



**THE UNIVERSITY OF KANSAS**  
SLAVIC, GERMAN, AND EURASIAN STUDIES

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# THE SGES NEWSLETTER

Vol. XXXII no. 2  
Spring 2023

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# ANNUAL AWARDS CEREMONY

For the first year as a combined unit, the department held two end-of-year ceremonies to celebrate our students: an awards ceremony to honor those students who showed excellence in Slavic, German, and Eurasian Studies, and a recognition program to celebrate graduating students across all programs in the department. This year, students who were awarded Excellence in Language were given custom gift sets from the local Lawrence landmark, Wonder Fair, that included a notebook, a German-produced fountain pen, and Kansas-themed post cards for them to remember home. In addition, we were able to give eleven monetary awards to outstanding students for their academic achievements and service contributions to the department. All of our graduating German students were inducted into Delta Phi Alpha, the national German honor society, and one student was inducted into Dobro Slovo, the national Slavic honor society.

Our awards ceremony was bolstered by the presence of representatives from the Center for Russian, East European, and Eurasian Studies, who recognized the recipients of that program’s annual awards and fellowships.

We are thankful to be able to give these awards to our students due to the generosity of alums and other donors to the department. Your gifts are used to support students in the form of scholarships, but they also serve to recognize students’ hard work and motivate them to develop their studies in and passion for the languages we teach.



*Excellence in German Awardees*



*Excellence in Intermediate Russian Awardees: Armina Ailyah Raheel, Rachell Orce, and their instructor Kamila Saifeeva*

## *Excellence in Language*

- *Bosnian Croatian Montenegrin Serbian*
  - Elementary
    - Olivia Percich
  - Intermediate
    - Gina Sane
- *Czech*
  - Elementary
    - Ellen Janda
- *German*
  - Elementary
    - Anis Abughalia
    - Ethan Kline
    - Jady N Miller
    - Loewy Noud
    - Jessi Rhinehart
    - Elwin Velcruz
    - Aprilia Winemaker
  - Intermediate
    - Emma Anderson
    - Cate Manning
    - Jane Michelbach
    - Katherine Price
  - High Intermediate
    - Allison Bell
    - Eilish Frissell
    - Kinsey Meyers

*Excellence in Elementary Turkish Awardees, Emily Tummons and Aylar Kichiyeva, with Fulbright Teaching Assistant, Gizem Zybek*



- *Russian*
  - Elementary
    - Brenlee Adamson
    - Alyssa Curry
  - Intermediate
    - Rachell Orce
    - Armina Aliyah Raheel
    - Derick Reid
  - Advanced
    - Kevin Bainter
- *Persian*
  - Elementary
    - Raul Rangel
  - Intermediate
    - Nicole Ahad
- *Turkish*
  - Elementary
    - Aylar Kichiyeva
    - Emily Tummons
- *Ukrainian*
  - Elementary
    - Paul Perrea
    - Harrison Quinn
    - Mariia Shishmareva
    - Marie Shmurak
    - Hannah Stone
    - Jordan Zaugg
  - Intermediate
    - Paris Gordon

- *Outstanding Service to the Department*
  - Aylar Atadurdyeva (Undergraduate)
  - Andriyana Baran (Graduate)
- *Outstanding Graduate Teaching Award*
  - Chul Hyun Hwang
- *Joseph L. Conrad Undergraduate Research Scholarship*
  - Paris Gordon
  - A Schroeder
- *2023 Russian Scholar Laureate from the American Council of Teachers of Russian*
  - Brooke Binger



*Andriyana Baran, recipient of the Outstanding Service by a Graduate Student Award with Dr. Oleksandra Wallo*

### ***Honor Society Inductions***

*Dobro Slovo | National Slavic Honor Society*

- Aylar Atadurdyeva

*Delta Phi Alpha | National German Honor Society*

- Aylar Atadurdyeva
- Elizabeth Lee
- Glynn Smith
- Ingrid Hess
- Meredith Loehr
- Paola Heredia
- Rachell Orce
- Salem Sanfilippo Solinda



