

# COMMENTARY

November 2011 | Volume 2 | Issue 3

## Stephanie Vertrees: The Vision of an Entrepreneur

By Beth Messner  
Associate Professor

As an undergraduate student, Stephanie Vertrees (M' 06) knew she was interested in owning her own business. But little did she know that 11 years later, she would be one of Muncie's newest entrepreneurs. Stephanie and her business partner, Wendy Conner, opened Schmoozie's in June 2011 in a quaint, diminutive building located in the parking lot of Bella Avanti restaurant (3201 W. Bethel Avenue).

Schmoozie's offers its customers an array of energizing coffee drinks and refreshing smoothies, including made-to-order items based on customer requests. As the primary staff member of the business, Vertrees also offers all of her customers a friendly greeting and a welcoming smile.

Vertrees began her preparation to become an entrepreneur while studying communication and business at Boise State University. During this time, she envisioned herself eventually opening a hangout for Christian students. After graduating with her degree in Business Management and Human Resources in 2004, Vertrees arrived at Ball State University to work on a Master's degree in Organizational and Professional Communication Development.

While much of her time as a graduate student was spent engaged in researching, writing, and teaching, Vertrees's



*Submitted Photo*  
**COFFEE AND SMOOTHIES**  
— Stephanie Vertrees (right) with her business partner Wendy Conner (left) stand before their new Muncie business -- Schmoozie's.

dream did not disappear. However, it did gain some competition -- she also developed a passion for teaching. Vertrees pursued that passion when she finished her Master's degree in 2006. She has taught a variety of communication-related courses in Ball State's Correctional Education program and at Ivy Tech Community College and Grace College.

For a time, Vertrees attempted to juggle both dreams. While she was teaching at Ivy Tech, she and Conner created the "River of Life" mobile café. Located on the Ivy Tech campus, the café offered muffins, sandwiches, beverages, and snacks to students, faculty, and staff.

The struggle between "Vertrees the Teacher" and "Vertrees the Entrepreneur" finally was settled when teaching jobs became more difficult to find due to budget cuts in education. At this point, she decided to devote herself full-time to her primary entrepreneurial vision -- creating

see **SCHMOOZIES** | page 6

## Ball State hosts 42nd Aquarius



*Submitted Photo*  
**LOOKING THE PART**— Freshman Huy Pham helps freshman Matt Marshall tie his tie in preparation for AoA 2011.

By Tynesia Ross  
Graduate Assistant

The 42nd Age of Aquarius swing tournament took place on Ball State's campus October 14th, 15th and 16th. Beginning in 1969, Age of Aquarius continues to be one of the oldest tournaments in the country.

Age of Aquarius is a unique tournament because it is a swing tournament. This means that two different teams will host a tournament at the same school. So while Ball State hosted the tournament on Friday and Saturday, Illinois State hosted a tournament on Sunday. This saves the travelling teams money, while also giving the teams a chance to compete twice in one weekend.

The IE tournament was headquartered out of the lobby of the Letterman Building. Other buildings that were used were Whiting, Robert Bell and Ball Communication. The debate tournament was held out of the Teachers College.

see **AQUARIUS** | page 6

**AMBER ANDERSON JOHNSON (M' 98)** – is the Corporate Relations Advisor for the Center for Values-Driven Leadership, Benedictine University, Lisle, IL.

**ADRIAN DUNN (B' 06)** – is a Systems Analyst for Apparatus, an Information Technology Company located in Indianapolis, IN.

**ABBY ERPELDING (B '08)** – is a Corporate Trainer for Rolls Royce North America, Indianapolis, IN.

**JOE JOTKOWITZ (M' 95)** - is the Founder and Managing Partner of The Executive Advisory, Encino, CA.

**KATHY PURVIS (B' 98; M 99)** - is a Buyer for Aerospace Engine Components for the Gas Turbine Engine Product Lines, Rolls Royce North America, Indianapolis, IN.

---

If you are an alumnus of the Department of Communication Studies and would like to contribute information about yourself for a future issue of COMMENTARY, please contact Glen Stamp at: [gstamp@bsu.edu](mailto:gstamp@bsu.edu) or Beth Messner at: [bmessner@bsu.edu](mailto:bmessner@bsu.edu).

Please note the year you graduated and whether you received a Bachelor's or Master's degree, and any information about current employment, involvement in the community, awards/honors, or other life events that you wish to share.

