



# Counseling Connections

## An Interview with Lisen Roberts

### What has been the most rewarding part of being director of the program?

I can't believe that I get to serve in a leadership position to this group of stellar people. Truly. Our students, our faculty, our alumni, our site supervisors—all stellar people. Unexpectedly, through becoming director, I've taken on an internal "motherly" role. I feel such pride in being a part of the growth I see all around me. Last month there were two conferences on campus at which our students presented—the Gender Conference and the Graduate Symposium. I was able to see presentations by Lisa Shows, Kathy Hogan, Meghan Horne, Shelley Tom (Others, whom I did not get to see presented as well—Tania Arcos, Leanne Mullen, Katie Vaughn, Rob Danzman, Katie Wohlford, Emma Pluta). I was filled with pride to see these students hold forth with such confidence, such expertise, in this professional setting. I am honored every day to be a part of this program.

### What has been the most challenging part?

The worst is having to make decisions that I know will be disappointing to people—sometimes a lot of people. I've faced two recently—the rescheduling of the summer Crisis class and the 2008-2009 graduate assistantship assignments. As many counselors struggle with, I want to please people; I want to help. Telling someone they'll be inconvenienced, or locked out of a class, or won't get GA money... well, stinks. What I'm learning though is that the key to making such difficult decisions is to get as much input and feedback as possible—especially from (potential) critics. And in discussing the challenges of a particular decision with folks, I'm finding a great deal of understanding. I think people are more forgiving of tough situations when they're informed about what's what.

### What changes or goals do you have for the program in the future?

Two changes are already underway—one related to new students, and one to graduating students. For the first time ever, we're hosting a program-wide conference, *Coming Full Circle: WCU's Counseling Conference and Commencement*, on May 9, 2008, to show off the work and talents of our practicum students and interns. We expect this to become an annual celebration of the program, and of our graduating students. New students who will begin coursework in Summer or Fall 2008 have been invited to *Coming Full Circle* and they've each been matched to an "experienced" student who can answer any student-related questions they have. These connections among experienced and new students, we hope, will promote connectedness among cohorts and a smoother transition for new students.

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# An Interview with Lisen Roberts

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## **Who have been some of the most influential people in your career development?**

Lowell Roberts, Asta Roberts, David Hill, Dennis Littky, Priscilla Blanton, Mary Deck (in order: my parents, my undergraduate advisor, my first principal/supervisor, my doctoral program advisor, and of course, you know Mary). There are others as well— many actually. But these folks each served as formal mentors to me at various stages in my life. Each believed in me, often more or earlier than I believed in myself.

## **How has your career development lead you to this position?**

I declared in the 6<sup>th</sup> grade that I would be a special education teacher, and I did indeed go on to pursue a degree and career in that field. I taught high school (in New Hampshire) for five years, and in that time, discovered that my real passion was working with students in the context of their families. While teaching full-time, I attended graduate school part-time and earned my Master's in Counseling. I worked as a counselor intern at my school and then as a counselor at a community agency. I loved these jobs and yet when an opportunity fell into my lap, I changed career avenues just a bit: I was invited to adjunct-teach an undergraduate course at the local college. I jumped at the chance and loved it. College teaching was my ultimate calling. When my high school students graduated, I too went on to college—to the University of Tennessee to pursue my PhD in Family Studies with a cognate in Counseling. My first job in academia began literally two days after my graduation... right here at WCU. I spent my first five years at Western as the program director of an undergraduate program in Child and Family Studies. Eventually, that program was terminated at Western, and through a lot of support from cherished colleagues who didn't want to see me leave Western (thank you!), I joined the Counseling faculty. I've been "home" ever since.



## **What do you do when you aren't involved in the counseling program?**

I appreciate (and need) both time alone and time with my family, with friends. I love to read. I've most recently been re-reading three books for Career class (*The Big Picture* by Dennis Littky; *Mastery* by George Leonard; and *The Art of Possibility* by Roz and Ben Zander) and before that, I thoroughly enjoyed *Eat Pray Love* by Liz Gilbert. I love to travel. This summer, I'll travel with my family to Iceland and Finland. Overall, it's my seven-year-old daughter who grounds me, reminds me what life is really about.

## **If the WCU administration fired all the other counseling professors and asked you to replace them with celebrities, who would you choose?**

Well, of course I'd replace Russ with Brad Pitt, but that's just because they look so much alike. After that, I don't know—these folks are irreplaceable.

## **In an ideal world, what would the counseling program look like?**

Hmm. More flexibility in scheduling. More "real world" practice and interaction. More independent and collaborative projects. No grades— just learning. Get rid of "classrooms" as we know them... (Whether this excites or scares you, I do not foresee earth-shattering changes coming any time soon.)

