



# Volume 3, Issue 1

## Letter from Nancy

This has certainly been a busy year for the MS Genetic Counseling program. It has also been a year in which we have experienced some major transitions. As many of you already know, in July Sonja Eubanks was a beautiful bride (see page 14). We were sad to see Sonja leave and appreciated all of the contributions she made to the program over the past 10 years – one of them included starting this annual newsletter. I know that Sonja would love to continue to hear from all of you. In July, Randi Culp Stewart (Class of 2002) joined us as the new Assistant Director. Many of you know Randi through your experiences at UNCG or as colleagues in North Carolina. We are very happy to welcome Randi to the program. She “hit the ground running” and is already putting her energy and creativity to work in many good ways. Several of you had an opportunity to visit with Randi at the 2011 NSGC meeting a few weeks ago. Of course, some things, happily, remain the same, including that Sally Sprague is still here, supporting us and our students in her lovely cheerful way. Thank goodness for Sally!

Another huge transition happened on July 1, 2011 when the program joined several other departments and programs in the newly formed **UNCG School of Health and Human Sciences (HHS)**. Over the past months I have enjoyed working with new colleagues within HHS, learning the ropes of being part of a larger academic unit and discovering some new resources for the program. I am optimistic that this move will result in some new opportunities for collaboration for the program faculty and students (see [www.uncg.edu/hhs](http://www.uncg.edu/hhs) for more details about HHS). HHS Dean Celia Hooper has been very enthusiastic about learning about our program (see letter from Dean Hooper on page 2).

Not surprisingly, in light of the current economic crisis in the US, along with all departments and programs across UNCG, we faced some significant budget challenges this year. The operating budget for the program has been reduced and we had to make some changes accordingly. I think we made some good decisions about how to handle these cuts in a way that preserves what is always most important to us – offering strong academic courses and clinical experiences for our students. But, now more than ever, we hope that you will consider making a contribution to the MS Genetic Counseling Program **Student Enrichment Fund** (see more about this on page 3). This fund is used solely to support student research projects and professional development activities – including partial funding for students to attend the annual NSGC meeting.

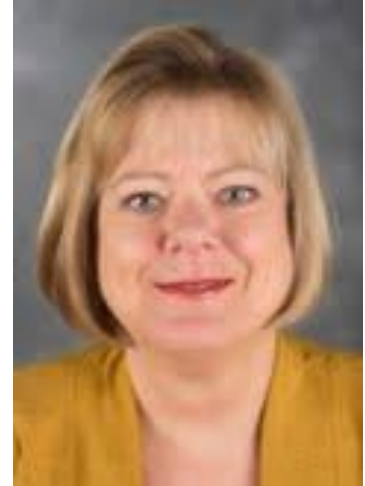
During this academic year, our program will be reviewed by the **American Board of Genetic Counseling** for re-accreditation. This is an extensive process that includes a detailed self-study and report, and a site visit. While this is a laborious process, it also gives us the



opportunity to look back on the accomplishments of the program and our graduates. We have a lot to be proud of! As part of this process we surveyed graduates from the past 5 years (thank you for the 97% response rate!) and their employers. As evidenced by the survey results and updates we received from many of you, our graduates are out there doing wonderful things - working in meaningful and sometimes unique positions, advocating for their clients, contributing to our professional organizations and the literature and taking on new challenges. Our graduates have also consistently been successful in obtaining employment shortly after graduation and in achieving certification by passing the ABGC exam. In putting together this application I am once again reminded of, and grateful for, the many, many ways that our colleagues throughout NC support the program. The strength of our clinical rotations is a large factor in why students choose to come to UNCG, and something that students always comment on positively during their exit interviews. Our colleagues also contribute significantly to the success of the student Capstone Projects – a number of which have resulted in presentations at NSGC or other meetings. In a growing number of cases, our graduates, with help and encouragement of their project committees, have been successful in having their work published in the Journal of Genetic Counseling or other relevant publication. So, whenever you have the chance, please reach out and thank those wonderful folks who provide lectures, clinical supervision, support of your projects and other mentoring during your time at UNCG. As our newsletter continues to develop we hope to include more recognition of and updates from our program colleagues (see page 7).

I want to take this opportunity to congratulate you on your professional and personal accomplishments – those which appear in this issue of the newsletter, and those which we may not know about. I hope you enjoy this issue of our newsletter, and continue to stay in touch with us and with each other.