---

#### Editor's Note

Alumni notes are based on information received from the Alumni Association and individual e-mails. The Department of Communication Studies apologizes for any omissions or changes that have occurred since receiving this information.

# One of a thousand

By Kaitlyn Braun  
Student

On Weds., November 9, 2011, Ball State University hosted an exciting event that brought attention to the Falling Whistles campaign. The event, organized by Paula Truex (a senior Organizational Communication major) and held in Emens Auditorium, featured Sean Carasso, founder of Falling Whistles. Carasso has spent much of his life pulling diverse communities together. After starting a number of small companies and grassroots initiatives, he traveled the world while volunteering with Invisible Children and TOMS Shoes.

In late 2007, Carasso journeyed into the Democratic Republic of Congo on what was supposed to be a short trip. It was there he learned that children, too small to carry a gun, are kidnapped and forced to the front lines of war, armed with only a whistle. The Falling Whistles campaign was born in 2009 in response to a small journal entry he wrote that night. Whistles, worn around the necks of those who join the campaign, function as a sign of protest against the war in the Democratic Republic of Congo.

During his visit to Ball State, Carasso shared his experiences, stories and the knowledge that he gained throughout his trip into the Democratic Republic of Congo. Carasso's stop in Muncie is part of a multi-city tour designed to encourage people to join a growing coalition of individuals who are seeking peace in Congo.

Truex interned and toured with Carasso and Falling Whistles for eight months in 2010. While doing so, she acted as a personal assistant to Carasso and helped manage the 38-city tour across the U.S.

"I was able to use skills I have learned from my communication studies classes in a big way. I would help Sean understand effective ways to communicate with the team, as well as apply conflict management and interpersonal skills as our team of seven traveled around in an RV," Truex said.

After her time with the organization,



Submitted Photo

**GETTING THE WORD OUT** — Ball State students promote the Falling Whistles event with a float in the BSU Homecoming parade on October 8, 2011. The students (from left to right) are Taylor Brown, Steven Cobb, Chris Ulm, Matt Wells, Chad Allen, Kate Goris, Lisa Cappa, Kelsey Johnson, Paula Truex, Kortnie Kammeyer, Zach Olsen, Morgan Dragoo, Holly Fink, Stephanie Bristow, and Jared Bramer.

Carasso asked Truex how she was going to stay involved once she was back at Ball State. Her reply – to bring Carasso to Muncie. And, that's exactly what she did.

Since returning to her studies at Ball State, Truex has gathered students, friends, and professors across campus in hopes of reaching a specific goal - - to get 1000 members of the Ball State community to attend the Falling Whistles event. The COMM Club in particular helped Truex reach her goal of one thousand. Truex says, "It has been really amazing to see the support and help stream in from my Communication Studies department. COMM Club, professors, graduate assistants, and students have been coming together to help spread the word."

Carasso's visit to campus was formally sponsored by the Student Government Association, Ball State Federal Credit Union, WLBC, and Cool Cayenne. More information about the Falling Whistles campaign can be found at [www.fallingwhistles.com](http://www.fallingwhistles.com).

#### FIND OUT MORE:

Students interested in more information should go to [www.fallingwhistles.com](http://www.fallingwhistles.com).

## Becoming something greater than herself

By Nathan Erwin  
Student

Devanny Kuhn is not your average Communication Studies student; in fact, she is well above average. Devanny is one of the rare students to not only be a student athlete, but she also is involved in multiple organizations across campus.

Devanny is a Senior majoring in Interpersonal Communication with a minor in Hospitality Management. Her mental attitude is far beyond what you would expect of someone with such a work load. Ironically, Devanny seems to have never considered her efforts actually “work.” As she says, “I stay involved because I enjoy it. I look forward to events or fundraisers we plan and I love the feeling of satisfaction afterwards.”

Doing what you enjoy must be the formula to being proactive in Devanny’s world. She is team captain of the women’s field hockey team, President of COMM Club, a part of Lambda Pi Eta, a member of the Student Athlete Advisory Committee, and Mortar Board. With

so much responsibility, it is easy to see that Devanny is a valued leader. The leadership skill that she most values is listening. Devanny says, “People in COMM Club and the field hockey team have to feel comfortable talking to me. I need to have the ability to listen to other peoples’ ideas [to lead].”

