

SPRING 2022 | NO. 3

CHC Alumni Newsletter

UPDATES FROM THE COOK HONORS COLLEGE

3rd place winner (Publications), Northeast Regional Honors Council, 2022

Back & Better Than Ever

DR. CHAUNA CRAIG, CHC DIRECTOR

What a long, strange trip these last couple years have been. Spring has finally arrived in Indiana, wrapped in rain and punctuated with occasional teasing bursts of sun. Two years after that March day in 2020 when students packed up their rooms and went home for the Great Online Learning Experiment, they were able to remove their masks in the classroom and argue the core questions face to face.

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*Photo by Hannah Colen,
CHC '21*

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Back & Better Than Ever (continued...)

The decline of COVID has opened the door for in-person experiences of all kinds again, and in early April three of our first-year students presented research begun in their history core units at the Northeast Regional Honors Council in Philadelphia. The Cook Honors College won three awards at the conference, more than any other school in attendance [see accompanying article], including third place in the publications category for this, our alumni newsletter. The judges noted that our newsletter is still very new, but they praised its professional appearance and writing, encouraging us to keep going. I couldn't be prouder considering that the first-place winner boasts a staff of twelve, while one student, Amy Kukula (junior, English Education/ Interdisciplinary Fine Arts) produces what you're reading right now. I'm so grateful for her dedication and hard work.

I realized looking at the award plaque that we need a name for this newsletter, something more distinctive than "Cook Honors College Alumni Newsletter."

We would love suggestions from our target audience—you, our bright and creative alumni. Please send your ideas to honors@iup.edu. In fact, if there's anything you want to hear more about, we would appreciate ideas for future articles.

I'll close this, my third academic year as director, by noting that even in the midst of some very trying times, I am reminded every day how lucky I am to work with passionate students and supportive staff. Enthusiasm is contagious, and that's one thing I don't mind catching. I hope reading about all the good things happening here will infect you with some of the same.



Now's your chance to...

Name This Newsletter!

When the "Cook Honors College Alumni Newsletter" won 3rd place in the Publications category at the Northeast Regional Honors Council 2022 conference, we realized our title is a mouthful. Have a catchy idea for a new title? Email us at honors@iup.edu with your idea(s), and you just might receive the next issue with your title on the first page!

Trail Cleanup Day is No Joke

Rather than playing pranks, a kindhearted group of CHC volunteers spent their April Fool's Day giving back at Yellow Creek State Park. Students assisted the Laurel Highlands Off Road Bike Association in building a half-mile of new trail to bypass an area made impassable by erosion.



Workday organizer Aaron Kovatch said, "Those reroutes would have taken us forever if it weren't for the help of the Cook Honors College and your students. We're very fortunate to have the CHC as a resource."



'Nerd Prom' Becomes *MASQUERADE*



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This spring, a time-honored CHC tradition got a fresh new look. Instead of hosting 'Nerd Prom,' Lisa Halmes, Dr. Craig, and a dedicated group of student leaders planned and hosted a Mardi Gras-themed Masquerade Ball (in true Nerd Prom style).

Students danced the night away, snacked on treats provided by the CHC, and even witnessed a tie-breaking dance battle while crowning a prom king and queen from each class. Needless to say, after a hiatus during the height of the pandemic, Nerd Prom is back in full swing.

More photos on next page...

Trail Cleanup (continued)



MASQUERADE BALL

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Learning to Breathe

AT KARMÊ CHÖLING

Moving out to start a college career is already a big adventure. Each year, Cook Honors College students take that adventure one step further by traveling to Karmê Chöling, a Shambhala Buddhist Meditation center in Vermont, over spring break.

Billed as an 'Alternative Spring Break' trip, Karmê Chöling offers students a way to fill their empty spring break days—but students come away with so much more. Besides bonding with fellow CHC students on the trip to Barnet, Vermont, they also gain new skills, community service hours, and a newfound understanding of Buddhist meditation and culture.

Senior Megan Cahill (BA, Psychology, '22) served as co-president for this year's trip, which took place from March 12 to March 19. She and ten other students packed their bags and joined Karmê Chöling's dedicated staff and residents in numerous service projects around the center's property. In Cahill's words, "Everyone works together to take care of basic chores (called "Rota") while treating everyone with basic kindness.

