Chatter Matters at Unique Summer Camp

Kids with special speech needs, their families, and UW-W grad students improve communication skills through summer camp fun.

Whether it’s exploring science, creating music, or participating in a sport, summer camps are a wonderful way to help young people learn, grow and increase their self-confidence. UW-W provides these life-changing opportunities to youth of all abilities, including those who use augmentative and alternative communication (AAC) devices, such as picture boards, IPads and dedicated communication systems. Originally designed as a respite camp for kids with physical disabilities, Chatter Matters is now a four day residential camp for any youth who use AAC and their families.

Offered in partnership between Variety, the Children’s Charity of Wisconsin and UW-W’s Center for Communicative Disorders, Chatter Matters provides UW-W graduate students with the opportunity to work with AAC users in settings other than schools. “AAC devices are so expensive that they are often left at school,” says Beth Miller Swanson, Clinical Assistant Professor of Communication Sciences and Disorders and camp director. “Kids are taught to use their device at school, but not at home with parents and siblings. The camp gives kids opportunities to use their device in settings they might otherwise be able to.” It also allows Warhawk graduate students a unique opportunity to work with this population. Swanson says. “Chatter Matters gives our students a really meaningful learning opportunity that other graduate schools don’t necessarily have.”

The goals of Chatter Matters are three-fold. First, kids learn to use their AAC devices with their families and other users in alternative settings. Second, parents are given the opportunity to learn more about the devices and to network with each other. Finally, Chatter Matters gives UW-W graduate students the unique opportunity to work with and learn to advocate for AAC users.

Chatter Matters is partially funded through a generous grant from Variety, the Children’ Charity of Wisconsin, although participation is not limited to residents of the state. Last year,
Swanson began coordinating all programming for the camp and Continuing Education Services assumed the coordination of all registration and logistics. “The camp was a big success,” Swanson said. “We hosted 14 families, many past participants and several new families. The parent networking was incredible!”

Swanson was recently notified that UW-W has been awarded the grant to offer the camp again in 2020. “Our goal is to expand to 25 campers and a total of 75 family members,” Swanson notes. “We hope to have 50 volunteers, including 13 second year communication sciences and disorders students, up to 10 occupational therapy students from area institutions, and up to 15 undergraduate students looking for experiences to get into graduate school.”

For more on the camp, check out this video. Chatter Matters is tentatively scheduled for June 2020.

ECE4U Graduates Now Teaching at UW-W Children’s Center

Jenna Fintel and Danjela Vuckovic are back at UW-Whitewater after each graduating from the ECE4U early childhood education program a few years ago, this time as lead teachers at UW-W’s Children’s Center.
Fintel and Vuckovic had been working in the early childhood field when they enrolled in the ECE4U program. Fintel was drawn to the program’s flexibility. “It was accommodating to non-traditional students and the hybrid courses allowed me to continue to work in the field as I furthered my education,” she noted. Vuckovic echoes those sentiments. “I wanted to be able to work as many hours as I could without having to drive back and forth to UW-W,” Vuckovic says. “This program helped me save money on gas still while having the opportunity to learn everything about early childhood and teaching.”

The ECE4U program is designed for people who are already working in the field or balancing other responsibilities that won’t accommodate an on-campus schedule. Students complete the program with a cohort of classmates, taking classes online, and meeting on occasional Saturdays. They also receive individualized advising from Anne Tillett, program coordinator.

After graduating, Fintel spent a few years teaching 4-year olds in another setting while Vuckovic worked in the Milwaukee School District with special needs children in middle school. When they saw openings back at their alma mater, both were excited to be back on campus working with our youngest Warhawks.

“I grew to love the community of Whitewater during my time as a student and I was excited to come back to campus,” Fintel says. “I was also intrigued with the idea of mentoring new educators just starting off in this field. I remember the positive impact that all my cooperating teachers had on me while I was a student and I want to give that same experience to others.”

Vuckovic agrees. “Working with all children is a blessing, but getting back to working with young children again made me realize that is where I am meant to be,” she says. “I missed working with young children, so I looked into the Children’s Center and I just adore their Reggio Emilia style of teaching.” Like Fintel, Vuckovic also enjoys the many adults who make the Center a special place. “Being able to work with the families so closely and seeing how they interact with each of their children is always a joy to see.”

“It is exciting to have Jenna and Danjela back at UW-Whitewater working with our children and college students,” Tillett says. “They are incredible assets to our Early Childhood community and great to have them serve as role models for our current students.”
Is Hindsight 20/20? Let's Discuss.

The first two decades of the 21st century are now behind us. We have witnessed and experienced a lot in those twenty years – a terrorist attack, a global recession, the rise of social media, the impact of climate change, and too many political events to list. What have we learned? How will these events contribute to the decisions we make as individuals and communities? Let's explore these questions together during the Spring 2020 Fairhaven Lecture Series.

