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GSU View

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News and Events

Spring Commencement

Spring Commencement exercises on Saturday celebrated the achievements of more than 600 graduates. In addition to hearing from President Maimon, the students and their families and friends heard an inspiring speeches from student commencement speaker Edgar Casillas and presidential historian Michael Beschloss, who received an honorary degree.



GSU was well represented by the many faculty and staff who participated in the ceremony and university personnel who volunteered to help coordinate the event.

ScholarShip – Dr. Phyllis Bell



Dr. Phyllis Bell, Assistant Professor of Social Work participated in a forum sponsored by Health Connect One in Chicago last week. The forum focuses on how community health workers can help communities become healthier. Dr. Bell served as a group facilitator discussing the pros and cons of professionalizing community health workers.

Dr. Bell serves on the Board of Directors of Health Connect One, a national organization dedicated to helping lower income women have healthy deliveries and healthy babies, train healthcare workers and expand the effectiveness of the doula. Doulas are specially trained to provide support, information, and coaching during pregnancy, labor, and delivery.

Photo courtesy of Flint Chaney.

Beschloss Receives a Standing O

The audience at the Distinguished Lecture given by presidential historian Michael Beschloss on

Friday enjoyed a glimpse into the lives of American leaders as well as insight into the importance of research and primary sources.

“Presidential courage is based on the willingness to make unpopular decisions and the ability to work collaboratively with people with differing ideals,” said Beschloss, who illustrated his point with stories of great leadership and exemplary courage. “To fully understand a president, you need to know what goes on behind the scenes. You also need hindsight.”

He included tales that touched on his youth in Flossmoor, south suburban and Illinois history, and the Midwestern character. “Growing up in the south suburbs had a substantial effect on my career as a presidential historian,” he observed.

After his lecture, Beschloss answered questions from the audience and signed copies of his bestselling books on leadership and the American Presidency. He received an honorary degree at the 2009 Spring Commencement on Saturday.

ScholarShip – Dr. Marsh Katz

Professor Marsha Katz was recently to the 2009 Board of Examiners for the Malcolm Baldrige National Quality Award. The Award, created by public law in 1987, is the highest level of national recognition for performance excellence that a U.S. organization can receive.

As an examiner, Dr. Katz is responsible for reviewing and evaluating applications submitted for the award. The board is composed of approximately 500 leading experts selected from industry, professional and trade organizations, education and healthcare organizations, and government. Those selected by the board to receive the award meet the highest standards of qualification and peer recognition.

Dr. Katz has been a professor of management, marketing, and public administration in the College of Business and Public Administration since 1988.

Trained to Save Lives

As part of the Emergency Response Team’s ongoing training, volunteers across the campus are participating on CPR/AED courses throughout the summer.

The first session concluded last week with Sandi Kawanna of CAS, Terry Rickhoff of the Library, and Karen Sinwelski of CAS all earning their certifications.

The Emergency Response Team is always looking for additional volunteers to assist in the event of a campus emergency. Interested individuals should contact [Colleen Rock](#) at ext. 7384.

Just for Kicks

The GSU Soccer Club is currently playing weekly games and is looking for new members. Men and women are welcome to join, regardless of skill.

Weekly games take place on Tuesday and Thursday afternoons at 4:45 p.m. The club also participates in soccer tournaments and trips to Chicago Fire and international games.

Members of the Soccer Club enjoy camaraderie and a unique chance to interact with individuals from a variety of cultures and backgrounds. Plus, playing soccer is a great cardiovascular workout.

For more information, contact [Jose Reyes](#) at ext. 4494.

GSU Family Matters – Susan & Bob Rakstang



Susan and Bob Rakstang originally met at their first mutual employer, a neighborhood department store in Chicago's Rogers Park neighborhood.

"Susan was 16," Bob says. "She was the girl who worked in the office. I was a lowly stock boy."

The Rakstangs this year celebrate their 39th wedding anniversary.

At GSU, Susan is Associate Vice President for Facilities Development and Management. Bob is Assistant Director of CenterPoint Business Development Center. Before starting at GSU, the Rakstangs had already enjoyed long, productive careers. Susan, a licensed architect, had her own firm. Bob was president of a Chicago-based manufacturing company specializing in hydraulic and pneumatic systems. Susan came to the campus in 2001; Bob's been at CenterPoint for two years.

At GSU, Susan oversees on-campus buildings and grounds. She estimates she's visited just about every square inch of GSU's facilities, pointing out, "This is a big place." Governors State's campus has 750 acres and 600,000 square feet of buildings. Susan is most proud of the university's sustainability initiatives during her tenure. The facilities staff has been environmentally conscious for several years, she says, but that awareness is now spreading to GSU's students, faculty, staff and administration.

Bob works with CenterPoint clients who are interested in starting their own businesses. He helps them with Small Business Administration loan applications and counsels them on every phase of the business start-up process, including the development of business plans, real estate matters, and securing financing.

The Rakstangs are parents of a grown daughter and son; they have one grandchild. Several years ago, they sold their home in the suburbs and moved to a condo in Chicago's West Loop.

"It's a great situation," Susan says. "I love working at GSU and walking the campus grounds. But we love living in the city, too, and having access to everything up there. It's really the best of both worlds."



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