Finally, I want to thank all of you who reached out in such thoughtful ways following the loss of my daughter Angela. Your kindness and generosity during such a difficult time meant so very much to me.



November 15, 2011

Dear Graduates and Friends of the Genetic Counseling Program at UNCG,

It was with the greatest of pleasure that we welcomed the Genetic Counseling Program into the new School of Health and Human Sciences (HHS) in the Summer of 2011. We consider ourselves fortunate that the only Genetic Counseling program in North Carolina found a home with us in HHS. I have gotten to know Nancy Callanan and some of her students this fall and they are a terrific group! Nancy has joined our leadership team in HHS as we formed a new school, faced state budget cuts, and carried out our theme this year: *HHS. Nine Disciplines. Changing. Together*

In HHS, all of our faculty members, staff and students are committed to improving the **human** condition. We try to improve people and institutions, working to make the world better, safer, healthier, more just and more humane. In concert with this broad overarching goal, the genetic counseling program emphasizes the values of cooperative and lifelong learning to prepare graduates that will contribute to the field and society in productive ways through clinical and professional service, research, education and advocacy.

I applaud your and your program's successes and the contributions you have made to the field of genetic counseling as well as to individuals and families, and to the community as volunteers in family support groups. I am proud to be your new Dean and hope that just as you have found a home in 119 Mclver Street, that you will find yourselves at home in HHS. Please do check out our new web site at [www.uncg.edu/hhs](http://www.uncg.edu/hhs), including our transition site. And see our slides from the fall convocation of all faculty. And, of course, join our Facebook page! Just search for "School of Health and Human Sciences" at UNCG and become our "friend!"

Sincerely,

Celia R. Hooper, Ph.D., CCC-SLP  
 Professor of Communication Sciences and Disorders  
 Dean, School of Health and Human Sciences

### SCHOOL OF HHS

DEPT. OF COMMUNICATION SCIENCES AND DISORDERS  
 DEPT. OF HUMAN DEVELOPMENT & FAMILY STUDIES  
 DEPT. OF KINESIOLOGY  
 DEPT. OF NUTRITION  
 DEPT. OF PUBLIC HEALTH EDUCATION  
 DEPT. OF COMMUNITY AND THERAPEUTIC RECREATION  
 DEPT. OF SOCIAL WORK  
**GENETIC COUNSELING PROGRAM**  
 GERONTOLOGY PROGRAM

# Congratulations Class of 2011!

## Class of 2011 Capstone Projects at NSGC

### Platform Presentation

Hardy, Melanie, Roche, Myra, Cannon, Robert and Callanan, Nancy. Increasing Undergraduate Student Awareness of Genetic Counseling as a Career Choice.

### Poster Presentation

Faux, Dana, Schoch, Kelly, Shashi, Vondana and Eubanks, Sonja. Development of an Interview Guide to Assess Parental Disclosure of a 22q11 Deletion Syndrome Diagnosis to the Child as well as Informational and Support Needs.

McMahon, Kelly, Cope, Heidi, Heise, Elizabeth and Eubanks, Sonja. Descriptive Life Experiences of Adults with Myelomeningocele.

Osborne, Michael, Lee, Kristy, Valgus, John and Eubanks, Sonja. Knowledge and Attitudes of Pharmacists on Pharmacogenetics.

Schultz, Mallory, Powell, Karen, McWalter, Kirsty, and Callanan, Nancy. Public Health Genetic Counselors: Roles, Knowledge, Skills and Where to Learn.



## Did the UNCG Genetic Counseling Program make a difference in your life?

Would you like a way to show your gratitude and make a difference in the lives of future genetic counselors and future members of our alumni community?

The *Student Enrichment Fund* may be just the answer!

**What is it?** : The *Student Enrichment Fund* is a fund used entirely to support current students in the program by providing support for capstone projects, financial assistance for travel to national meetings as less support is currently available for students, and other activities such as joint class meetings.

**How do I donate?** : To make a donation online, [click here](#). You can also donate by mail. Checks should be made payable to the UNCG MS Genetic Counseling Program and can be mailed c/o Sally Sprague, MS Genetic Counseling, 119 McIver Street, Greensboro, NC 27412. Any amount will be appreciated.

**The Class Challenge!** : We hereby challenge you all to see which graduating class can raise the most money in donations for the *Student Enrichment Fund*! The contest begins now and the class with the highest earnings will be appropriately acknowledged in the Fall 2012 Alumni Newsletter! This is a great excuse to contact your former classmates, share the latest gossip and talk about supporting the UNCG Genetic Counseling Program!

