



Endicott College students help build a school in Mexico.

THE
REWARDS
OF

SERVICE LEARNING

Dear Student,

As you consider a study abroad program, you'll want to investigate locations and program design. You'll want to educate yourself about the various features so you make the best possible choice. That you are reading *ABROAD VIEW* is a sign that you will not be one who goes on a particular program just because your friends are doing it. Like choosing a college or a roommate, the right match is everything.

You should know that the most frequent complaint of those who have studied abroad in traditional programs (going from a classroom "here" to a classroom "there") is that they have little real contact with the local people. They go to classes at an overseas university, they see the sights, they make friends with other international students, but their contact with local people tends to be brief and superficial.

Not so for those who have been part of service-learning programs! A recent study prepared for the Ford Foundation (*Service-Learning Across Cultures: Promise and Achievement*, edited by Humphrey Tonkin, IPSL Press, 2004) reports that students who took part in substantive volunteer service as part of their study abroad programs were deeply engaged in their host cultures and emerged with an appreciation of the complexities of the culture. Moreover, for many students the relationships developed through service-learning have proved long-lasting and have had a profound influence on their subsequent life choices.

Why is this so? First, through service and study, students see a wide spectrum of their host society, while studying and living at a university, they are introduced to the elite of that society. Their volunteer service is generally among the poor and needy. If they are in a homestay, it is often with a middle class family, adding another dimension to their perspective. If they are giving direct human care, such as at a school, hospital, or orphanage, they are meeting both staff and clients who enjoy their company and appreciate their help. Friendships spring up as they work together. Unlike many university classes, which are based on lectures, the service situation fosters asking questions and exchanging ideas. It creates a condition for the rapid acquisition of language skills. Observing people in action gives relevance and immediacy—sometimes reinforcing, sometimes challenging—to what is learned about the culture in the classroom.

But, buyer beware! Service-learning has become so very popular with students going abroad that service is often advertised as part of a study abroad program, but in reality it can be short, superficial, and poorly planned. Don't be hesitant about asking lots of questions about a program. You know the old adage: the more you put into something, the more you get out of it. This is true for study abroad in general and

for service-learning in particular. Ask who determines the project, how you are placed in service, how long before you begin the service, if you will be working alone or in a large group, for how many hours a week and how many weeks you will be engaged in service, and if the service is integrated into the academic work or is an optional extra-curricular activity. If it is integrated, you will have a different—and enriching—educational experience. The fragmentation and compartmentalization of knowledge—which you experience as disciplines and departments—breaks down as you test the applicability of what you have learned, and are learning, to situations you are seeing in your service.

Further, you will be confronted with challenges testing your own ability to work cooperatively with those whose lives are probably very different from yours. As you interact, learning when to lead and when to follow; as you realize that their assumptions, values, and realities are not yours; as you find your place and contribute to the well-being of others; as you get to know them and they you, you will find yourself defining and redefining your own values and beliefs. As you get to know how others manage their lives, you will reexamine the meaning of yours. You will be developing new skills and perhaps uncovering new talents and, as have so many service-learning students before you, you may find yourself rethinking your career plans and other life choices.

And, as important, you will know that you have gone on study abroad not only to take but to give as well. You will have been more than an academic tourist. You will have been an active participant, not just an observer, and while you cannot alone make lasting change in a brief semester or year abroad, you will have made a contribution to bettering the lives of others. Whether you choose a developed or developing country, there are needs everywhere that are being addressed, and you can be part of that.

As you prepare for study abroad, set your sights high. For some of you, this will be the only opportunity you have to live in another country. For others, it will be an early step in a lifetime of international work and living. Do your homework with respect to the wonderful opportunity before you, so that when you return you can say that your education abroad was rich, rewarding, and life-transforming.

Bon Voyage!
Linda Chisholm

STUDY ABROAD WITH A CONSCIENCE

When students return from studying abroad, they typically bring home knowledge of another culture, different perspectives on their home country, new friendships, improved foreign language skills, academic credits, increased confidence and maturity, life-long memories, and a suitcase full of souvenirs. Imagine if you could have a deeper and richer version of the academic, personal, and professional benefits of study abroad, while making a meaningful contribution to your host community. Global service-learning presents such a socially and/or environmentally-conscious alternative to traditional study abroad. It is the substantial service component that enhances both the academic and intercultural opportunities and enables participants to make a difference in the world.

The learning that occurs in global service-learning programs tends to be a profound experience because participants examine real-life problems in real-world settings and make efforts to address issues confronting the local community. There are no “right” answers in the back of the book, but the academic portion of the program provides the necessary background information and theoretical framework to understand community issues and facilitate effective participation in the service project. Participants work collaboratively to grapple with the complexity of real issues, learn to balance competing interests in the community, apply their academic knowledge and skills to address a community need, and critically reflect on the service-learning experience. Success or failure in service-learning has real world implications and is measured in terms of a tangible impact on the community, along with the personal growth and cognitive development reflected in grades and credits. Moreover, active involvement in the service component of the program

can have a major impact on participants, transforming their understanding of themselves and the world.

