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MORRISON BRUCE CENTER

JAMES MADISON UNIVERSITY®

Morrison Bruce Center Spring 2025 Newsletter

Please enjoy these articles written by our undergraduate staff on the Marketing, Research, and Development Committee. Our outreach has continued to grow this semester, and we have been fortunate to serve the surrounding community. On behalf of our Spring 2025 staff, thank you for your continued support of the Morrison Bruce Center!

A Note from Our Executive Director

Greetings from the Morrison Bruce Center (MBC) and thank you for taking the time to enjoy our Spring 2025 newsletter. In this newsletter, you'll read about our Spring 2025 programs, and the outstanding work of our MBC student staff. A few accomplishments I'd like to share include: a) we welcomed our first Health Science student to the MBC staff, cultivating a new interdisciplinary partnership to broaden the depth and experience of our staff; (b) we piloted two research studies to explore valid and reliable measures to utilize in upcoming research endeavors to increase the research productivity of the center; and (c) we investigated and published an archive of MBC research projects on our website, to honor the research funded or conducted by the center over the past 20 years.

JMU's vision is to be the national model for the engaged university, and the work of the MBC brings this engagement to life with a focus on physical and health literacy for women and girls, where our participants have the knowledge, skills, and confidence to enjoy a lifetime of physical activity and wellness.

I hope you enjoy reading about our Spring 2025 programs and events. Wishing everyone a wonderful summer!

With gratitude,

Cathie McKay

Cathy McKay, Ed.D, CAPE, Executive Director of the Morrison Bruce Center



EmpowHER, Spring 2025

Alana Galbert, MBC Intern (2025)

This spring, the wonderful ladies in EmpowHER pushed themselves by taking on strength training, muscular endurance, challenging bar lifts, and so much more! In each session, these women brought energy, encouragement, and a shared commitment to growth. This semester, graduate assistant Joy Toth provided participants with Morrison Bruce Center (MBC) notebooks to track their fitness progress. Tina Grace, a second-year participant, shared, “I always bring my MBC notebook to every class so that I can write down the fitness theme and movements to refer to. That way, I know how I am improving!” Over the course of the semester, the women explored various strength training workouts, such as High-Intensity Interval Training (HIIT), resistance band exercises, and Olympic lifting power movements—all of which challenged both their minds and bodies. EmpowHER is more than just a workout—it’s a welcoming space where women reach new heights and discover their strength through diverse forms of movement. Frequent attendee Ashlyn, who was new to EmpowHER this semester, shared, “I love EmpowHER classes because I don’t feel intimidated or overwhelmed. I’m enjoying every session, and I am showing up for myself.”



Movin' & Groovin' Day, Spring 2025

Alana Galbert, MBC Intern (2025)

Ready, Set, Blast Off! This year's 2025 Movin' & Groovin' Day took girls in grades K–6 on an out-of-this-world fitness and nutrition journey! With an exciting outer space theme, participants launched into a full day of high-energy activities that kept them active and engaged. This year, the Morrison Bruce Center (MBC) invited girls from across Harrisonburg City and Rockingham County to come together to move, learn, and make new friends in an environment designed just for them. Teamwork was at the heart of it all, encouraging them to support one another and build confidence along the way! The MBC staff was thrilled to welcome many volunteers, who brought different perspectives and expertise from both Health Science and Kinesiology curricula. Their collaboration helped further elevate the day and provided the girls with enthusiastic role models! The mission was clear: to inspire girls to embrace the importance of cardio, flexibility, strength, and nutrition—all while having a blast! One Movin' and Groovin' Committee member shared, "This amazing day was made possible through the dedication and hard work of the MBC exec team, staff, and the incredible volunteers. Their collaboration and passion created an unforgettable experience, ensuring the event was not only fun but also impactful for all the girls who participated. It was a true testament to what can be accomplished when we come together as a team!"