We recognize that in the current economy it may be difficult to make a donation. However, your donations are needed and will be appreciated more now than ever!

Please see our website at [www.uncg.edu/gen](http://www.uncg.edu/gen) for more details on the *Student Enrichment Fund*.

## The 2011 MPS Conference through the eyes of a genetic counseling student

### By Julie Jesiolowski (2012)

I did not realize when selected to intern with the National MPS society how impactful this experience would be. I got off the plane in St. Louis barely able to pronounce "mucopolysaccharidosis," but eager to learn as much as possible. Graduate school teaches us that families are resilient - that most individuals can handle the cards dealt to them by the unpredictable wheel of life. Despite hardships and turmoil, most people turn out "okay" after even the harshest trials. MPS families could be the "poster child" for this term. When a child is diagnosed with MPS the uncertainty and fear that accompany this diagnosis can be incapacitating for the entire family. Many of these individuals shared with me concerns about the lack of knowledge health care professionals currently have, and the pain of watching their dreams for their child's future shattered. MPS families are truly warriors, fighting with honor and bearing an assault which often feels hopeless. Despite this onslaught, I noticed a common theme within these families which shines like hundreds of candles in a deep darkness. They each have an undeniable appreciation of each day, and the love and strong bonds within their families cannot be tampered with. Children with MPS light up a room with their beautiful smiles! MPS parents advocate for their children and stand up for what they believe in; we could all learn a lesson from them. Also, I could not possibly leave out the siblings of MPS children, who are easily willing to provide a helping hand. These unbreakable family ties allow them to move forward; MPS families resolutely approach each day as it comes. I was inspired by their strength and humbled by their courage.



While MPS invades many facets of their lives, it does not define them or their children. A trip to the water park and time at the pool proved that these families like to splash water and eat french fries as much as anyone else. In the shallow end of the pool, our "noodles" became imaginary horses, and I was nominated as an honorary princess by these children. They live in

a way easily envied; if they are hungry, they express themselves loudly until satisfied. Bodily functions are not hidden; there is no shame. If they are unhappy with a current activity, they move onto the next one without regard. If they feel like talking to someone, they will let it be known. I will not forget "Riley" always welcoming me with a smile and a "Hi!" at breakfast each morning! If only we could all live with such free spirits.

Throughout the weekend, I was welcomed by each of the families with open arms as they shared intimate details about daily living with MPS and the effect it has on relationships and their lives. Though their lives may be much different than anticipated, this syndrome does not stop these families from excelling. I can't thank them enough for letting me into their world.



I laughed while looking at scrapbooks of silly photos and listened as wonderful memories were shared. I cried with them as we remembered those who had lost their fight at the memorial ceremony. I could sense the anxiety in their voices during the clinical trial lectures; I too was desperately wishing that there would be a promising trial for each and every one of these children. They have taught me the importance of cherishing each day and how valuable strong relationships are. I have learned so much from each of them, and my journey toward becoming a genetic counselor has been forever changed. As a genetic counseling student, I thank each of them for their compassion and openness. Lastly, I am grateful to the National MPS Society for providing this life-changing experience.



# UNCG Alumni and Students at NSGC

October 27-30, 2011 in San Diego, CA



Recent grads from the class of 2011 shared stories with the “more experienced”.



2nd year students escaped the conference for a little fun!



Current 2nd year students enjoyed meeting alumni!

The whole gang!





## Embracing the Role of Education by Kelly East, MS, CGC (2010)

One part of what attracted me to the profession of genetic counseling was the role genetic counselors have in educating patients about the impact of genetics on health and disease. It is crucially important for our patients, many of whom have been personally impacted by genetic disease, to be given the information and support necessary to make informed decisions and become self-advocates.

The last decade has seen dramatic growth in the field of genomics, driven by the development of faster and cheaper sequencing technologies. Genomic research has allowed for the further elucidation of gene mutations responsible for rare Mendelian conditions. In addition, genomics is allowing us to learn about the numerous genomic factors associated with common, complex diseases such as heart disease, diabetes, and asthma.

There is a real need for genetics education beyond the traditional genetic counseling setting. As primary care medicine becomes more and more influenced by genetic information, all people are going to need a basic understanding of genetics to be informed health consumers. In addition, numerous studies have shown that many of our colleagues in

other healthcare professions feel ill equipped to integrate genetics into their everyday practices.

