HONORS PROGRAM RE-ESTABLISHED IN BIOLOGICAL SCIENCES

By Rebecca Pyles

By popular demand of the faculty and a supportive chair (Joe Bidwell), the Honors-in-Discipline program in Biology is BACK at ETSU! The new curriculum for the program was designed by our department Honors Committee, approved by the faculty, and then approved by the ETSU Honors College and the campus-wide Academic Council (May 2015). The Honors Committee is now a standing committee in the department, and currently includes Drs. Aruna Kilaru, Darrel Moore, Lev Yampolsky, and Rebecca Pyles, who also is serving as the Biology Honors Coordinator.

The required curriculum includes Honors Launch I and II to help our new freshmen scholars jump-start their academic careers. Later in the program, students will take Honors Seminar, Research Orientation, their choice of honors-enriched biology courses, Research in Biology, and Honors Thesis. More information can be found at http://www.etsu.edu/cas/biology/academics/hid.php.

Although approval of the program came late in the year, we have been successful in recruiting seven incoming freshmen and one current ETSU junior. Later in the fall 2015 semester, applications from current ETSU sophomores (biology standing) will be accepted and reviewed, with an addition six or seven students selected. We plan to continue adding seven or eight new freshmen to the program each year, and hope to maintain a total program size of 30-35 students.

We are pleased to welcome our new Honors scholars for Fall 2015! These students submitted their own biographies and their favorite photos from home to introduce themselves, and have given permission for use in this newsletter and on our website. Thanks to each of them and WELCOME TO ETSU BIOLOGY!

Lea Ann Cutshall. I am from Johnson City, Tennessee and I have lived here my whole life. My family raised me on the values of being the best version of myself and exceeding through my personal goals. So at a young age I started to play multiple sports along with attending school. As I got older I found my interest in medical education and also soccer.

Towards the end of my high school career I found out that I want to be a veterinarian and also that I wanted to play soccer longer than high school allowed. So at ETSU, I will be setting my goals high for my education and my physical abilities and I am sure that ETSU provides the best environment for both of these goals to be achieved.
Amber Hanson. I was born in Okinawa, Japan to a military family and spent my life moving from place to place. I graduated from Station Camp High School in Gallatin, TN. I've participated in various activities, including honor societies, musicals, and math competitions. I was also a member of my school’s marching and concert band as a French horn and Mellophone player. After I graduate I plan on pursuing further degrees and a career involving genetics.

Laura Moffatt. I’m from East Tennessee, born and raised in Maryville, just south of Knoxville. I am a major bookworm, having read more books than I can count or even remember. When I am not reading, I can usually be found watching anime; listening to my music, which is mostly comprised of country (though I do dabble in other genres); and, if I am in the right mood, sitting quietly as I contemplate the mysteries of the universe and our own existence in the universe. I also love watching movies, especially Disney movies.

From a very young age, I have always had a love of animals and nature. Animal Planet was one of my favorite channels, and I can watch the entire Planet Earth documentary without getting bored (I have the entire set).

I took every biology class available in high school, so there was no question in my mind about applying for the Honors in Biology program. I don’t have an exact idea for what career I want, but I am imagining myself working in a conservation area or doing research and studies out in the field.

Taryn Clark. I was born and raised in East Tennessee and have two siblings. Both of my siblings have jobs and responsibilities and that leaves only myself, the youngest, to fly the coop. My developing love for biology, photography, and various crafts have influenced my choice to pursue studies in Biology.

In school I’ve always worked to earn A’s and B’s and to be involved in clubs such as HOSA, BETA, NAC, and Yearbook. I became part of my school's yearbook class/club as a sophomore. The people I meet there allowed me to combine ideas and solve issues to create the best product. BETA was also a favorite clubs because the members loved to volunteer and be a part of the community. My senior year I decided to undertake dual-enrollment classes to earn college credit before graduating, which put me ahead and gave me some experience.

I’ve always expected myself to work. I began babysitting during the summer after 7th grade, and a few summers later, spent my time serving food at a family-oriented park. During my senior year I worked at a grocery store part-time and then landed a full-time internship for the following summer. I learned about caring for children, following food protocol and how to contribute in a business environment from my work.
I enjoyed my learning experiences from the people I met at school and work. I hope to one day find a way to use my love for genetics and biology to improve the quality of life for others. Being part of an Honors program is a great way for me to become involved as soon as I go to college and I look forward to conducting research with talented students and mentors.

