my abilities."

**Jurdene Ingram,**  
Kent State University, 2009 MS Cohort

**Jared Anderson, Ph.D.,**  
assistant professor



My wife, Stacy, and I are the parents of three young children. Kate, our oldest, is 5 years old and will start kindergarten this fall. She is so excited for school

to begin and asked if she would be able to go on Saturdays, too! We’ll see how long that lasts. Logan is 3 years old and is the mechanically inclined member of the family. He loves taking things apart, and unlike his father, he can actually put things together, too. His current favorite pastime is changing his clothes multiple times a day. Cale is 1 and the only sports enthusiast of the group. He likes watching and playing any sport

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with mom and dad, and can generally be found trying to repeat what his older sister and brother are saying or doing.

As a family, we like taking walks, going to the park and the zoo, spending time with friends in Manhattan, and traveling to Kansas City to see extended family. Finally, our family has recently been matched with a little brother through the Big Brothers Big Sisters program and we are looking forward to him joining us once a week this year.

Professionally, it has been a busy, exciting year. Several current graduate students and I presented papers and posters at the American Association for Marriage and Family Therapy, National Council on Family Relations and the U.S. Department of Agriculture/Department of Defense Family Resilience conferences. I continue to be involved with military family research, leading a study of successful Air Force couples, a study on the transition to marriage in the U.S. Army, a study focused on resilience in Army spouses, and an ongoing evaluation of secondary prevention programs in the Air Force.

In addition to these military projects, I'm developing a Kansas marriage index in conjunction with the Kansas Department of Social and Rehabilitation Services. Finally, I continue to work with several research teams that include graduate and undergraduate students. We're analyzing both qualitative and quantitative data related to factors that influence relationship development among young adults in mainland China. We have a tentative plan to return to China in May 2012.

## Spotlight (cont.)

**Amber Vennum, Ph.D.,**  
assistant professor



Hello! I'm excited to be joining the great faculty, students and alumni of K-State. I grew up in a small town in Wisconsin, but after living in the south for 12 years I'm looking forward to getting back to the Midwest and snow — although I will need to invest in some new snow boots! I attended Rice University in Houston for my bachelor of arts in psychology, then the University of Houston-Clear Lake for my master's in marriage and family therapy. I then moved to Florida to complete my doctorate at Florida State University.

In addition to providing clinical supervision, I'm looking forward to teaching Clinical Theory and Practice this fall and working with students on research. My research focuses on efforts to sustain or improve intimate relationships and family functioning and to prevent future unhealthy relationships. This includes researching how early romantic relationships develop and impact later adult romantic relationships, developing and evaluating programs that address healthy relationships, and working therapeutically with adolescents, young adults and their families in school and community settings to foster healthy relationships and decrease distress. I particularly enjoy therapy with adolescents and their families, and have conducted therapy in school, community and nonprofit settings.

When I'm not engaged in therapeutic or scholastic endeavors, I can usually be found eating cheese, swimming, dancing and spending time with my family.



I am so grateful for the experience I had being a GTA. I was able to teach a large UGE class (approx 150 students per semester) for the last two years. I have learned so much about teaching in a university setting, which has prepared me well for my future.

**Chelsea Madsen,**  
*Brigham Young University, 2009 Ph.D. Cohort*

**Jared Durtschi, Ph.D.,**  
assistant professor



Hi! I have been looking forward to joining you all at K-State for many months now, and it's exciting to finally be here. I would like to briefly introduce myself to you. A member of a military family, I was born in Idaho and have lived in a number of places, including Germany, Canada, Hungary, Virginia and Washington. I have been married to Angela for almost eight years, and we have three young children: Tyler, 5; Brady, 3; and Ellie, 1. When I'm not working, I enjoy playing with my family, traveling, horseback riding, hiking and snowboarding.

