

## Concordia Promise

By Katrina Bell

Everyone is welcome at Concordia and there is a place for everyone, no matter their race, gender or age. Embracing the diversity of Concordia, along with those who inhabit these halls, comes with leaving the preconceived notions of where someone fits, and knowing that here at Concordia, everyone is welcome everywhere.

"Education will lead to encouragement, encouragement will lead to participation." So says Lee Pao, the Director of the Center for Hmong Studies. Being the only campus to have a center for Hmong Studies, Concordia provides a place for hundreds of scholars to join together every other year in an international conference on Hmong Studies. Not only does the center allow a gathering of about 500 people, it is also open to the public who are able to view the exhibits, textiles, weapons, tools, and photos that describe life "in the homeland, as well as the U.S.," Currently, the CHUSA club frequents the center, but many students use it as a quiet place to eat lunch or study. Lee Pao would like everyone to know that the Center for Hmong Studies is open to anyone to visit, relax, hang out, or learn something new.

CSP ministry is in charge of the University Ministry Center (UMC), the lounge space next to the game room. Don't let the name put you off: the UMC is open to anyone, no matter their religious affiliation. Shelly Schwalm, Director of Church Relations/CSP Ministry Associate spoke about the UMC. Although it is used for group meetings and face time for Pastor Tom and Shelly; "It is very much open to anyone. It embraces the diversity of Concordia, because Christ welcomes everyone. I think more students will feel more comfortable using the space as they learn that it's there for them to use and that they are welcome."

The International Student Services room is where the 132 international students on campus have access to the ITC, the International Tutoring Center, and answers to any questions they might have about their student visas and being here at Concordia. Also available is the specified prayer room, which is popular among students and open to anyone. Alongside a dedicated team of people that help these students, is

Tiffanie Schneider, the International Student Advisor. "I think the students are really enjoying Concordia. The fact that it is such a diverse campus makes them [international students] feel welcome. This is a really exciting time for Concordia, to be working here with all the growth that is going on is great."

Regan McAthie, the Assistant Director of Athletics highlighted the athletic department at Concordia, "We try to make everything available to all students. All events are free for the traditional students and we don't charge an activity fee to participate. The GC is a good place that mixes everyone together. We also like to recognize that athletes have different demands than general students, but we try to integrate athletes with the general student population." Everyone is welcome to the weight rooms, basketball courts, racquetball courts, and the 15 different teams that students can compete in.

Community, Action, Leadership, and Learning, the CALL Center; "Opening eyes to the global perspective." Kelly Mathias, CALL Center Director described this space as a program "meant to include and invite any and all students to get involved, by engaging students of different backgrounds in similar activities." This includes community outreach, service opportunities, studying abroad, etc. This program's goal is to expand the horizons of every student. All are encouraged to join and experience a greater perspective. Director Mathias states, "I think the diversity of the campus is what makes Concordia unique. We have such an opportunity to celebrate the diversity and everyone Concordia encompasses."

Claire Houser, enlisted in the National Guard, represented Veterans Affairs. According to her, "The majority of people who come in here [veteran's lounge] are people with prior service, because they have finished active duty and now they are coming back to school." Although labeled in such a way, the Veteran room is open to anyone, "When there's a lot of people, you'll get a lot of other students."

Taherah Shamsul-Bari works with Dr. Cheryl Chapman as the program coordinator of the Diversity Affairs office. They are both a part of the C.A.R.E (Coalition Against Racism for Everyone) committee and the Welcome Committee of Concordia. Taherah described the Diversity affairs room to be a "resource center, but also a social hangout place. The room is not for one specific demographic. We're really chill in here and once you come in, leaving any preconceived stereotypes at the door, you'll know that you are welcome."

CSP is one of the most multifarious campuses in the state, and all Concordia students should remember that it was our differences that brought us here. Separated by name, we know that each part of campus serves a specific purpose, but the underlying purpose of welcoming everyone is what matters.

## Faculty Spotlight: Matt Ryan

By Cassie Shaw

The English Department at Concordia University, St. Paul is represented with a great amount of diversity in each professor's educational background. One of those representatives is the known and loved Matt Ryan.

Matthew Ryan was born on Jan 1st, 1968, in Marion, Indiana. He is the youngest of five children; three older sisters and one older brother. He graduated from Marion High in 1986, and then went on to Indiana University, where he majored in African American Studies with an emphasis in Literature. For his MFA (Master of Fine Arts), Matt went to Spalding University studying Fiction, and then received his JD (Juris Doctor), from Thomas Cooley School of Law. During his time in school, Matt met his wife, Mandy, and has now been married for 21 years. Mandy works in the interior design field at



Pottery Barn. They have a daughter named Gretel that is 16 years old, and a son named Silas, who is 18 years old.

Matt Ryan practiced law, in the Criminal Defense division for 6 years. "I did the best I could for my clients, but couldn't always give them the decision they wanted." Matt remembered. He soon discovered that he could not take the pain of losing judicial cases and seeing his clients face futures that they did not deserve. Eventually, it became too much to bear, and he left that chapter in his life and began a new journey.

Matt Ryan has been at Concordia for eleven years now, and loves every part of it. He teaches the Gen Eds, Creative Writing, as well as Persuasive Writing. "I love writing. It is a huge part of my life, and thus I enjoy teaching it," said Matt.

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