The Community Foundation of West Georgia reached out to the College of Social Sciences to be part of their inaugural Homeless Summit to discuss solutions to issues surrounding homelessness in the Carroll community. Faculty and students from across the College participated in the summit, and Sociology took a lead role in discussions of transitional housing.

The summit focused on three key areas—prevention, temporary housing, and transitional housing. Sociology’s Dr. Paul Luken, professor and chair, and Tiffany Parsons, instructor, along with Kathy Parsons of 415 Hope and Karen Kagiyama of United Methodist Campus Ministries were on the transitional housing panel.

At the summit Luken shared thoughts from his studies in historical sociology. “When you’re talking about a house and a home, you’re no longer talking about something as simple as shelter… A home is the center of the social organization of your life. Try to imagine that gone; that’s what we’re getting to when we’re talking about homelessness.”

Tiffany Parsons followed, “Let’s say tomorrow your home is gone. Where do you go first? No one in that position for the first time knows. That’s where the transitional program comes in that is so vital to getting people out of homelessness.”

Lack of transportation, low income housing and low wages were cited by Kathy Parsons as the primary barriers to being safely and securely housed.

More than 200 people pre-registered for the January summit and dozens more registered on site. Sociology students participated in discussions across the three areas and arrived early to volunteer with registration.

Kim Jones, president of the Community Foundation of West Georgia expressed her gratitude for the students’ work. “They were certainly the glue that held everything together. The registration process was quick and painless with their help.”

The summit served as a starting point for conversations around issues of homelessness in the community. The conversation is ongoing online via Facebook and Google Groups and open to all.
Honoring Community talks continue this spring

By Amber Smallwood, Associate Dean

In 2013, the College of Social Sciences began a new tradition of welcoming community leaders to campus during Honors Day to talk with students, staff and faculty across campus about ways we can engage in honoring community.

These talks are a natural for our college—as we proudly show our tagline “Serving humanity. Doing public good.” It’s who we are. It’s what we do. Every day. In the classrooms, out in the community through service learning projects, in our research, in our partnerships with nonprofits, agencies and businesses.

But the Honoring Community talks have become something really special—an opportunity for us to invite leaders onto campus, but outside the classroom; to talk not on a topic we’ve chosen or suggested that matches our syllabus, but on a topic they think is important for this campus to learn about; and following the popular TED Talks model, talks are succinct and powerful at about 15 minutes each.

Thank you to this year’s Honoring Community speakers for making time to help the University of West Georgia grow in its community engagement—something this university and college are more committed to than ever.

2014 Honoring Community Talks

“By Making a Broader Impact”
Bill Bolling ’76
Atlanta Community Food Bank

“By Responding to the Heart of Community”
Jonathan Dockery
The Carrollton Menu

“By Having Fun and Lending Your Expertise”
Jonathan Dorsey ’90
Carrollton Area Convention and Visitors Bureau

“By Role-modeling and Mentoring in the Community”
Cynthia Langley ’91
Communities in Schools

“By Just Listening to Veterans”
Bill Liggin ’79 ’80
Veterans Heart Georgia

“By Knowing How to Help a Survivor”
Marina Rogers
West Georgia Rape Crisis Center

Giving to COSS

Consider making a gift to the UWG College of Social Sciences.

Suggested levels of support:
$250
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$1,000

Please contact Erin Brannon, Administrative Manager, for more information.

678-839-5172 or ebrannon@westga.edu

*Gifts are tax-deductible to the extent provided by law.

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Student-managed PR firm works with regional and national clients

Mass Communications

This spring, Bluestone Public Relations garnered their first national client after dedicating the fall to building a foundation and business model.

The student-managed firm worked closely with the Center for Civil and Human Rights Museum in Atlanta to conducted extensive research on communication needs which include social media development, designing their press kit, planning promotional events, and developed a tribute journal and op-ed pieces.