## **What advice do you have for graduate students who want to eventually teach at the college level?**

I think it's the greatest job, I really do. I recommend it. The big difference between being a counselor and a counselor educator is precisely that "educator" piece. I see myself as a teacher. Talk to any one of us (in fact, all of us!) if you want to pursue a PhD. And get involved early in teaching COUN 140 and professional/academic presentations and publications. No matter your career goals now or in the future, dive into experiences, create experiences. Enjoy the fullness of life!

# Fun in Asheville

by Andrew Bednarzik

Asheville has the more nightlife than I can list in one article. So, my best effort is the following top eight list of fun things to do in Asheville. Bear in mind that this list doesn't try address the beautiful mountains that surround the city and all the amazing opportunities for explorations they offer. My focus is on the nighttime activities in downtown Asheville and the surrounding communities. I've tried to include a mix of events that are under 21 friendly and one's that require an ID. Here they are in no particular order. Enjoy!

## **Asheville Pizza and Brewing Company**

For \$3 you can see a movie in the theatre! What a concept. You can also buy a good meal at normal, non-movie theatre prices, drink beer brewed on-site, and consume it all while you watch the movie. Get there early because the shows sell out early.

## **Walk-in Theatre**

When the weather warms up there is a walk-in, outdoor movie theatre In West Asheville. A large screen is put up in the parking lot behind Orbit DVD and the Westville Pub. Bring a folding chair and watch a movie under the stars. The walk-in theatre begins this Friday and happens one Friday a month through the summer.

## **80's Night at Broadways**

Every Wednesday at Broadway's downtown the same DJ spins tunes from the 1980's. It's a great place to boogie but the dance floor doesn't start filling up until 11:30pm so be prepared for a late night. Broadway's requires a membership so either show up with someone who has one or next time you're downtown stop in and get one for a nominal fee.

## **Root Bar**

If you like games the Root Bar in Swannanoa invented a game and opened a bar based on it. It's a combination of bocce ball and horseshoes and it's a lot of fun! There are three outdoor, sand courts in the back so it's easy to get into a game.

## **Downtown after Five**

This event is another warm weather phenomenon. Every Friday at five o'clock there is live music right in the heart of downtown. This is popular way for working folks to start the weekend off right. The music usually features a line-up of quality local bands.



## **LEAF**

The Lake Eden Arts Festival happens twice a year at a beautiful old camp in Black Mountain. The music is eclectic and always has a good mix of world music and local bands. There are healing arts tents with yoga classes and tai chi, vendors with local artists selling their crafts, contra-dancing, a zip-line, climbing wall, and one of the best poetry slam's in the country. It is family friendly and has an entire kid's village with activities for the young ones all weekend. You can buy a community pass if you want to sleep in your own bed or a pass that includes camping if you want to stay on site.

## **Thirsty Thursdays**

We have a minor league baseball team in Asheville, who knew? It's inexpensive and the stadium is small and intimate. On Thursday's when the team has a home game the stadium is full of people who like to beer that only costs a dollar. When the weather is good it's a lot of fun and the stadium is right downtown.

## **Drum Circle**

On Friday nights in downtown Asheville at Pritchard park there is always a gaggle of people drumming and even more dancing. If you are into drumming, anyone is welcome to bring their drum and join in. You can also just stop by and watch the scene if you don't want to join in. This is a Asheville tradition that is unique to our town.

# Running Groups in Schools

by Dale Brotherton

This semester the students in COUN 635 have been running groups at Fairview K-8 in Jackson County. Each of the 10 counseling students is leading a group of 7-10 eighth graders for six sessions. The theme of each group is “transitioning to high school” and involves providing a safe place where students can talk about transitioning out of a school where many of them have been for nine years and transitioning into a high school environment where they have little familiarity and will be the “new” kids. Considering the individual physiological, psychological and sociological developmental changes and the collective impact of 80 students experiencing such a change at the same time, one can begin to appreciate how these groups could be beneficial in meeting some of the needs of these students. The group members are able to discuss concerns they have about the transition and to discussion around what they see changing in themselves and in their school world. Some groups have evolved to the point of personal disclosure and members giving and receiving feedback.

The counseling students have been well received by the teachers, administration, and more importantly the students. Teachers have pointed out; with the continuous pressure felt by teachers around end of grade testing, students are seldom allowed time to just talk about important issues that personally impact them. Teachers, however, believe focused conversations among eighth-graders without teacher observation would be beneficial to their students. We have reports that the Fairview students are enjoying the groups and many are reminding their teachers that group is on Wednesday.

