



# Tucker Center

for Research on Girls & Women in Sport

FALL 2015

TuckerCenter.org

## FEATURE STORY: Placing GIRLS First Leads to Ground-Breaking Research and Outreach



Tucker Center Affiliated Scholar Dr. Chelsey Thul has quite a track record for being a passionate and dedicated promoter of girls' involvement in sports and physical activity. A native of Cloquet, MN, she pursued her Ph.D. in Kinesiology at the U of M with an emphasis in Sport Psychology. A central component of Thul's graduate student experience was to serve as a Research Assistant in the TC from 2006-11. During that time she worked closely with her advisor, Dr. Nicole M. LaVoi, on a variety of gender and sport research issues. Their 8-year collaboration examining the physical activity needs and barriers faced by underserved girls began in 2007 with a small grant from the *Melpomene Institute for Women's Health Research*. More specifically, they examined the experiences of East

African girls living in the Twin Cities metropolitan community and how those experiences involved engagement in physical activity. In this first-of-its-kind study, Thul and LaVoi discovered that the girls had a great desire to participate, but had limited access to culturally competent and religiously appropriate programming. Specifically, the girls wanted a female-only space in which they could be active and uphold their cultural and religious beliefs concerning maintenance of privacy and modesty.

Based on their findings, Thul and LaVoi knew it was critical to collaborate with a well-known and respected community member. In 2008, Somali-American Fatimah Hussein created the Girls' Initiative in Recreation and Leisurely Sports (GIRLS) program. Based in the

*"GIRLS Co-Design" cont'd page 2*

## Letter from the Director

It's another Fall season, leaves are turning into splendid red, yellow and orange colors, and two decades after the Tucker Center was first established, we continue to make a difference in the lives of girls and women. Since our inception in 1993, we have been committed to conducting research that has a direct impact on our surrounding communities and beyond. A central part of our mission is establishing partnerships with advocates committed to ensuring that all females have opportunities to participate in sports and physical activity. One of our most recent—and important—partnerships fulfills this mission through the groundbreaking and collaborative research of Dr. Chelsey Thul. Along with Dr. Nicole M. LaVoi, Thul developed a unique initiative spearheaded by Somali-American Fatimah Hussein, one that targets an underserved population—East African adolescent girls. The story of how this initiative came about, as well as the amazing end result, demonstrates the importance of building community partnerships.

Remember how you felt watching the U.S. women's soccer team capture the World Cup? How about Becky Hammon being hired as an Assistant Coach in the NBA? These remarkable moments have many asking if we have finally reached a tipping point in women's sports. To address this issue, our Fall Distinguished Lecture will feature a Great Conversation with pioneering sports scholar Professor Pat Griffin and yours truly. We'll explore how our own research, ranging from media coverage to the impact of homophobia, provides insights into whether this truly is an unprecedented moment in women's sports. See the back page for more details.

This past summer we worked with three remarkable individuals, two of whom served as TC interns—Maddie Kornfeld and Anna Posbergh. Undergraduate students at Macalester and the U of M, respectively, each made significant contributions to our research efforts examining females in leadership positions (or the decline thereof) in women's sports. We also introduce you to Marnie Kinnaird, Master's degree student at the U of M, who was awarded the first Borton Fellowship for the Promotion of Girls and Women in Sport Leadership.

I hope you can join us for our Great Conversation on October 21st. Happy Fall!