With her experience as a leader and in organizations, Devanny feels better prepared for life after graduation. Group work is often expected in the business world, and Devanny has been exposed to it a great deal in the organizations with which she has been involved. She also credits some of her Communication Studies courses for her ability to work in groups: “I think my small group decision making class has shown an overlapping message through my organizations and sport that I participate in.”

For those who are seeking success and want to get involved like Devanny has, she offers this advice: “Get in-



Courtesy of Ball State Athletics

**FEATURED STUDENT** — Devanny Kuhn,  
Captain of the BSU Women’s Field Hockey Team.

involved because it not only looks good on your resume, but allows you to become a part of something greater than yourself.” Devanny has clearly shown through her years here at Ball State that she is eager and ready to take on multiple challenges and take them on with flying colors.

## SPEECH TEAM - AGE OF AQUARIUS RESULTS

By Mary Moore  
Instructor and Director of Individual Events

The BSU Speech & Debate Team hosted the 42nd annual Age of Aquarius Swing tournament with Illinois State University this year. Almost 30 schools participated in the tournaments, with more than 300 coaches and students enjoying fall break weekend in sunny Muncie. As hosts of the tournament, BSU declined receiving team awards, but the Cardinals took home 20 individual awards.

Seven novice competitors competed at the BSU tournament, 5 winning awards: freshman **Berkley Conner** (Logansport) placed 5th in *Novice Prose* and 5th in *Novice Persuasion*, freshman **Lauren Chapman** (Indianapolis) placed 6th in *Novice Extemporaneous Speaking*, freshman **Huy Pham** (Evansville) placed 2nd in *Novice Poetry*, freshman **Kathryn Overn** (Noblesville) placed 4th in *Novice*

*Informative speaking* and **Matthew Marshall** (Indianapolis) placed 5th in *Informative Speaking*.

Fifteen speech team students competed at the ISU tournament, 10 winning awards: freshman **Berkley Conner** placed 3rd in *Persuasive Speaking*, sophomore **Bree Nelson** (Kokomo) placed 6th in *Poetry Interpretation*, and 5th in *Informative Speaking*, **Kate Shaffer** (Plymouth) placed 4th in *Persuasive Speaking*, sophomore **Andrew Neylon** (Noblesville) placed 2nd in *Impromptu Speaking*, 1st in *Dramatic Interpretation*, 2nd in *Poetry Interpretation* and 2nd in *individual sweepstakes*, junior **Meg Moshe** (Madison, WI) placed 6th in *Impromptu Speaking*, junior **Kate Roesch** (Noblesville) placed 3rd in *Rhetorical Criticism*, junior **Haley Armstrong** (Byron, IL) placed 5th in *Informative Speak-*



Submitted Photo

**A CELEBRATION** — Speech teams celebrate the 42nd annual tournament.

ing and 6th in *Dramatic Interpretation*, senior **Nicole Fortunato** (Indianapolis) placed 3rd in *Informative Speaking* and 4th in *Persuasive Speaking* and **Michelle Colpean** (Ft. Wayne) placed 4th in *Informative Speaking*.

# Speech team travels to Purdue

*Ball State wins both IE sweeps and overall team sweepstakes*

By Mary Moore  
Instructor and Director of Individual Events

The BSU Speech team's season is heating up! On October 29th the team traveled to Purdue University to compete at the annual Boilermaker tournament. The team earned 21 individual awards, winning the tournament (both in IE sweeps and overall team sweeps). One week later, November 5-6, the team traveled to Peoria, Illinois to compete in the 64th annual Norton Invitational at Bradley University. This tournament is the largest invitational of the year and the most prestigious tournament in the country.

Ball State made up 31 of the 1,200 entries at the tournament.

The team advanced 3 students to final rounds.

Next up, the BSU speech team will have an on-campus performance night on November 17th from 7p.m. - 8 p.m. at Brayton Clevanger. The team's last competition is December 2-3 at the Holiday Frolic at Ohio State University. The team will finish their semester performing at the BSU Speech Team Winter Showcase in Pruis Hall, Monday, December 5th at 6:30 p.m.

**EVENT:**

Join the Speech Team on campus at Brayton Clevanger from 7-8 p.m. November 17th.



Submitted Photo

**BSU WINS SWEEPSTAKES-** (Left to right front row): Kate Roesch, Kathryn Overn, Kate Shaffer, Niccole Fortunato, Meg Moshe, Bree Nelson, Michelle Colpean, & Huy Pham (Left to right back row): Berkley Conner, Matt Marshall, Lauren Chapman, Andrew Neylon, Mike Catlos, Jon Conway, Louis Lin.

