Spring Bazaar extends Staples Fund’s reach

By Dory Knight-Ingram

ISR staffers pooled their talents and resources for Spring Bazaar 2016, held at ISR-Thompson on April 12.

The event benefits the Laurie Staples Staff Development Fund, which has helped more than 80 ISR employees work toward their educational goals. "It’s a worthy cause and I’m happy to support it," said ISR economist Helen Levy as she made a silent auction bid.

More than 50 donors – including several ISR offices and Common Interest Groups – contributed items for sale or auction. "There was fierce bidding at the end for Joe Braun’s photograph of the Chapel Rock Sunset, Cheryl Brackenridge’s photo of Northern Michigan in Autumn, and, as always, for Mary Beth Ofstedal’s seasonal pies,” said Jennifer Puckett, who works in the ISR Office of External Relations. The auction drew more than 60 individual bidders and the event raised $5,338, Puckett said.

Two Staples Award recipients who were volunteering at the Bazaar shared news of their progress since receiving their awards.

Ashanti Harris, a meeting and special events manager in Survey Research Operations, has used her awards to pursue undergraduate and Master’s degrees in business management - knowledge she draws on in the logistics of getting interviewers trained to work on projects like the National Study of Family Growth and the Health and Retirement Study.

Nick Prieur, who works in SRC’s Youth and Social Issues Program, is using his award to become a certified research administrator and is looking forward to taking his certification test in May.

Puckett said further efforts to support the Staples Fund include an October bus tour of Detroit with Research Professor Emeritus Reynolds Farley, author of Detroit Divided. Details on the tour will be announced this summer.

Photos by Lee Ridley and Michael McIntyre.
In the run-up to the Michigan Democratic primary, ISR political scientist Vincent Hutchings weighed in on the attitudes of black voters about Bernie Sanders and Hilary Clinton. “Fairly or unfairly there’s a sense that Sanders is coming to the party late,” Hutchings was quoted as saying in the March 8 edition of the International Business Times. “Whatever efforts he makes, however sincere they are or however sincere they appear to be, he is not going to be perceived as having been in the fight over the long term.” Hutchings also discussed the significance of the black vote in the Democratic contest with MSN and other media outlets.


Reuters Health and HealthDay were among numerous media outlets reporting on the findings of a study by ISR researcher Vicki Freedman and colleagues. The study, published in the American Journal of Public Health online March 17 showed that older women still live longer than men, but that they spend more of their golden years with moderate levels of disabilities. “Just a few decades ago, older women used to live more years than men without needing help taking care of themselves or managing basic household activities,” said Freedman. “But that does not appear to be the case anymore.”


ISR researcher Muniba Saleem spoke to Michigan Radio on March 29 about how exposure to news about terrorism influences Americans’ perceptions of Muslims. “Exposure to terrorism news increases perceptions of Muslims as aggressive,” she said, “which then increases support for public policies which are harming Muslims both internationally and domestically.” In her research, Saleem found increased support for international policies like military action in Muslim countries, and for domestic policies such as having separate and more thorough airport security lines for Muslims.

More on her research: http://bit.ly/saleem-research

In the News

2016 Converse-Miller lecturer tackles timely topic

“Can Political Advertising Pervert Policy-Making?”

That was the provocative title of Kathleen Hall Jamieson’s lecture April 14 at ISR. The talk was the most recent in an annual series that honors the legacy of ISR Center for Political Studies Founder Warren Miller and former CPS Director Philip Converse.

Jamieson is the Elizabeth Ware Packard Professor of Communication and Director, Annenberg Public Policy Center at the University of Pennsylvania.

Jamieson presents to a full house.

Post-lecture discussion.

Michael Traugott greets attendees.


Photos by Michael McIntyre.
The ISR Survey Research Center signed a Memorandum of Understanding this month with Statistics Netherlands (CBS), the Dutch agency that gathers statistical information about the Netherlands.

The five-year agreement is designed to formalize the nearly 15-year collaboration between the SRC and CBS with regard to Blaise development. Blaise is a computer-assisted interviewing system and survey-processing tool developed by the CBS and widely used in SRC projects.