Faculty from the Whitewater and Rock County campuses will offer free presentations on Monday afternoons at Fairhaven Senior Services, beginning February 3. Lectures in the series will explore the global recession, climate change, social media, and workplace trends. Political topics will include the election of Barack Obama, Supreme Court nominees, and the protests in Wisconsin surrounding Act 10. No registration necessary and everyone is welcome. Join us, won't you?
Earning Graduate Credits Now Easier (and less expensive!)

Did you know that undergraduates at UW-Whitewater can now earn up to 12 graduate-level credits while still enrolled in their bachelor-level programs? Previously only up to 9 graduate credits were available for UW-W seniors, but now undergrads who are on track to meet their other degree requirements may earn up to 12, and all assessed only undergraduate tuition.

“This allows them to explore graduate education for next steps in their professional journey,” notes Matt Vick, interim associate dean of the School of Graduate Studies. “Additionally, if they have already decided that a master’s degree is an important part of their career preparation, this allows them to start on that while still being an undergraduate student, which saves both time and money,” Vick says. “Students in many fields can take advantage but we’ve seen that the accounting field especially has benefited from students having this opportunity.”

Visit our website for more information on graduate programs, policies, and what graduates are doing in the region.
Beat the Winter Blues with Gardening Workshops

Winter is the best time to plan ahead for spring and summer planting! Continuing Education is pleased to offer a variety of gardening workshops in January and February.

At the Rock County campus, well-known horticulturalist and former director of horticulture at Rotary Gardens, Mark Dwyer, will present workshops for a small fee, and each worth Master Gardener CEUs. Dates and topics for Mark’s workshops are:
- Saturday, February 1: New Annuals, New Perennials, and New Trees and Shrubs
- Saturday, February 15: Basics of Landscape Design, Combining Plants for Color & Texture, and Landscape Maintenance

The workshops are $25 per date, or $60 for all three Saturdays.

Celebrate Leap Day on the Whitewater campus with a workshop on Saturday, February 29. Leap Into Spring Gardening during this FREE workshop, led by master gardeners. Choose breakout sessions on container gardening, composting, seed starting, soils and gardening methods.

Sign Language is for Everyone!
American Sign Language (ASL) is the fifth-most used language in the United States, utilized by over a half a million people from all walks of life. Continuing Education (CE) works with schools, organizations and individuals to offer learning opportunities for this popular visual language.

In December, CE’s Educational Pathways partnered with St. Coletta’s of Wisconsin in Jefferson for a 2-day workshop for staff. St. Coletta’s serves secondary students and adults with intellectual disabilities. They serve multiple clients who use ASL to communicate, whether they are profoundly deaf, hard of hearing, or are unable to communicate verbally. St. Coletta’s staff enjoyed learning about deaf culture and how best to interact with individuals who communicate via ASL in addition to learning basic signs.

If you or someone you know is interested in learning ASL and deaf culture, the UW-W Rock County campus will be hosting classes for adults and youth this spring. Introduce your child to ASL and develop and awareness to this community of non-hearing people in our Sign Language for Teens and Tweens classes. Adults can learn more in our Basic Sign Language for Beginners classes. Both classes are held in Janesville and space is limited.

Graduate Studies Bids Farewell to Sally Lange
Congratulations to Sally Lange, Senior Student Status Examiner in the School of Graduate Studies, on her upcoming retirement. Sally has been with UW-Whitewater for over 40 years, working in several different offices across campus. Since moving to the Office of Graduate Studies over 20 years ago, Sally has played a central role in helping graduate students from application to graduation, as well as supporting all LEARN Center programs and activities. Her knowledge about everything pertaining to graduate programs and her willingness to work with students and programs have been central to the success of graduate programs, and to countless individual students. We will miss Sally tremendously, but please join us in wishing her a long and happy retirement filled with family, lunches with friends—and lots and lots of tennis playing!

News and Upcoming Events:

Now is this time to capture the stories of your life. Connect with yourself and others in an encouraging environment and write your life stories, just two pages at a time. Life Story Writing classes begin February 3.

Glaciers, Volcanoes and the Sea! Join UW-Whitewater’s resident geology expert for a hands-on working tour of Iceland. Space is limited, online registration accepted until February 1.

Did you know that the Camps and Conferences office has an annual impact of $7.15 million in southeast Wisconsin? Read more about this impressive contribution here.
Coming in March – new public lecture series for our Rock County friends. Stay tuned to the Continuing Education website for details on the new Cedar Crest Lecture Series. Dates, titles and presenters are:

- Thursday, March 5, 3:00 p.m.: “A Hundred or So Years Later: Remembering Forgotten Wisconsin Authors of the Early 20th Century” presented by John Pruitt, professor of English and Women’s & Gender Studies
- Thursday, March 12, 3:00 p.m.: “Roosevelt's 'Brain Trust' and the Creation of the New Deal: presented by Elizabeth Jozwiak, associate professor of History
- Thursday, March 19, 3:00 p.m.: “The Arc of Protest: Growth, Inclusion, and Change in Mid-20th Century America” presented by David McKay, senior lecturer of History
- Thursday, March 26, 3:00 p.m.: “The 100 Greatest American Speeches of the 20th Century” presented by Richard Haven, professor emeritus of Communication, UW-Whitewater