## TOURNAMENT RESULTS

**SPEECH TEAM**

**Prose**  
1st place: Andrew Neylon

**Prose**  
6th place: Kate Shaffer

**Rhetorical Criticism**  
2nd place: Kate Roesch

**Team Sweeps**  
1st place

**Poetry**  
1st place: Andrew Neylon

**Poetry**  
5th place, Kate Shaffer

**After Dinner Speaking**  
5th place: Meg Moshe

**COMBINED (Debate & IE) TEAM**  
1st place

**Dramatic Interp**  
1st place: Andrew Neylon

**Extemporaneous**  
6th place, Lauren Chapman

**Prose**  
3rd place: Meg Moshe

**Informative**  
Semi-finalist: Andrew Neylon

**Informative**  
2nd place: Andrew Neylon

**Impromptu**  
2nd place: Lauren Chapman

**After Dinner Speaking**  
2nd place: Huy Pham

**Impromptu**  
3rd place: Andrew Neylon

**Impromptu**  
1st place: Andrew Neylon

**Rhetorical Criticism**  
3rd place: Lauren Chapman

**Poetry**  
3rd place: Huy Pham

**Novice Extemporaneous**  
5th place: Lauren Chapman

**Quadrathlon**  
1st place: Andrew Neylon

**Persuasive Speaking**  
4th place: Bree Nelson

**Informative**  
4th place: Kathryn Overn

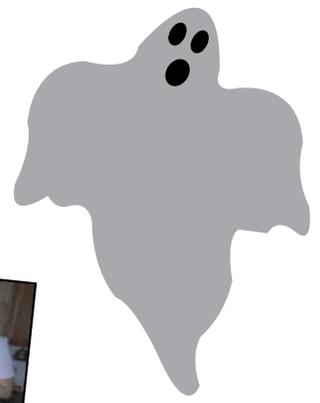
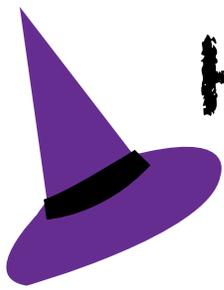
**Novice Poetry**  
3rd place: Huy Pham

**Dramatic Interp**  
3rd place: Michelle Colpean

**Poetry**  
4th place: Bree Nelson

**Persuasive Speaking**  
6th place: Berkeley Conner

# Happy Halloween!



3



1



2



4



*Submitted Photos*

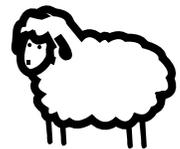
1 — Meg Tully and Amy Yount embrace the Halloween spirit by dressing as bat girl and a flapper.

2 — (From left to right) GA's Scarlett Hester, Meg Tully, Jessica Choquette, and Kenneth Saalman pose for a group shot

3 — GA's and their friends hang out at a Halloween party.

4 — (Back row, left to right) Marie Hoffman, Meg Tully, Daniel Kemp, Leland Fecher, Sheri Niekamp and Amy Fusco. (Front row, left to right) Elena Chudnovskaya, Katlyn Williams, Morgan Summers, Scarlett Hester, Heather Bauer, David Staggs and Robin Phelps.

## Bringing new meaning to Thanksgiving



By Nathan Erwin  
Student

We all know our Thanksgiving traditions by heart, and we all have plenty to give thanks for. However, not everyone will receive a table full of food, a warm home in which they are surrounded by family, or many other luxuries associated with the holiday.

Thankfully, for those individuals without an ideal Thanksgiving, the Feed My Sheep program is here to change that. The Feed My Sheep program is a Muncie community organization founded in 1996 that currently is led by three organizers, including Dr. Peggy Fisher. This year, the organization also is being assisted by three interns from the Department of Communication Studies: Erinn Bunger, Cassie Janis, and Nathan Pace.

Feed My Sheep provides an entire meal, as well as a bag of groceries, to

individuals in need who could not afford a meal on Thanksgiving. In order to prepare for this elaborate process, Feed My Sheep is currently undergoing a food drive that ends on November 21st as well as fundraising.

On Thanksgiving day from 1:00-3:00 p.m., meals are served to anyone who walks through the door of Muncie Central High School. It does not end there, however. From noon-4:00 p.m., deliveries also are made to homes of people who cannot make it to the high school.

