SVSU named ‘Great College to Work For’

SVSU was recognized among the nation’s best college workplaces by The Chronicle of Higher Education.

“We receive this honor with great enthusiasm, because it speaks to our commitment to support students and one another,” said Donald Bachand, SVSU president.

SVSU was one of 93 institutions to achieve the “Great College to Work For” recognition. The results are based on a survey of 281 schools.

SVSU was honored in three categories: compensation and benefits; facilities, workspace and security; and teaching environment.

All SVSU faculty and staff and their families are invited to the annual Welcome Back Picnic

Thursday, Aug. 25 • 5 to 7:30 p.m.
Owsley Grove
(Northwest of the Arbury Fine Arts Center)

The festivities follow the introduction of new faculty and staff, along with remarks by President Don Bachand, at 4 p.m. in the Malcolm Field Theatre for Performing Arts.

Military Student Affairs earns state recognition

SVSU’s Military Student Affairs recently was awarded gold-level certification as a veteran-friendly school from the Michigan Veterans Affairs Agency.

The state agency awards the certification to campuses with military affairs offices, student-operated clubs associated with members of the military, an established process for identifying student veterans, a veteran-specific website, the evaluation of the academic progress of students with military background, and the monitoring of job placement for its military-affiliated students.

Campus welcomes new student affairs leader

Sidney R. Childs began in July as SVSU’s associate provost for student affairs, replacing the retired Merry Jo Brandimore. Serving since 1993 at Bowling Green State University, Childs since 2014 worked as both interim vice president and assistant vice president for student affairs at the Ohio campus.
Every smile has a purpose for Heidi Chernich.
After her 16-year-old son, VJ, ended his life in September 2008, Chernich’s approach to connecting with people has changed. It’s an approach that she brings to her work as administrative secretary at the Office of Academic Affairs.

“The way you treat people and the way you smile at someone can make a difference,” she said. “Sometimes just saying ‘hi’ can make that difference, especially if someone seems sad.”

Chernich’s own struggles with despair following her son’s death led her to step away from a 25-year career as a legal assistant with the UAW. She spent four years in that state of mind before deciding to re-enter the work force by answering an advertisement seeking candidates for SVSU’s clerical pool.

She was hired, spending weeks at a time in various offices before landing a full-time position in the Office of Diversity Programs. She was hired at Academic Affairs in April 2015.

The move to SVSU helped Chernich reengage with the world, exposing her to supportive and friendly co-workers. The network she built on campus also was supportive of Chernich when she joined Walk For Hope, a Saginaw-based nonprofit organization that raises awareness about depression and suicide. A number of Chernich’s colleagues have joined in her efforts with the group.

“It’s a passion of mine,” she said of Walk For Hope’s mission. “Very close to my heart.”

The nonprofit hosts an annual fundraiser that supports educational programs aimed at training people how to approach those suffering from depression and thoughts of suicide.

“My son was the most normal 16-year-old, and I didn’t even realize he was suffering from depression,” she said. The lessons learned, meanwhile, have made her daily interactions more rich and meaningful, she said.

“I try to get to know everyone, including the student workers,” Chernich said. She considers her Academic Affairs co-workers “like a family.”

Meanwhile, her at-home family also keeps Chernich smiling.

With her husband of 30 years, Vince, Chernich raised five children, including two who still live at home. Chernich said a new addition to that family tree — a 4-year-old grandson — has given her another purpose for smiling.

“He and I share a really special bond,” Chernich said. “We had a connection right from the beginning, and he makes everything worthwhile.

“He makes me smile every time.”
Once — not too long ago — Dan Strasz tried to count the number of offices he has occupied while working at SVSU.

“I lost count at 17,” said the Academic Advisement Center director. “I’ve been all over the campus.”

The office he has occupied for nearly two years, on the first floor of Wickes Hall, was a library when Strasz first became part of the SVSU family as a teenage undergraduate in 1982.

Since then, he has worn a number of hats on campus, as both a student and a professional.

He was a member of the 1983 national championship men’s indoor track team — an accomplishment that in 2013 resulted in the team’s induction into the SVSU Cardinal Athletics Hall of Fame. He served as the student government’s president in 1985. He graduated with a bachelor’s degree in 1986.

Shortly after that, he nearly nabbed a position in state government, but an election season fallout kept him from such a career. Instead, he applied for a position in the SVSU Admissions office. Since then, he’s taken on new roles in Career Services, First Year Programs, Orientation, and Academic Advisement.

