Some people discover their passion late in life. They hold nothing back in pursuing it, and in doing so, ignite a fire in others. So it is with Wendy Dirks, assistant professor of anthropology, whose work includes studying the effects of stress on primates.

Dirks’ path to her passion was circuitous, but its seeds were planted in childhood. “I fell in love with the gorillas at Chicago’s Lincoln Park Zoo,” she recalls. Although she dropped out of college at a young age, her love of learning never dimmed. An avid reader, she was fascinated with primate ecology and human evolution.

It was actually television, not books, that precipitated Dirks’ epiphany. In the late 1980s, she was working as a secretary at Nashville Auto-Diesel College. Watching a National Geographic special one evening, her calling could no longer be silenced. The documentary, Among the Wild Chimpanzees, chronicled the work of Jane Goodall. “I sat there and cried, wondering how people got to do these things. It seemed as possible for me to go to Tanzania as to the moon.”

However, dreams are powerful fuel—powerful enough to take Dirks from Tennessee to Tanzania within ten years. Shortly after viewing the Goodall documentary, she moved to New York City and enrolled in primate anthropology courses. She earned master’s and doctorate degrees at New York University and did fieldwork in Tanzania as part of her study. At NYU, Cliff Jolly became her mentor. His research on Ethiopian baboons steered Dirks to her current focus—creating models for understanding primate evolution.

“Growth increments in teeth help you reconstruct an animal’s life—similar to growth rings in trees,” Dirks says. According to her, teeth reveal the timing of stresses—from weaning and reproduction to death. Some studies have even tracked how excessive rainfall created stress in primates. “If we can understand what the teeth are telling us in extant species, we have a window on reconstructing the lives of extinct fossil taxa.”

Researchers also are studying the model’s implications for human archeology. “Archeologists are trying to get a sense of developmental trajectory. At some point in human evolution, we made an incredible jump to having long childhoods and large brains. How we grow is incredibly important to our success as a species.”

Oxford is an ideal setting for her work and she enjoys teaching students at a critical juncture in their lives. Dirks encourages students to do something they love, instead of working just to acquire possessions. “I don’t want them lose the pleasure of learning.”

Laura McMaster, a former lab assistant and founder of the Oxford Anthropology Club, says, “I know what it means to be completely ignorant of a subject and one day wake up knowledgeable because someone bothered to listen to my questions, take me seriously, and teach me all I wanted to know. Dr. Dirks wants her students to care about the world and be aware enough to make a difference.”

Given her own enthusiasm for discovery, Dirks can be confident she’s making a mark on the lives of Oxford students.
Spuds Line Quad for Good Cause

To the casual observer, a tractor-trailer load of potatoes on the Oxford College Quad might look like an elaborate student prank. Those who know the students of Oxford would realize it must be something else.

Approximately 100 students participated in the first Oxford Great Potato Drop on March 27, 2004, when 45,000 pounds of potatoes were dropped on the Quad to be distributed to community members in need. The project was organized by Volunteer Oxford, an umbrella agency for volunteer activities at the college.

“The idea for the project came when we had a guest facilitator from Georgia College in Milledgeville do training with us. Their volunteer group had done it,” said Crystal McLaughlin, director of student development at Oxford College for the last two years. “It has been done at several colleges—actually, Candler School of Theology has done it in the past.”

The idea for potato drops originated with the Society of St. Andrew, which partnered with Oxford and whose motto is “Gleaning America’s fields, feeding America’s hungry.” Its website, www.wwendar.org, states, “Tractor-trailer loads of potatoes and other produce are often rejected by commercial markets or potato chip factories due to slight imperfections in size, shape, sugar content, or surface blemishes. Ordinarily, this produce would be taken to landfills, but the society redirects this edible fresh produce to communities in need. The potatoes are free, and the volunteer organization pays for the shipping costs.

At Oxford’s Great Potato Drop fifteen-pound bags of potatoes were hauled onto the Quad. Students formed an assembly line to get the potatoes off the truck, which were

then counted and separated to be distributed to local aid agencies. Students contacted organizations ahead of time to plan who would be picking up the potatoes and how many pounds were needed, which the students also loaded onto the vehicles of the receiving agencies.

“We contacted agencies we were familiar with, a couple of food pantries we work with throughout the year, and ‘Hands of Hope,’ which is affiliated with the United Methodist Church,” said McLaughlin. “We also worked with senior citizen groups and programs serving the homeless.”

Volunteerism is a strong value at Oxford. The college offers theory/practice/service learning in which certain classes use service as part of their course requirements.