Meditation is a big factor in the approach of running the community, [so] household activities are approached with the idea of respecting oneself, others, and the environment." Projects range from chopping wood to building, painting, housekeeping, gardening, and cooking at the Karmê Chöling center. Service projects complement students' daily schedule of meditation sessions, meals eaten together, and adventures in the evenings.

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Learning to Breathe (continued...)

On a day trip to the White Mountains in New Hampshire during her second year at Karmê Chöling, Cahill overcame her previously-held ideas about her own physical limitations. After hiking the whole way to the top of a mountain, Cahill was exhausted. She spotted a lake at the top and couldn't resist. As she jumped in, she sank into the cold water and felt a deep sense of personal accomplishment. It was freezing, but also incredibly refreshing—she had known it would all be worth it in the end.

While this year was Cahill's third year as a participant and leader of the trip, CHC students have traveled to the meditation center for 12 years. Karmê Chöling is supportive of students of any race, gender, orientation, nationality, and religion, making the trip inclusive to anyone who is interested in participating and learning more about their meditation practices. As a bonus, CHC students who participate in the trip receive 30 service hours of the 60 in total that they are required to complete each year.

For Cahill, visiting Karmê Chöling is more than just a way to get service hours—it's an experience of immense growth and self-reflection. In her words, "Shambhala Buddhism is not a theistic religion, meaning that there is no worship of any god. It is focused on improving your own mental state and being. This really resonates with me and the teachings about self-love have been instrumental in my own personal growth." Furthermore, Karmê Chöling is not a monastery and does not enforce strict lifestyle choices. Instead, they promote practices that fit into the daily routine of a typical contemporary lifestyle in Western society.

While it can be nerve-wracking for students who sign up for the trip (including Cahill) to take the leap, she insists that it's worth it. She describes visiting Karmê Chöling as a "mental reset," when "[patterns of] toxic thinking get washed away," leaving her in a healthier mental place. Unsurprisingly, these effects stretch far beyond the students who participate in the trip. With a slightly smaller-than-average group of CHC students participating this year, Cahill explains that the group stuck together and bonded as a whole, rather than smaller groups forming separate cliques. Looking out for each other and building each other up are inherent to the lifestyle these students lead for a week each year. They bring back those skills—coupled with stress management through meditation and mindfulness—to inspire other students when they return to campus.

For students interested in the trip, reach out to Jordan Delattre at zbwbc@iup.edu. Alumni interested in getting involved or supporting the trip can get in touch with Jesse Brown at stkw@iup.edu. ■

Written by Amy Kukula



Northeast Regional Honors Council Recognizes CHC



"Dr. Chauna Craig is extremely deserving of recognition for her **passionate dedication to the student experience and leadership**. She is **exceptionally knowledgeable**, and has an intense **can-do attitude**. She has been the rock at our honors college as we have faced many obstacles during her tenure."

- *Lisa Halmes,*
CHC Administrative Assistant

On April 10, CHC students and faculty alike received multiple awards from the Northeast Regional Honors Council at their 2022 conference. Dr. Chauna Craig, CHC director, was named Honors Professional of the Year in the Administrator category. Callie Bland (anthropology and political science) and Abigail Hancox (political science), both first-year CHC students, presented on the topic "A More Perfect Union: Creating and Restoring Community in an Age of Disruption." Thomas Oraskovich (Regional Planning and Political Science), also a first-year CHC student, won a Minority Scholarship for his work on LGBTQ issues. This newsletter (feature writing/layout by junior CHC student Amy Kukula) won 3rd place in the 'Publications' category. NRHC Executive Secretary Kat MacDonald described IUP as the "winningest" school at the conference for its three distinct awards.

For more information, view the full news release on IUP's website:
www.iup.edu/news-events/news/2022/04/iup-cook-honors-college-director,-students-honored-by-national-collegiate-honors-council.html

Photos continue on next page...

NRHC Recognizes CHC (continued...)



