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Word from the Head

John is off to a conference in Beijing, so I may say a few words to open this monthly issue of Psychobabble.

The semester has come to an end, with a wonderful honours poster session. It was great to see so many students and staff members joining. Thanks to Nicola and Ann for the organization and congratulations to Blaine Abraham for winning the poster prize.

And, talking of posters, you will have noticed a lot of new posters all around the Easterfield corridors. Thanks to everyone that helped with that, it sure looks very nice now. Please also help Garth in updating the school of psychology ‘hall of fame’ on the 6th floor near the kitchen. Of course I mean the display board where we place reprints from the work published by all of us.

Finally, since both John and I are stepping down at the end of January, the school together with Human Resources is busy finding a new head of school and anew deputy. Hopefully, by the next issue we will have more information on that.

Thanks again to everybody for the hard work during the second trimester and let’s hope for a wonderful summer.

Bart Ellenbroek
Acting Deputy Head of School

News in the School

The Wellys 2011

It sounds quite cliché but the thing with clichés is that they are so often true. One person really can make a difference. A huge difference if you think about how many hungry mouths 17.34 tonnes of food can feed in a year.

Robyn and George Langlands started Kaibosh in 2008 from very humble beginnings. One night a week they would collect donated food from retailers, store it overnight in their domestic fridge before giving it to a charity to distribute to those in need. Kaibosh has since grown to include a community office, two employees and over 60 volunteers.

This year Robyn the Co-founder and Chairperson of Kaibosh has been nominated for the The Wellys – The Dominion Post’s Wellingtonian of the Year award (community service category). She shares the nomination with three other distinguished Wellingtonians namely Des Britten, Dean Gifford, and Gareth Morgan. Well done Robyn and good luck!
Psychology is Alive and Well in Blenheim.
This month, Maryanne Garry and Gina Grimshaw braved the flying pencil to take Psychology to the good people of Blenheim. As part of the Science Faculty Road Show, they presented public lectures to an enthusiastic audience of 150 farmers, vintners, and our students’ parents and grandparents. The crowd asked great questions, and they all want to know when we are sending more lecturers. Volunteers? We think a satellite campus in sunny Blenheim is a great idea.

Why so Blue? Understanding Vulnerability to Depression
When bad things happen, most of us are sad or angry for a time, but then we bounce back and become our old selves. But for some, the blues become an extended period of darkness. Why, given the same life events, are some people more likely to become depressed than others? In this lecture we will see how our genes, our brains, our thoughts, our families, our culture and our circumstances all conspire to make depression one of the leading causes of disability worldwide.

Your Memory is Really Bad - And That’s Good
Our memories don’t work like MySky, accurately recording our experiences so we can play them back later. Instead, our memories are a blend of reality and fiction. When memory goes wrong, the consequences can be tragic: a mistaken eyewitness identifies an innocent man; a distracted bungy jump operator forgets to secure the cord and a young woman plunges to her death; a well-meaning but misguided therapist implants false memories of childhood abuse. But these examples are the terrible byproducts of a good system. In this lecture, we will see that memories are the distorted stories we tell ourselves and each other, and these distortions help us learn, keep us happy, and bond us together.

Bits n Bobs

- Susan Schenk, PhD, FRSNZ
  I am pleased to report that I have been elected as a Fellow of the Royal Society of New Zealand. Only 12 are successful each year and it usually takes about 5 years from nomination to election. I managed in only 2 years. So now I get to add more letters to my signature.

- Melbourne Cup
  Many thanks to Wendy Ward for once again organising the Melbourne Cup Sweepstake.

Christmas-New Year Holiday
In case you didn’t have time to read the email about Christmas-New Year holidays, the University will officially close for Christmas on Tuesday 20 December 2011 and re-open on Thursday 5 January 2012! That’s hopefully two weeks of sunshine!

Closedown dates over the period will be covered as follows:

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<tr>
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<tr>
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</tr>
<tr>
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