Congratulations to the Women's Studies graduates! This year, students in senior seminar decided to focus their projects on "walking our talk" as feminists once we leave UMD. The students' approaches to the topic were as individual as they are. Some examples include an assessment of their lives and asking "what really is 'my talk?'"; ecofeminist ethics applied to sustainable farming; and an analysis of feminist interpretations of reproductive rights law. We are very proud and honored this year as always to have such a wonderful group of majors, minors and graduates who work so hard academically and in the community to further justice.

There is good news for the department. We have just learned that there will be one more year of funding for staff in Women's Studies and the hours will be returned to the level previous to last year's budget cuts. We would like to thank Laura Stolle Schmidt, our office staff person for sticking with us during a difficult year of half-funding for her position. She went above and beyond the call of duty to do her job in half the time and continue bringing us together in hope that her position would be renewed. Thank you to all of you who have held us in your thoughts and wished us well during budget retrenchments.

Inside this issue you'll find an article about one of our advisory board members consulting with Al Franken, news about WS major and Darland Scholarship winner Molly DeBrock, and a paragraph from each of our graduates about what Women's Studies has meant to them and where they are headed.

Congratulations, again, to our graduates. We have become better for your presence among us, and know you will do great things in the world.
Professor Emily Gaarder was invited to a roundtable discussion with Senator Al Franken in January 2010. In the wake of President Obama’s recent announcement of a troop escalation of about 30,000 American forces, Senator Franken sought out Minnesota advocates and critics of the war in Afghanistan to inform his future voting on the issue.

Professor Gaarder argued for (1) demilitarization, (2) redirecting efforts toward humanitarian needs, and (3) focusing on women’s rights to strengthen Afghan civil society. Specifically, she argued that alternatives to war include funding community-based, Afghan-led reconstruction efforts to enable access to food, clean water, health care and education. Aid should be channeled through international aid or Afghan organizations to ensure that money and resources reach those most in need, instead of reverting back to private US-based contractors. Furthermore, the choice in Afghanistan is not between “winning the war” or “abandoning Afghan women,” as it has been argued by many. Rampant abuses of Afghan women’s rights cannot be eliminated by force. Civil society, including the Afghan women’s movement, is the country’s most moderating force and a vital resource for advancing human rights and fostering peace in the region.

Alumnae News - Sue Meyers

WS alumna Susan Meyers turned her Master of Liberal Studies work into a healing journey for the Twin Ports community that continues today. Most recently, she exhibited her work with domestic violence survivors in the UMD Express Store windows. The installation, which consists of work using found objects and art materials to create visual stories of pain and healing, documents the journeys of many domestic violence survivors in this community.

Sue’s MLS project was titled “Creating a Healing Journey with Art with Survivors of Domestic Violence.” She conducted experiential art classes at the Center Against Sexual and Domestic Assault (CASDA) and at the North End Arts Council Gallery in Superior, WI. In September, Sue raised over $3,000 for CASDA at her art opening and silent auction that showcased the work from the classes with survivors. Because her work combines art with social justice and found and recycled objects, it was a natural fit to showcase it at the UMD Sustainability Fair this past April.

In collaboration with CASDA, Sue applied for and was awarded a scholarship to a leadership training with A Window Between Worlds, a national organization that trains artists to work with survivors to create healing art. She will travel to Los Angeles for the training this summer.
Molly DeBrock, a Women’s Studies and International Peace Studies major, has been awarded one of three Darland Scholarships for the 2010-11 academic year. The Darland Scholarship is awarded on the basis of scholastic record, character, citizenship, leadership on campus, and the nominee’s potential to serve as a leader in the future.

Molly is a bright and delightful student, who in addition to her Women’s Studies major has created her own interdisciplinary major in International Peace Studies. She also serves the campus and community in so many ways. She is an intern for both the Women’s Resource and Action Center and for the National Abortion Rights Action League, both of which afford her opportunities for leadership on campus. She was particularly effective in organizing students on campus to attend and lobby our state representatives to pass sex education legislation. Molly also is active in several UMD student organizations: Students for Peace, of which she is the Co-Organizer; Reproductive Justice Collective; and V-Day UMD. She is a dedicated leader, and highly respected by her peers.

Molly’s citizenship extends beyond campus as well. In her activism for peace, Molly also works with and coordinates efforts with several organizations in the Duluth community, such as the Northland Anti-War Coalition and Grandmothers for Peace. Her work with the Reproductive Justice Collective and V-Day UMD extend her citizenship to organizations in the Duluth community which serve the particular needs of women, the HOTDISH Militia, the Building for Women, and PAVSA. In addition, she serves as an active citizen through her volunteer work at Safehaven Battered Women’s Shelter and the Damiano Soup Kitchen, walking her talk in concrete acts of peace-making and justice-serving. This summer, she will travel with a group of students from UWS to Bosnia, to learn about the work of peace and reconciliation that has taken place in that country since the war there, and will developing knowledge and skills to extend her citizenship to the world community.

We are very proud of you, Molly. Congratulations!
Women studies has opened a whole new world of experience for me. Women’s Studies has given me the confidence to have my own feminist perspective and to trust myself and to stand up for what I believe in. Being surrounded by other women's studies majors, and interacting with the faculty members gives me great support and has created a home for me. I have found my own personal identity through the program. Women's studies has been one of the greatest experiences in my life and am glad to have shared it with so many. After college I plan on staying in the Duluth area and will soon be raising a child in November, I then will be planning on finding a full time job.