Whether program participants conduct health clinics, complete building or environmental conservation projects, assist local service agencies, develop resources, conduct research, provide training, or raise awareness about community problems, service-learning programs provide unique opportunities for meaningful interaction and direct connections with the local community. The mutually beneficial nature of service-learning projects facilitates dialogue, creates a bond, and builds trust between participants and community members. Similarly meaningful relationships are rarely formed in traditional study abroad programs, where interaction with the local population is often limited to the classroom setting or social gatherings. In effect, service-learning can open the door to the host culture and forge deep personal connections between participants and local people.

Service-learning refers to a specific type of pedagogy and form of research, but the term is often misused. In order to select a quality service-learning program, you should take the time to find out about both the service and academic components of the program. Look for programs in which service is integral and connected to the academic component and in which opportunities for on-going critical reflection and dialogue with community partners, peers, and faculty are built into the program structure. Since reciprocity is a key goal in service-learning, the local community should have significant involvement in the development and implementation of the service-learning program. Community members should therefore play an important role in identifying the problems that service work will address, structuring the program, and as-

sessing the outcomes of service projects. Furthermore, service projects should be sustainable, evidencing the long-term commitment of the sponsoring institution, faculty, and local community.

In addition to developing intercultural competence, service-learning can lead to greater civic responsibility and transform participants into global citizens. Engaging with a host community in a service project enables participants to go beyond crossing cultural bridges to building bridges that improve society on local and global levels.

By becoming more actively involved in community-based service-learning projects abroad, participants will better understand the relationship between theory and practice and learn how to apply knowledge that can have an immediate and positive long-term impact on the host community. By choosing study abroad with a conscience, global service-learning participants enhance their awareness of cultural differences, increase their academic understanding of social problems, gain hands-on experience, and return home knowing that they made a valuable social contribution.

»» For more information on global service-learning programs, visit the web sites of the National Clearinghouse for Service Learning (www.servicelearning.org) and Campus Compact (www.compact.org/links/international.html).

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principles of service-learning

- **SERVICE-LEARNING UNITES ACADEMIC STUDY AND VOLUNTEER COMMUNITY SERVICE IN MUTUALLY REINFORCING WAYS.**

The service makes your study immediate, applicable, and relevant; the study informs the service through knowledge, analysis, and reflection. Theory is field tested in practice and is seen and measured within a cultural context. Because the learning is put to immediate use, it tends to be deeper and last longer.

- **THERE IS RECIPROCITY BETWEEN THE COMMUNITY SERVED AND THE UNIVERSITY, COLLEGE, OR PROGRAM.**

Their relationship is built on mutual respect and esteem.

- **THE SERVICE PROMOTES INTERCULTURAL AND INTERNATIONAL UNDERSTANDING.**

The service often occurs with people whose lives are very different from yours. By working with them, you come to understand and appreciate their different experiences, ideas, and values, and to work cooperatively with them. Service-learning nurtures global awareness and socially responsible citizenship.

- **IN SERVICE-LEARNING PROGRAMS, STUDENTS AND TEACHERS USE THE EXPERIENCE OF SERVICE AS ONE SOURCE OF INFORMATION AND IDEAS.**

You are asked to analyze critically what you learn from the service, just as you analyze the information and ideas from the sources of traditional academic study. When academic credit is awarded, it is not for the service performed, but for the learning, which you demonstrate through written papers, classroom discussion, examinations, and/or other means of formal evaluation.

- **SERVICE-LEARNING IS DIFFERENT FROM COMMUNITY SERVICE UNCONNECTED TO FORMAL STUDY IN TWO IMPORTANT WAYS.**

First, it demands that you understand the service agency—its mission, philosophy, assumptions, structures, activities, and governance—and the conditions of life

of those you serve. Second, it is characterized by a relationship of partnership: you learn from the service agency and from the community and, in return, give energy, intelligence, commitment, time, and skills to address human and community needs. The service agency also learns from you.

- **SERVICE-LEARNING IS DIFFERENT FROM FIELD STUDY, INTERNSHIPS, AND PRACTICUMS, ALTHOUGH IT MAY HAVE ELEMENTS OF ALL OF THESE.**

Unlike field study, service-learning makes you not only an observer but an active participant. While you may gain from service-learning many of the benefits of an internship or practicum, service-learning has two goals: student learning and service to the community. The service should be truly useful. You explore with your community how your education may benefit the community and the well-being of others. The time and quality of your service must be sufficient to offset the agency time spent in planning, supervising, and evaluating the program; otherwise you and your program are exploiting the very people you intend to assist.