Girls Have H.E.A.R.T., Spring 2025

Emily Barner, MBC Intern (2025)

Girls Have H.E.A.R.T., one of our Morrison Bruce Center (MBC) Spring programs, inspires 3rd through 5th grade girls at Waterman Elementary School to develop confidence and build healthy lifestyles through non-competitive running and engaging nutrition lessons. Every Thursday, the girls gathered after school to participate in endurance-building activities, interactive games, and discussions on self-confidence and well-being. This semester, we introduced new elements to complement the program's strong foundation, including tracking pre- and post-program improvements in self-concept and running endurance. Throughout the semester, the MBC coaches were intentional about weaving our core values—kindness, creativity, courage, and resilience—into every lesson to help guide both personal growth and peer connection. To encourage motivation, girls earned charms for completing weekend workouts or for demonstrating actions during program time that reflected one of the four core values of a Girls Have H.E.A.R.T. participant. One of our participants shared, “I love the foot charms—it makes me want to get one every week!” Additionally, our MBC coaches brought energy to their groups, helping to build strong bonds among the girls. One of our coaches reflected, “It’s amazing to see the girls grow in confidence and teamwork throughout the program. The team-based approach has made a real impact!”



Gus Bus, Spring 2025

Emily Barner, MBC Intern (2025)

The Gus Bus is a community literacy and enrichment program serving PreK–5th grade students and their families in Harrisonburg, VA. Each spring, the Morrison Bruce Center (MBC) partners with the Gus Bus and the local food bank to participate in sixteen of their Family Engagement Nights. On these nights, the MBC staff travels to Gus Bus stops located at elementary schools and in a variety of neighborhoods to facilitate activities focused on fitness and nutrition. These events provide fun, educational experiences and free resources to help families stay active together. MBC staff provided one-on-one attention to participants, helping them connect meaningfully with each activity. One participant shared, “My favorite part about the Gus Bus was playing the fun games!” To support continued physical activity at home, we incorporated take-home bags for each family. “One difference this year was the goodie bags. We included items that supported the specific nutrition and fitness objectives of the program, including nutrition and exercise tips along with a resistance band so the kids could practice the movements at home,” said MBC intern and staff coordinator for Gus Bus, Nathalie Almeda. We would like to give a huge thanks to Nathalie for taking the lead in orchestrating this amazing experience for all involved. We’re excited to continue collaborating with the Gus Bus as we fulfill our goal of building healthy habits and meaningful connections with families across the Harrisonburg City and Rockingham County communities.



Healthy Kids, Spring 2025

Shelby O'Dell, MBC Intern (2025)

Our Healthy Kids program had a fantastic spring semester filled with learning, physical activity, and fun! Healthy Kids is a Morrison Bruce Center (MBC) partnership with the JMU Young Children's Program. This semester, the MBC staff worked with children in two three-year-old classes, focusing each week on three learning components: nutrition education, motor skill development, and strength related fitness. New this semester, we utilized a three-station rotation for each lesson and introduced an engaging opening activity and closing activity for the students to repeat each week. Children in Healthy Kids loved gathering in our circle and starting each class with "Hickory Dickory Dock", and were eager to learn three new yoga poses each week. Once we moved into stations, the participants worked with small groups, learning motor skills like running, jumping, sliding, the underhand roll, and the overhand throw; learning nutrition concepts about fruits, veggies, dairy, protein, and "sometimes foods" (desserts); and exploring strength through dyna-bands, small hand weights, and fitness poly spots. The fitness poly spots were especially fun, as children engaged their math skills, rolling colorful dice, counting the numbers, and then taking part in the fitness activity showcased on the spot. In addition to movement-based learning activities, Healthy Kids incorporated crafts, coloring, and matching games for further engagement, striving for interactive learning. MBC staff member Alicia Garretson shared, "Healthy Kids has brought a lot of joy to my MBC experience, seeing the kids get so excited to see us every week, and seeing the way they really remembered what we taught them from week to week!" Lead teacher Heather Hansohn shared how pleased she was with the new organization of Healthy Kids this semester, and said, "The kids looked forward to moving and learning in the program each week, and the foundation for healthy habits they learned will set them up for a lifetime of good choices!"



