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Georgia Southern interior design professor wins grant from international education foundation

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Christine Wacta, Ph.D., assistant professor of interior design in Georgia Southern University's College of Behavioral and Social Sciences, recently earned a \$2,000 Irma Dobkin Universal Design Grant from the International Furnishings and Design Association (IFDA).

Wacta is one of five recipients from across the United States to receive a grant from this program. She said the grant comes as a great opportunity and will support her innovative approach in design education. She plans to involve first-year students in community engagement and research, which involves collecting data.

“My goal is to integrate geoscience into interior design education to develop a geo-info lab where data from the community will be collected and used in ways we have never done before,” said Wacta. “This will allow us to develop a wealth of users’ feedback of real daily experiences that then create a new layer of information that will augment the designer’s knowledge.”

In the announcement, Helen Wagner, chairman of the board of the Educational Foundation of IFDA, congratulated the winners.

“Their skills and initiative in undertaking new challenges are impressive,” she said. “Each winner exemplified the goals of the award they were granted, whether research, universal design, professional development or the advancement of interior design programs.”

IFDA’s mission is to inspire collaboration within the furnishings and design industry to support its people, their products and services.

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Georgia Southern students combine past and present works for new art exhibition in November

October 31, 2022



Art is often considered an unspoken language meant to express emotion, voice and identity, though audiences may not always have a clear translation of what an artist is trying to express.

In an upcoming Georgia Southern exhibition, “Figure It Out,” the audience will traverse a variety of mediums that include charcoal drawings, fibers, sculpture, digital and acrylic paintings. With these mediums, figure and portraiture will meld into the concepts of the everyday to other-worldly. Through this journey, the hope is for audiences to develop a connection to each artist’s pieces to interpret a meaning for themselves.

Asia Le, a Savannah native, is a visual arts major. In her work, she found inspiration from individuals from her past, and individuals of her own creation. She created a digital narrative played out by characters from her own life and career.

“I felt excited to finally show people my characters, stories and visions,” she said. “So, it means a great deal to have the opportunity to share my work with a wider audience than just family and friends. The digitally rendered paintings give a glimpse of who the characters are in their world and their story.”

Students in the Georgia Southern Betty Foy Sanders Department of Art are encouraged to explore their own creativity to find inspiration for their work. Many times, the passion and creativity from one student can rub off on another.

“The most impactful part of my experience at Georgia Southern are the connections I made with my professors and peers,” said Le. “I was able to learn a great deal from each person’s own art style and perspective of what it means to be an artist.”

“Figure It Out” will also showcase the works of fellow graduating seniors Rodney Briggs, Storm Patterson-Edinger, Demarious Hartley and Gregory Tyson. The show will run from Nov. 2 through Nov. 30, Monday to Friday from 9 a.m. – 5 p.m. at the Georgia Southern University Armstrong Campus Fine Arts Gallery.

This event is free and open to the public.

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Veterans, youth with physical disabilities enjoy a day of recreation at Georgia Southern University

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BlazeSports America staff and Georgia Southern volunteers pose for a photo after a the Blaze Day event during which veterans and youth with physical disabilities visited campus for a day of recreational activities.

Veterans and youth with physical disabilities spent a day enjoying adapted sport and recreation programs at Georgia Southern University’s Armstrong Campus in Savannah during Blaze Day in September.

Hosted by the Center for Rehabilitation and Independent Living (CRIL), in conjunction with BlazeSports America, Blaze Day provided an opportunity for coastal region residents with disabilities to experience a range of activities and learn that with a few adaptations, everyone can enjoy recreation and sport activities.

“Our hope was that this clinic was the first step to developing community-based sport and recreation programs for youth and veterans with physical disabilities in our region,” stated Gavin Colquitt, Ed.D., executive director of the CRIL.

In addition to participants, Georgia Southern students also had the chance to participate as they gained experience and volunteered within the community. Student volunteers from the Department of Health Sciences and Kinesiology and Doctor of Physical Therapy (DPT) Program in the Department of Rehabilitation Science within the Waters College of Health Professions helped contribute to the event’s success.



Blaze Day participants and volunteers listen to instructions from the BlazeSports America archery coach, Chris Tackett

Heather Lorden, DPT, associate professor of physical therapy, coordinated the participation of students from the DPT Program.

“Approximately 12 of our DPT students volunteered to assist with set-up, participant engagement and clean-up activities as part of Blaze Day,” Lorden said. “The DPT students continually strive to embody the ethical principles that drive the profession of physical therapy. A dedication to meeting the needs of all people locally, nationally, and globally is one of those guiding principles.”

Kelly Ashley, an undergraduate exercise science student, wasn’t sure what to expect when she volunteered.

“Special populations fill my heart, and any chance I get to work with these kids, to get them involved and exposed to activities just like other children their age, I love to help,” said Ashley.

Student volunteers helped set up equipment for the event and participated alongside participants throughout the day, including a game of wheelchair basketball.

“What an incredible experience and perspective this was,” Ashley said. “To be in someone else’s position for an hour and be provided with a glimpse of their adaptations and physical requirements in the game was truly incredible.”

DPT student Sarah Hall also volunteered for the event.

“Blaze Day was a great opportunity to meet people with all different backgrounds and learn all sorts of new activities,” Hall said. “I never thought I would be learning how to play wheelchair basketball and shoot an arrow in the same day, but I had the best time doing it.”

With the help of volunteers and sponsors like Optim Orthopedics Foundation, [BlazeSports](#), [Nine Line Apparel](#) and [Bowtreader](#), the first adapted sports clinic hosted outside the metro Atlanta area was a huge success, Colquitt said.

To participate in or volunteer for the next adapted sports clinic, contact [CRIL](#) at cril@georgiasouthern.edu.

About BlazeSports America

BlazeSports America is the direct legacy 501(c)(3) nonprofit organization of the 1996 Atlanta Paralympic Games serving children, youth and veterans with disabilities through programs, training and education initiatives. Based in Atlanta and a two-time winner of the U.S. Olympic Committee's Rings of Gold for impactful programs, BlazeSports is a member of the United States Olympic and Paralympic Committee – Multi-Sport Organizational Council, and the USA Member Organization of the Cerebral Palsy International Sport and Recreation Association (CPISRA). For more information visit www.blazesports.org.

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