*Outstanding Graduating Students Beth Lee, Aylar Atadurdyeva, and Paola Heredia*

### ***Special Awards***

- *Outstanding Graduating Majors*
  - Paola Heredia (German Studies)
  - Aylar Atadurdyeva (Slavic Languages and Literatures)
- *Outstanding Graduating Minors*
  - Beth Lee (German Studies)
  - Anna Wallen (REES)
  - John Henry Colard (Slavic Languages and Literatures)
  - Dana Nasr (Peace and Conflict Studies)

*Delta Phi Alpha Inductees*





SLAV 205 | GIST 205 | REL 190

**MUSLIM LIVES:**  
POLITICS, CULTURE, AND SOCIETY



The course provides a general introduction to politics and culture(s) of Muslim societies by examining pressing issues such as abortion, capital punishment, gender issues, nuclear weapons, and censorship and, in doing so, engages in exposition of the moral ethos that shapes their cultural and sociopolitical practices. By showing a rich diversity of Muslim communities in terms of cultural mores, religious practices, and legal and political dispositions, the course will challenge the essentialized notion of a “Muslim world,” which is usually presented in the West as a monolithic society.

Fulfills KU Core Goal 5.1.

Dr. Razi Ahmad | r.ahmad@ku.edu

11:30 - 12:15

Tues. & Thur.

FR 113



**CELEBRATING PROMOTIONS**

It is with great pleasure that we announce the promotions of Dr. R.B. Perelmutter and Dr. Ani Kokobobo to the rank of Professor. Their exceptional achievements, dedication to academia, and commitment to advancing knowledge have earned them this well-deserved recognition.

The promotions of Dr. R.B. Perelmutter and Dr. Ani Kokobobo represents not only their exceptional accomplishments but also serves as a testament to the academic excellence and collaborative environment that SGES hopes to foster. It is through the tireless efforts of our dedicated faculty, staff, and students that we can continue to thrive and make significant strides in various fields of study.

Please join us in congratulating Dr. R.B. Perelmutter and Dr. Ani Kokobobo. We are excited to witness their continued growth and impact. Their accomplishments inspire us all to strive for excellence.

**CONGRATULATIONS TO GRADUATING STUDENTS!**

notes by Ari Linden, Oleksandra Wallo, and Vitaly Chernetsky

**Majors**

**Aylar Atadurdyeva** graduated with a major in Slavic Studies and Literatures with an emphasis in Russian and a minor in German Studies, as well as majors in Global and International Studies, Microbiology, and Political Science and another minor in Psychology. Her capstone project in Slavic — which she defended with departmental honors — describes the folklore in Turkmen wedding traditions and studies the prevalence of these traditions in Turkmenistan and in the Turkmen diaspora abroad. Among her many achievements at KU is being the recipient of a prestigious University Award, which is given to only two graduating students who show evidence of intelligence, devotion to studies, personal character, and promise of usefulness to society. Aylar was recognized as the Outstanding Graduating Slavic Major in the department and twice for her service to the department. Aylar is hoping to pursue a Ph.D. after taking a gap year filled with non-academic books, travel, and tons of cooking and baking.

**Paola Heredia** was the recipient of the Outstanding Graduating German Studies Major award. Paola double-majored in German Studies and English, with a focus in creative writing in the English program. Paola received the Engel Scholarship from our department to study abroad in Bonn, but COVID unfortunately interfered with those plans. Paola will also be graduating from KU’s Honors Program and with a certificate from the Global Awareness Program. Her dream is to go to graduate school in a year and become a college professor one day. Starting in June, Paola will work for the German International School in Boston.

**Ingrid Hess** graduated with a double major in German Studies and Journalism, a minor in Political Science, and certificates in Data Science and Global Awareness. She received distinction for her exceptional academic achievement in both majors. In her sophomore year, Ingrid served as President of the German Club during the height of COVID-19. She also studied abroad in Berlin her junior year. Ingrid is pursuing employment in Advertising and Media and plans to move to Chicago this summer.

**Meredith Loehr** pursued majors in both German Studies and Global and International Studies, as well as a minor in Political Science. Meredith has served as Vice President of University of Kansas Young Democrats. Following graduation, she plans to take a year off from school before pursuing graduate study.

**Salem Sanfilippo Solindas** received a BA in Linguistics and German Studies. He is a three-time recipient of the Foreign Language and Area Studies (FLAS) Fellowship for Kaqchikel and has taken three years of Kaqchikel as well as one year of Tibetan in addition to his German language studies. Salem will pursue a Master's Degree in Indigenous Studies at the University of Kansas in the coming Fall.