- **YOU ARE ENCOURAGED TO DEVELOP AND DEMONSTRATE LEADERSHIP SKILLS, USING YOUR OWN INITIATIVE WHEN APPROPRIATE, BEARING IN MIND THAT YOU SHOULD FIRST LISTEN TO THE COMMUNITY AND BE RESPONSIVE TO ITS VALUES AND NEEDS.**

You will learn that the most effective leadership is that which fosters the active participation—and indeed leadership—of others.

- **OPPORTUNITY FOR PERSONAL REFLECTION ON THE MEANING OF THE EXPERIENCE IN RELATION TO YOUR VALUES AND LIFE DECISIONS SHOULD BE AN INTEGRAL PART OF YOUR PROGRAM.**

>> Adapted from The International Partnership for Service-Learning and Leadership's Declaration of Principles (www.ipsl.org).

GOOD INTENTIONS

History is full of examples of people who tried to do good deeds for those whose cultures they did not understand, only to fail. My close friend, the late Ernesto Orellana Villers, who worked for many years at Mexico's National Museum of Anthropology, used to illustrate this point with the following true anecdote.

A Western-trained doctor was assigned to complete his required community service practicum at a government-run health clinic in a small indigenous village in Mexico. Shortly after he began his assignment, the number of patients coming to the clinic dropped dramatically. An investigation was quickly launched. The investigating team asked the doctor to describe the delivery of a baby that he had recently performed. He detailed every aspect of the procedure. Each task had been performed according to standard protocol and the healthy newborn baby had been sent home with his healthy mother. Puzzled, an investigator asked, "And what did you do with the umbilical cord?"

"I disposed of it carefully" said the physician. "That's it," declared the investigator.

According to local practices in this community, the umbilical cord was considered sacred; it represented the newborn baby's spirit. Where it was buried after the birth was crucial. If the baby was a boy, the umbilical cord was buried in the field behind the family's home in order to encourage a prosperous harvest. If the baby was a girl, the umbilical cord was buried under the house to bring peace and love to the home. In this case, however, the doctor had simply thrown out this sacred object, disrespecting the baby and his family in such a blatant way that word had quickly spread and no one in the community had returned to the hospital.

Good will goes far in making the world a better place, but knowledge of the cultural practices of those you want to help can be just as important.

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JORGE'S GIFT

bio

NAME: Aaron Mearns

OCCUPATION: Kayak Instructor and Guide

EDUCATION: Endicott College, 2003

MAJOR: English and Creative Writing

GLAD YOU PACKED: Pictures from home. They helped me connect with my host family.

ADVICE: When in a foreign country and culture, life is a whole lot easier if you can learn to laugh at yourself.

FAVORITE SIDETRIP: Cuetzalan

CULTURAL APPRECIATION: The band Manu Chao became a quick favorite.

BIGGEST CHALLENGE: At first it was hard to see the kids' living environment. It took a while to understand that even though they lived in "poor" conditions, they were all happy and surrounded by a loving community.

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As the plane made its final descent into Boston's Logan Airport, the lights from the city seemed different. They hadn't changed in the month I had been in Mexico; rather, living and working in another country had changed me. Flying above, the city seemed more of a blessing than a given. Landing instructions shook us from our thoughts, and then a special announcement, welcoming home the 11 students and two professors coming back from a month-long community service project in Mexico.

Home. The reflection from the window betrayed my tears as I thought about the homes we had all been briefly but wholeheartedly welcomed into. We were quiet with our thoughts, reflecting on what we were leaving behind, and what we were coming back to.

Of course, when I was first accepted for the trip, I didn't know how life-changing it would be. The truth is, I wasn't even excited to go. I had never flown before, and my Spanish was sub par. I worried that while living with the host fam-

ily, I wouldn't be able to communicate with them, not to mention not being able to see or talk to my family.

But by my sophomore year at Endicott College, I was ready to push my limits. In high school, college is often billed as a time for independence and self-discovery. But for the two years I had been at school, it had seemed like great measures were taken to make our stay comfortable. I wanted a chance to really get out on my own, to test myself and see what obstacles I was capable of overcoming. Mexico seemed like the perfect chance.

I was also beginning to look more at the world around me. Though I hadn't been raised in a wealthy family, I was privileged to be at a beautiful school, and the thought that so many people had so much less gnawed at me. I wanted to help others, and the trip was designed to do just that. Prior to leaving, we held fundraisers. We collected cans and took donations. We sold candy grams and homemade reindeer candy canes to students and faculty. The whole campus seemed behind

us, as if we were raising not only money, but also awareness about the poverty in Mexico.