Academically, I received my bachelor of science in psychology from Brigham Young University, my master's in marriage and family therapy from Purdue University

## Spotlight (cont.)

**C.R. Macchi, Ph.D.,**  
research associate



I must be getting old — my oldest son, Zach, graduated from college this year! He graduated with distinction with a bachelor of science in neurobiology from KU — yes, the other school. He has been accepted and plans to begin studies at the KU School of Medicine this fall. My wife, Marti, is just completing her second master's in public health from the University of North Carolina, Chapel Hill. She recently started a new position as a senior consultant with the National Association of Chronic Disease

Directors, an organization funded by the Centers for Disease Control. Marti and I will celebrate our 25th wedding anniversary in August. She just got word that she needs to take a business trip to Hawaii at that time, so it appears we will be celebrating our anniversary in the Aloha state!

Professionally, Nancy O'Conner and I are completing our fifth year as co-administrators of two contracts training home-based family therapists: one with the Kansas Department of Social and Rehabilitative Services and another with Kansas Health Solutions, which administers Medicaid in Kansas. We are pleased our research team has provided training to more than 500 home-based family therapists working with families throughout Kansas.

Jared Anderson and I are continuing data collection associated with our research project, studying partner relationship dynamics that influence a person's weight management following bariatric surgery. We are hoping to have enough data to begin publishing our results sometime late next year.

I am approaching the end of my tenure as past president of the Kansas Association for Marriage and Therapy in December. It has been very busy and fulfilling work on the board for the past four and a half years. Please take a moment to visit the new KAMFT website, which includes many new features and valuable resources.

Calumet, and this past April completed my doctorate in marriage and family therapy from Florida State University.

I believe it's a great privilege to be here and working in this wonderful program. This academic year I will be providing clinical supervision and teaching an Advanced Marriage and Family Therapy Research Methods course. I'm grateful for the opportunity to work clinically with individuals, couples and families, and provide clinical supervision; research what contributes to improved couple and family functioning; and teach what we know about couples and families.

In my research, I study predictors and processes of marital quality and stability in developmental stages, such as the transition to parenthood and early marriage. I enjoy working with longitudinal, dyadic data to learn about how dyadic interactions affect each spouse and each spouse's likely trajectory across time, using large data sets.

## Founders' Bench to commemorate three parents of MFT program

By Rachel Skybetter

After dedicating their professional lives to the Family Center, a bench has been dedicated to founders Candy Russell, Steve Bollman and the late Tony Jurich.

"They are three very, very important people who we view as the founders of our program, who are now — through retirement or death — no longer with the program anymore," said Nancy O'Conner, clinical director of the Family Center. "This was our way of honoring them."

The bench, which is to be installed by the end of summer, will be placed just outside the Family Center underneath a magnolia tree. The names of the three founders will be engraved on it.

"It's like a meditation area where we — faculty and students — can sit and hopefully be inspired by the people who founded our program," O'Conner said. "They dedicated so much of their lives to building this really important program and center."

Russell retired this summer, Jurich died unexpectedly in October 2010 and Bollman retired in June 2006. Although technically Russell and Jurich were the true founders of the marriage and family therapy program, O'Conner said Bollman should also be considered a founder since he was the center's first director and an important contributor to the MFT program.

"As a former student and then colleague of all three of them, I have felt very privileged to be able to learn with them

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## Colleagues, students gather to celebrate Candy Russell's retirement

By Rachel Skybetter

and work with them," O'Conner said. "I'm grateful that we have a way to recognize how much they have offered to the program and to each of us personally as well, not just professionally."

The bench concept was unveiled at Russell's retirement party April 16, when the department presented her with an oil painting of the bench by MFT graduate student Jayashree George. Jurich's widow and retired instructor of leadership studies, Olivia Collins, was also in attendance. The painting of the proposed bench now hangs in the Family Center.

George has been Russell's student and considers her a mentor.

"I gave her a picture of the painting to keep. She was very touched to be noticed and recognized as one of the founders," George said. "She really left her stamp on the department and we all feel it."



After 37 years, Candy Russell is finally taking a break. In her decades at K-State, Russell, a family studies and human services professor, co-founded the marriage and family therapy program, mentored hundreds of students and most importantly, listened. She made a career out of listening to her clients, her students and her colleagues when they needed her most.

