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Professor of Psychology and Merry Lea faculty member bid farewell to Goshen College

GOSHEN, Ind. – The close of this school year marks the retirement of two valued Goshen College faculty. Psychology Duane Kauffmann completed his 40th year of teaching. Larry Yoder will retire after working 26 years at the Merry Lea Environmental Learning Center of Goshen College.

Yoder has been instrumental in the growth and direction of the college's environmental education facility at Merry Lea, beginning as its executive director in 1981. "He worked closely with Lee and Mary Jane Rieth, the founders of Merry Lea, in shepherding the emerging relationship of Merry Lea with Goshen College," said Gascho, current executive director of Merry Lea.

Yoder is grateful that he was able to develop a relationship with the couple that donated Merry Lea to the college before Lee passed away just a few years after they had met. "I had a chance to work with him and capture the vision that he had," Yoder said. "I think Mr. Rieth would be thrilled at the way Merry Lea has been developed."

Yoder received a bachelor's degree from Manchester College and attended Indiana University until he had completed his doctorate in 1972. After serving as the director of Merry Lea for 16 years, in 1996 he became an assistant to the executive director. Throughout his career, Yoder periodically taught biology courses at Goshen College as well.

"I'm so pleased that I made it all the way to retirement without the dean finding out how much fun it is to work at Merry Lea," Yoder said. "I would have wound up having to pay tuition all these years instead of drawing a salary."

Gascho appreciated Yoder's enthusiasm. "He has had a vision for the way Merry Lea can challenge people's connections to the earth and how they can become good stewards of creation. It has been a privilege to let Larry and work alongside him in fulfilling the mission of Merry Lea."

In his retirement, Yoder plans to continue working on the family farm, putting more time into the production of local food. "One of the wonderful things about the academic life is that when you retire you don't have to get your watch and go out the door never to be seen or heard of again," Yoder said. "I expect to apply my experience at Merry Lea, my training as a botanist to this new enterprise — in a sense writing a new trend in locally produced food."

An important part of Yoder's career took place from 1972 until 1981 at Ohio State University's Marion campus where he was a botanist. He initiated the preservation and planting of five acres of native prairie. Recently, Yoder's contributions and achievements there were rewarded with a ceremony naming the prairie lands after him. "It was a very meaningful time," he said, "and believe me that was quite an experience to have been recognized in that way."

Still, Yoder said, "I would really have missed a chance of a lifetime if I had not had the opportunity to come to Merry Lea."

Yoder, who attends church at East Goshen Mennonite, said he and his wife Ilse will be remaining in the area. They have two grown daughters, Erika and Laura.

Professor of Psychology Duane Kauffmann

Kauffmann is chair of the Psychology Department, a position he first held when psychology broke away from the Education Department in the 1970s.

After graduating from Goshen College with a degree in psychology in 1966, Kauffmann studied social psychology at the University of Illinois, where he received his master's and doctorate there. While attending doctoral classes, he began his career teaching at Goshen in the fall of 1967.

"For a time I was a one-person department," Kauffmann said of his early years in the emerging psychology department. Over the years he has also used his interest and knowledge in marine biology to teach an annual term course on the topic at the college's field station in the Florida Keys.

Apart from teaching and heading a department, Kauffmann has served on numerous committees at Goshen College and for many years he held the position of director of institutional research.

Kauffmann's career achievements reflect his interest in research, particularly in the fields of the psychology of learning and memory.

religion, social psychology and experimental psychology. His research has been published numerous times in a variety of academic journals and he plans to continue this type of work in his retirement. "I hope to do writing in areas of psychology of religion and philosophy of education. I also plan to continue my marine work on the gastropods," Kauffmann said.

Professor of Psychology Vic Koop, who has been a colleague of Kauffmann's for 25 years, said of him, "He is a kind and will never be replaced." Koop named one of Kauffmann's major contributions as "helping the Psychology Department get to a point where we have an impressive record in terms of getting students into graduate school. More than 95 percent of GC psychology graduates who apply are accepted."

The students Kauffmann has taught are perhaps his greatest source of pride. "I am proud of where our graduates serve today. Collectively GC psychology graduates are doing many wonderfully impressive things," he said.

Kauffmann's retirement plans are not all academic. "I also want to play golf and travel," he said. When not at work, he and his wife Dottie reside in Goshen, and they have one son, Glen. The Kauffmanns are members of the Central Mennonite Church.

– By Kelli Yoder

Editors: For more information about this release, to arrange an interview or request a photo, contact Goshen News Bureau Director Jodi H. Beyeler at (574) 535-7572 or jodihb@goshen.edu.

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