From the first plane ride, I knew my life would be different. As we rose above the city, I watched the details of the place I called home blend into the rest of the world, blurring the distinction between "us" and everyone else. Five hours later, the lights of Mexico City looked just like Boston, and I wondered at the similarity between areas so distant. Yet as we descended, and spent the next few weeks living and working in several communities, the rich details of a culture very different from ours came into focus.

We spent our first few days in Mexico City, acclimating to the culture through field trips with our professors. We climbed pyramids and looked across earth-toned hills supporting closely stacked homes dotted with cacti. We walked through ruins of an ancient civilization, emerging in the heart of the city built on top of them. The field trips brought to life what we had studied in the semester before coming to Mexico.

After Mexico City, we

went to live with host families in Puebla. The families belonged to the upper middle class and went out of their way to make sure we were comfortable. On my first night with my host family, my host mother urged me to call my mom. Despite the cultural differences, she knew that my mom would be worried. I hadn't realized until I called how much I missed my parents. I could hardly talk around the lump in my throat, but hearing their voices was reassuring.

Yet while missing my own family, I was quickly feeling like a part of my new one. My host brother took me to the mall and the *discoteca* to meet his friends. We listened to Eric Clapton and Mexican folk singers in his garage, both of us singing while playing guitar and drums. My sister, Kata, introduced me to her friends and taught me how to play poker. My mother, also Kata, showed me the rich variety of Mexican food and invited me to watch movies with them. My father, Abelardo, drove me every morning to meet the other students and, though language barriers made talking dif-



Jorge wearing the cowboy hat he gave the author.

difficult, we spent a long evening looking at the pictures I had brought from home.

During the day, all 13 of us piled into a couple of vans and drove to the outskirts of Puebla. There, we worked in preschools, using the money we had raised back home to paint the schools in bright colors, build fences to separate the schoolyard from the road, and install bathrooms. Though the schools had little in material things, including running water and electricity, the students were loving and spirited. They worked right beside us.

When we weren't working, we played with the kids and learned about their community. We had a goal of things

we wanted to accomplish over the week, but we often let the kids decide what to do. Each student helped with the painting; after all, it was their school, and they were proud to take part in making it beautiful. We decorated the inside by dipping our hands in paint and pressing them against the wall.

After a few days in the schools, other members of the community came out to help. We had plans to build a bamboo fence around the schoolyard. Unfortunately, none of us knew how to do it. Side by side, we worked with fathers and mothers, who showed us how to dig the hole and set the bamboo. Long after we had put down our shov-

els in exhaustion, the locals kept digging.

Working all day in the school and then going back to our host families gave us daily culture shock. Though the distance between the communities was less than 10 miles apart, the economic differences were worlds apart. With the host families, we lived in relative luxury. Most days it was hard leaving the schools, knowing that while we went back to a life of comfort, the students were staying behind in a world of poverty. At times, I wondered how much good our work was doing, because it wasn't ultimately changing their lives. Yet by the time we left the schools, one student in particu-

lar showed me the value of our efforts.

At five years old, Jorge flipped my world on its head, shattering my notions of rich and poor while showing me what the truly important things in life are. We bonded pretty quickly while painting, playing, and snapping goofy photos of each other. On the final day, we said goodbye to the kids and their families.

Jorge's grandmother came up to each of us and, with a hand on her heart, said, "*Siempre en mi corazón.*" Forever in my heart.

After everyone left, Jorge came rushing back into the school. Tugging on my hand for me to kneel down, he took off his straw cowboy hat and placed it on my head. At first I protested, not wanting to take such an expensive gift. Despite everything we had learned, I still had a hard time not seeing gifts in terms of dollars. My professor Sergio explained to me that the best thing to do was to take the hat. It was important to Jorge that I remember him. I had never seen such generosity, and my mind tried to grapple with how

someone with so little could give so much. As Jorge reached his hand out to put the hat on my head, he reached across language, class, and cultural differences. He showed me how to judge a man not by the size of his wallet, but by the generosity in his heart. My already poor Spanish was lost through my sobbing as I struggled for words.

I promised myself as I left that I would write Jorge letters and send gifts once I got back to the U.S. Unfortunately, everyday life resumes too quickly, and I have yet to send a letter. Not a day goes by, though, that I don't think of Jorge and his friends at the school. The hat now hangs on my desk, next to the picture of Jorge standing proud in front of the school that he helped paint, straw cowboy hat pulled snug over his little head.

A few days after we left the school, we returned to show the president of our college the work we had done. While we were there, I dropped off some pictures of me and Jorge that I had developed. On the back, I wrote, "*Siempre en mi corazón.*"

INTERNATIONAL SERVICE-LEARNING: IS IT RIGHT FOR YOU?