Genetic counselors not only have genetics expertise, we are also trained to be excellent educators. We have the knowledge and skills needed to have a large impact on the genetic literacy of our patients, the public and other healthcare professionals.

Following graduation from UNCG in 2010, I accepted a position in the Education Outreach Department at the HudsonAlpha Institute for Biotechnology in Huntsville, AL. HudsonAlpha has a three part mission: performing world-class genomic research, stimulating economic development in biotechnology and providing genetics education to students, educators and the public.

Education Outreach at HudsonAlpha is involved in genetics education for all ages. We are actively involved in digital education. We currently have two educational Apps available (for free) in the Apple app store – a 3-D interactive model of plant, animal and bacterial cells (HudsonAlpha Cell) and an activity we call GenomeCache™. Using the GenomeCache™ app and website, educators can create a scaled model of the human genome and have students go on a genomic “scavenger hunt.”

We have also produced classroom curriculums and hands-on activities that are used across the state in 7<sup>th</sup> and 9<sup>th</sup> grade classrooms. Each summer we host weeklong middle school biotech camps, an intensive

two-week teacher academy, and manage an institute-wide internship program. In addition, we host evening educational courses for the general public twice a year.

As a new genetic counselor in a “non-traditional” role, I often found myself wishing for a group of other genetic counselors interested in education to talk to and learn from. Through the NSGC listserv I met another genetic counselor involved in education at the undergraduate level. We decided to put an inquiry out to see how many other genetic counselors had an interest in education and see whether or not it would be feasible to start an Education Special Interest Group (SIG).

The response was great and the Education SIG was created. While all of the SIG members have an interest in education, there is great diversity in the specific audiences we are involved with: patients, public, k-12, undergraduates, medical students, genetic counseling students, and practicing healthcare professionals. The goals of the SIG are to create a place where genetic counselors interested in education can meet one another and collaborate on education minded projects.

It has been a wonderful experience over the past year getting to know the other SIG members, as well as gaining leadership experience by serving as the SIG’s first chair person. I am looking forward to watching the SIG grow over the next several years and am excited to see the projects we have begun to plan come to fruition.

# Supervisor Spotlight: Christy Stanley

*UNCG students have the opportunity to work with some great supervisors. Here, **Melanie Hardy '11** shares a story of an inspiring supervisor. We hope that you will continue to provide us with your supervisor stories to help recognize our program's dedicated and inspiring supervisors!*

"Christy was my supervisor at Wake Forest Prenatal. From the very beginning, she was supportive and encouraging, and the friendliest person I had ever met!!! She's certainly a model for what great genetic counseling looks like! Even when I would see her months later at a professional meeting, we would pick up like we had just seen each other yesterday. She has a way of connecting with people on a level that shows how much she truly cares about others - and that's true for patients, students, and colleagues. She demonstrates the standard I aspire to, and I'm so happy that I had her as a supervisor. She's the one that helped me to realize how much I enjoyed prenatal counseling, and that I was capable of managing in a complex counseling role. I'm so thankful that I was able to work with her!"

**Christy Stanley** graduated from the University of Cincinnati Genetic Counseling Program in 2003. She has been working at Wake Forest University Baptist Medical Center since graduation, where she saw pediatric and prenatal patients and was involved in coordinating the Maternal Serum Screening Program and counseling for Pre-Implantation Genetic Diagnosis. Christy has been working exclusively in the Department of OB/GYN for the last 4 years. She continues to be involved in counseling prenatal patients at three clinic locations, providing lectures for multiple learners at the medical center and publishing her interesting clinical findings. She has been supervising genetic counseling students in the UNCG Genetic Counseling Program since 2003.



"All students learn differently and enter into rotations with different experiences, interests and goals. Helping to establish and understand specific goals in respect to students' true abilities while being open for modification as a rotation progresses is the foundation for a successful rotation" Christy shared. Many students rotating with her have agreed with this philosophy. "Supervision is a constant learning curve. My goal is to be the best counselor and supervisor that I can be." Our program and alumni community are grateful for Christy's dedication to her patients and students. We appreciate the wonderful example she sets and the high standards she models.

Christy's children Noah (5) and Addie (4) are doing well and are reaping the benefits of having a genetic counselor for a mother! Also, congratulations to Christy for just completing a half-marathon in Savannah!