**Hayley Seaton.** Beginning Fall 2015, I will be a freshman at East Tennessee State University, majoring in Biology with a Biochemistry concentration. I grew up in the rural area of Parsons, TN, which recently got a second red light and a McDonald's. To say the least, Johnson City will be a totally different environment for me. I have amazing parents that support me and my decisions, even moving seven hours away from them. I am the oldest child in my family with only one brother.

In my spare time, I volunteer with many organizations that help the community. I was very lucky in high school to volunteer with the American Red Cross, American Cancer Society, Carl Perkins Center of Child Abuse Prevention, and St. Jude Children's Research Hospital. I also wish to travel the world someday. So far, I have been to many states and Belize, Central America. I plan to broaden my travel experience as soon as I am able. When I travel, I want to serve small countries and rural areas with my Biology degree and a hopeful degree in Medicine.

I grew up in a family full of health care professionals, which intrigued me and sparked my aspiration to do something great in my life. I aspire to be the first doctor in my family. However, I chose Biology as a major for a different reason. I've always been interested in science, but my passion for Biology started my freshman year of high school. Call me crazy, but studying Punnett squares excited my interest, leading to Genetics being my favorite field in Biology. I'm excited to be a part of the Honors in Biology program at ETSU. I can't wait to be challenged and to see what's the future holds!

**Cheril Patel.** Growing up I experienced living in many different places including India, Canada, and Florida. New Hampshire, and Mississippi before finally settling down in Church Hill, Tennessee. I attended Volunteer High School and joined Beta Club and Mu Alpha Theta I also played soccer and ran track and cross country as a falcon for high school. My two favorite memories from high school involve track. The first would be breaking a thirty year old school record with my relay team and the other is earning all-conference two years in row. My hobbies included active and traveling. I loved meeting different people and experience activities that only a certain region can provide during my childhood and that affection has carried on to the present. I also enjoy being physically active through sports; there isn’t a greater feeling than relieving stress through running.

I had already decided that I was going to be attending East Tennessee State University since my junior year. This was decided because wanted a great quality education and I also wanted to stay close to home. I’m majoring in Biology because of some childhood curiosities. As a child I was always fascinated by learning new things and later in life I discovered that I enjoyed unravelling the complex processes that happen in nature.

I’m excited to see where the next four years at ETSU will take me. I already know it will be challenging with lots of studying however I still plan to have lots of fun and make great lifelong friends. I hope that these next four years will be even better than the fun times I had the past four. My goal after
getting a bachelor degree is to attend med school to be a doctor. Specifically I have no idea which profession I want to into but it’ll come to me sooner or later.

**Charlotte Leonie Kaestner.** I grew up in Gailingen, Germany – a small town in the south of Germany near the northern border of Switzerland. Having a father who is a well-respected medical doctor that started his own private practice, and a mother who is an upper-level Biology and Chemistry high school teacher, it was no surprise that I developed a passion for science and medicine at a young age. Watching my father take care of the people in our town made me realize that being a doctor is more than just treating patients, it is helping and making a difference in patients’ lives. The thought of helping people with science formed my aspiration to become a physician.

In my free time, I enjoy reading and participating in different activities, such as playing flute for my high school orchestra and being a member of our town’s tennis team. But my real passion, besides science, is dance. I took my first dance lesson at the age of four and started ballet two years later. Dancing is my personal safe haven because it frees my mind from stress and worries. During breaks from school, I also had the privilege to travel with my family to 12 different countries, mostly in Europe and North Africa. Seeing different cultures and various lifestyles at a young age help me become an open-minded person.

My desire to visit more countries led me to apply for the *Au Pair* program in the United States after high school graduation. I cared for the children of an American host family in Maryland and took a few college classes. After experiencing college life and seeing the academic opportunities in the medical field, I applied to ETSU to study biochemistry. I’m the first person in my family to study in a foreign country. However, I stay in close contact with my parents in Germany and travel home every winter break. I hope the HID biology program at ETSU will help prepare me for medical school while still being able to travel the world.