If you have ever considered studying or volunteering abroad—or perhaps both—you should think about international service-learning. This can take either of these alternatives to a higher, more meaningful level (both for you and your host community). Service-learning combines academic study with community service, so that your experiences in and out of the classroom are constantly reinforcing each other. The end result is a rich experience that can enhance your academic understanding, cultural awareness, and real-life skills—all while you are making positive changes in a specific community.

HOW IS INTERNATIONAL SERVICE-LEARNING DIFFERENT FROM STUDYING ABROAD? In most study abroad programs, you take academic classes while immersing yourself in a new and exciting culture, which is certainly an amazing experience. However, in a service-learning program you still take classes, but you also have the opportunity to use your classroom learning in a real-life situation. You get to contribute to your new community in a meaningful way, and you have the support of an experienced faculty and/or staff member.

One of the most rewarding aspects of service-learning is that it can enhance any course of study. Whether you are studying psychology, medicine, ecology, economics, or anything in between, you can find an appropriate service-learning experience that matches your interests, needs, and goals. In addition to the immediate benefits, there are long-term benefits as well. For example, this experience can enhance your resume, widen your career opportunities, and make you a more desirable job applicant. You will be one step above someone who just sat in a classroom and read from books; you will have applied that classroom learning to a real-life experience.

An effective service-learning program will combine your academic goals with

the needs of the community. As a result, your work will not only help you develop, but it will also create a positive impact in your host community.

HOW IS INTERNATIONAL SERVICE-LEARNING DIFFERENT FROM VOLUNTEERING ABROAD? With international service-learning, you participate in a more structured experience than if you were volunteering. Your program will be coupled with a classroom environment that will involve reflective activities to help you better understand your experience and process the emotional component of volunteering. As a result, you will gain a deeper, more critical understanding of the community, its needs, its culture(s), and its people. The academic component also makes it possible for you to receive credit (pending approval from your home institution).

IS INTERNATIONAL SERVICE-LEARNING RIGHT FOR YOU? One of the main things to consider is that an international service-learning experience can be more emotionally and academically demanding than a volunteering or study abroad experience. This can be a good thing, if you are prepared. You will be responsible for your academic work, as well as your volunteer service—and while this combination can be very rewarding, it may also be time-consuming. Depending on your particular program, your time for independent travel may be limited.

Another consideration is the length of the experience. Many volunteer programs can last anywhere from two weeks to one year, depending on your preference. With service-learning programs, however, you may not have the option of a short-term experience (i.e. less than a typical semester)—although there are a few exceptions. Most service-learning programs coincide with the academic year, so you can participate in a semester program, a year pro-

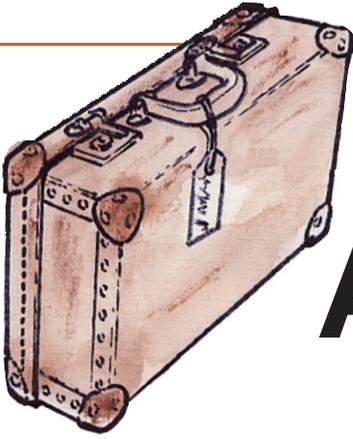
gram, or maybe a summer program. However, if you have time constraints and are looking for a shorter experience, you may not be able to participate in service-learning, and traditional volunteering might be the better option.

If you are unsure whether you are ready for such an experience, you may want to try volunteering in your home community first. This can give you a feel for what it is like to work in an unfamiliar environment and can help prepare you for a similar experience abroad. It is important to keep in mind, however, that there are often significant cultural differences between volunteering at home and abroad. Cross-cultural understanding is a key component of preparing for your international experience.

One last factor is money. Somehow you will have to find a way to finance this experience, so it is important to keep in mind the cost of the international service-learning programs. They vary depending on the organization, destination, and length of stay, so you may want to do some research. Also, you can see if any scholarships or financial aid might be available.

WHERE TO GO FROM HERE? You can always visit the study abroad office at your school to discuss your options. Also, Action Without Borders (www.idealists.org) provides an online resource center with a database of more than 45,000 non-profit organizations from 165 countries and some 10,000 volunteer and/or service-learning opportunities.

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WHAT ASSUMPTIONS ARE IN YOUR SUITCASE?

You're going abroad on a service-learning program. You may have thought about learning a different language, trying new foods, or what it will be like to live with a host family. Maybe you've given some consideration to the kind of service you'll do, or why the community you're visiting has a need for this kind of service (Why are there orphaned children, homeless families, or schools that need teaching assistants?). What's the economy like, and what's the history that has created these problems? What you may not have thought about, however, is how your host community views learning, service, and service-learning.

You may find that most people in your host culture have a norm, belief, or value that's different from those you know. You may notice, for example, that your Russian friends say "myi" (we) in situations where you might say "I." This speech pattern may give you a clue that Russians might emphasize the group in a situation where you would emphasize the individual. It's these kinds of hints about a society and its values that you should look for when doing intercultural service-learning.