*Ingrid Hess, Meredith Loehr, and Salem Sanfilippo Solindas*

## Minors

**John Henry Colard** was the recipient of our Outstanding Graduating Slavic Minor award for his academic excellence in our program. He received a BA in Global and International Studies, and his emphasis within the Slavic minor was in Russian.

**Beth Lee** was the recipient of our Outstanding Graduating German Studies Minor award for her academic excellence in our program. After patiently waiting for the pandemic to subside, Beth was finally able to study abroad in Holzkirchen last summer. Aside from her German Studies minor, she received a BS in Civil Engineering and has been a part of the University Honors Program.

**Dana Nasr** was the recipient of the Outstanding Graduating Peace and Conflict Studies Minor award. Aside from her minor in PCS, Dana also earned a BSJ in News and Information from the KU School of Journalism and Mass Communications.

**Rachell Orce** was a Political Science and Global and International Studies major with a German minor (and a Russian certificate). In the summer of 2022, Rachell studied abroad in Berlin (with Dr. Meyertholen) and fell in love with the city. She was awarded the FLAS award for Russian in August 2022 and in April 2023, she was awarded the Critical Language Scholarship to study Russian. She plans to spend this summer in Bishkek, Kyrgyzstan, in an immersive Russian study abroad program. In August, she will be moving with her partner to Berlin to begin her Master's Degree in International Affairs at the Hertie School of Governance. Rachell is hoping to get internships and other practical experience on top of her master's degree to pursue a career in EU integration policymaking after graduation.

**Glynn Smith** graduated with a German Studies minor. Unfortunately, due to a mix of Covid, Air Force ROTC training, and a much-needed internship, he was not able to study abroad in Holzkirchen, but he plans to visit Germany as soon as he gets the chance! Glynn hopes to land a job as a Data Analyst either in Texas or Colorado and perhaps pursue a master's degree.

**Anna Wallen** was the recipient of our Outstanding Graduating REES minor and put together a diverse and engaging minor in Russian, East European, and Eurasian Studies. Aside from being a REES minor, Anna received her BA in Psychology and she also minored in Intelligence and National Security.

On account of their high GPAs in German, all of our majors and minors in German Studies qualified for membership in the National German Honors Society, Delta Phi Alpha; and Aylar is also a new member of the National Slavic Honors Society, Dobro Slovo.



*Rachell Orce and Glynn Smith*

## Masters

After receiving a BA in Slavic from KU, **Kate Crnkovich** graduated with a masters in Slavic Languages and Literatures with a focus on Slavic Linguistics. While working for the department, Kate has been a lead instructor for our online Russian courses for high school students. Kate has also learned Armenian during her master's program, a language not offered at KU. Next academic year, Kate will be serving as an English Teaching Assistant in Armenia on a Fulbright fellowship.

**Marta Puhach** is one of four Ukrainian graduate students to join our department this past year and will complete an accelerated MA degree in Russian, East European, and Eurasian Studies at the end of the summer. As part of the program, Marta taught second-semester Ukrainian while Dr. Wallo was on sabbatical and has served as a grader for some of our largest courses. Marta will be returning to Poland for further plans in academia.

**Kevin Thomas** graduated with the two-year MA in Russian, East European, and Eurasian Studies. While an MA student at KU, Kevin served as the Graduate Assistant to the Center for Russian, East European, and Eurasian Studies, where he assisted with outreach and other tasks. The Center greatly appreciated the work that Kevin did for them. He plans to pursue a Ph.D. in political science in the future, but is presently applying for positions at NGOs.

**Mason Hussong**, a KU Slavic BA alumnus, returned to KU for the accelerated masters in Russian, East European, and Eurasian Studies after the Covid-19 pandemic put a pause on Navy flight school. Mason worked closely with Dr. RB Perelmutter to teach Slavic Folklore and on his MA capstone paper which they aim to turn into an article. With MA in hand, Mason will return to flight school in Pensacola, but he hopes to pursue a Ph.D. after he completes his active-duty military service.