“This was a lot of fun, yet still serves an important need,” said McLaughlin of the drop. “It’s another example of how committed Oxford students are to serving their community.”

In 2004, Volunteer Oxford participated in the National Great Potato Drop, which certain classes use service as part of their course requirements.

The Oxford College Alumni Association conferred its 2004 Outstanding Teaching Award upon literature and humanities professor emeritus John Willis Gregory. Gregory began teaching at Oxford in 1947. During the course of his career he served as chairman of the humanities division and director of public relations. Students fondly remember him as “coach” of “B Company,” during the era in which all students were assigned companies upon their arrival on campus. He also served on the college’s admission and development committees. The father of two sons, both Oxford graduates, and the grandfather of four, Gregory retired from teaching in 1979. He endowed the Sara Gregory Book Fund in honor of his late wife, who died in 2001. According to the Alumni Association citation, Gregory “exemplified Oxford’s dedicated teachers in going above and beyond in the classroom and outside the classroom to teach, to encourage, and to challenge.”

Also honored as Honorary Alumni at the ceremony, held in April at Oxford Weekend, were Joe Moon, associate dean of campus life, Jennie Taylor, associate dean of admission, and Dean Dana Greene.

The Outstanding Alumna Award went to Melinda Davis ’86, who retired as assistant director of alumni and parent relations this year.

The Outstanding Alumnus Award went to Millie Davis ’81, who retired as assistant director of alumni and parent relations this year.

Honors and Distinctions

Students

The Coca-Cola Scholars Foundation has recognized sophomore Morgan Lodungo of Ponte Vedra Beach, Florida, for her outstanding academic achievement and community service. She was one of 400 recipients of the honor nationwide.

Continues

The John Temple Scholarship, established in honor of Emory’s recently retired executive vice president for administration and finance by Emory College and awarded to an Oxford student, was awarded for the first time to Woon Cho Kim ’04/’06 of Seoul, South Korea. The scholarship honors service and leadership.

Faculty and Staff

• Nitya Jacobs received the General Board of Higher Education and Ministry of the UMC Exemplary Teaching Award.

• Reza Saadeh received the University’s Emory Williams Teaching Award, its oldest award for teaching.

• Gretchen Schultz participated in the National Endowment for the Humanities’ Summer Institute on Shakespeare at the Shenedaoh Shakespeare Blackfriars Theatre in Staunton, Virginia, and at the Globe Theatre in London.

• Matt Morris coauthored Identitt, Modernite, Texte (Yale University Press) and two editions of Le Roman de Parthenay. For the latter, he was awarded the Adelle Mellen Prize for Distinguished Contribution to Scholarship.

• David Gowher edited Fabr’s Discourse (Trinity Press International).

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Judy Greer Receives Chandler Award

Judy Greer, professor of physical education and dance emerita, received the R. Carl Chandler Award from Oxford’s Board of Counselors at their October 8 meeting. The award honors a lifetime of outstanding leadership through service to Oxford College and is given in honor of Chandler, a charter member of the Board of Counselors, who served as its first chair from 1971 to 1975. Greer is pictured here with Judy Greer Scholar Bryan Oster. The scholarship was permanently endowed in her honor in 1997 by members of the Class of 1959.
Dean’s Message

‘Emory stands for the best in life, and it believes the best is yet to come.’

These rousing and hope-filled words from the Emory Creed of 1918 were written here in Oxford as Emory College embarked on a new adventure—the move to Atlanta to create a university. It was a time of great moment, reminiscent of what is before us today in 2004: the opportunity to create a great university fashioned from nine unique and distinctive schools. The sense of adventure and expectancy inherent in the creed are replicated now as each part of Emory envisions and plans for its own future and determines how it will connect with and enrich this elusive whole we call the “University.” Emory is greater than the sum of its parts, yet it is only strengthened by integrating each school and supporting the connective links that hold them all together. While there is precedent for this adventure of creating something new, the work of making a unified Emory is novel. It is also imperative, if Emory’s “best is yet to come.”

During the past academic year Oxford has worked diligently to prepare for its future. Aware that much was at stake, in March 2004 we began a process of strategic planning that was both inclusive and intense. We began with a vision statement, defining Oxford as a place in the heart of Emory. Our assessment of institutions and strengths and weakness was presented to the University Strategic Planning Committee in July, and in October the process was completed with the designation of goals and initiatives that would guide us for the next five years. This planning was educational for all involved, and the initiatives defined will serve as a basis for Oxford’s participation in the University-wide comprehensive fund-raising campaign.