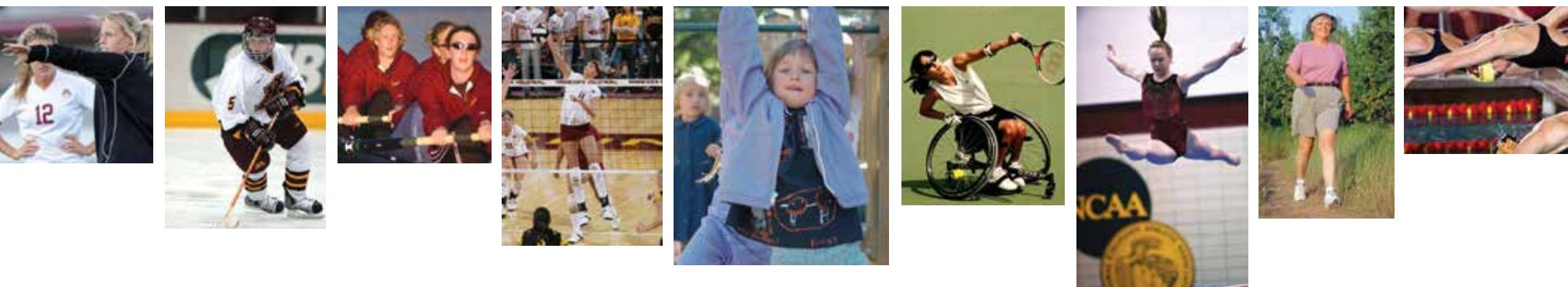


Dr. Mary Jo Kane

### SAVE THE DATES!

- **October 21:** The 2015 Fall Distinguished Lecture **"Have We Reached a Tipping Point in Women's Sports?: A Great Conversation with Pioneering Sport Scholars"** will be held on Wednesday, October 21, 2015, 7-9pm at Cowles Auditorium on the West Bank.
- **February 2:** The 6th Annual *Tucker Center Film Festival* will be held February 2, 2016 to celebrate National Girls & Women in Sport Day. We are currently accepting film submissions through November 14. To submit a film, please go to [www.tuckercenter.org](http://www.tuckercenter.org).
- **April 22:** The popular and annually sold-out Women Coaches Symposium will be held at TCF Bank Stadium, DQ Room, on April 22, 2016.

For updated information on all our upcoming events visit our website or Facebook page.



"GIRLS Co-Design" cont'd from page 1

Minneapolis Cedar-Riverside neighborhood, home to the largest diaspora of East African immigrants in the United States, the GIRLS program provides opportunities for East African adolescent girls—a majority of whom are practicing Muslims—to participate in a variety of physical activities in a female-only space. Thul served as a research consultant for this innovative program.

In spite of this unique and creative partnership between the Tucker Center and the East African community, it wasn't long before Thul and members of the GIRLS leadership team heard complaints from the girls in the program about one particular barrier to their physical activity—their apparel. Females in traditional Muslim culture must cover their heads and bodies when in the presence of males. Since sports typically are played in public spaces, the need for culturally appropriate uniforms is highly relevant. Popular and accessible active wear available on the American sports market does not meet these requirements. In addition, culturally and religiously appropriate clothing—such as long, flowing skirts and hijabs—can interfere with running and jumping. The girls frequently mentioned that their traditional cultural and religious attire limited their ability to be physically active and also impacted their comfort level. As Thul pointed out, "The girls would tell us 'We need clothes... We want to uphold our religion and culture, but we also want to be comfortable. I want to dribble between my legs. I don't want to have to hold up my hijab to shoot a three-pointer.'"

A life-long problem solver, Thul used this feedback to generate a unique idea: Let's provide the girls with an opportunity to create their own ideal, culturally appropriate active wear and thus eliminate clothing as a significant barrier. Thul consulted with program participants, community members and the GIRLS leadership team, and received overwhelming support for the idea. In 2013, a major development occurred when Thul, LaVoi and Hussein partnered with Dr. Elizabeth Bye (Professor and Head of the Apparel Design Program in the College of Design at the U of M) and the Minnesota Agricultural Experiment Station who agreed to fund a research project entitled, "Impact of Culturally Sensitive Apparel Co-Design on the Physical Activity of East African Adolescent Girls." Thul underscores the role and contributions of the Tucker Center: "It's hard to put into words how much support the Tucker Center really provides and especially Dr. LaVoi, as my mentor and advisor. The biggest advantage I had was the support of a world-renowned research center with top scholars from around the world and amazing support for graduate student research. At every turn, Dr. LaVoi was there supporting my work with this important local community." For her part, LaVoi credits Thul for the success and sustainability of this critical research: "Chelsey is a gifted, creative scholar who has the ability to collaborate, bring together diverse groups, roll up her sleeves,

be persistent, and make her ideas a reality. I couldn't be more proud of her commitment to the community and to making a difference. She inspires others to put the needs, desires, and wants of the girls at the center of the work—exactly where the focus should be!"