You need to be aware that cultural assumptions are present in learning situations. For example, how would you define "a good student"? Is he or she someone who asks lots of questions, has original ideas, does independent research, and wants to know more than what's said in class? In many U.S. classrooms, this is the ideal of a good student. In some cultures, however, this kind of student would be considered immature and disrespectful—one who does not understand that he or she is not the equal of the professor, who has studied the subject for many years. Think, too, of the economic assumptions underlying independent work: a library full of books, journals, and electronic databases; computer labs with easy Internet access; time to spend doing research rather than working at a job or sharing in family responsibilities. Are these assumptions true in the society you are going to?

Beliefs about giving service also vary by culture. In some societies, those who give service to others often do so because of their religious beliefs. In

India, as Howard Berry and Linda Chisholm point out in *Service-Learning in Higher Education Around the World: An Initial Look*, the impetus for service comes from a desire to be self-sufficient in light of a colonial past, and in Denmark, a traditionally homogenous society, it is seen as a way of learning about the country's new cultural diversity. In some societies, where the concept of "face" is important, the idea of receiving service from a stranger can be shameful—it can mean that you do not have an "in-group" to take care of you. For example, nursing homes don't exist in many countries—families care for the elderly. Of course, that paradigm presupposes that someone, most likely a female member of the family, does not work outside the home. You may also find that the preponderant belief in some societies is that the government or some other group should take care of those in need, rather than individuals. When people in your host society react to the work you're doing, either positively or negatively, try to put the reaction in a context—look around you, ask questions, and see if you can get some idea about their attitude toward service. What motivates people to serve? Do those who are being served feel shame, or do they see themselves as being in a temporary situation, or in a situation caused by forces for which they are not responsible?

If beliefs about learning and service differ by culture, then it makes sense that ideas about service-learning differ, too. If you've chosen to do service-learning, then you've chosen a form of learning that falls under the broad category of experiential learning. If you think about the ideas that underlie experiential learning, you may realize that figuring something out for yourself is an important part of it. Of course you'll read, and listen to your supervisor and your professors, and hear about the experiences of other students, but a fundamental idea inherent in experiential learning is that you can form hypotheses from your own observations about the way a society works. You may find that not every society thinks that a 19-year-old is capable of forming such hypotheses. You may **[CONTINUED ON PAGE 47]**

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A COMMUNITY APPROACH IN THE FIGHT AGAINST AIDS

bio

NAME: Melanie Williams

EDUCATION: Cedar Crest College, 2006

MAJOR: Genetic Engineering and Psychology

PROGRAM: Global Service Corps (www.globalservicecorps.org)

MOST MEMORABLE SERVICE EXPERIENCE: Walking 11 miles one way carrying bags of food for HIV patients.

GLAD YOU BROUGHT: Medical supplies (everyone came to me with their needs). Also vitamins were helpful in keeping my immune system up.

CULTURAL APPRECIATION: African drumming

FAVORITE SIDETRIP: Zanzibar

BIGGEST CHALLENGES: Coming to terms with not being able to save everyone. Being back in the U.S. and overcoming the helpless feeling of not being able to maintain the same service you were providing overseas.

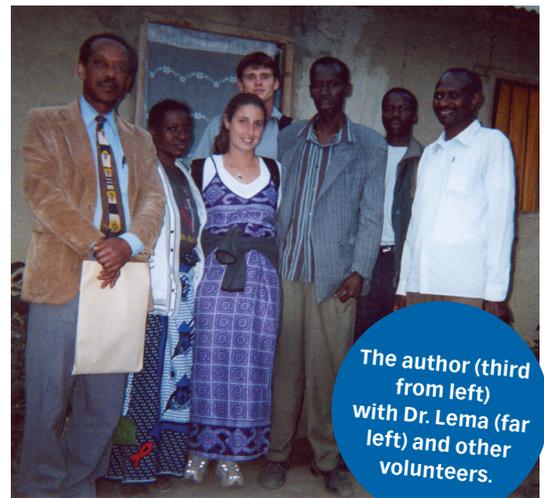
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After searching the Internet for overseas internships, I chose Global Service Corps' International Health program in Tanzania, because of my interest in public health and AIDS research. I had volunteered in two AIDS facilities in the U.S. and witnessed the effects of HIV.

Tanzania is one of several countries lacking a unified plan against HIV, and myths and misinformation are widespread. Arusha, the area that GSC serves, has a shocking 14 percent reported rate of infection because of poverty, lack of education, and poor access to healthcare.

As my departure drew closer, I gathered information on Tanzania and stocked up on materials to prepare me for any ailment or situation I might face. I also packed suitcases full of medicine and related items from funds I had received for the internship before leaving the U.S.