Each of the 10 group leaders are going through their own “transition” from being a student to being a professional counselor. The first meeting was a bit of a shock for some of the group leaders, but all have demonstrated resilience and are beginning to develop a connection with their group members. The counseling students meet as a class with Dr. Brotherton after each session to discuss with one another what they tried in the session and how it worked or did not work and to talk about plans for the next week. The next challenge for the group leaders is to help group members begin to develop areas of personal insight as they journey through this transitional period of becoming high school students. Overall, the counseling students seem grateful for the opportunity to put group work into practice.

With the apparent success of this first broad attempt at using counseling students to run groups in schools, Dr. Brotherton is approaching a second school for permission to run groups in the fall. Stay tuned for further developments.



## A Note from Dale

I am adopting a new family text in the fall. The title is “Theory and Practice of Family Therapy and Counseling” by James Bitter. The text is bundled with a WebCat support module at no charge. If bought separately from the text the WebCat support module is an extra \$16.00. The sales representative said the cost of the text and the WebCat module would be \$63.00. It may be higher at the bookstore. The ISBN # is 0495634425.

**Don't forget to register for Coming Full Circle at  
[http://ceap.wcu.edu/counseling/  
studentinvolvement.htm](http://ceap.wcu.edu/counseling/studentinvolvement.htm)**

# How to Find Belonging in Western's Counseling

by Phil Waalkes

If you are like me, you want to become a counselor to make people like you. What could be more motivating for perspective counselors than picturing the adoring throngs of future clients whose lives you will transform? Well, the first step towards this vision is making the students and professors in the counseling program like you. However, this task is challenging for many people because of the systematic social rules associated with Western's counseling program. After nearly a year of learning these complex social interactions, I have arrived at seven easy steps to being accepted by the WCU counseling program community. Follow these steps and thousands of adoring clients won't be far behind.

1. **Apologize repeatedly after interrupting someone.** Interruptions are bound to happen in class, but it is essential that the person you interrupted be given repeated apologies and be allowed to speak first. Anything less would be rude and shows that you don't care about the needs of other people
2. **Know the key phrases to say in class.** Whenever speaking in class, use the phrases "trying to be more genuine" and "learning to trust myself and the process." Regardless of anything else you say or what the original question was, if you use both of these phrases the counseling professors will eat it up.
3. **Don't tell people what really goes on in your head.** Who knows how people might respond if they learn your five-pronged theory about Carl Jung or the Jackson 5 or pineapples as aphrodisiacs or Mary's fascination with the Lion King? As weird as you are, your opinions are not fit to leave your head.
4. **Don't talk too much about yourself.** Nobody likes a braggart. In fact the less you talk about yourself the better. This way you will never risk exposing that crazy part of yourself and your past, like that accident you had on the 3<sup>rd</sup> grade field trip to the hot dog factory that left your vocal cords unable to say the word marshmallow. Instead, if you use your active listening skills and maintain a smile on your face, other people will believe everything they say is fascinating and will keep talking instead of asking you questions about yourself.
5. **Bring food to class.** Extra brownie points if it's vegan, smelly, chocolate, or if you made it yourself.
6. **Memorize the CACREP standards and recite them.** As we learned in ethics class, an encyclopedic knowledge of the CACREP standards is required for any competent counselor, but the most likeable counselors go a step further. Being able to recite the standard for the curriculum requirements under the 8 core areas of CACREP is more than just an amusing party trick; it also proves your undying loyalty to your professors and the counseling profession.
7. **During in class role plays, help the counselor solve your problems.** Any time your role play counselor challenges you, uses immediacy, asks an open question, or even says "mmhmmm," your role play client should gain a life-changing new insight, an insight that only the wisdom and caring of their counselor could have provided them. The more transformed your client is after the role play the better. For example, if your role play client came to counseling to learn strategies for parallel parking, by the end of the session she should be able to parallel park, have forgiven her parents for never buying her a Teddy Ruxpin, have a six step plan for success in the stock market, be halfway finished writing the great American novel, and have resolved her long term fear of toilet paper.



## Congratulations, Mary!

Dr. Mary Deck has been awarded the College of Education and Allied Professors Exemplary Service Award for 2008. Mary was recognized for her outstanding service to the college, program, students and graduates. Her leadership in the CACREP accreditation process for our programs contributed greatly to a very favorable review. Mary's continuing mentorship of graduates and her years of service to the Break By the Lake Student Services Personnel Conference makes her endeared by all who work with her. Congratulations Mary on this well deserved recognition.

# The Lost Art of Thank You

by Melanie Norman

The week following spring break, I went to buy three thank you cards. I had just finished the previous week interviewing three people and wanted to thank them for their time and their willingness to speak with me. While trying to select a specific card for each person, I looked at the price. Three dollars a card! Now, I can't say that I'm especially frugal with money. In fact, I'm not. But paying nine dollars for three cards seemed a bit pricey. So I looked around and found a box of 50 beautiful thank you cards for a few dollars more than the cost of just the three cards, rationalizing that maybe over the next twenty years I would eventually find the box empty.