With this girl-centered spirit in mind, program participants were instrumental in the design process during every stage of the project. Early on, the girls made several field trips to Gopher women's sporting events to conduct field research on athletic apparel and to be exposed to positive female role models. Following the field research stage, U of M College of Design students, led by Professor Bye, co-designed apparel based on input from the girls. As Thul pointed out, "The design team was there to

help facilitate and provide support. The girls drew their ideal, culturally sensitive clothing visions on paper and worked to create many different designs."

During the later

stages of the project, continual feedback from the girls, their parents and the community further guided the design process as the clothing was finalized. First, images of initial apparel designs were showcased to the local community in a gallery walk. Responses from this event helped the team narrow down what would be the final design to four different prototypes. From these prototypes, one physical activity outfit was selected. Additionally, the team worked with the girls to create a first-of-its-kind sports uniform for Muslim girls. Community members were recruited to sew the clothing in a local mosque. Made from breathable fabrics, the garments included knee-length tunics, leggings, and fitted, Velcro-attached hijabs. Each GIRLS participant received one of the final physical activity outfits as well as a pair of athletic shoes.

The GIRLS project culminated in a fashion show held in June, 2015. The highlight of the event occurred when the two winning outfits were unveiled. The show was a huge success and generated a great deal of media interest from numerous local, regional and

national news outlets such as *Newsweek*, *Sports Illustrated Online*, *The Washington Post*, *New York Times*, *Deadspin*, and *MTV*. Thul said, "I think we were all a little bit blown away by the coverage.

We never expected the amount of coverage we received." She added, "The best part was that the girls were prominently featured, because they really led the way. It

had a profound impact not only on their own lives, but other girls' lives through the apparel they created and its potential to reach a larger audience of girls. To use a sports cliché, this was a real team effort." The accolades keep on coming: Last August, the GIRLS program was honored during halftime ceremonies at a Minnesota Lynx game, garnering a standing ovation from a sold-out crowd.

Looking toward the future, Thul hopes to find ways to make the outfits more affordable and accessible so they can be available to any physically active Muslim girl. Project members have been contacted by several Minnesota schools inquiring about buying the uniforms. Another goal is to design culturally appropriate active wear for mothers and elderly women in the community.

It's an understatement to point out that all of the creative, not to mention diligent, work over the past few years has really paid off for GIRLS participants. Thul underscores the project's success and impact: "When the girls talk about the outfits, they light up. They are so proud, so excited, so empowered. They can play sports, uphold their cultural and religious norms, and they don't have to compromise their competence in sports or any of their cultural values. They can be who they are and just play, all the while knowing they helped lead the way to make this happen."

The Tucker Center's mission is reflected in, and embodied by, the GIRLS program and co-design project. Dr. LaVoi adds, "The

community-based aspect of this project is unique, making it an exemplar of how collaborative research and programming can and should be carried out."

Chelsey Thul echoes LaVoi's

sentiments: "I think this project, and the partnership it embraces, is really what the Tucker Center is all about—high-quality research connected to community outreach that results in making a real difference in the lives of girls and women. That mission was embedded in me through my graduate training in the Tucker Center and the support I received every step of the way."

For more information on this community research project please visit the website at <http://z.umn.edu/girlsresearch>.



## Staff Update: 2015 Tucker Center Summer Interns

Last summer, **Maddie Kornfeld** and **Anna Posbergh** made invaluable contributions to the Tucker Team as interns supported by the TC Summer Internship Fund for Gender Equity in Sport. This innovative fund is designed to mentor, educate and provide a quality research experience to aspiring students by working with our faculty and affiliated scholars.