Written by Randi Stewart

# Professional Updates from Alumni

## Class of 2002

**Brooke Thompson Smith:** I am now working part-time for Greenwood Genetic Center in Greenville, SC seeing pediatric and adult patients, and I continue to work closely with patients receiving treatment for lysosomal storage diseases.

**Randi Culp Stewart:** See Faculty Updates



Class of 2002



Class of 2003

## Class of 2003

**Angela Schwab:** I am currently work at Intermountain Healthcare in Salt Lake City, UT as the Cardiovascular Research Clinical Trials Project Manager. I am responsible for overseeing research patient billing compliance, finance, marketing, and process improvement. Although I am no longer in the role of a genetic counselor, the training I received at UNCG is invaluable. I am especially appreciative of the guidance we received in communication and work ethic. On a personal note, Shorty and Julie (my dogs) are doing well. My boyfriend has three children (ages 8, 9, and 15). I enjoy being active, going on hikes and playing football with the kids and dogs. I also spend a lot of time traveling. This year, I spent a month in Western Europe and take at least one 4-day vacation every month for travel. My words of wisdom for this year are: never regret anything that made you smile! I hope you all gain at least one laugh line this year, and wear it with pride!

**Heidi Cope:** I have been working at the Duke Center for Human Genetics for over eight years now. Currently, I coordinate the Hereditary Basis of Neural Tube Defects and The Genetics of Chiari Type I Malformation studies. I am also a part of the newly created Duke Neonatal Genomics Task Force, which is an exome sequencing study of fetuses and neonates with unexplained congenital anomalies. On a personal note, Easton Abel Cope was born March 8th.

**Megan Fleischut:** I have been at Memorial Sloan-Kettering Cancer Center for over 5 years and love my job. In my role as the lead senior counselor, I work closely with a team of genetic counselors, physicians, and administrative staff members. I especially enjoy providing group education to patients and mentoring students. As a part of my position, I have the opportunity to meet and remain in contact with patients and their families in a biweekly retinoblastoma clinic. I am continually learning and grateful to have found my dream job. My husband Peter and I are happier than ever and have made New York our home.

## Class of 2003

**Christina (Cain) Rigelsky:** At work, I continue as a part-time cardiovascular genetic counselor. If anyone is interested in breaking into cardiovascular genetics and would come to Cleveland, we will likely have an opening by the end of 2011. We welcomed our second boy, Nolan Frank, to the family at the end of January. Both of our boys are doing great and we continue to thank God for being so fortunate.

**Eddie Williams** was promoted to Genetics Services Manager at LabCorps. He has a 10 month old son, Owen.

## Class of 2004

**Shelly Galasinski:** I have recently changed positions. I am starting the cancer genetics risk assessment program at a community hospital in McHenry, IL - a far northwest suburb of Chicago. I just started last week. I was previously working at another community hospital where I started the cancer genetics program there. A physician/patient recruited me to the new hospital. I am still working part-time and the rest of the time I am busy with my family (2 sons and husband).

**Vanessa Rangel:** Overall, it has been a busy year. In August 2010, I relocated from Atlanta, GA back to Seattle, WA, leaving my position with Emory Genetics Laboratory and the Department of Human Genetics at Emory University after 6 years. During my last two years with Emory, I obtained my MBA through the University's Goizueta School of Business, graduating in May 2011. In October 2010, I joined Patient-Crossroads (Innolyst, Inc.) as the VP Genetic Services. In this role, I have the pleasure to work with patient advocacy foundations, medical researchers and clinical investigators to develop patient registries for rare and common diseases. I am involved with the American College of Medical Genetics, serving on the Program Committee for the annual conference, and am a member of the scientific advisory committee for the Congenital Muscle Diseases International Patient Registry. I travel a moderate amount and would be happy to network with any students or alum.

## Class of 2005

**Jill Polk:** I continue to work as a cancer genetic counselor at Hillcrest Hospital, a Cleveland Clinic hospital. I am currently involved in a project called Clinical Decision Support Tool that will allow Cleveland Clinic patients to enter their family history information in a patient portal and will bridge into our electronic medical record with resulting recommendations for medical management and/ or genetic counseling referral provided to the patient and their physicians. I also continue to work as a facilitator for the Children's Programs at The Gathering Place, a local support organization for families touched by cancer. This past summer my two munchkins, Parker and Remy, celebrated their birthdays. In my free time, I've started an Etsy shop called mamabean for my handmade creations for mom and baby (<http://www.etsy.com/shop/mamabeanjill>).