“It’s gone by really quick,” Strasz said of his career as a Cardinal. “It’s been a great experience here. I’ve been fortunate to have had a variety of job opportunities.”

Strasz’s membership to the SVSU family runs as deep as DNA. His daughter, Sarah, expects to graduate with a bachelor’s degree in psychology within two years. His son, Bill, already earned a bachelor’s degree in health science and is engaged to another member of SVSU’s alumni.

His wife, Tracy, who also graduated from SVSU, died of cancer in 2009. Since then, Strasz has been a regular at charities and fundraisers benefiting cancer research and cancer awareness. “That’s a very important cause to me, so I try to stay connected to events like that,” he said.

He also keeps busy as a middle school football coach. “I’m very committed to the learning process,” Strasz said.

That commitment remains part of the reason he advanced his career at SVSU. Strasz has remained a member of the Academic Advisement Center since 1998, his longest tenure with any of SVSU’s offices.

“What I enjoy most about this job are the challenges,” he said. “Whether it’s making processes easier, helping students who are registering, improving university processes — anytime I get an opportunity to make things better, that’s rewarding for me.”
By Bruce Zimmerman’s calculation, SVSU extended his coaching career by a decade.

“Sixty years old,” he said. “That’s when I told my wife I would be ready to retire. Then I heard about this opportunity.”

“This opportunity” was a chance for the now-62-year-old to become the first coach of both SVSU’s inaugural women’s swimming and diving team in 2014 and first men’s swimming and diving team in 2015.

“It seemed like all of the pieces of the puzzle were here to create something special,” said Zimmerman, whose new target retirement age is 70.

His path to SVSU’s pool spanned nearly a lifetime in the sport, beginning at age 6, when his family enrolled Zimmerman and his two sisters in swim lessons at a YMCA in his native Chicago. One of the coaches immediately recognized Zimmerman’s knack for moving in water, and signed him up for competition. That competition continued throughout high school and college.

Even while he was an active competitor, though, Zimmerman’s ambitions were to become a coach one day.

“I was very heavily influenced by my elementary school physical education teacher,” Zimmerman said. “By the time I graduated from elementary school, I wanted to follow in his footsteps.”

Zimmerman can mark the beginning of his coaching career to the day: Nov. 7, 1975. “That was a scary date,” he said. “I remember walking out to the pool deck. I started to go through the new team policies, and one of the older guys didn’t like what he was hearing, so he left.”

He began by coaching both the boys team in Peoria High School and the Peoria Park District USS Age Group Swim Team in Illinois. His career included jobs at various K-12 schools, clubs and colleges across the Midwest and east coast.

His first college coaching stint came in 1988 with a women’s team affiliated with the University of South Carolina. When the men’s team’s coach departed for the storied men’s swimming program at Indiana University — which produced Olympic champions such as Mark Spitz — Zimmerman followed to become an assistant coach in 1990. In 1999, he accepted a head coach position at the College of Charleston, where he remained until he decided to postpone his retirement and join SVSU.

“Our teams have exceeded my expectations substantially,” he said of SVSU’s programs. For instance, four student-athletes from SVSU’s women’s team qualified for the NCAA Championships during the program’s first two years. Two student-athletes from the men’s team qualified for the championships during the program’s first and only year of competition.
Condolences

- To Gerald Dennis, technical director, whose mother, Joan Dennis, passed away June 17.

- To Vanessa Brooks Herd, associate professor of social work, whose mother-in-law, Leatha Britto, passed away Aug. 3.

- To the family of Marilyn Knight, retired assistant professor of accounting, who passed away July 4. While on the faculty at SVSU, Knight received two distinguished awards: the Landee Award for Teaching Excellence for 1995-1996 and the 1994 House Family Award for Teacher Impact.

- To Robert Lane, professor of political science, whose father-in-law, Jerry Lane, passed away July 23.

- To Janet Rentsch, director of sponsored programs & IRB research, whose mother-in-law, Marlis Rentsch, passed away July 28.

- To the family of Jerry Woodcock, retired vice president for administration & business affairs, who passed away Aug. 14.

Briefly Speaking

- Faculty and staff can pick up two 2016-17 All Sports Passes from Shelly Reminder in the Ryder Center. The passes grant admission to all home regular season football and basketball games. You must sign for them and you may not pick up passes for anyone else. All Sports Passes are not distributed at any home contests. Please note that your SVSU ID card does not provide you with free admission to the games; you must present your All Sports Pass to the ticket takers.


- Rejeana Heinrich, associate director of the Stevens Center for Family Business, presented “Family Businesses Have Great Opportunities for College Graduates” at the 6th Annual Michigan Career Educator & Employer Alliance State Conference, June 16 in Frankenmuth.