Ms. Kornfeld is a psychology major beginning her senior year at Macalester College. A member of the women's soccer team, she is interested in studying the social barriers and inequities facing women and girls engaged in sports. Toward that end, she assisted Associate Director Nicole M. LaVoi in data verification and analysis for the *2014-15 Women College Coaching Report Card*, as well as helped with Dr. LaVoi's forthcoming book on the challenges and opportunities surrounding the coaching profession for women. Kornfeld found these experiences highly beneficial: "I have become a more thorough and articulate researcher, and have had the opportunity to work on a variety of different projects that have exposed me to the rewarding and hard work that goes into this dynamic research center at the University of Minnesota."

Ms. Posbergh, a senior English major at the U of M, found her summer experiences similarly worthwhile. She also worked on data coding and analysis for Dr. LaVoi's research on women coaches—the *Coaching Report Card*—but this time the focus was on employment patterns in DIII sports. Beyond these research activities, Posbergh helped create a nationwide database on intercollegiate athletic directors for future investigations. According to Posbergh, "The two biggest things I learned this summer were the 'behind the scenes' work in the research and the report cards, and just how prevalent gender inequality is in sports. Both



**Anna Posbergh, Maddie Kornfeld, and Marnie Kinnaird**

of these things—especially the latter—will definitely help me in my future career path and in my life in general in terms of being an advocate for gender equality both in sports and life and raising awareness!"

Finally, second-year Master's student, **Marnie Kinnaird**, became the first Pam Borton Fellow for the Promotion of Girls and Women in Sport Leadership. Kinnaird's work will be featured in our Spring 2016 newsletter. She is advised by Dr. LaVoi.

These young women join a distinguished group of Summer Interns who have all gone on to make a difference in their respective careers ranging from clinical psychology to nursing to sport sociology. To learn more about our summer internship program, visit our website.

## Kudos & Announcements

### Honors & Awards

- Last May, Tucker Center Associate Director **Nicole M. LaVoi** was awarded the 2015 CEHD Distinguished Teaching Award. In February, LaVoi also received the *Special Merit Award* for her contributions to girls and women in sports by The Minnesota Coalition of Women in Athletic Leadership.
- Tucker Center Affiliated Scholar **Janet Fink** (U Mass-Amherst) was recently honored with the 2015 Earle F. Zeigler Lecture Award from the North American Society for Sport Management (NASSM).
- Tucker Center Affiliated Scholar and Kinesiology faculty member **Daheia Barr-Anderson** was awarded a U of M Grant-in-Aid for her research, "Effects of Yoga on Blood Pressure, Stress, and Physical Activity in Overweight African-American Women." The study examines the physiological, psychological and behavioral effects of a 12-week yoga intervention program compared to a delayed-intervention control group in a sample of 50 overweight, sedentary but otherwise healthy adult African-American women.



*Tucker Center Associate Director Nicole M. LaVoi receives her Special Merit Award at the National Girls and Women in Sports Day event.*

