

Dr. Schray named 2013 Professor of the Year

Marshall



azine

**BACK
TO
THE FUTURE**

Former Marshall Star
Dan D'Antoni returns



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Summer 2014

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The official magazine of Marshall University

Spring 2014

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CORRECTIONS: In the Autumn 2013 edition of Marshall Magazine, Mike Kirtner was inadvertently identified as Jim Kirchner in the "Summer with President Kopp" spread on page two. In the same edition on page eight, cover subject Jim Smith was misidentified in a photo. The photo used was of Greg Smith, a center for Marshall's football team at that same time. Marshall Magazine is devoted to accuracy and we regret these errors.



on the cover

Dan D'Antoni takes over as head coach of the men's basketball team and plans to take Marshall straight to the top. Photo by Rick Lee.

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“The Real Deal”

*The Faculty Merit Foundation of West Virginia
names Marshall English professor
Dr. Kateryna Schray the 2013 Professor of the Year.*

In 2007, Dr. Kateryna Schray was recruited to edit the first Ukrainian translation of the Anglo-Saxon epic *Beowulf*. Her 2008 article in *Honors in Practice* titled “Literary Ornithology,” which demonstrates the value of reinforcing literary images with scientific observation, remains one of the prestigious journal’s most popular pieces. Among numerous other honors, Schray received Marshall University’s Reynolds Outstanding Teaching Award in 2009 and the Hedrick Outstanding Faculty Award in 2013. She has been selected twice to speak at the university’s freshman convocation and was the keynote speaker at the 2013 winter commencement.

Schray’s list of accomplishments is vast and varied – but that is not why she was named the 2013 Professor of the Year by the Faculty Merit Foundation of West Virginia.

“Dr. Schray is the real deal,” said Marshall University Provost and Senior Vice President Dr. Gayle Ormiston. “She is well recognized for her gift of connecting with students of diverse backgrounds and motivating them to achieve the highest levels of performance. The impact of her contributions to the university, its students and the broader community Marshall serves is without question significant.”

Schray, an English professor in the College of Liberal Arts, was named Professor of the Year in March at a banquet at the Culture Center in Charleston. Each year, the Faculty Merit Foundation

By Katherine Pyles • Photos by Rick Lee



“My teaching philosophy is embarrassingly simple: Identify and build on each student’s strengths and remember that learning is inherently joyful.”

– Dr. Kateryna Schray

honors an outstanding faculty member at a West Virginia college or university. Through financial support from United Bank, the award winner receives a \$10,000 cash prize.

“While the award itself is incredible, the overwhelmingly supportive reaction of my community brings me to tears,” Schray said. “The elementary school at which I volunteer taped up the news story on its main entrance the very next morning, my church included it in its weekly bulletin and my department put up posters announcing the award all over our building. It feels like my whole campus and all of Huntington is celebrating, and that makes me so incredibly happy.”

Celebrating Schray’s success comes easy for many within the Marshall community.

“In my 25th year of full-time university teaching and my 10th chairing an English department, I can say without hesitation that I have never had a colleague who more vividly and completely embodies the ideals of our profession and, thus, this highest faculty award on our campus,” said Dr. Jane Hill, professor and chair of the English Department at Marshall.

“Kateryna’s passion for both her content and her students cannot be matched,” said Sarah McConnell Krause, an adjunct English professor at Marshall who was Schray’s student before becoming her colleague. “Over the years I have known her, she has nurtured me as a student, embraced me as a colleague and supported and celebrated me as a friend. I am truly honored and blessed to have had her presence in my life.”

“Kateryna was an amazing mentor for me, not only in the Yeager program but also in my preparations for medical school,” said Dr. Jacob Kilgore, internal medicine-pediatric resident physician at the Marshall Univer-

sity Joan C. Edwards School of Medicine, who benefited from Schray’s work as a writing mentor for students in the Society of Yeager Scholars from 1997-2010. “She has a profound knowledge of her subject matter, an insatiable desire to learn and a true compassion for her students.”

“In my 18 years at Marshall, I am extraordinarily fortunate in that I have been given absolutely wonderful students,” she said. “Walking into the classroom is by far the most exciting part of my workday. Teaching is

the most important thing that I do, and working with my students brings me immense joy.”

She said students at Marshall benefit from relatively small class sizes as well as the university’s dedicated faculty, who go above and beyond to invest in their students and foster learning.

“At Marshall, students are getting committed teachers who turn to one another for ideas, feedback and advice as they prioritize student learning,” she said. “I benefit daily from exceptional mentors and inspiring colleagues. I run down to John Van Kirk’s office at least once a week with a question, and I would not have made it through my first year without John Teel, who is also conveniently down the hall. My department chair, Jane Hill, puts the students first, and she makes sure that everything – and I mean everything – that my department does is for the benefit of our students. That’s what every decision comes down to.”

As for Schray’s own teaching philosophy, it is grounded in the belief that everyone shares a natural desire to learn.

“My teaching philosophy is embarrassingly simple: Identify and build on each student’s strengths and remember that learning is inherently joyful,” she said. “I have taught at the college level, in an industry setting, in a homeless shelter, in a convent and in an impoverished foreign country. Throughout all those settings, my students had one thing in common: They believed that they were taking an active step towards improving their lives in a way that nothing else could.”

Schray’s *joie de vivre* extends beyond the walls of Corbly Hall on Marshall’s Huntington campus. Through a project she initiated during a 2010-2011 sabbatical, she has become an in-demand speaker on teaching writing



Schray works with students from Southside Elementary School in Huntington to help improve their writing skills.

strategies at the elementary school level and works with students at local schools to help them improve their writing skills.

“There isn’t anything that Kateryna isn’t able to do,” said Serena Collins, principal at Southside Elementary School in Huntington. “She does everything from assisting our teachers in preparation for writing assessments to encouraging parents and calming crying children. She inspires everyone she meets to be a better person.”

Schray, who has four children of her own, said her time in the elementary schools gives her a better understanding of the educational foundations many of her students bring with them to Marshall and illustrates one of her guiding principles as a professor.

“You can’t make the world a better place for your own children until you first make it a better place for every single one of their classmates,” she said. “That includes the kid who comes to school hungry, the kid who comes

to school unprepared and the kid who comes to school overwhelmed. Being in the elementary schools reminds me that each of my students is a unique and wonderful human being and is worthy of love. It reminds me that at one point my students were these innocent, small creatures. And now here they are at Marshall, entrusted to my care. And my responsibilities towards them are immense.”

Schray is an internationally acclaimed scholar, a larger-than-life professor and an asset to the community she serves – “the real deal,” indeed. □

Katherine Pyles is a freelance writer living in Huntington. She is a 2009 graduate of Marshall University, and is one of the hundreds, if not thousands, who claim to be Dr. Kateryna Schray’s No. 1 fan.