Before buying this box of beautiful cards, I hadn't sent a thank you card in—well, I can't remember how long! Since having this box, I've already sent out seven or eight cards. I've had the box for almost four weeks.

While writing one just the other day, I began to wonder why it was that I was writing so many cards. Was it really that people were offering up more reasons for me to say thank you? Or maybe, I was just taking more notice? I feel like I say thank you often. Probably everyday. Thank you for your help. Thank you for running with me. Thank you for the pen. Thank you for—well, those words are said all the time. But what do they really mean? Is it just out of habit and manners, that as I return a pen I say those two little words? I mean, I always notice when somebody else doesn't say those words to me. I feel unappreciated, so I know the words have value. They mean something. But how much more *could* they mean?

Interestingly, I'm a writer. Words flow together in ways that just seems impossible when I try to speak. But as I wrote those first three cards, I really struggled to find the words. Any words. Writing thank you felt so much more difficult than speaking the words. My hunch is that when writing the cards and trying to express my sincere appreciation, I was trying to respond to more than just a person's actions. I was trying to respond to them as a person. Interestingly, I found it difficult to write a statement of genuine appreciation without a willingness to also share a piece of myself.

In a culture where communication is vital, it strikes me that many times words circumvent what's genuine, relaying only what's amiable. Maybe thank you is taken for granted. Maybe we say it out of habit or expectation. Maybe it's just assumed. Or maybe even forgotten. In any case, it is my belief that the words "thank you" provide opportunities beyond fulfilling the merely cursory etiquette requirements. The words "thank you" provide an opportunity for one person to connect with another in a way that's human, in a way that resonates in the space between the physical and the metaphorical. What at first glimpse appears a mundane and a repetitive reaction suddenly becomes a choice and an intention.

Amazing, the power of two little words.



We're on the Web!  
[HTTP://CEAP.WCU.EDU/  
COUNSELING/GUIDES.HTM](http://ceap.wcu.edu/counseling/guides.htm)

## From the Editor

A huge thank you to Andrew, Melanie, Lisen and Dale for their submissions to this issue of the newsletter. Submissions like theirs make the newsletter that much richer.

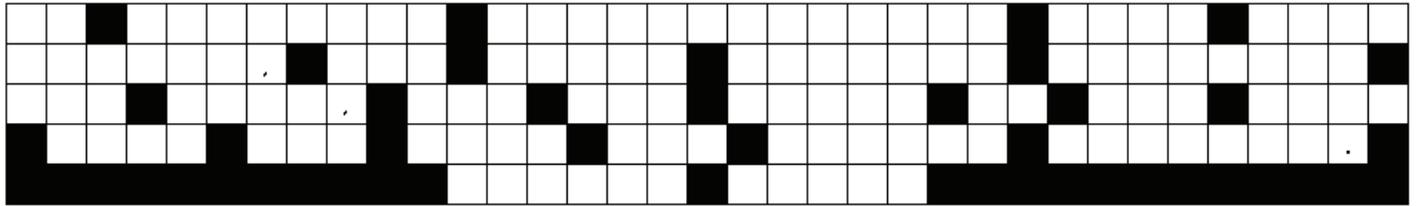
Summer is fast approaching and that means the newsletter will be on hiatus until fall. However, if you do have more free time and come up with something you'd like to submit for the fall please email it to me at **phil-lip.waalkes@gmail.com** or give them to Mary Deck.

Editing *Counseling Connections* this semester has been fun and rewarding and as always I'd love to hear any comments, suggestions or ideas you have. ~Phil Waalkes

# Fun and Games

## Fallen Phrase Puzzle

Solve this puzzle by matching the white squares with the correct corresponding letters below. One letter from each column will belong in one white box in each column. When solved correctly, you will discover a quote by Albert Ellis.



U N R E A G I  
 P T Y U R V O N E A D N N E O S E P T  
 E R A O T N E O R T O L C C R W L F L R I N G B O U R Y A F  
 B Y R H O H F M B U Y A N E E A T N L E U T S R T Y U U E F I L S T  
 F O R S R S E S T L Y O A B K E O W D L M I U N G O Y E N R S E O U R



## Fallen Phrase Puzzle

Unscramble the tiles to reveal a quote by Ben Sweetland.

NOT G O R I G . H E R H , O R C L D  
 W E T B T A U R H O H T E O W N I G H  
 W I T ' S O L A T H O U C A N P A T H T  
 N O T N I N




You do not have to be good. You do not have to walk on your knees for a hundred miles through the desert, repenting. You only have to let the soft animal of your body loves what it loves.

~Mary Oliver