“The bluestone associates have taken ownership of the firm and, with that, a level of commitment that will serve them well in their public relations careers,” said Dr. T. Randahl Morris, firm co-advisor and assistant professor.

The firm associates aim for recognition at multiple levels by partnering with clients to deliver award-winning work.

Bluestone associates and advisors consider requests from community partners. For more information, find Bluestone Public Relations on Facebook.

Faculty and doctoral students share insights with business leaders

Psychology

In April, the Department of Psychology hosted its inaugural Humanistic Psychology at Work: Transformational Leadership Conference for community leaders. Sessions during the one-day conference focused on translating the academic work of the Psychology department into the work settings of businesses and organizations.

“The purpose of the conference is to reach out to the community to share the department of psychology’s content and culture,” said Victoria Yang, departmental associate and graduate coordinator for Psychology.

Session topics ranged from “Conflict Resolution” to “Personal and Professional Growth at Midlife” to “Mindfulness Meditation at Work” presented by faculty and doctoral students in the department.

Yang said the department plans to make the conference an annual event, varying session topics to meet needs of the community and reflect expertise of the department, but will likely move the conference to fall months.

American Society of Public Administration comes to UWG campus

Political Science & Planning

The University of West Georgia’s Department of Political Science and Planning hosted the 16th Annual Conference for the American Society for Public Administration Georgia Chapter. The conference brings together university faculty members and students, government managers and non-profit organization practitioners.

This year, five students from UWG’s Master of Public Administration program presented research papers at the conference and welcomed an estimated 70 participants including academic researchers, government managers and graduate students from across the region.

“All the attendees really appreciated the program quality, panel discussions, facilities, and UWG’s hospitality,” said Sooho Lee, associate professor of Political Science and site organizer.

Dr. N. Jane McCandless, dean of the College of Social Sciences, welcomed attendees at the luncheon. During the dinner program, the chapter presented the 2014 Public Service Award to Atlanta Mayor Kasim Reed.

ASPA is the largest academic and professional association in the discipline of public administration and policy.
Criminology celebrates National Criminal Justice Month

In 2009, the United States Congress established March as National Criminal Justice Month in part because the criminal justice system touches the lives of nearly every American in some form another.

The purpose of National Criminal Justice Month is to promote societal awareness regarding the causes and consequences of crime, as well as strategies for preventing and responding to crime.

“Demand for quality criminal justice and criminology programs has continued to increase and it is imperative that we raise awareness throughout the region, the state, and the country regarding the truth about many criminal justice issues,” said Dr. David Jenks, department chair and professor of Criminology.

During National Criminal Justice Month Jenks traveled to West Georgia Technical College campuses to talk with students about the new agreement that allows a seamless transition into UWG’s award-winning Criminology program.

“Both the Department of Criminology at the University of West Georgia and the Criminal Justice Department at West Georgia Technical College have dedicated faculty who seek to contribute to this effort by providing an educated work force within the criminal justice field in the state of Georgia.”

Criminology

Cherokee expert draws 200+ students and community members

More than 200 students and community members gathered to hear Tom Belt—a citizen of the Cherokee Nation of Oklahoma and a fluent Cherokee speaker—present the 2014 Waring Distinguished Lecture in Anthropology.

Belt teaches the first four semesters of Cherokee language and he co-teaches courses on Cherokee grammar and Cherokee language literature at Western Carolina University. His presentation at the University of West Georgia discussed Cherokee language and culture and recent successful efforts at revitalizing the language.

“I think it’s safe to say it was a successful event. Beyond filling a big lecture hall, I think his visit was really inspiring for our students, and for us as a department,” said Ben Steere, assistant professor of Anthropology and organizer of the event.

Belt works closely with speakers from the Eastern Band of Cherokee Indians to produce culturally-based Cherokee language learning material.

“Mr. Belt volunteered to do a ceremony at our summer field school in Cherokee before we start work, to set a good tone for the fieldwork. That will be really special,” said Steere.