The Oxford plan was driven by the hopeful expectation of the Emory Creed, and the realistic understanding that Oxford College’s future lies in forging links with its sister schools in Atlanta and claiming its distinctive place within the Emory constellation.

In the midst of these nine months of highly focused planning and evaluation, two events inter-versed that heightened our understanding of Oxford as part of the wider community. President Wagner began his inaugural activities here on campus, and the University Board of Trustees, after a six-year absence from the Oxford campus, convened its June meeting in our new Tarbleton Center.

A meeting of considerable import in which the Board reconfirmed the mission of Oxford and recognized it as an untapped asset of the University. In summarizing that meeting President Wagner wrote: “The main agenda topic of discussion for the Board of Trustees that day dealt with the future possibilities for Oxford College. It was an open and frank discussion concerning the entire spectrum of possibilities for Oxford’s future. . . .” The meeting ended with a total and enthusiastic consensus that Oxford College not only must continue but also must grow in excellence and distinction in ways that bring pride to its faculty, students, staff, and alumni, and ever-increasing value to Emory University.”

Here at the College we are reeling in 2004–2005, knowing as we always have that “the best is yet to come.” Sending best wishes from your alma mater.

Dana Greene

greene@emory.edu

Earl Lewis chosen as provost

When Earl Lewis graduated with a PhD in African American history from the University of Minnesota, he turned down a job at Emory to become a faculty member at the University of California at Berkeley. Twenty years later, after a distinguished career at the University of Michigan, Lewis has chosen to work at Emory after all, as its new executive vice president and provost. His appointment makes him the highest-ranking African American administrator in Emory’s history and the first person to permanently hold the provost position since Rebecca Chopp left in June 2001. “Owning to his experience in academic administration, his roots in the humanities, and his particular experience in graduate education, Earl will bring a rich portfolio of capabilities that will be a strong complement to those already part of Emory’s leadership team,” said Emory President James Wagner.

Prior to his arrival at Emory in July, Lewis was dean of the Horace H. Rackham School of Graduate Studies and the Ella Barkley Brown and Robin D. G. Kelley Collegiate Professor of History and African American and African Studies at Michigan. He joined the Michigan faculty in 1989 and became director of Michigan’s Center for Afroamerican and African Studies the following year. He earned a BA, magna cum laude, in history and psychology from Concordia College in Moorhead, Minnesota, in 1978 and went on to earn a master’s and the aforementioned doctorate from Minnesota six years later. —Excerpted from Emory Report

Earl Lewis began his job as provost July 1.

Mark your Calendar

Oxford Weekend is Thursday, May 12, through Monday May 16, in coordination with Emory Weekend. Oxford’s Commencement will be held Saturday morning, May 14, followed by an Oxford Day celebration lunch and other activities that afternoon. Reunion classes ending in “4” and “5” will celebrate Saturday evening with a live band. More information on Oxford Weekend, graduation, and Emory Weekend, and join us Details and registration information will be mailed to you soon.

Tennis 3rd in Nation

For the second year in a row, the Oxford men’s tennis team participated in the NJCAA (National Junior College Athletic Association) Division III national tournament. Oxford finished third out of thirteen competing teams at the tournament in Plano, Texas. Under first-year coach Brandon Feldman, Oxford improved on its fifth-place finish from the previous year.

The tournament featured six singles flights and three doubles flights, with teams awarded points for each win. Oxford amassed 26.5 points to finish third, a half point behind second place Rock Valley College (Rockford, Ill.), while the championship was won by the College of DuPage (Glendale, Ill.), with 45 points.

Four Eagles were named to the NJCAA All-America second team, the first tennis All-Americans for Oxford. All four were national runner-ups in their singles and/or doubles flights.

Sophomore Ben Harris was the runner-up at No. 1 singles and No. 1 doubles, the latter with sophomore Mike Jirasakhiran. Sophomore Nathan Comstock was runner-up at No. 6 singles and No. 3 doubles, the latter with freshman Zach Sigel.

Harris added to his list of honors as the NJCAA national men’s winner of the Arthur Ashe Jr. Award, presented by the Intercollegiate Tennis Association for leadership and sportsmanship.

“I’m extremely proud of how our players competed,” said Coach Brandon Feldman following the tournament.

“I’m extremely proud of how our players competed,” said Coach Brandon Feldman following the tournament. “We competed hard in all of the matches. It’s tough being so close in points, but considering how tough the top four or five teams were at the tournament this year, we know how much of an accomplishment our result is.”