- Michael Major, director of career services, presented “Hunting Your Purple Squirrels with Career Services” at the National Association for Colleges and Employers 60th Annual National Conference, June 7-10 in Chicago, and also at the 6th Annual Michigan Career Educator & Employer Alliance State Conference, June 16 in Frankenmuth.

- Reserve parking permits for 2016-17 may be purchased for $20 at svsu.edu/universitypolice, at University Police in South Campus Complex A or at Student Financial Services in Wickes Hall. Permits for 2015-16 expire Sept. 15. For further information, call ext. 4141.
Professionals Profile


- **James Bowers**, associate professor of criminal justice, co-authored (with Jason Spraitz from University of Wisconsin-Eau Claire and Kendra Bowen from Texas Christian University) “Neutralizations and a history of ‘keeping the lid’ on it: how church leaders handled and explained sexual abuse in one diocese” in *Journal of Crime & Justice*.

- **Geoffrey Carter**, assistant professor of English, was a co-host on WCMU Public Radio’s jazz program, Destination Out, in honor of the 88th birthday of the late Eric Dolphy.

- **Adrianne Cole**, STEM program manager, and **Anne Tapp**, professor of teacher education, gave a pair of presentations titled “Building a Regional Culture of STEM” and “Broadening Student Views on STEM Careers” at the National Science Teachers Association Annual STEM Conference in Denver.

- **Chad M. Dewey**, lecturer of computer science & information systems, presented “Hacking the High Seas” at BSides, Aug. 2 in Las Vegas.


- **René Hernandez**, assistant professor of health science, presented a poster titled “Disaster Relief to the Nepali Earthquakes: A Multi-Perspective View of Response” at the 18th Annual FEMA Emergency Management Institute Higher Education Symposium, June 6 in Washington, D.C.

- **Michael Mosher**, professor of art/communication & multimedia, is exhibiting his artwork at the “Meter-Reader: Voltage, Amperage, Knowledge” show through Sept. 14 in SVSU’s University Art Gallery. He will lecture in the gallery at 3 p.m., Thursday, Sept. 8; a reception will follow from 4 to 6 p.m.

- **Christine Noller**, assistant professor of health science, and **Marilyn Skrocki**, professor of health science, presented “Advantages and Concerns with Requiring Personality and Emotional Intelligence Testing as Part of the Employment Process” at the 6th Annual Michigan Career Educator & Employer Alliance State Conference, June 16 in Frankenmuth. Skrocki also presented “Ability to Adapt to Change, how best to Interview to Achieve the Desired Candidate” at the conference.


- **Hong Park**, professor of economics, presented “Creativity and the Market for Entrepreneurs in the Information and Communications Industry,” as the lead paper in the session of unpacking creativity at the 11th International Forum on Knowledge Asset Dynamics, June 15-17 in Dresden, Germany. Park co-authored the paper with **Il-Hyung Cho**, associate professor of computer science & information systems, and Sonia Park (Etienne Aigner). The research is supported by a Braun Research fellowship. Park, who received a Korea Foundation Field Research grant for a study on Korean creativity economy from July 1 to Dec. 31, is conducting the research while on sabbatical.

Also, Park’s paper, “Advantages and Shortcomings of Korean Chaebols,” was republished by popular request in *International Business & Economics Research*.

- **Matthew Zivich**, professor of art, exhibited a painting titled “Overboard” in the University of Michigan’s juried 2016 Stamps School of Art & Design Annual Alumni Show. The piece was selected as one of three equal top-awarded works in the exhibition.

New Cardinals

- **Chris Ebright**, head baseball coach, announced the birth of a daughter, Emmersen Eleanor Ebright (8 lbs., 20.5 in.), July 24.

- **Jules Gehrke**, associate professor of history, announced the birth of a daughter, Elizabeth Kathleen Gehrke (6 lbs., 3 oz.), July 8.

- **Samantha Kuhl**, assistant athletic director of compliance & academics, announced the birth of a daughter, Amelia Louise Kuhl (7 lbs., 9 oz., 21 in.), July 27.

- **Jacob Moe**, custodian, announced the birth of a son, Ryker Moe, July 3.

- **Cara Shaw**, accounting supervisor, announced the birth of a daughter, Leah Rose Shaw, July 7.

- **Nicholas Wagner**, director of institutional research, announced the birth of a son, Jack Michael Wagner (7 lbs., 4 oz., 19 in.), July 29.