**Antin Zaiarniuk** is another of the Ukrainian graduate students who was able to join us this year for the accelerated MA degree in Russian, East European, and Eurasian Studies. Antin headed our large course on Understanding Russia and East Europe, which has had record enrollments this past year. Along with Dr. Chernetsky, he worked to revitalize the course material. Antin hopes to get a position as a data analyst or work for an NGO in the near future.



*Prof. Vitaly Chernetsky, Mason Hussong, Marta Puhach, and Prof. Oleksandra Wallo*



## TEXTBOOK HERO

We are delighted to share that Assistant Teaching Professor, Ljudmila Bilkić, was selected as KU Libraries 2023 Textbook Hero. Dr. Bilkić has worked for several semesters to convert the course materials for the first two years of the German Language Proficiency Sequence to Open Education Resources (OER), making them more relevant and lively in the process. This project was accomplished through the KU Libraries OER grant and was coordinated with the Shulenburg Office of Scholarly Communications & Copyright. We encourage you to read the full news post on the KU Today website, which highlights the exceptional work of Dr. Bilkić and the transformative impact she has had on students' experiences with the first two years of German at KU.



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## REMEMBERING LORIE VANCHENA



The University of Kansas community is mourning the loss of professor Lorie A. Vanchena, who died on December 12th, 2022 at the age of 61.

Vanchena was an associate professor in the Department of Slavic, German, and Eurasian

Studies and served as Director of the Max Kade Center for German-American Studies. These are but two of the many forms of service she dedicated to the university since she joined the faculty in 2008.

Vanchena's academic work focused heavily on German Americans and German immigrants to the U.S. during the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, which was reflected in her devotion to elevating immigrant voices through the Max Kade Center. Her academic research will be remembered through her creation of the flourishing online course GERM 336: The German Transatlantic Experience, as well as her archive of German immigrant poetry written during the First World War.

"I am profoundly saddened to learn of the death of Professor Lorie Vanchena," said Douglas A. Girod, University of Kansas chancellor. "She was a dedicated scholar, teacher and mentor to her students, and, on behalf of the entire university, I express my sincerest condolences to her family, friends and to all who knew her at KU."

Being a teacher and mentor resonated in all Vanchena's work. As Director of the Max Kade Center, she established connections with the KU Museum Studies program, through which she invited classes to utilize the Center for their projects and mentored several interns who gained invaluable hands-on experience. Vanchena also proved instrumental to the redesign of the German Studies undergraduate curriculum including revamping the senior capstone course to involve mentorship on individual research projects. Vanchena was awarded the J. Michael Young Academic Advisor Award in 2016, the K. Barbara Schowen Undergraduate Research Mentor Award in 2017, and the Dean's Award for Exceptional Student Mentoring (Research Excellence Initiative) in 2017.

"When I first moved to Lawrence, Lorie was among the first to welcome me into to her home where we discovered a mutual love for classic film and animals," writes Andrea Meyertholen, Vanchena's German Studies colleague. "Lorie's dedication and perseverance shone through in everything she did, most notably in her work for the department as Undergraduate Advisor and director of the Max Kade Center. I was always struck how Lorie worked to create moments of togetherness between the German Studies Department and the community -- in and beyond KU. She not only invited those outside the department into the Max Kade Center with yearly series of lectures, but she also brought German out into the community through her work with the Watkins Museum of History. Her commitment to her work and to her friends as well as the volunteering she involved herself in will be greatly missed."

Vanchena sought to make her scholarship public by interacting with the community around her. Beyond her work within KU, by pairing with the Museum Studies Program and Spencer Research Library, Lorie also created connections with the Watkins Museum of History to further the awareness of Lawrence's own German American legacy. In conjunction with her role as Academic Director of European Studies, she served as Chair of the WWI Centennial Commemoration and worked to commemorate the lasting effects of the war.

"Lorie's life exemplifies unmatched dedication to student mentoring, public-facing scholarship, and community engagement," recalls Nina Vyatkina, prior chair of KU German Studies. "As Director of the Max Kade Center for German-American Studies, she worked tirelessly with many campus, community, national, and international partners on curating books, archives, and artwork related to German Americans and making these collections available to scholars, providing opportunities for student engagement, and bringing numerous guest speakers and other highly successful programs to campus and the wider community. She will be sorely missed by students and colleagues, but her legacy will live on."