- Amelia Doth -

In my sophomore year I had to choose a major, and I had no idea what I wanted to do. I was getting ready to leave school, and then someone had suggested that I take intro to women's studies, and I did. Within a few weeks of class I knew I had found what I was meant to go to college for, and that I wanted to delve in deeper. Women's Studies has urged me to open my eyes and really see myself as well as the world around me unfiltered. Women's Studies has allowed me to claim my education and truly own it, and has showed me that my experiences and voice matter, and community is possible. I feel that I have found a home in Women's Studies.

- Jena Modin -

When I was in the process of deciding if I wanted to change my major to Women's Studies, I visited the Department homepage and their mission statement caught my attention. "The mission of the Women's Studies Department is to provide a nurturing environment for the whole person -- to help each student find her or his own strengths, gifts, and path, as well as to raise awareness about the way that path concerns and connects with all other beings." Reading this made my decision easier, and once I was in the program I couldn't imagine why it took me so long to find it. My time spent studying has challenged me, opened my eyes, and pushed me to accept change. I am leaving UMD and Duluth with a place that will always feel like home to me, and it is mostly due to the amazing community of women and men (and professors!!) I met while a student in the department. The only thing I regret is not having enough time to take all of the Women's Studies classes that are offered! It seems like just when I am starting to get everything figured out, I am moving on. But I find comfort in the fact that Women's Studies has prepared me for what comes next.

- Elizabeth Strawn -

Coming to Women's Studies was a choice that I would make again and again were I to relive this experience over. I came in search of theories and ideas that were more person-centered to expand that important college element of an education. I found not only that but a community of caring individuals that were interested in me, my thoughts, and my future. Women's Studies had been for me in many ways a home within the University, a place of refuge amid the storm of academia. It is a place of learning about the world, learning about people, learning about ourselves. Most of all, Women's Studies has taught me not answers, but how to ask better questions in search of truth.

- Steve Wick -
Women’s Studies has been a place and a space for me to learn about the world, and myself, in and outside of the classroom, of course. The Women’s Studies community has been like family. It has the same feel of security, inspiration and peace that comes from my family. It sounds like voices saying ‘Come as you are, as you truly are…’ It looks like smiling faces.

And as you may or may not know Women’s Studies has also been a place of intensity. In Women’s Studies I have had the opportunity to learn about and look straight in the face the most inhumane realities of women’s and other marginalized and underrepresented people’s lives. I have had the opportunity to learn about things millions of people may never know about. In Women’s Studies I have come to understand that I have to continue looking the injustices and the realities of this world straight in the face, because frankly there’s not that many of us doing that. I have come to realize where I am interwoven inside all of these as an African-American woman.

With all this knowledge of myself, the world, and where I stand and am able to stand in it comes the question, “what am I going to do about it?” I have been able to answer that with, everything I can. In Women’s Studies I have worked my “courage muscles” if you will, to the point where I can leave with the tools to be able to look at the injustices of our world in the face, and step into new possibilities for transformation, because there is NOWHERE! to go but forward. - Eleni Johnson -
As a part of our curriculum in Ecofeminist Theories and Practices, we participated in a Duluth Streams project. There are 42 streams that flow through the city of Duluth. Our mission was to get to know the stream... spend time with it. We found out where it flows, what flows into it, whose lives it touches and what lives near or in it.

On Earth Day we met outside near the pond in Bagley to participate in a ritual. We brought along with us a jar of water from the stream we got to know. The day ended up being beautiful and sunny. We gathered in a circle around a large bowl and each took a turn saying what we liked best about our time spent with our streams. We each poured our water into the collective bowl, joining all of the Duluth streams water together. We sat for awhile, in our circle, talking about what we had learned about our streams. Many had enjoyed their time and felt a new connection to water or were able to rekindle a friendship with water that they had been missing. Others felt frustrated due to the fact that it was tough to follow their streams because it got lost underneath the city. We all wondered how those streams flowed before they were seen as ‘in the way’ and were rerouted for roads, building, etc. We then each took a turn getting water back into our jars, the collective water of the streams, and spoke words for the future. Words of hope, of gratitude, and of promise. Beth poured the rest of the water from the bowl, into the pond to join the water together.

I am not sure what everyone else felt, but I think it was quite a magical experience. We all went home with our collective water in our jars, a reminder of the ritual we participated in. I felt connected to the earth, the water that graced us, and respect for the environment around us.
LIBRARY NEWS

Girl in a Library: on Women Writers & the Writing Life by Kelly Cherry PS261 .C44 2009
Poems from the Women’s Movement by Honor Moore PS595.F45 P64 2009
Forgiveness from a Feminist perspective by Kathryn Norlock BJ1476 .N67 2009
Women, the State, and War: a Comparative Perspective on Citizenship and Nationalism by Joyce P. Kaufman and Kristen P. Williams HQ1236 .K38 2007
Women’s Studies on the Edge by Joan Wallach Scott HQ1180 .W6878 2008
Re-riting Woman: Dianic Wicca and the Feminine Divine by Kristy S. Coleman BP605.W53 C65 2009
Feminist Spirituality: the Next Generation by Chris Klassen BL325.F4 F47 2009
The Maternal is Political: Women Writers at the Intersection of Motherhood and Social Change by Shari MacDonald Strong HQ759 .M3732 2008

ALUMNAE NEWS CONTINUED
UMD WS ONLINE

Women’s Studies now has a group on Facebook where we can post events, have discussions, share photos, and stay in touch with alumnae and friends of the department. Find us under groups at “University of Minnesota Duluth Women’s Studies Department”

Check out our website at www.d.umn.edu/ws Especially note our new calendar for UMD and local community events during the school year. Also find this newsletter in color and many back issues.