Expectations for the event are already mounting for Cassandra Janis, a senior Interpersonal Communication major. She expects the event to be very busy. "I plan to meet a lot of new people, help out those in need and I also expect to be very emotional the day of the event."

Erinn Bunger, a senior Organizational Communication major, hopes to take away a good deal from this experience: "I am hoping to go into event planning after I graduate, and I am hoping to get experience through the Feed My Sheep community outreach." It is humbling to see that there are students out there willing to sacrifice some of their holiday to ensure that others may enjoy their holiday.

If you are in a situation that is similar to those who are being served during the program, Peggy Fisher encourages you to attend on Thanksgiving: "Any student is welcome to join us if they do not have a place to go for Thanksgiving. We don't turn anyone away."

**SCHMOOZIES** | continued from page 1

a business that sold smoothies. She and Conner soon found a permanent location for their business and, after some serious brainstorming sessions, chose the name “Schmoozie’s.” According to Vertrees, this short, catchy name not only reflected their feature product, but also “made people smile.”

As an entrepreneur, Vertrees invests long hours in the business. Schmoozie’s is open Mondays through Saturdays. A typical work day for Vertrees requires her to rise early; she arrives before the business opens at 7:00 a.m. to get the equipment up and running. She spends much of her mornings and lunch hours waiting on customers and preparing products. During slow times, often in the afternoons, she works on marketing and promotions for the business. Her day ends at 8:00 p.m. She estimates that she works approximately 70 hours each week.

While the lengthy hours do not seem to bother Vertrees, there are other parts of the business which she finds quite challenging. Designing a business plan,

an important tool for successful entrepreneurship, was one of these things. A successful plan requires a great deal of research, something she tends to view as drudgery. It also requires the ability to articulate a vision. According to Vertrees, it was hard “to get things from your head onto paper.” She also has struggled to maintain realistic expectations for the Schmoozie’s venture. As she states, she is impatient to experience success, so she needs to “realize that it will take time to bring the vision to life.” Learning to communicate effectively when she and her business partner have different styles of communication can be hard as well. Luckily, Vertrees’s background in Communication Studies has been helpful in this regard.

Vertrees also believes that success requires entrepreneurs to understand their strengths and weaknesses. She argues that you shouldn’t be afraid to explore and address your weaknesses. In addition, she believes that “your strengths can become your greatest weakness” if you don’t deal with them properly. For example, an entrepreneur must be visionary, but success also requires attention to details such as research and accurate budgeting. In Vertrees’s words, “if you are a fly-by-the-seat-of-your-pants

## “...your strengths can become your greatest weakness.”

**Stephanie Vertrees** | Business Owner

kind of person, you need people behind and beside you” to ground you and handle the specifics.

To Vertrees, the opportunity to create Schmoozie’s is well worth the struggle. It not only has brought her personal pleasure and pride, but she also sees the business as a way of investing in the Muncie community. As she says, “Schmoozie’s wasn’t created just for me to have a job or to serve great coffee and smoothies. We want to be able to invest in programs and ideas that we find meaningful. We also want to invest in people and help them.”

As for the future, Vertrees hopes that she and Conner will be able to establish at least one or two more Schmoozie’s in Indiana in the next five years. And, true to form, Vertrees has another brainchild in the works. Eventually, she hopes to establish a training and consulting company that assists others in bringing their entrepreneurial visions to life.

### FIND OUT MORE:

■ Visit Schmoozies at 3201 W. Bethel Avenue.

### HOURS

Mon-Fri: 7 a.m. - 8 p.m.

Sat: 8 a.m. - 8 p.m.

### WEBSITE

Getschmoozed.com

**AQUARIUS** | continued from page 1

Even though Ball State competed in novice categories on Friday and Saturday in order to focus on hosting, they received 5 winning awards. At the ISU tournament, Ball State received 10 winning awards. (Results are on page 3)

“I have two seniors and 10 freshmen on the team this year. So we are a young, growing team that has lots of promise. It’s a group of really dedicated, committed, smart students. So I feel lucky to be able to work with the best of the best,” said Mary Moore, Director of the Individual Events team.

Membership of the team is a full-time commitment. Students spend anywhere from 10 to 12 hours a week practicing as individuals or with one of their five coaches. Students also have to deal with the challenges of juggling academic and work schedules due to the diversity in

majors and places of employment. Team members’ majors range from Psychology, Pre-Med, Nursing, Journalism, Communication Studies and T-Com, so anyone is welcome to join the IE team. Moore also mentions that even though most students aren’t Comm Studies majors, some members of the IE team will end up minoring in Comm Studies since it is such a complementary discipline to most majors.

