

SVSU Lending Research Expertise to Reduce Crime in Saginaw

Two major initiatives aimed at reducing crime in the city of Saginaw are the latest examples of SVSU's commitment to community engagement.

Andrew Miller, assistant professor of geography, led a study that found a correlation between a recent drop in Saginaw's violent crime rate and a Michigan State Housing Development Authority (MSHDA) initiative aimed at eliminating blighted structures from the city.

He presented the findings during a Tuesday, May 26 symposium that also featured U.S. Rep. Dan Kildee and Saginaw Mayor Dennis Browning. The event focused on Saginaw's community development since receiving \$11.2 million in MSHDA funds to demolish abandoned homes beginning in late 2013.

Miller's analysis was commissioned by Saginaw City Hall officials looking to track the impact of the MSHDA funds the city received. He said the study represents SVSU's dedication both to community interaction and hands-on learning.

"This is a local university using local information to solve local problems," Miller said. "On top of that, we're using local students with skills they attained at a local university to service their communities."

Beginning in April, Miller performed statistical analysis while two of his students were responsible for much of the study's data management and GIS work. Those students were Mitchell Kloc, a professional and technical writing major from

Freeland, and Daniel Johnson, a criminal justice major from Sparta who graduated in May.

John Stemple, Saginaw's chief inspector, said he and other City Hall officials turned to SVSU to conduct the study because of the university's strong record of community engagement.

"The City of Saginaw has partnered with SVSU on several occasions with positive results, including participation in the multi-jurisdictional Saginaw County Crime Prevention Council, resulting in a crime statistics basis for creating crime

measurement tools," Stemple said.

In 2013-14, Miller and SVSU undergraduate students conducted research that helped Saginaw law enforcement leaders better understand the city's crime "hot spots." That research received national media attention, and led to a related study that extended to the county level in 2014-15.

In a separate project, SVSU also is serving as the research partner for a Project Safe Neighborhood grant received to combat crime in Saginaw.

The Saginaw Community Foundation announced Saginaw's selection for funding by the U.S. Department of Justice at a news conference Friday, May 22.

Four SVSU faculty are involved with the project: Meghan Baruth, assistant professor of health sciences; Dawn Hinton, professor of sociology; Josh Ode, professor of kinesiology; and Carol Zimmermann, associate professor of criminal justice.



Andrew Miller, center, assistant professor of geography, presented findings of a study that shows eliminating blight has contributed to a drop in crime within the city of Saginaw during a May 26 symposium at the Bancroft Building in Saginaw. SVSU students Daniel Johnson, left, a May 2015 criminal justice graduate from Sparta, and Mitch Kloc, a senior professional and technical writing major from Freeland, assisted with the study. Miller's analysis was commissioned by Saginaw City Hall officials to track the impact of an MSHDA grant to demolish abandoned homes beginning in 2013. [Photo by Tim Inman]

Travis Pashak

Assistant Professor of Psychology

For three years now, the study of death anxiety has been part of Travis Pashak's life.

"I get a lot of squints when I tell people what I study," said the assistant professor of psychology. "Once we start talking about it, though, they become very interested in it, too."

Pashak began research on the topic while he was a graduate student at Saint Louis University. He continues it today as a member of SVSU's faculty, utilizing some of his students as research partners.

"My adviser in grad school was interested in death anxiety and it was a topic that struck me as important," said Pashak, who joined SVSU in July 2014.

Specifically, his research examines how the fear of dying may play a role in mental health across a person's lifespan and whether there are protective factors against death anxiety. The data include surveys of hundreds of people.

"The thought at first was that those with a stronger faith would have less death anxiety," he said. "So far, we're a little baffled because we haven't seen that it's related to religion or spirituality."

The research isn't Pashak's only focus in psychology, a field that first attracted his interest in the sixth grade.

"I learned what it was in school — it sounded really interesting," the Bay City native said. "I've been lucky because the more I learned about it, the more I liked it."

And now he's working to attain full state licensure as a clinical psychologist. To achieve this, Pashak has volunteered 10 hours weekly since January as a therapist in the Student Counseling Center, with off-site supervision.

"It's highly utilized," he said of the center. "My schedule ends up getting very full."

He will spend about two years in the role before earning the license, which would allow him advantages such as the ability to practice independently.

In the meantime, Pashak will have plenty of work to attend to. In addition to his classroom work, research and counseling hours, he soon will become a father. His wife, Whitney Pashak, a research specialist in SVSU's Institutional Research office since fall 2014, is due to give birth in August.

The two met while attending Bay City Western High School. "I was in marching band and she was a cheerleader," Pashak recalled. The two began dating as college undergraduates, and later both moved to Missouri before returning to Michigan.

"I was really excited that she was able to find work here, too," he said. "We've enjoyed working at the same place together very much."



Kelly Helmreich

Faculty/Administrative Secretary, Office Coordinator • May Staff Member of the Month

Just call her “Mama Kelly.”

That’s the moniker many SVSU theatre students affectionately bestow upon Kelly Helmreich, whose many responsibilities over the years have included serving as secretary in the Department of Theatre since 1998.

The role has placed the Auburn native behind the scenes of more than 50 theatre productions. It has also kept her near and dear to the hearts of the department’s students, staff and faculty.

“We consider her to be part of our team,” said Ric Roberts, professor of theatre. Helmreich said her close relationship to colleagues and students remains the highlight of her job.

“That’s what I enjoy most,” she said. “I love working with the faculty and being close to the students. They know they can come to me with questions or other issues.”