The MOU promotes collaboration in training international students in survey research methodology, developing new infrastructure to support survey research and testing and promoting Blaise.

“Our organizational goals and interests have aligned more closely than ever with the SRC’s creation of a unit devoted to promoting international outreach, research and capacity building, and Statistics Netherlands’ renewed focus on developing tools and training to further research capacity in resource poor countries. This MOU provides a formal framework for our ongoing collaborations,” said Beth-Ellen Pennell, director of SRC International Survey Operations.

“Our organizational goals and interests have aligned more closely than ever...”

Frauke Kreuter, director of the Joint Program in Survey Methodology (JPSM) will be meeting with Marcel Van Deer Steen, the Statistics Netherlands manager of Innovation and Business Development, to discuss collaborative opportunities in JPSM’s new online Master’s Program in Survey and Data Science.

Harry Wijnhoven, CEO of Blaise, was also on hand to discuss the SRC's review of Blaise 5.0, the latest version of the product.

“There are many things we have to work together with – I’m looking forward to it,” said Tjark Tjin-a-Tsoi, the Statistics Netherlands Director-General.

REMEMBERING JEAN CAMPBELL

Jean Campbell, the first director of the University of Michigan Center for the Education of Women and the widow of ISR Founding Director Angus Campbell, passed away on March 16, 2016.

A Celebration of Jean’s Life was held on Saturday, April 23, in the Michigan League Ballroom.

Not expecting: What may be behind high rates of unintended pregnancy

By Diane Swanbrow

Yasamin Kusunoki, 2014-15 winner of the Marshall Weinberg Endowment Fund, is studying dynamic patterns of contraceptive use among young women during the transition to adulthood.

Before coming to Michigan as a postdoc, Yasamin Kusunoki was already interested in the topic of contraceptive use. But as Co-Investigator with ISR sociologist Jennifer Barber (Principal Investigator) and other ISR colleagues on an innovative longitudinal study of 1,003 young women – the Relationship Dynamics and Social Life Study (RDSL) – Kusunoki gained a deeper understanding of how relationships affect the chances that young women will have an unintended pregnancy.

Just how likely unintended pregnancies still are in the U.S. surprises a lot of people. A recent study published in the New England Journal of Medicine found the rate had fallen to a 30-year low in 2011, but even so, an astonishing 81 percent of pregnancies among women who were cohabiting were unintended.

Analyzing the detailed information study participants provided in weekly journals, Kusunoki and colleagues found that three main aspects of a relationship had a major impact on contraceptive use.

The more serious the relationship, the more likely young women are to use the pill, Kusunoki found. The less serious the relationship, the more likely the couple will use condoms, or rely on withdrawal.

Relationship stability is also important, according to Kusunoki. About 32 percent of the young women in relationships during the study reported that they broke up with their partners, then got back together sometime during the study period. “With a history of break-ups, young women are less likely to use contraception at all, and when they do, they’re more likely to rely on less effective methods, like condoms and withdrawal.”

Overall, 45 percent of the young women reported physical or psychological violence from their partners during the study period. “If there was a history of violence in the relationship,” said Kusunoki, “the young women were less likely to use contraceptives, less likely to use contraceptives consistently, and more likely to use withdrawal as a contraceptive method.”

In addition to her appointment as a Faculty Associate at the ISR Population Studies Center and Survey Research Center, Kusunoki became an Assistant Professor at the U-M School of Nursing this academic year. “It’s exciting to help students understand how we can use evidence to support changes in practice and policy,” she says.

More about Kusunoki: http://home.isr.umich.edu/sampler/not-expecting/

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How can this be, with so many kinds of contraceptives available? Young women may not have easy access to, or be able to afford, highly effective types of contraception, such as birth control pills or IUDs, injections and other long-acting reversible contraceptives, Kusunoki points out. Or norms about using contraceptives may not support their use.

But Kusunoki’s recent analysis of the RDSL data, funded partly by the Marshall Weinberg Endowment, shows that the types of relationships young women have may be even more important.