“The biggest benefit gained from joining the team is that we have created this culture of excellence. So, for many of the students, it’s the idea of setting tangible goals and working toward those goals. There is also all of the self-discovery that comes from the process of goal-setting,” states Moore.

While the IE Team prefers that students join in the Fall, there are plenty of



Submitted Photo

**WARM UPS**— GA Heather Chaulk gives pep talk to novice members of BSU speech team.

opportunities to watch the teams compete in order to get a feel for what being a part of the IE family encompasses. The IE team has two upcoming showcases, one will be held in Brayton Clevenger and the other will take place in Pruis. For more information check out the events calendar on page 7.

## NOVEMBER

TUESDAY | 8

**Presentation by Dr. Kristen McCauliff and Dr. Brandon Waite** - "With the Click of a Mouse: Social Media and Activism."  
*Presented at the BSU Center for Peace and Conflict Studies.*

FRIDAY | 11

**Sabbatical Research Presentation Dr. Laura O'Hara** - "Uncomfortable Questions: One White Woman's Experience with the Race Variable in Research."

WEDNESDAY | 16-20

**National Communication Association Convention**  
*New Orleans, LA*

THURSDAY | 17

**Performance Night, Individual Events**  
*Brayton Clevenger, 7:00 p.m.*

## DECEMBER

FRIDAY | 2

**David Letterman Distinguished Professional Lecture and Workshop Series:**  
A conversation with David Letterman and Rachel Maddow  
*Emens Auditorium, 4 p.m.*

FRIDAY | 2-3

**NEDA Tournament, Debate Team**  
*Anderson University, IN*

FRIDAY | 2-3

**Holiday Frolic Swing Tournament, IE Team**  
*Columbus, OH*

SUNDAY | 4

**COMM 210 Bucket Speech Competition**  
*David Letterman Communication and Media Building*  
12 p.m. - 3 p.m.

MONDAY | 5

**On Campus Showcase, IE Team**  
*Pruis Hall, 6:30 P.M.*

---

### COMMENTARY

NOVEMBER 2011  
VOLUME 2, ISSUE 3

#### | Editor and design |

Tynesia Ross, Graduate Assistant

#### | Advisors |

Glen Stamp, Department Chair  
Beth Messner, Associate Professor

---

COMMENTARY is published monthly for the faculty, students and alumni of the Ball State University Department of Communication Studies. Any comments or suggestions should be directed to: [bsucommstudies@gmail.com](mailto:bsucommstudies@gmail.com)

## Graduate Student Feature: Robin Phelps

By Liz Spangler  
Student

Relationships, communication and technology. Graduate student Robin Phelps has an interest in, and focuses many of her projects on, these three things.

As a second-year graduate student, Phelps is the Assistant Basic Course Director under Assistant Professor Kathy Denker. This job includes working with COMM 210 students and graduate teaching assistants. She communicates with students about grades and makes sure they get their points for attending lectures while also training the teachers in technology such as Blackboard, Gradebook and iClicker.

Phelps got the job after a recommendation from her friend who formerly had the job. "I like to be behind the scenes organizing stuff," says Phelps.

Beyond her responsibilities there, she is also involved in a couple of research projects dealing with relationships, communication and technology. She gets many of her ideas through her classes and her interest in media and technology.

The first is about instructional technology in which she is teaching GAs how to use iClickers and other technology. She is interested in finding out if students see the GAs as credible because they are trying to teach something to them as they are learning what they are teaching at the same time.

Another project she is working on with a fellow graduate student is the



Submitted  
Photo

**FEATURED STUDENT—**  
Robin is a second year graduate student in the Comm Dept.

relationships between forensics coaches and their students. A coach can be put in a difficult situation in which they are to critique their students while encouraging them at the same time. Phelps is interested in what kinds of conflicts can emerge within the student-coach relationship.

Her involvement in all these activities and busy schedule leaves her little time to spend in the graduate assistants office with her peers. But she still likes to do what she can to help her fellow assistants. Phelps said, "I do like to know I'm helping. If there's something I can do to help someone, it makes me feel good, even if there's not that one-to-one contact."

**"I like to be behind the scenes organizing stuff."**

Robin Phelps | graduate student