During the first half of the program we taught AIDS awareness and prevention at HIV/AIDS summer day camps for teenagers. Seeing how much the youths learned and how excited they were about sharing this new knowledge with their family members and other students was one of the most rewarding experiences of my life. To think



The author (third from left) with Dr. Lema (far left) and other volunteers.

that the information and skills we armed these students with could potentially save their lives or the lives of others was incredibly powerful.

Prevention is the most effective tool in the fight against HIV, but what about the dying and the suffering of those already infected? More than two million people are expected to die from AIDS this year, and most of them are malnourished, under-

tips for volunteers

- Consider raising extra funds before going abroad to support the project of your choice. Once there, spend some time evaluating the situation before you decide what to spend the funds on.

- Do not fall into the trap of

thinking that you will not be able to get basic supplies once you are abroad. For example, do not go out and buy some high-tech water bottle with a fancy filter; boiled water is perfectly safe and readily available.

- Even if you are tolerant of others' differences, try to become even more flexible and accommodate yourself to these differences.

- Setting personal and organizational goals is critically important to being productive in the

medicated, and in unremitting pain.

The second part of my internship was completed at The Needy Hospice Association, an NGO established to offer services to terminally ill patients. Because of the rise in AIDS cases in Tanzania, hospital beds are filled with two or three people at one time. Hospitals can only deal with this overload by discharging the terminally ill patients to be cared for by their relatives at home. However, because of the stigma of HIV, many families will not accept these patients. Many are left to fend for themselves. This means they are left alone to die.

My initial role was to diagnose the AIDS patients' diseases in order to provide them with the proper treatment and medications. It was quickly evident that many of the patients were unable to take the medications because they lacked food. In Tanzania, most people who die of AIDS actually die of starvation.

Seeing the effects of inadequate nutrition on patients and how this compromised our ability to treat them, I realized I had to do something. If our mission was to improve quality of life and maintain a stable level of health, then it was necessary to provide a regular supply of food, so I set out to create a sustainable food project.

I began by trying to fundraise in Tanzania, but this was difficult because most of the educated or skilled residents leave Tanzania as soon as they have enough money to do so. Those left are very poor and have no money to help others. How-

ever, I found many people eager to donate whatever they could, such as their time or vehicles.

One company offered to donate over-produced food once a week if we provided transportation. I learned the importance of having good walking shoes, and my backpack became precious to me. Many could not believe their eyes when a *mazungu* came to their house carrying sacks of food. Once neighbors realized that a *mazungu* was willing to come all this way to help infected members of their society, they too became involved in our efforts to improve the patients' quality of life.

I completely underestimated the effect of adequate nutrition. Not only did my patients regain hope; many, with a strengthened immune system, were also able to take back their lives, and get out of bed and do something. Once the word spread, many other organizations became interested in our work. We met our goal to make the food project sustainable.

Since I have returned to the States I have given several presentations on my experiences in Tanzania to raise funds for the projects I started there. I have also continued to collaborate with The Needy and GSC to increase the sustainability of these projects.

»» If you would like to learn more about volunteering with GSC or helping the projects Melanie started, contact her at mlwillia@cedarcrest.edu or melanielwilliams@hotmail.com.

short period of time you will be overseas. Everyone can make a difference, but if you want to do something with your time abroad, you have to actively pursue your goals. Do not let anyone hold you back or fall into

the trap of blaming others for not being able to accomplish what you came to do.

• Know that things will not always go your way and that you might make mistakes. As long as you learn from these setbacks and adjust your

behavior accordingly, you have not failed.

• Finally, you must learn to balance compassion with reality. Realizing that I could not help everyone was a big step. Be careful not to spread yourself too thin. —M.W.

[CONTINUED FROM PAGE 45] find people who question not just the ideas you've come up with, but also your right to have a theory or a hypothesis about your host society. Before you take that personally, take a look around you. Is most of the education in your host university done through professors lecturing and students taking notes? Do you find yourself explaining the concept of service-learning to your friends? If so, it may be that you're in a society that has different ideas from yours about who's an authority, from whom one can learn, and what's the right way for a "good" student to behave.

Cultural variation in ideas about learning, service, and service-learning is much more complex than these few paragraphs can suggest. A simple piece of advice is to look and listen, reflect, and seek information. Above all, don't assume that attitudes about anything are just like they are at home. You're going abroad to experience cultural difference—be ready to find it when you're doing your homework or playing with a group of five-year-olds or thinking over your day. Cultural assumptions are embedded in all parts of society. Pay attention, and you'll find that opportunities for learning are everywhere.

»» For an expanded version of some of the ideas found in this article, refer to "The Cultural and Intercultural Contexts of Service-Learning," contained in *Knowing and Doing: the Theory and Practice of Service-Learning*, 2005, IPSL Press. www.ipsl.org.