Class of 2004



Class of 2005

## Class of 2005

**Kelly Schoch:** I continue to coordinate 22q11 deletion syndrome research studies and clinic at Duke Medical Center. Our most recent project involves cognitive remediation and social skills training for children with the deletion. I continue to enjoy my involvement with the NC 22q11DS support group, and we are excited about our new project involving creating a book to assist families in sharing information about the 22q11DS diagnosis to their child. Bryan and I still enjoy living in Raleigh, and life with two little boys, Chase (4) and Jacob (1), is adventurous, totally rewarding, and at times exhausting!

Publications:

[Discordance in Diagnoses and Treatment of Psychiatric Disorders in Children and Adolescents with 22q11.2 Deletion Syndrome.](#) Young AS, **Shashi V**, **Schoch K**, Kwapil T, Hooper SR. Asian J Psychiatr. 2011 Jun 1;4(2):119-124.

[Social skills and associated psychopathology in children with chromosome 22q11.2 deletion syndrome: implications for interventions.](#) **Shashi V**, Veerapandiyan A, **Schoch K**, Kwapil T, Keshavan M, Ip E, Hooper S. J Intellect Disabil Res. 2011 Aug 31. doi: 10.1111/j.1365-2788.2011.01477.x. [Epub ahead of print]

[Chromosome 22q11.2 deletion syndrome in African-American patients: A diagnostic challenge.](#) Veerapandiyan A, Abdul-Rahman OA, Adam MP, Lyons MJ, Manning M, Coleman K, Kobrynski L, Taneja D, **Schoch K**, Zimmerman HH, **Shashi V**. Am J Med Genet A. 2011 Sep;155(9):2186-95. doi: 10.1002/ajmg.a.34226. Epub 2011 Aug 10.

## Class of 2006

**Tammy (Ader) Adar:** I just got married and my office has a view of A-Rod's new house.

**Christie McPhillips:** After graduation I worked for University of Tennessee at Memphis for 2 years on the CANDLE study (Conditions Affecting Neurocognitive Development and Learning in Early childhood), investigating factors influencing fetal development. In 2008, I left to become the first genetic counselor at St. Jude Children's Research Hospital. St. Jude is a unique hospital that focuses primarily on pediatric hematology/oncology. I provide clinical cancer genetic counseling. I am involved with studies in pharmacogenetics, retinoblastoma and pediatric adrenocortical carcinoma. I had the opportunity to travel to Sao Paulo, Brazil in 2009 to speak about genetic counseling at a conference on pediatric ACC. Neil and I welcomed a baby boy, Ben, to our family in April 2010.



Class of 2006



**Kelly Schoch with the NC 22q11DS support group.**

## Class of 2007

**Kim Guthrie:** I am working as a pediatric genetic counselor at Nemours Children's Clinic. I celebrated my 2<sup>nd</sup> annual 29<sup>th</sup> birthday by visiting Montreal this year.

**Larisa Baumanis:** I recently changed jobs and am working for University Hospitals of Cleveland in prenatal and pediatric genetics. I also ran my first marathon this year! My new email address is larisa.baumanis@uhhospitals.org.

**Kacey Platky Warren:** I got married on 9/3/11!



Class of 2007



Class of 2008

## Class of 2008

**Emily Rettner:** I have been working at Children's Hospital & Research Center Oakland's Division of Medical Genetics for three years. I continue to provide genetic counseling services for the Craniofacial Panel; and I am the clinic coordinator for the Northern California Skeletal Dysplasia Clinic. I currently live in San Francisco with my boyfriend. I recently visited my sister in New York, and flew to England in July for my cousin's wedding. I am still running and occasionally enter races, most recently a 5 miler!

**Rachel Mills:** I am still working within the Institute for Genome Sciences and Policy at Duke with my PI, Susanne Haga. We are currently wrapping up a study about the genetics of diabetes risk. Soon, we'll be starting another study on Pharmacogenomics and physicians' utilization of PGx testing in a clinical setting. I am currently on committees for two capstone projects for students at UNCG and I recently coordinated the NCMGA meeting that was held at Duke. I still live in Durham with my dog Beau and we enjoy long walks around our neighborhood and attending music festivals.

**Tanya Lehfeltd :** I am in Spokane, WA working as a prenatal and cancer genetic counselor. I recently got engaged and am planning for a July 2012 wedding.