"What I learned from her is that you have to have the time if someone wants to talk to you. You have to really listen," said Patricia Barros, a graduate student in the MFT program. "When you look at her, you see someone who is always available to listen to you."

And listen she did, at her retirement party April 16 at the K-State Alumni Center where around 200 people gathered. Russell listened as colleagues, family members and students from the past and present honored her.

"It made a big impact on me and other current students to see people gathered and sharing stories about her from the span of her career," said Michelle Gorzek, an MFT graduate student. "It was really special to see people from all different points of her life gathered to celebrate her."

Gorzek gave a speech at the party where she spoke of the calmness and kindness that Russell brought to the classroom.

"She has taught me that there is strength in gentleness, that human connections can be sacred, that life and people — therapists, clients, students, teachers, culture — are always changing," Gorzek read. "Her ability to notice and give attention to seemingly small moment and baby steps has helped me to be more appreciative of change."

Russell was overjoyed with the retirement party, where she was surprised with the concept for the Founders' Bench that will be dedicated to her, late professor Tony Jurich and professor and director emeritus Steve Bollman.

"It was terrific because they know I don't like the spotlight," Russell said. "It was like the perfect salute — something that I would accept and acknowledge."

As Russell looks forward to traveling — to the East Coast, West Coast, and even Paris — she reflects on her last year of teaching as "the most wonderful year ever."

"I just felt as though people were wanting to learn what I had to offer and the students were very engaged and very involved. And for me, that was rewarding," Russell said. "It was a great year."

But despite her plans for traveling, exercising and lunching with her friends, Russell wants everyone to know that she's not going anywhere when her ear is needed for a good listen.

"I have three wonderful new mugs made by an art student, they're here for tea time," Russell said. "I'm sure some folks will be by."

## Remembering Tony, 1947-2010

by Rachel Skybetter



When Tony Jurich died unexpectedly last fall, he left behind a legacy that marriage and family therapy students, faculty and staff are not soon to forget.

Jurich, a professor in marriage and family therapy and co-founder of the Family Center, was vacationing in Cabo San Lucas, Mexico, when he and his wife were dragged underwater by a rogue wave. His wife, retired instructor of leadership studies, Olivia Collins, survived. He was 63 years old.

Jurich's impact on the MFT program is undeniable. He started at K-State soon after he earned his doctorate at Pennsylvania State University in 1972 and ended up spending his entire academic career here as a therapist, professor, advisor and mentor. He held various positions of leadership with K-State and beyond, including as the president of the American Association for Marriage and Family Therapy in the late 1990s. In 2008 he published a book, "Family Therapy With Suicidal Adolescents," a topic he dedicated much of his time to.



*The late Tony Jurich poses with marriage and family therapy graduate students at an American Association for Marriage and Family Therapy Conference. He served as president of the association for a portion of the 1990s.*

He could often be found singing in the hallways and was a huge K-State basketball fan who held courtside tickets for nearly 40 years. His presence remains a strong force in the program today, with many of his former students and associates pausing to reflect on him in the near year since his death:

"My life is forever changed for the better because Tony was in it, and I hope I can pass along what he taught me!"

- Colleen Peterson, MFT alumna

"More than anyone I've ever known, Tony embraced all things good in life and strove endlessly to connect with others. It is without any hesitation that I can say Tony was the fulcrum of this community."

- Lindsay Edwards, MFT alumna

"Tony has left a void that will never be filled. I miss his advice and his smile – I can't recall ever seeing him when he wasn't smiling. His legacy will live on in our thoughts, memories and knowledge that he's passed onto us."

- Kimmerly Newsom, MFT alumna

"His passion for our field was infectious. He loved life, he loved people and he always knew where the best place to eat was. Tony, you'll be missed but never forgotten."

- Jen Hutchings, MFT alumna

"His significant contributions to the field of family therapy and to the lives of the people he has touched is extraordinary. His departure from this world was far too early for me and many others. The only consolation I can take from Tony's death is that he lived the way he died – bigger than life."

- Bill Northey, MFT alumnus

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