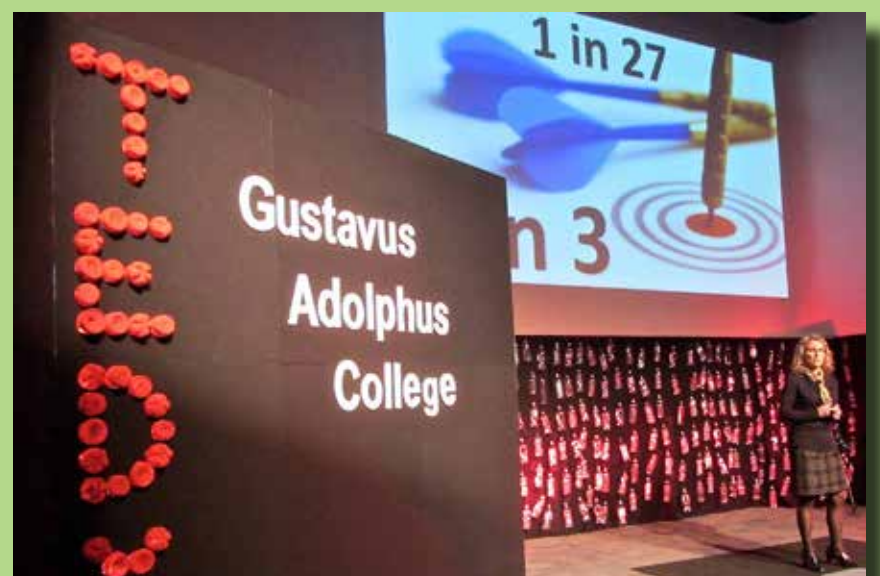
### Presentations

- Last April, **LaVoi** delivered at TEDx talk at her alma mater, Gustavus Adolphus College entitled, "Now You See Her, Now You Don't" in which she examined three key ways the promise of sports remains unfulfilled for girls and women. To view LaVoi's talk, visit YouTube at this link <http://z.umn.edu/TEDx2015>
- Over the spring and summer **LaVoi** presented her research on women coaches to a variety of groups including the NCAA Inclusion Forum (La Jolla, CA), The Alliance for Women Coaches National Conference (Kansas City, MO), NCAA Women Coaches Academies in Denver and Atlanta, The Conversation of Women in Sport held in Quebec City, and the 10th annual *Play Like a Champion Sport Leadership Conference* held at the University of Notre Dame.
- In July, TC Affiliated Scholar **Jo Ann Buysse** gave an invited international presentation, "Feeding the Brain: Challenging Role Models through Sport" at the Women's Expo during the OxFamItalia World Expo 2015 in Milan, Italy.
- In July, TC Affiliated Scholar **Cheryl Cooky** (U of Purdue) was featured on PBS Newshour to discuss Title IX and the U.S. Women's World Cup victory. View her commentary here: <http://www.pbs.org/newshour/bb/will-team-usa-win-help-level-playing-field-women/>

- In August, TC Affiliated Scholar **Austin Stair Calhoun**, Director of the School of Kinesiology's eLearning + Digital Strategies team, led a panel discussion with her colleagues on Kickstart Open Lab, an incentivized, project-based approach to eLearning exploration, adoption and implementation.
- In September, **LaVoi** was part of an invited panel discussing sportsmanship and moral development with Jim Loehr (Johnson & Johnson Human Performance Institute, Orlando, FL) and Clark Power (University of Notre Dame) at the USPTA World Conference in New Orleans.
- In November, Tucker Center Director **Mary Jo Kane** and **LaVoi** will present a paper, entitled "Translating and Disseminating Interdisciplinary Research as a Vehicle for Social Change," and LaVoi and Kinesiology faculty member and TC Affiliated Scholar **Chelsey Thul** will present their work, "Physical Activity Experiences of East African Immigrant Girls," at the annual conference of the North American Society for the Sociology of Sport (NASSS) being held in Santa Fe, NM.

### Publications

- Kane** has a forthcoming chapter entitled, "A socio-cultural examination of the decline of women in sport leadership positions," which will appear in a new book published by Routledge Press in early 2016, *Women in Sports Coaching*, edited by **LaVoi**.
- Last July, **Kane** and **LaVoi**, along with Tucker Center Affiliated Scholars **Elizabeth Daniels** (Northern Colorado), **Fink**, and **Cooky** wrote an invited piece for *espnW* entitled, "Even in the wake of a record-setting women's world cup, myths still surround women's sports." To read the article, visit the *espnW* website here: <http://z.umn.edu/espnwjuly2015>



*Tucker Center Associate Director Nicole M. LaVoi delivers her TEDx talk at Gustavus Adolphus College, her alma mater.*

## FALL 2015 DISTINGUISHED LECTURE

# HAVE WE REACHED A TIPPING POINT IN WOMEN'S SPORTS?: A GREAT CONVERSATION WITH PIONEERING SPORT SCHOLARS

**Wednesday, October 21, 2015 • 7:00 pm - 9:00 pm**  
**Cowles Auditorium, Hubert H. Humphrey Center**  
**University of Minnesota West Bank Campus**