**Jackie Powers:** I am working as a cancer genetic counselor at the University of Pennsylvania. I just returned from a one month trip to Tanzania where I summited Mt. Kilimanjaro. I must have decent genes to thwart altitude sickness because I felt great! I just bought a row home in Philly with my sister and life is good.

## Class of 2009

**Diana Smith:** I am still working at Cincinnati Children's Hospital splitting time between our Hereditary Cancer Program and the Fetal Care Center of Cincinnati. I have recently picked up more cancer clinics so the split is about 50/50, so I no longer participate in our general pediatric clinic. Our Hereditary Cancer Program is fairly active as we hold a quarterly discussion group for BRCA carriers. We're also starting the initial planning for our 2nd annual BRCA carrier conference, which is a one day event for all BRCA carriers and their families/friends in which several area physicians speak on a variety of topics. I am still involved with the Ohio Partners for Birth Defects Prevention group and have also taken a larger role with the Ohio Cancer Genetics Network. We are in the planning stages of several research studies, one of which is to implement a database to be used by referring physicians which will help capture the information on their population of patients that meet USPSTF guidelines. We will then have a reporting system in which we can track what patients were referred for counseling, who received testing, etc... which we can use to inform/educate the referring physicians and insurance companies.

I am also working with the Ohio Perinatal Collaborative (a group of all fetal treatment centers in Ohio) to potentially develop a registry for rare isolated birth defects in Ohio. All in all, I'm definitely keeping busy :) I am very much enjoying my time in Cincinnati, but am looking forward to getting back to NC during ACMG this Spring in Charlotte! If anyone else is going, please let me know as it would be great to meet up!



Class of 2009

## Class of 2010

**Whitney Cogswell:** is working as a cancer genetic counselor at the Medical Center of Central Georgia in Macon. Over this past year, she has had success in growing the cancer genetics program at the hospital. This year, part of her capstone project was published in the *Journal of Genetic Counseling* in an article entitled "Primary Care Physicians' Awareness, Experience, and Opinions of Direct-to-Consumer Genetic Testing." She is also recently engaged to her boyfriend of 1+ years.

**Theresa Mihalic Mosher:** is working as a pediatric genetic counselor at Nationwide Children's Hospital in Columbus, OH.

**Brooke Rush** continues to work at LabCorps in cytogenetics and she is so excited that she passed the board exam! She still works at a vet office in Raleigh because of her passion for animals. Brooke had a poster presentation at NSGC this year entitled "Efficacy and Adventures in Prenatal SNP Microarray."



Class of 2010

## Class of 2011

**Michael Osborne:** After graduating in May, I started working with UNC's Department of Obstetrics in the Division of Maternal Fetal Medicine. I am thrilled to be joining such an incredible group of counselors here at UNC. Professionally, I am also planning to submit a draft of my capstone presentation for publication in the next couple of months.

In other news, I am currently in the process of shopping for condos in the Raleigh/Cary area, and am hoping to move to the Triangle in the next couple of months. My puppies, Taco and Helix, are just as spoiled as ever. Among their most recent acquisitions includes a custom-made car seat to insure safe traveling.

**Dana Faux** is a pediatric genetic counselor at Nationwide Children's Hospital in Columbus, Ohio, and working on getting her capstone project published.

**Amy Blevins** is working at the Genetics Center in Orange, CA as a pediatric, prenatal, and cancer genetic counselor. She is the proud owner of Gretta, a 1 year old Basset Hound.

**Mallory (Schultz) Sdano** got married to Matt Sdano on July 8, 2011. She is currently living in Salt Lake City, UT and is a genetic counselor for Lineagen, Inc. Lineagen provides a comprehensive genetic counseling and testing service to physicians caring for children with autism spectrum disorder, intellectual disability or developmental delays.

**Emily Walsh:** I am excited to begin working at LabCorp beginning November 2011!

**Melanie Hardy:** I just started my first GC job as a prenatal counselor in Richmond, VA. I work at Henrico Doctors' Hospital (part of the HCA Healthcare System). I'm loving it and enjoy working within a very fun and supportive practice.

**Kelly McMahon** lives in Fort Myers, FL and is working as a prenatal genetic counselor at MFM of Southwest Florida. She is now the proud mother of an 11 week old French Bulldog named Axel.