OWWL, Spring 2025

Shelby O'Dell, MBC Intern (2025)

Older Women's Wellness for Life (OWWL) continued to offer a fantastic experience to participants. As one of the Morris Bruce Center's (MBC) longest-running programs, OWWL provides in-depth health and fitness testing, nutrition education, and personalized exercise prescriptions. While key components like comprehensive blood panels and fitness assessments remained consistent, we streamlined the exercise planning process to facilitate MBC volunteers' development of effective, individualized exercise prescriptions. We're grateful for the commitment of our volunteers and faculty, whose support continues to make OWWL a success, and to the incredible women who attend OWWL and share their wisdom and energy with our staff. Dr. Liz Edwards, former MBC Executive Director and OWWL faculty collaborator noted, "The pairing of OWWL participants and MBC staff has helped develop leadership, organization, and engagement, as well as foster a deeper connection between the women and students. The women love to share about what came before them." As the MBC continues to grow, we remain committed to strengthening these connections and creating a lasting, positive impact in the lives of the women who join us for this dynamic program.



Marketing, Research, and Development, Spring 2025

Shelby O'Dell, MBC Intern (2025)

The Marketing, Research, and Development (MRD) committee has been hard at work implementing exciting changes to amplify the Morrison Bruce Center's (MBC) outreach within the Harrisonburg and JMU communities. This semester, the MRD team expanded its social media presence by collaborating with various organizations for shout-outs, helping us connect with new audiences. We've shifted our focus to highlighting authentic photos from MBC programs and events—showcasing the real faces and stories of our staff and participants. In addition to outreach efforts, the MRD committee has begun strategizing for future programming. This semester, instead of traditional tabling events, we created an "Ideas List" to capture innovative event concepts, ensuring that future initiatives continue to be engaging, relevant, and community focused. One of the most exciting developments is the formal addition of a research component to our team. This addition allows us to incorporate data-driven insights into our strategies, making our outreach even more effective. As committee member Alana Galbert shared, "Being on the MRD team has been such a collaborative and inspirational space. We get a lot of work done, and every bit of it is impactful!" With creativity, collaboration, and a renewed focus on research, the MRD committee is excited to continue growing the MBC's presence and deepening its impact in the semesters ahead.



The Flohr Scholarship

Dr. Judi Flohr had a vision to honor two outstanding faculty who made such a difference in the lives of women at Madison, in the community and nationally. Last fall, The Morrison Bruce Center (MBC) celebrated its 20th Anniversary reflecting Dr. Flohr's vision of continued support and research into the health and wellness of women and girls. And now it is our turn to honor Dr. Flohr by supporting her scholarship - Dr. Judith A. Flohr Endowed Scholarship for Graduate Studies in Exercise Science. Please join us in honoring Dr. Flohr with a gift to the Flohr scholarship, by clicking the "Give Now" button at the end of this page and selecting the appropriate designation for your donation.



Stay Connected!

Emily Barner, MBC Intern (2025)

Stay connected with us on Instagram and Facebook @morrisonbrucecenter. This summer we will be highlighting our board members, flashing back to some favorite moments from our programs, and bringing you tips for summer wellness activities. As we wrap up another great semester, let's take a moment to appreciate our incredible student staff.



Top row, left to right: Emily Barner, Abby Jasinski, Avery Morris, Alicia Garretson, Kaitlyn Baxter, Riley O'Leary, Logan Boone, Lily Voelkel.

Middle row, left to right: Kalindy Kupiszewski, Elise Reap, Jenna Dyke, Shelby O'Dell.

Bottom row, left to right: Alana Galbert, Addison Messick, Alexis Downey, Nathalie Almeda, Carley Dennis.

Giving to The Morrison Bruce Center

Gifts help the Center to be able to continue its mission of offering innovative and enjoyable physical activity programs for girls and women of all ages. Please consider donating to the Center by clicking the "Give Now" button below.

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