Chemistry professor Christine Hermann is leading the effort to host the Blue Ridge Highlands Regional Science Fair on RU’s campus March 4—5 in Peters Hall Gymnasium. Volunteers are still needed for the event.

More than 150 budding scientists from middle and high schools across Southwestern Virginia will participate in the competition.

Hermann is serving as science fair Director. Kimberly Lane, assistant professor of chemistry, is serving as Chair of the Scientific Review Committee, and Orion Rogers, Dean of the College of Science and Technology, has been integral in the planning of the Science Fair and in bringing this event to RU.

The Science Fair celebrates its 20th year of excellence serving the students of Southwestern Virginia. In the past, it was hosted by Wytheville Community College and New River Community College.

Students participating in the Science Fair attend schools in the counties of Bland, Buchanan, Carroll, Dickenson, Giles, Grayson, Lee, Montgomery, Pulaski, Russell, Scott, Smyth, Tazewell, Washington, Wise, Wythe and the cities of Bristol, Galax, and Norton. There is a Junior Division for 7th and 8th grade students and a Senior Division for 9th through 12th grade students.

The purpose of the fair is to stimulate in young people an active interest in science and engineering, to provide an educational experience through being exposed to the judges and to the public, and to give public recognition to talented students for the work they have done in the sciences.

Sponsors for this year’s fair include Bluefield College, Community Animal Clinic, First Bank, Alex Granata (Grand Award Winner in 2010), Amy Kabaria (Grand Award Winner in 2003), Sanjoy Kishore (Grand Award Winner in 2008), Mill Mountain Coffee, New River Charitable Trust, New River Valley Airport, Novozymes Biologicals, Polymer Solutions, Radford University, Thompson Chrysler, and many private individuals.

The two Grand Award Winners will receive an all-expense paid trip to the International Science Fair in Los Angeles, Calif., in May. This year Old Dominion University, Wytheville Community College and New River Community College will award scholarships. The top award winners in the senior division will receive engraved Merck Indexes.

If you are interested in becoming a volunteer or sponsor, please contact Hermann at chermann@radford.edu.
She says it takes a lot of time management and focus to be successful in both academics and athletics. Snooks will be graduating in May after four years at RU. "I am going to finish in four years, which is rare for an athlete at the Division One level. Coach Dean stresses that academics comes first and makes sure we put school work before softball," says Snooks. She also serves as a tutor at the university's Learning Assistance and Resource Center.

Snooks is hoping to attend medical school after graduation. "As of right now, I'm interested in sports medicine. I've always wondered how things work, especially in the human body," adds Snooks.

She credits many of her professors for guiding her and fueling her interest in helping people and the human body. "I had medical physiology with Dr. Mark Cline, genetics with Dr. Phelps-Durr and anatomy and physiology with Mr. John Kell. These three classes really increased my interest in the medical field. My biology professors have been very supportive and are 100 percent behind student athletes' success," she says.

Snooks “Hitting Her Spots” in the Classroom and Research Lab

"Hitting her spots" is nothing new for RU softball pitching star and senior biology major Kellie Snooks. Growing up in the Chicago suburb of Alsip, Ill., Snooks played for the youth organization connected to Chicago's professional team The Bandits. Current Radford University softball coach Mickey Dean coached The Bandits before coming to RU. Through this connection, Snooks learned about the athletic and academic opportunities available at Radford.

“I’ve been playing softball since I was six years old. Being able to play in college makes the game even more interesting,” says Snooks. Her RU team won the Big South Conference Championship in 2009 and 2010.

As a celebrated student athlete and member of RU’s Honors Academy, she is also outstanding in the classroom and laboratory. She currently has a 3.83 grade point average and is working in biology faculty member Tara Phelps-Durr’s laboratory studying the DNA of the Arabidopsis thaliana plant.

Joseph Andy Lancaster, a 2002 geology graduate, is putting his knowledge and experience to work in the sands of Florida to investigate property insurance claims due to ground movement. He is employed by HSA Engineers and Scientists as a staff geologist and project manager. While the company's work is predominately insurance related, it performs a wide range of geotechnical investigations.

Lancaster loves his current position and finds it very rewarding. He began as a field geologist working behind a drill rig collecting soil samples, and then was transferred into the geophysics department to perform ground penetrating radar (GPR) and electrical resistivity imaging (ERI) surveys. He had experience using GPR to locate buried utilities and storage tanks, but its application in geology was a great and much anticipated change. The thick sands of Florida and the underlying karst and paleo karst topography make for interesting radar. His work also includes preparing geophysics and geotechnical reports. Lancaster has performed geotechnical studies in Florida, Alabama, Tennessee, Georgia and Arizona, and is currently handling 50 claims between Florida and Tennessee.

He believes his education at RU prepared him for the challenges he faces today. "I owe my success in my career to all of the great staff at Radford University. The program at Radford is a great mix of excellent classroom and laboratory lessons and field training that can hardly be matched at other schools. I cannot thank the staff at Radford enough for putting together such a comprehensive program," says Lancaster.

He hopes the department continues to excel and produce great geologists. And he looks forward to returning to Radford and seeing all of the changes that have occurred since he graduated.

- Xiu Wang

Geology Graduate Investigates Sinkhole Mysteries

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RU Student State Leader in The Wildlife Society

Seven members of the Radford University Student Chapter of The Wildlife Society (RUTWS) recently attended and actively participated in the annual conference of the Virginia Chapter of The Wildlife Society in Front Royal.