Class of 2011

# Faculty Updates

## Stepping into a New Life

By Sonja Higgins

**H**ello alumni and friends! I am so glad to have the chance to keep in touch with you and tell you a little more about my new life in this article. Life has taken some dramatic turns to places I never imagined in recent months. Some of you have heard me say that Myrtle Beach is NOT a place I would have ever picked as a place I want to live. In fact, the tackiness of the place still surprises me sometimes. How many miniature golf and t-shirt shops does one town need??? But, I am slowly discovering some places around town that I like. For instance, there is an area called The Market Common with quaint shops and mixed housing and a great park. I've also discovered The Atlantic Stage Company that has good quality live theater, The House of Blues where we recently saw Colbie Caillat in concert, Brookgreen Gardens where we have a season pass and we are not far from nicer beach towns like Murrell's Inlet and Pawley's Island. And of course the beach is great. So, the place is growing on me.

So what would persuade someone like me who loves the triangle area of NC and her career to move to a tacky town like Myrtle Beach? True love of course. I am blessed beyond measure with my husband Robert and two step daughters, Avery Rose (12) and Naomi (9). Robert is a dentist here and like me is a Tarheel at heart, as he attended dental school at UNC. Being at home as a wife and step mother is very different than my life as a single professional woman as you can imagine. Who knew it takes so much time to feed a family? I'm also learning how to help with school science projects and math homework. We also enjoy tea parties in our tree house, bike rides from our house to the beach and dog park, and rollerblading. Another big change in my life



came a week before the wedding. Many of you have heard stories about my Australian Cattle dog, Ellie. She passed away a week before the wedding at age 17. What an amazing companion she was to me during all those years.

One reason I was not so keen on Myrtle Beach is the lack of genetic counseling opportunities. There are no MFMs or Geneticists within two hours of Myrtle Beach. But, I am in talks with folks at Coastal Carolina University about teaching a course or two there. I hope that works out for the spring as I do miss interaction with students very much. There is a new minor in Medical Humanities at Coastal where a course in Human Genetics may fit well.

So, I do wake up many days feeling like I have stepped into someone else's life, someone else very different from the old me. But the changes are great ones despite the things about my old life that I miss. I have been so glad that so many of you have kept in touch over the past months since I left UNCG. Please continue to send me notes and let me know how you are doing at [sonjaeubanks@yahoo.com](mailto:sonjaeubanks@yahoo.com). It makes my day to hear from you. I am thankful that the program is in such good hands with one of our own alumni, Randi. I am grateful for the 10 years spent at UNCG and know that the program will continue to flourish as it has in the past.

**Randi Culp Stewart:** I transitioned from being a prenatal counselor at Duke to the Assistant Director of our program in July. This job has been amazing so far! I love being back at the house and helping to move the program forward that has been so instrumental in making me the counselor and person that I am today. Thank you to all of you that have been so supportive of me entering into this new role...Sonja certainly left big shoes to fill! I have a whole new level of respect for the work that Nancy and Sonja have done to develop our program and cultivate the stimulating learning environment and caring atmosphere from which we all benefitted. I am looking forward to working with our current and future students and am grateful that I can continue to be involved in patient care in pediatrics with Dr. Reitnauer at Cone Health.

**See a picture of Randi's daughter, Ryleigh, and Dr. Reitnauer's daughter, Sofia, on the next page!**

Nancy and Sonja were coauthors on a paper that was published in the February issue of the *Journal of Genetic Counseling*:

Gu, L, McCarthy Veach, P, Eubanks, S, LeRoy, B and Callanan, N. Boundary Issues and Multiple Relationships in Genetic Counseling Supervision: Supervisor, Non-supervisor, and Student Perspectives. *Journal of Genetic Counseling* 20(1):

# Congratulations!



Christy McPhillips with husband, Neil, and their son, Ben.



Emily Rettner and sister, Rachael, at their cousin's wedding.



Brooke Smith and her husband, Eddie, welcomed son Jack in April.



Class of 2010 at Theresa Mihalic Mosher's wedding this summer.



Easton Able Cope, son of Heidi Cope, was born March 8th!



Mallory (Schultz) Sdano and husband, Matt, were married in July!



Ryleigh Stewart, daughter of Randi Culp Stewart, just turned two!



Dr. Reitnauer's daughter, Sofia.



Christina (Cain) Rigelsky and family



Michael Osborne's two dogs, Taco and Helix.



Amy Blevins' Basset Hound Gretta.