## About the Lecture

The summer of 2015 was highlighted by numerous ground-breaking achievements by female athletes and women leaders in sports ranging from the U.S women's soccer team winning the World Cup to Serena Williams vying for the Tennis Grand Slam to Becky Hammon being named an Assistant Coach in the NBA. Such unprecedented milestones prompted many to ask: Was the summer of 2015 a tipping point for women's sports? To examine this important question, two seminal and internationally known sport and gender scholars—Professors Pat Griffin and Mary Jo Kane—will engage in a Great Conversation for the Tucker Center's 2015 Fall Distinguished Lecture. Kane and Griffin's work as pioneering researchers and advocates will provide insightful, thought-provoking and instructive lessons that will help us understand the current landscape as well as the future of women's sports.

## About the Panelists

### Pat Griffin, Ph.D.

Pat Griffin is Professor Emeritus in the Social Justice Education Program at the University of Massachusetts-Amherst and former Director of *It Takes a Team! Education Campaign for Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender Issues in Sport*, an initiative of the Women's Sports Foundation. In 1998, Griffin wrote the groundbreaking book, *Strong Women, Deep Closets: Lesbians and Homophobia in Sports*. Griffin's research and advocacy focus on heterosexism/



**Dr. Pat Griffin**

homophobia in educational settings as well as homophobic structures and beliefs in athletics. She is widely acknowledged as one of the pioneers in addressing LGBT issues in sports.

### Mary Jo Kane, Ph.D.

Mary Jo Kane is a Professor in the School of Kinesiology and Director of the Tucker Center for Research on Girls & Women in Sport. Professor Kane is an internationally recognized scholar who has published extensively on media representations of athletic females and is considered one of the nation's leading experts on the social and political implications of Title IX. In 1996, Professor Kane was awarded the first Endowed Chair related to women in sport: The Dorothy McNeill Tucker Chair for Women in Exercise Science and Sport. She

was elected as a Fellow in the National Academy of Kinesiology, the highest academic honor in her field. In 2014, Professor Kane was named one of the 100 Most Influential Sports Educators by the Institute for International Sport.

*The Annual Distinguished Lecture series exemplifies the Tucker Center's commitment to community outreach and public education by making links to the Twin Cities' metro and outstate areas. It provides a venue for the most influential individuals in women's sports to share their knowledge and expertise. The lecture is also sponsored through the Edith Mueller Park and Recreation Memorial Award.*



**Dr. Mary Jo Kane**

## KEEP IN TOUCH WITH THE TUCKER CENTER!

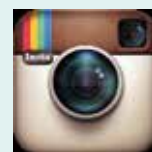
There are several ways you can keep up to date with the most recent events and news from the Tucker Center. For starters, the Tucker Center's website is our online hub. Everything from current research to staff contacts can be found at:

***www.TuckerCenter.org***

The Tucker Center also maintains a presence on Facebook, Twitter, and YouTube:

- **Facebook:** [facebook.com/tuckercenter](http://facebook.com/tuckercenter)
- **Instagram:** [tuckercenter.org/heresproof](http://tuckercenter.org/heresproof)
- **Twitter:** [@tuckercenter](https://twitter.com/tuckercenter)
- **YouTube:** [youtube.com/tuckercenter](http://youtube.com/tuckercenter)

We hope you'll take advantage of all the ways we are sharing information!



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- Women and Sport Leadership Fund
- Tucker Center Internship Fund for Gender Equity in Sport
- Borghild Strand Endowment for Young Women
- Dorothy McNeill Tucker Fellowship Fund
- Edith Mueller Endowed Fund for Graduate Education
- Edith Mueller Park and Recreation Memorial Award
- Eloise M. Jaeger Scholarship at the Tucker Center
- Graduate Fellowship for Gender Equity in Sport
- Research Fund for Gender Equity in Sport
- Pam Borton Endowment for the Promotion of Women and Girls in Sport Leadership
- Tucker Center Graduate Assistantship Fund

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**Thank you for your continued support !**