The department sponsored a small memorial for Lorie Vanchena at the Max Kade Center in January of 2023, which was organized and attended by dear friends and colleagues. Lorie will be fondly remembered at the center and in the department.





*Oleksandra Wallo, Vitaly Chernetsky, Ani Kokobobo, and Valery Dzusati*

## THE WAR IN UKRAINE 365 DAYS IN

Reflecting on the invasion of Ukraine by Russia at the one-year mark, the department reprised the Teach-In and Panel that we organized in 2022. Held at The Commons and livestreamed via KU Media Services on March 1st, the event was well attended with clear community support. Our approach to this event was to revisit assumptions we made last year and reevaluate the situation and position moving forward. During the Teach-In, Professor Oleksandra Wallo discussed how the war has changed the social landscape of Ukraine. She expanded these comments into a public lecture given at the Lawrence Public Library. Professor Vitaly Chernetsky followed with a discussion of the history of violence and colonialism in the region.

Professor Ani Kokobobo of SGEES and Dr. Valery Dzusati, Visiting Assistant Professor of Political Science and CREES, joined Drs. Wallo and Chernetsky for the panel session, which provided space for lively discussion and a wide range of questions.

As part of our ongoing efforts to support our Ukrainian colleagues, the department will be welcoming another cohort of displaced Ukrainian graduate students to pursue a fully-funded MA in Russian, East European, and Eurasian Studies. Visiting Assistant Professor Olga Kyrylova will continue in Film and Media Studies for another year, teaching on the history of Ukrainian film, and the department hopes to provide space for another Scholar at Risk this upcoming academic year.

## NAVALNY SCREENING

In April, we welcomed our BA and MA alumnus, Aric Toler, Director of Training & Research at Bellingcat. In conjunction with a screening of the documentary *Navalny*, which won an Oscar this year, Aric spoke about his work at Bellingcat and its relationship to the investigation into the poisoning of Alexei Navalny. The event was jointly hosted with the Center for Russian, East European & Eurasian Studies (CREES).

The documentary centered around the Russian opposition leader, Alexei Navalny, who has been a prominent figure in advocating for democracy, transparency, and human rights in Russia. The event provided a platform for students, faculty, and community members to engage in thoughtful discussions surrounding the investigative work of Bellingcat as well as Navalny's activism, the challenges he has faced, and the broader implications for democratic movements worldwide.

The event was well attended by both members of the department and the wider community. Aric fielded a wide range of questions after the showing, which included comments on his career path as an alumnus of the department, details about Bellingcat's investigative methods and future, and about the political landscape in Russia and the implications it has on the international stage.

We are thankful to Aric for joining us and CREES for supporting the event as well as the students, faculty, and community members who attended the *Navalny* screening.

**FAIRY TALES**  
FROM THE BROTHERS GRIMM TO  
DISNEY AND BEYOND

**GERM 145**  
MW | 3:00 - 3:50 PM  
with Discussion on Friday  
Dr. Andrea Meyertholen

Once upon a time, fairy tales were not the Disneyfied children's stories we know and love. Set in a world of torture, mutilation, and abandonment, the grim reality of our favorite tales would disturb small children and parents alike. This course delves into the darker side of fairy tales as we re-discover their roots in the German folklore tradition and compare the Grimm classics to contemporary adaptations on stage, screen, and television. From Disney to beyond, we will uncover the hidden cultural messages that shape our identity, behavior, gender roles, and desires and explore the potential for social subversion through reinterpretation and rewriting.

*Taught in English. Satisfies Core GES1.  
No textbook or other materials required.*

# FREE, ONLINE ELEMENTARY RUSSIAN FOR HIGH SCHOOLERS

- 100% free and online
- 2 semesters of 3 KU Credits each
- Created and taught by KU Faculty
- Language learning supplemented by cultural webinars



**Register**

<https://slavic.ku.edu/us-russian-foundation-grant-project>



## RUSSIAN AT KU

Russian is spoken by upwards of 250 million people around the world, making it one of the top ten most spoken languages. Learning Russian is not only important for the study of Russia, but those countries around and affected by it such as Kazakhstan, Belarus, and Ukraine. Russian has been taught at KU for more than 50 years by national experts, who have created specialized curriculum, including our own open resource textbook.

