

# Kim Sellick: the heart of the Academic Skills Center

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Associate Editor

Her official job title is Alternative Learning Specialist but to all the people she has touched, Kim Sellick is much more: spiritual advisor, crisis counselor, surrogate mother, fashion consultant, psychotherapist, culinary mastermind, tax attorney and friend.

"Kim's position requires her to create order out of chaos, and she does so with grace and humor," said Doug Smith, a colleague in the Academic Skills Center. "We can be grateful for that."

"For years this campus badly needed a specialist in learning disabilities," ASC director Sue Keith said "Having such a person on site has made a tremendous difference. Now in her third year, Kim Sellick has brought a lot of energy and insight into the initiative of gaining equal access for students who learn differently. Her direct approach is refreshing."

Sellick first heard about the position from IT&S director Leah Kraus, who saw the ad and called Sellick to tell her about the job opening. Sellick was also in the same singing group as Keith and asked her about applying.

"I didn't apply with the intention of getting the job," Sellick said. "I did it mainly to update my vita and to go through the interview process. I was thrilled to get the job and decided it was a door opening for me and that perhaps I should walk through it ...so here I am."

As the Alternative Learning Specialist, Sellick reads and evaluates documentation for alternative learners such as ADD/ADHD, dyslexia, and Asperger's Syndrome.

She sits on several committees, tutors students in learning strategies, time management and reading strategies, assists students and advisors in choosing a balanced course load for alternative learners, teaches an alternative learning strategies class, interviews prospective L.D. students and educates and works with faculty on L.D. issues.

"She has an ebullient spirit at the ASC," English instructor Carol Hoppe said.

"Of all the places I've been around, I haven't seen anyone who cares so much for her students," Dallas Britt, a friend, said. "She cares for them as if they were her own children."

One of Sellick's major accomplishments at Guilford has been writing a legal policy regarding LD students and alternative learners.

When I was hired," Sellick said, "Guilford had no official ADA policy. Last summer we were able to put a policy into place."

Sellick's warm motherly nature has led to very close relationships with her students.

"They don't call me 'mom' for nothing," she said.

"From what I have seen, she is willing to go the extra mile to help a student in need," junior Jessamyn Bean said. "I'm always surprised at how often she takes people in and selflessly gives her time and resources."

"Kim has been an advisor and a friend," Junior John McLean said. "She has succeeded in helping me multiple times where all other advisors have failed."

However, the learning process between Sellick and her students is not just a one-way street. One learning difference which captivates Sellick is Asperger's Syndrome.

"I've had some fascinating conversations with people who have Asperger's Syndrome. It's like getting a glimpse into somebody else's mind and

seeing how it works," Sellick said, recalling a particular student who explained to her how his mind worked differently from hers.

A person with Asperger's demonstrates a variety of characteristics including awkwardness in social situations and not catching on to social cues.

They have difficulty coping with change and a specific subject often preoccupies their mind such as flags of the world. They are overly sensitive to tastes, sights, sounds and smells.

When we hear the word dog, we think of a dog. When a person with

Asperger's hears "dog," their mind flips through every image of a dog they've ever seen.

"Where you get the snapshot, I get the film," Sellick's student said.

For Sellick, every day brings challenges like this.

Though she has only been at Guilford for three years, Sellick has touched countless lives with her warm heart and cheery disposition.

Sellick is the mother of two children, Austin (10) and Paisley (8). In her free time, she bakes and sells cakes out of her house and performs in acting and musical productions.

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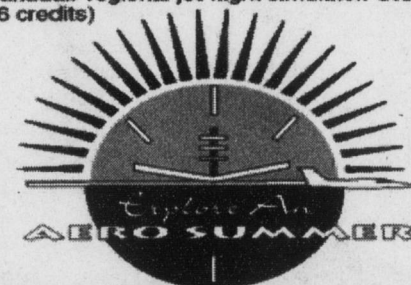
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