RUTWS faculty advisor and biology faculty member Karen Francl said, “students got the chance to meet and speak with some of the leaders in wildlife management in our state and in the region. Many talked to these well-respected leaders in wildlife in informal settings, which is a great experience for them. I received many positive comments from attendees about how well the RU student speakers performed and how well all seven students represented RU.”

Tessa Canniff

Three biology students, Burke native Tessa Canniff, Chesapeake native Kaelin Creange, and Giles county native Meghan Stump, presented their summer research and environmental internship experiences. Canniff was awarded second place for Best Student Presentation for her presentation, "Quantifying Wing Damage of Summer Bats in the Northeastern United States." The senior biology major was elected student representative to the state chapter. Canniff is the first RU student to hold this position.

Canniff has been active as a student researcher in the wildlife field, including surveying for the endangered Indiana bat in West Virginia, quantifying wing damage in summer bat communities, studying the effects of fire on small mammal and vegetation communities at Caldwell Fields, Virginia, and determining gender differences in the eastern screech owl by comparing DNA and morphological metrics. She also studied mongoose populations in the Virgin Islands through a study abroad program. Canniff thought the conference was a great experience. "It gave me a glimpse into what I will be doing after college. It also gave me an awareness of the problems Virginia is facing in the field of conservation," she said.

Canniff is the Virginia The Wildlife Society (VATWS) spokesperson for all the students in the state of Virginia. She is the "middle man" between the VATWS and the student chapters (RUTWS and VTTWS. Her role involves occasional conference calls, meetings and voting on behalf of the students in Virginia.

--Xiu Wang

Faculty Receive Prestigious Grants

Geospatial science professor Grigory Ioffe received a $56,042 grant from the University of Oklahoma for his research “Land Abandonment in Russia: Understanding Recent Trends and Assessing Future Vulnerability and Adaptation to Changing Climate and Population Dynamics.”

Biology associate professor Mark Cline recently won a $20,000 Jeffress Research grant for his research project “Elucidating Central Mechanisms Associated with Neuropeptide AF-induced Satiety”.

Biology associate professor Jeremy Wojdak received a $7,500 National Science Foundation award for the project "Collaborative Research: Community composition and disease outcomes in a multihost-parasite system (REU Supplement)." REU Supplement is a collaborative project with Virginia Tech assistant professor of biology Lisa Belden.

Recruiters Visit IT Classes to Meet Outstanding Students

Information Technology professor Dan Spillman has coordinated recruiting visits from CGI Federal, Rackspace, VTLS and the CIA from February 8—February 23. CGI is planning to return to campus March 3 to conduct on-campus interviews with students. Most of the recruiters met with Spillman’s ITEC 490 Senior Seminar sections, in addition to offering information sessions to review and critique résumés. CCS will be visiting in March to recruit for five positions that it has available.

"I wanted to give our graduating seniors direct exposure to these company recruiters’ expertise. All of the recruiters are in the process of hiring, so this is an excellent opportunity for our students," says Spillman.

Study Abroad to Kenya Offered

The RU Department of Economics in collaboration with International Studies Minor and the geospatial science program, together with Kenyatta University in Nairobi, Kenya, will offer a three-week study abroad program that provides opportunity for students to interact across disciplines and culture with others on campus and in Kenya.

For more information, contact geography faculty member Dr. Charles Manyara at cmanyara@radford.edu or visit the Geospatial Science program website at https://php.radford.edu/~geos-web/.
CSAT Hosts Successful Open House

The CSAT Bridges and Pipelines Scholarship Committee and the CSAT STEM Club hosted an open house for prospective students interested in science, technology and mathematics. Faculty from across the college welcomed more than 50 students to the college for presentations, tours and demonstrations. These students have been admitted to the university as majors in the College of Science and Technology.

The day began with a welcome from Orion Rogers, Dean of CSAT and a presentation by 2003 information technology and political science alumnus Seth Peery. Then students were able to choose from activities such as meeting with a program specific advisor, campus tour, financial aid representative session, Museum of the Earth Sciences tour, RU Planetarium show, RU Greenhouse tour, chemistry magic show, robotics and information technology demonstration. The closing session included information about the Bridges and Pipelines scholarship which is specifically for STEM students, the LEAD program, the Honors Academy, study abroad opportunities, and presentations from the CSAT advising staff and RU admissions.

This is the second year the committee organized an open house. Last year, 44 of the 61 students who attended the open house enrolled as a major in the College of Science and Technology.

CSAT STEM Club News

T-shirts for the club are now available, and if you would like to buy one, they are $13. There are not many left, so please speak with the president, Erin Fowler to order one.

This upcoming Monday, February 28, we will be having a faculty dinner. Club members will be making spaghetti, and will offer salad for as a vegetarian option. Side items are also. The students will deliver the food to your offices between 11am-3pm.

On March 17, Dr. David Evans, Associate Professor from UVA will be talking about Computer Security. On April 7, mathematics professor Wei-Chi Yang will give a talk.

On Saturday, April 2, the club will visit the Smithsonian in Washington D.C. Cost is $15 and registration forms are available with Dr. Laura Jacobsen. The bus will depart at 5 a.m., and return around 11 p.m. The trip is open to everyone in the college.

There will be many volunteer opportunities this semester, and we want to encourage everyone to volunteer if they are available. These opportunities include:

- Blue Ridge Highlands Science Fair, March 4-5—Volunteers are needed all day
- Super MACC, Monday, March 14, 4—9 p.m.—Scorekeepers, Timekeepers, Ambassadors are needed
- Science Exploration Day, Saturday, March 26—Volunteers are needed all day for teaching assistant positions

Jasmine Jackson, Secretary of CSAT STEM Club