

It's math...in any language: Watching class takes Marriott employee home in her heart

Although separated from her life as a teacher by over five thousand miles and two decades, it only takes a few numbers on a chalkboard to take Terez Reznik back.

Twenty years ago Reznik relocated with her family to the United States leaving her native Hungary and her job teaching first through eighth-grade mathematics and gym behind her. Despite the distance and the passage of time, Reznik says she hasn't lost her passion for numbers, children and teaching. It's a combination that's proven addicting to Reznik who has worked as a Marriott custodian here at Simpson for the past year and a half.

Says Reznik in her thick Hungarian accent, "I very much like math and I very much like children."

It was these two loves that led Reznik to meet Dr. Rick Spellerberg last spring. Spellerberg, who has taught mathematics at Simpson for 14 years, says he has never met anyone quite like her.

The two met when Spellerberg was teaching an 8 a.m. upper-level math course in a classroom overlooking the atrium in Carver Science. He began noticing a woman watching intently as he wrote complex math problems on the board. At first Spellerberg says he shrugged it off, thinking the woman had just finished the night

shift cleaning Carver and was simply taking a breather on a bench outside his classroom before heading home. It was only after several consecutive days passed with the woman continuing to pay close attention to his class-in-progress that Spellerberg's curiosity won out and he decided to approach the woman.

After a brief conversation with

"She said she used to teach mathematics and she seemed to recognize some of the stuff I was writing on the board."

Rick Spellerberg, professor of mathematics

Reznik, Spellerberg learned she in fact had just finished the night shift at 7:30 a.m., but instead of going home to rest after a long night of working, she had opted to stay until eight to watch his class.

"I say to him, 'I'm so sorry, I very much like math but I don't understand too much English.' He's very nice [to] me; he doesn't see me as some cleaning lady," says Reznik. "He said no problem for me to watch what he teach the

children."

"Sometimes every day of the week she'd be out there...She said she used to teach mathematics [in her country] and she seemed to recognize some of the stuff I was writing on the board," shares Spellerberg. "So I invited her into the classroom to sit in on the class..."

However, this is where the language barrier came in, as Reznik, who has had no formal training in English says she didn't accept the offer to enter the classroom because she didn't want to be in the way and she did not feel confident in her English-speaking ability. Raising three children and teaching math for 17 years, Reznik says there simply wasn't time for her to study English.

"My children speak both [English and Hungarian,] she explains. "Every time I'm behind, I cook, clean, cook, clean, teach my children, no time to study English."

Despite her reservations, her connection to mathematics continued to draw her back to Spellerberg's class. Even without completely understanding everything he wrote on the board saying it's "too high math for me," Reznik says it was enough just to see him "teaching the children."

After all, Reznik says being around young people is a huge part of what she

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German professor named Outstanding Educator

The IWLA (Iowa World Language Association) recently named Associate Professor of German Patricia Calkins, Outstanding Educator at the university level.

The IWLA executive committee chooses one winner at the university level each year out of nominees from across the state.

Calkins learned of her nomination in June and proceeded to send in four letters of reference as requested. She did not know she had been chosen to receive the honor until the IWLA state conference in Des Moines this October. She was not told who nominated her, although she says she is very curious.

Calkins says she believes her involvement in the IWLA as well as her efforts outside of the state led to her nomination and eventual receipt of the award. Specifically, her involvement includes working with a group at the Goethe Institute, which is the German government's teaching arm dealing with the teaching of German in foreign countries. At the Goethe Institute Calkins is part of the trainer network where she trains other German teachers at all levels from across the country. Calkins also devotes time to the AATG (American Association of Teachers of German), where she is the president of the organization's Iowa chapter and is involved in its

program for future leaders.

Of receiving the award, Calkins says, "It's been a blast." She also says it's especially important that a German teacher



Calkins

received the honor, as it will bring attention to German as a foreign language of choice as well as drawing attention to the organizations with which she is involved.

Shares Calkins, "This award is a tribute to all those organizations working in our state to keep foreign language education alive in Iowa. It may seem incredible, but even after 9/11 there are school boards and university administrations that feel that foreign languages are of little value for the future of our country. This award will give me the standing to publicly work against such an alarming trend."

LIFE AFTER FIVE



A look at life with Michael Duke

Duke

Title: instructor of music

Been at Simpson: since August 2002

Family: wife Anna and cat Ella

Likes most about job: "There are many things I enjoy about it. Obviously, I really enjoy the interaction with students...I enjoy providing students the opportunity by bringing in visiting artists, to work with world-renowned musicians and composers from the field. Also, I have a career that allows me to pursue my own interests. I get to do my hobby everyday."

Outside of work: enjoys water skiing and snow skiing with Anna; is also involved in chamber music and freelances as a musician around town with different bands. Is also writing his dissertation to receive his doctorate of music in saxophone performance from Indiana University. He plans to graduate at the end of this school year.