Tennis has a special place in the history of Oxford athletics, thanks in part to the support of the late Mary Louise Fowler. Upon her death in 1979, Fowler bequeathed $50,000 to Oxford in support of the tennis program.

A longtime resident of Covington, Fowler was an avid tennis player and teacher. Her commitment to Oxford and our program over the years has been invaluable. “Penny England, a longtime physical education professor, is among the newest inductees into the Oxford Sports Hall of Fame. She was one of six honorees at the October 2 induction ceremony, attended by more than 150 guests, including current Oxford student-athletes, alumni, staff, and faculty.

England contributed to Oxford’s athletics program as a former men’s tennis coach (see this issue for the team’s success last season) and currently serves on the school’s athletics committee, an advisory group for the athletics department.

Penny has always exhibited positive energy, sound judgment, a caring nature and a determined will,” says Judy Greer, a former teaching colleague and also a member of the Emory Sports Hall of Fame. “Penny England stands for what makes Oxford a great place. I have learned a great deal from Penny and we are very proud of her accomplishments. Her commitment to Oxford and our program over the years has been outstanding,” said Athletic Director Edgar Flores.
This Georgia-to-Georgia partnership promotes health

Driven by a common goal, a group of Atlanta medical professionals endured vaccinations, jet lag, and long hours working under difficult circumstances. Less dedicated individuals might have been overwhelmed at the task confronting them—improving education, science, and health in the Republic of Georgia. When the Atlanta-Thomasville Healthcare Partnership formed in 1992, the Republic’s infrastructure was in disarray from the dissolution of the Soviet Union. Hospitals were unheated, underequipped, falling apart, and lacking technology. Electricity was unreliable. Medical libraries were empty except for outdated periodicals. Diseases such as rabies, tuberculosis, hepatitis, and AIDS were ongoing threats.

H. Kenneth Walker ’56 Ox–58C–61M–70MR, deputy chief of medicine at Grady Memorial Hospital and professor of medicine and associate professor of neurology at the School of Medicine, became the partnership’s codirector. “We began in a country devastated in every respect: spirit; economy; health care; political system; virtually every social institution,” Walker recalls.

Determined to create positive change, the partnership has made substantial progress. Health policy reforms have established quality control standards, health-care funding, licensing of medical facilities, and certification for health-care providers. On-the-scene resuscitation wasn’t common practice, so an emergency medical career was created. A National Information Learning Center (NICL) provides access to Western medical knowledge—necessary to construct and equip the new call center. The partners remain as pledge balances at the end of the fiscal year ending August 31, 2004. Oxford College raised $11,122,941 in cash and pledges of this amount, $986,785 was in cash and $126,155 remained as pledge balances at the end of the year. The Emory Annual Fund raised $206,385 for Oxford College in the last fiscal year.

We have opened a new call center, hiring two student managers and twenty student callers. This new center will allow Oxford students to call our alumni, and we hope you will be pleased with the results. The members of our Board of Counselors—whose Counsellors’ Fund and an extraordinary gift from member J. Eric Pike—provided the support necessary to construct and equip the new call center. We have a number of proposals pending with major foundations and corporations. We have received two grants from the C.R. Bard Foundation: the first for $5,000 for the Martin Luther King Jr. Scholarship and the second for $2,500 for an Oxford student-internship at the Bard plant in Covington.

We also have completed one major planned gift agreement during this past year that will benefit the Oxford scholarship program for generations to come. We are working with several other planned-giving prospects at this time. The Institutional Advancement division has been renamed the Office of Development and University Relations to more accurately reflect what we do. All of us in our office—Marvyn Kirk, Mary Barnes, Tammy Camfield, and I—are beginning to realize that we are part of something much bigger than Emory. Emory is stepping to another level. In a broad sense, we have a part in outcomes that will change the world. This is a new day for Oxford. It is up to us to work together to take advantage of this opportunity. If a rising tide floats all boats, I want Oxford to be the flagship.

W. Thomas Wilfong
Director of Development
Tom.Wilfong@emory.edu

Anne Marie Oliver ’79 Ox–81C lives in Portland, Oregon; her book on suicide bombers will be published in December.

Determined to create positive change, the partnership has made substantial progress.

Conflictic journeys, martyrdom in the intifada and the struggle for friendship under extremely divisive circumstances. “Countless Israelis say, ‘I just want to be a normal person in the world.’ Their chaotic society affects every aspect of their lives,” Oliver says.

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