Research Presenters

VFTH

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Close to 400 students put their research projects on display recently at the 49th annual Student Research Conference.

Amy Bingham takes a closer look at three of the presenters in this week’s View from the Hill.

What factors influence motor development scores in infants? How does tourism activity impact natural attractions? Here’s a glimpse into a few of the many research projects underway at WKU.

 “It definitely opened my eyes to everything you can do with research.”

Senior Lauren Miller has been researching infant motor development and how various factors including maternal physical activity in the third trimester impact the scores.

 “We created an aggression analysis equation and we found that the four month score could predict one year scores and there was a moderate to strong correlation between those two percentages.”

 “I always point to my start as a kid. I just loved exploring the world.”

Grad student Jason Fox has been to Iceland and more recently Washington state assessing how the growing tourism industry is threatening natural attractions that are already vulnerable to climate change.

 “We’re looking at tourism so sights, waterfalls, beaches, coastal cliffs, any sort of sight where water is the draw.”

He uses a checklist to glean the information.

 “There are all sorts of variables listed out and you score those variables. All the ways the tourist can impact that landscape.”

 “I’ve always been kind of outdoorsy and I’ve always liked different critters and stuff.”

And it’s a good thing Olivia Gearner grew up loving bugs and critters because spider beetles have been the focus of her research for the past few years.

 “You can kind of think of it like a family tree except for the different species in the group trying to see how they’re related.”

Hypothesizing relationships within the spider beetles and related families.

 “We’ll extract the DNA from them, crush up the whole beetle or use part of beetle then go through extraction process of getting DNA.”

More than 150 faculty and professional staff served as mentors to the student presenters at the research conference. 2020 will mark the 50th year of the event.

With this week’s View from the Hill, I’m Amy Bingham.

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