SGA Officers



IUP Student Government Association (SGA) recently held elections for the 2022-23 academic year. CHC students were voted into every officer position. Moreover, first-year CHC students are stepping into four out of five positions, so it's clear that SGA has a bright future ahead. Pictured above, from left to right, are President, Abigail Hancox; Vice President, Shagufta Haque; Secretary, Thomas Oraskovich; Chief Justice, Daniel Kukula; and Treasurer, Matthew Gulyas. They were sworn in on Tuesday, April 26 in Elkin Hall.

Updates from CHC Alumni

Michael Bell is Regional Vice President at Benevity in Calgary.

Natalia Kaniasty received her master's degree in film from New York University in 2017 and is currently a filmmaker.

Zoë Thorkildsen is the Senior Research Scientist at CNA.

Lindsey (Qakenbush) Brown (BA, English Studies, 2014) is a childcare provider and teacher at Play And Learn School of Wyoming LLC. She worked as a special education paraprofessional for the CUSD 200 Illinois school district in 2021. Also, she has had a side career as an independent musician and producer for the last 2 years, which she is continuing now after her move to Wyoming in January 2022.

Amy Bouch (BSEd, English Education / Educational and School Psychology, 2013) received her master's degree in reading education from the University of Pittsburgh in 2015. She is currently an English teacher at Chartiers Valley Middle School.

Keith Stevens (BA, History with minors in Asian Studies and German, 2007) received his law degree from Capital University Law School. He is currently an attorney with Carlile Patchen & Murphy, specializing in elder law, special needs law, estate planning, and Medicaid. He married Dr. Sarah (Williamson) Stevens (next update!) in July 2007 and they have three daughters.

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→ Student Leaders Making a Difference

John Sorisio secured an internship with BNY Mellon.

Teryl Rice won 1st place (Undergraduate Dean's Award for the College of Arts and Humanities) at the 2022 IUP Scholar's Forum for his project, "Making Sense of Ned Rorem's First Piano Sonata" (with faculty mentor Henry Wong Doe).

Several CHC students won at the recent leadership awards ceremony co-hosted by IUP's Student Government Association (SGA) and the Multicultural Center for Student Leadership and Engagement (MCSLE). Winners included Katarina Noll (Legacy of Leadership), Jacob Drexler (Emerging Leader), Milady Lagunas (Inclusion and Advocacy), and Amy Kukula (Bridge Builder).

Jared Klepadlo secured an internship with Ernst & Young.

Klaus Zeff and Brianna Adkins both had multiple pieces accepted for publication in IUP's New Growth Arts Review.

Eman Soliman received scholarships from BURE and IUP-APSCUF.

Jacob Fritsky was accepted into University of Connecticut's Research for Undergraduates program.

Eric Goins secured an internship in North Dakota with the US Forest Service.

Gabriella Giese was elected president of IUP's Students Against Racism.

Kiara Moravec secured an internship with DHL Supply Chain.

Shagufta Haque was elected Vice Chair of the University Senate

Alumni Updates (continued...)

Dr. Sarah (Williamson) Stevens (BS, Biology with a minor in History, 2007) received her doctorate in biomedical science from The Ohio State University in 2012. She is currently a coach at Nerd Fitness, where she uses her certifications in personal training and nutrition coaching to help people develop healthy habits in the areas of nutrition, fitness, and mindset. She is also the program coordinator for Scodova's Combative Martial Arts and a personal trainer at her local YMCA. She married Keith Stevens (previous update!) in July 2007 and they have three daughters.

Kathryn Lucas is the Senior Consultant with Strata Information Group.

Ashley Swenson (BA, History Pre-Law, 2015) received her law degree from University of North Texas at Dallas College of Law in 2018. She is now serving as a Procurement Analyst for the US Navy. ■



Want your update included in an upcoming issue of the official CHC Alumni Newsletter? Fill out this form (linked below) to let us know any news you want to share--career, promotion, or personal achievement.

We'd love to hear from you!

www.alumni.iup.edu/chcalumnicontract

Layout by Amy Kukula

Your journey began here. Why not theirs?



← → ↻ iup.edu/admissions/honors/summer/ ☆

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SUMMER HONORS PROGRAM

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