Knowing Russian unlocks unique career opportunities in fields like Business, Science, Technology, Cyber Security, Politics, Literature, and the Arts.



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## OFFERING RUSSIAN TO KANSAS HIGH SCHOOL STUDENTS

*The U.S. Russian Foundation Grant*

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We are entering into a second year of our U.S. Russian Foundation grant to provide opportunities for and access to Russian Studies to high school students from the state of Kansas. This past year, we welcomed 39 students in two semesters of the introductory Russian course, RUSS 150, and saw 11 students continue to the second semester in RUSS 152.

These online Russian courses relied on the work and guidance of graduating MA student, Kate Crnkovich, and Visiting Assistant Professor, Zakhar Ishov, to whom we are grateful for. We wish them the best on their next endeavors.

We will enter the second year of this grant in Fall 2023 with another session of RUSS 150 and RUSS 152! Please encourage any interested Kansas high school students to visit our website and register for the program.



# UPDATES FROM THE MAX KADE CENTER FOR GERMAN- AMERICAN STUDIES

by Marike Janzen

In January 2023, I was pleased to take on the directorship of the Max Kade Center. I have big shoes to fill, but am eager for the challenge!

I spent much of this semester getting to know the Center. This meant becoming familiar with its historically significant buildings. These include the Sudler house, built by the physician and KU Professor James Sudler in 1927, and the Annex, a limestone stable built by the Jayhawker James Lane in 1861. It also meant learning to know about the Max Kade Center's holdings, which feature the archives of the New York Turn Verein, and works by and about writers critical of National Socialism who were forced to flee their homes in the 1930s and 1940s.

My work in Spring 2023 also involved meeting with multiple stakeholders, and brainstorming ways to highlight the contemporary significance of the Center's collections, which represent efforts at building democratic civic institutions and critical responses to authoritarianism. I am also working on ways to feature the Max Kade Center as a site to examine the contours and relevance of current connections between Germany and the United States, as well as consider how migration (the phenomenon at the heart of the Max Kade collection) characterizes the world we live in.

Mark your calendars for a major event at the Max Kade Center in early fall, 2023. From August 14 to September 15, we will be hosting a traveling pop-up exhibit developed by the Thomas Mann House in Los Angeles, "Democracy will win!" Thomas Mann was one of the most well-known German writers of the first half of the twentieth century. While he claimed to be "apolitical" early in his life, the rise of fascism across Europe in the 1930s forced him to flee Germany for exile in the US, and led him to become a staunch defender of democracy. The exhibit follows Mann's political development and, on the basis of Mann's life and work, considers how democracy must be constantly put in practice to be defended.

After several years of being closed to visitors due to the Covid-19 pandemic, it is time to open the doors of the Max Kade Center once again!



We are sad to say good-bye to Abigail Elliot, who worked at the Max Kade Center for all four years of her undergraduate career. We are incredibly grateful for her work ethic and her ability to take initiative; impressive qualities in the best of times, but exceptional ones during a pandemic which required her to be working on her own for two years. As a student worker at the Center, her main duty was to continue an ongoing inventory of its materials. She helped in the conservation of the Milwaukee Turnverein Collection by using archival paper to wrap disintegrating books. She assisted in Max Kade Center community outreach, for example, by planning and leading activities for the Watkins History Museum's annual Trails and Traditions event. Abigail also helped set up and take down events that took place at the center. In addition to general upkeep of the building, she aided in the organization of the building's materials by consolidating collections and updating bookcase labels in both the Sudler House and Annex to be in keeping with museum and library standards. Abigail digitized files and documents, previous Max Kade Center newsletters, and the Milwaukee Turnverein inventory book. She also helped prepare for the New York Turn Verein digitization project by counting thousands of pages as needed for the grant proposal to secure funding for the documents to be scanned. Abigail conducted research into the early life of Dr. Sudler, and compiled newspaper articles about him. She transported materials to and from the Engel Library in Wescoe Hall and the Spencer Research Library.

Abigail graduated from KU with a degree in biology and plans to attend medical school. We truly appreciate the support Abigail provided to the Max Kade Center and wish her all the best in her next adventures.

*This edition of the SGES Newsletter was edited by Dr. Marike Janzen.*





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The University of Kansas