Recent vacation: traveled with Anna to South Dakota where they visited Custer State Park and the Badlands as well as camped in the Black Hills.

Upcoming vacation: the couple will return to his native Australia over Christmas break where they will visit his family and travel to Tasmania "for a sunny Christmas instead of a snowy Christmas."

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misses about teaching. She speaks of having a special connection to children, as both of her parents died when she was very young. In fact, Reznik's mother was a teacher and encouraged her and her sister to follow in her footsteps. Which is exactly what Reznik did, completing four years of college majoring in education and landing her first job teaching sick children in a children's home in Hungary.

Since that time, she has also completed two years of college studying business (also in Hungary) and after coming to the United States, enrolled in Mercy College, completing the 72-hour requirement to graduate

as a nursing assistant. She then spent six months working in a nursing home prior to her hire at Marriott.

She started out on the day shift cleaning Picken Hall where once again her contact with youth proved rewarding and fulfilling.

"When I worked in Picken all [the] children called me mom," shares Reznik with a laugh.

Today, Reznik says most of her initial reservations at Spellerberg's invitation last spring to sit in on class have passed and she is now ready to take him up on his offer, this despite admitting to feeling "very, very tired" after work.

"I miss teaching," she explains. "[I] would like to sit down behind [the] students, bring paper and pen, not bother anyone. Nobody [needs to] talk to me. I [would] go behind the children."

According to Spellerberg, although he isn't currently teaching an 8 a.m. class, his offer still stands.

"I just thought it was kind of neat that I saw her sitting out there everyday watching my class and it turned out she used to be a math teacher. She will always be welcome to come in from behind the scenes and sit in on any of my classes."

NEW FACES



Michaels



Walpole

Sheri Michaels has joined the marketing/public relations staff as director of publication services. Michaels, who worked in the same position at Simpson from 1989 to 1991, spent the past 14 years working at the Iowa State Education Association in Des Moines before returning to work at Simpson.

Melisse Walpole has been hired in the advancement office as assistant director of annual giving and alumni relations. Previously, Walpole was employed at the Anne Carlsen Center for Children in Jamestown, ND, where she worked in the foundation as annual giving officer.

FACULTY NOTES

Jim Bohy, assistant professor of computer science, has been informed that Simpson College has been chosen to host the Midwest Instruction and Computer Symposium in April 2006. This regional computer conference was established in 1967 and serves Iowa, Minnesota, Wisconsin, North Dakota and South Dakota. Simpson can expect approximately 200 people to be here on campus, so Bohy will be glad to accept any offers of help.

Bill Gilbert professor emeritus of biology and environmental science, has a letter on "Genesis Age Gaps?" in the June issue of *Perspectives in Science and Christian Faith* (Vol. 56, No. 2: 153-54)

Cliff Meints, professor of chemistry, participated in the national meeting of the American Chemical Society held

in Philadelphia Aug. 22-26. Afterward he visited Cedar Crest College in Allentown, PA., to gather information on their newly accredited forensics major.

Assistant Professor of Art **Justin Nostrola** has a painting featured on the cover of *North American Review*, May through August edition, 2004. He and **David Richmond**, associate professor of art, will exhibit art, drawings and photographs, at Grand View College, October 2004.

Associate Professor of Education **Steve Rose** published the cornerstone article in the fall, 2004, issue of *Iowa Education Leadership*. The title: "Formative Assessment: Some Practical Strategies." Rose also facilitated a discussion of "Formative Assessment at the Collegiate Level" as part of Simpson College's in-service and reception for the Division of Adult Learning. Last July, Rose attended an Iowa Writer's Workshop in Poetry under the direction of Michael Carey.

Brian Peer, assistant professor of biology, was voted an elective member of the American Ornithologists'

Union. He received a National Science Foundation grant through the Animal Behavior Program to present his paper "Cowbirds versus hosts: The outcome of long term host-parasite cycles," at the International Society of Behavioral Ecology meeting in Jyväskylä, Finland in July. His paper "Correlates of egg rejection in hosts of the brown-headed cowbird," appeared in the August issue of the *Condor*. His paper "Retention of grackle defenses in the absence of brood parasitism: Implications for long-term host-parasite coevolution," will appear in the October issue of the *Auk*, which marks his 20th peer-reviewed publication. His monograph "Ecology and Management of Cowbirds: edited with Catherine Ortega of Ft. Lewis College and Jameson Chace of Villanova University will be published in 2005. His paper "Host defenses against brood parasitism and their implication for the cowbird management," will also appear in this monograph. Peer has been invited, along with Stephen Rothstein of the University of California Santa Barbara, to write a featured perspective on the management of Brown-headed Cowbirds that will appear in the October 2005 issue of *Auk*.

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