The camaraderie is strong among the SVSU theatre community, she said. Many students, faculty and staff spend hours together outside of classes in rehearsals for productions or in study sessions in a lounge near the theatre department offices.

Hanging on the walls in this same lounge are framed photos of plays and musicals performed at SVSU through the years. Some of the posters date back to Helmreich’s early years in the job. She can still name the students who performed in productions from nearly two decades ago.

“I always tell the students when they graduate, ‘I want to hear from you after this,’” she said.

Joni Boye-Beaman, dean of the College of Arts & Behavioral Sciences, said part of what makes Helmreich an outstanding worker is “a long history of providing service over and above what might be expected.

“She has also been instrumental in the success of the Kennedy Center American College Theatre Festival and the Michigan Educational Theatre Association Festival, both of which have been hosted by SVSU numerous times,” Boye-Beaman said. “In fact, Kelly’s assistance is one of the main reasons the organizers of these festivals want to return to campus.”

Recently, Helmreich’s work ethic has extended to the Department of Geography, where she also serves as a faculty secretary.

“Kelly has such a positive attitude and a great willingness to work hard, to serve our department, to suggest better options, and to problem solve,” said Martin Arford, associate professor of geography and chairman of the department.

“Mama Kelly,” though, considers her work more a labor of love. “SVSU is a great place to work,” she said. “I like the people and I make new friends all the time. Working with students has been an unbelievable experience.”



SVSU Cardinal Formula Racing team places 26th in the world

The Cardinal Formula Racing team earned the fifth best finish in the accomplished program's history at its most recent international competition. The team finished in 26th place out of 110 colleges and universities from around the world at the Formula Society of Automotive Engineers Collegiate Design Series. SVSU recorded the highest overall finish among institutions without a graduate program in engineering, thanks to strong showings in all other categories, placing in the top 15 in acceleration, autocross, cost, presentation, and skid pad. The event took place May 14-16 at the Michigan International Speedway in Brooklyn, Michigan.

"I feel pretty good about our performance," said Brooks Byam, Cardinal Formula Racing's adviser since 1998 and professor of mechanical engineering. Byam said this year's vehicle might have finished in the event's top 10 if not for a mechanical failure during the endurance portion of the competition.

The only Cardinal Formula Racing teams to place higher in the annual competition managed a sixth place finish in 2002, eighth in 2005, 14th in 2008 and 18th in 2010. Last year, the group finished in 36th place.



The 2015 Cardinal Formula Racing team includes (standing, from left to right) team adviser Brooks Byam along with students Shane Oberloier, Logan Shelagowski, Kameron Carey, Zach Haveranek, Brandon Stanhope, Ryan Whitman, Clayton Piechowiak, Alex Fullerton and Samuel Dantuma. Student Jarred Felt is sitting on the team vehicle, known as No. 73.

Professional Profile

- **Andrew Miller**, assistant professor of geography, and **James Bowers**, assistant professor of criminal justice, worked with students Ryan Muntz and Dan Johnson on two crime mapping projects: "Assessing the Spatial Mobility of Violent Crime in Saginaw County, Michigan" and "A Temporal-Spatial Analysis of Saginaw County 911 Dispatch and Response Times." These maps were presented at the Association of American Geographers annual meeting, April 23 in Chicago.
- **Chris Giroux**, assistant professor of English, and **Helen Raica Klotz**, director of the writing center, presented "Guess Who's Coming to Tutor?: University Faculty in the Writing Center" at the East Central Writing Centers Association Conference, April 9-11 at the University of Notre Dame.
- **Heidi B. Lang**, pre-health professions advisor, presented "Mock Interviews: Helping Students Work out the Bugs" at the Central Association of Advisors for the Health Professions Conference, April 26 in Kansas City, Missouri.
- **Ric Roberts**, professor of theatre, was recently named Region III chair for the Kennedy Center American College Theatre Festival, April 16-19 in Washington, D.C. Roberts will represent the Midwest on the KCACTF board in Washington, D.C., and will vote on all KCACTF rules and procedures. He will also be responsible for chairing the Region III festival for the next three years. His first will be in January 2016 in Milwaukee, Wisconsin.
- **Stephen Taber**, professor of biology, has a manuscript titled "A Second Nearctic Species of the Fungus Gnat Genus *Acomopterella* Zaitzev (Diptera: Mycetophilidae)" accepted for publication in *Southwestern Entomologist* magazine.

New Cardinals

- **Kathryn Scott**, director of the English Language Program, announced the birth of a son, Isaiah Allan Scott, April 23.
- **Nic Taylor**, associate director of admissions, announced the birth of a son, Brooks Robert Taylor, May 15.

Condolences

- To **Ann Schneider-Branch**, assistant to the executive director of the SVSU Foundation, whose father, Aloysius "Al" Schneider, passed away May 16.

Briefly Speaking

- **Craig Snook**, assistant director of publishing services, recently had two paintings, "Breathe" and "Pear," juried into the Art in Public Places art show established by Saginaw Township. "Breathe" won the Open Arms Inc. Purchase Award.
- For a list of campus offices, including room numbers, that have located temporarily during the summer in Living Center Southwest, go to svsu.edu/find/offices.

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J.J. Boehm

Director of Media Relations
jjboehm@svsu.edu • (989) 964-4055

Tim Inman

Director of Photography, Advertising
& Publishing Services
tmi@svsu.edu • (989) 964-4086

Submission Deadline:

**Noon on Wednesday before the publication date.
Please send items by email to: jjboehm@svsu.edu.**