»» **MARTHA MERRILL**, who holds degrees in Russian Literature, Creative Writing, Higher Education Administration, and Islamic Studies, is an associate professor at the School for International Training, where she teaches Intercultural Communication as well as International Education courses. She is a member of the Board of the International Partnership for Service-Learning and Leadership, with which she has been associated since its founding. She is also on the ABROAD VIEW Editorial Board.



FAIRTRADE BEGINS AT HOME

bio

NAME: Denise Davis

EDUCATION: University of Redlands, 2006

MAJOR: Social Psychology of Gender and Multiculturalism

PROGRAM: Study abroad program: LEXIA International—London (www.lexiaintl.org)

RECOMMENDED

BOOKS: *Culture Shock—London at Your Door* by Orin Hargraves and *After Multiculturalism* by Yasmin Alibhai-Brown

ADVICE: Take advantage of every opportunity, even if you seem too busy; you'll be glad later, when you return home and reflect on all your experiences abroad

FAVORITE SIDETRIP: Bath, England

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Having grown up in Las Vegas, a town shimmering with diversity, I developed an appreciation for multiculturalism. Once I arrived at the University of Redlands in California, the budding activist inside me seized every chance to learn about and promote issues of social justice. Realizing the possibilities of using education as a tool for activism, which in turn can lead to social change, was all the assurance I needed to create a major with this at its heart. Through the Johnston Center for Integrative Studies at the University of Redlands, I've designed the major "Social Psychology of Gender and Multiculturalism for Social Change." My concentration is focused on issues of prejudice and discrimination, mainly on the basis of identity characteristics such as race, ethnicity, gender, sexual orientation, and social class.

As my junior year approached and I began thinking about where to study abroad, I knew that I wanted a place that fit in with

my unique major. While I saw the benefits of going to specific countries to learn a language and immerse myself in a particular culture, I wanted to go somewhere where I could experience a variety of cultures at the same time. All my reading proclaimed London to be the "most multicultural city" in the world. In fact, I picked the LEXIA program because of its specific focus on this topic, and because it offered the possibility for an internship. Once I arrived in London and met with my course tutor, I explained to her my passion for social justice and my desire to work for a non-profit organization. She suggested the Fairtrade Foundation.

I didn't know much about the Fairtrade Foundation, www.fairtrade.org.uk, or its U.S. counterpart, Transfair USA, www.transfairusa.org, until I started working there. However, shortly after arriving and seeing what the organization does, I was completely on board. The Foun-

dation's brochure says it best: "The Foundation does not buy or sell Fairtrade products itself, but works to bring everyone together—from the farmer to the shopper on the street—in an ambitious vision of tackling poverty through fairer trade."

Through my internship twice a week, which consisted of long days spent packaging campaign materials, assisting the director, and working with the press team, I learned how the organization was putting its social ideals into action. Each year FairTrade hosts the annual "Fairtrade Fortnight" campaign in March, which I helped plan. It's a two-week period when Fairtrade events happen continuously all over the U.K., drawing massive amounts of media attention and public awareness to the Fairtrade logo and all it stands for. Businesses, grocery stores, churches, schools, and universities as well as many other organizations are involved in hosting these events. Along with the campaign work, I

Fairtrade helps farmers and workers by ensuring fair wages and decent working conditions.



also had the opportunity to work with the director and her personal assistant in their office. My favorite project was doing research for a speech she was to deliver.

Knowing that I have an interest in Women's Studies, she and her assistant graciously assigned me the research on issues surrounding women as ethical consumers. They also suggested that I brainstorm topics surrounding women and Fairtrade to pitch to the press team. I loved that I could even take something as seemingly broad as the Fairtrade Foundation and tailor it to my interest in Women's Studies.

It's important to highlight that women are heavily involved in every aspect of Fairtrade—from the producers to the consumers (women statistically purchase more Fairtrade products than men). Fairtrade is also creating cultural shifts, especially in developing countries where its presence generates enough money to educate girls as well as boys. There are many other issues that can be discussed on the topic of women and Fairtrade, which I was excited to be able to voice to the press team for the possibility of a magazine or a freelance article. The whole process was enlightening because I'm very interested in how the media can work to enhance and promote issues of social justice.

The timing of my internship at the Fairtrade Foundation couldn't have been better. After being named the 2004 U.K. Charity of the Year, the Fairtrade Foundation is now an integral part of an important movement

going on in 2005. On my second day of work, a member of the press team handed me a white bracelet that said, "Make Poverty History." The bracelet was a way to show support as well as to spark conversations about the global campaign to end poverty and persuade world leaders to take action and eliminate the debts of poorer countries. In the U.K. more than 200 organizations have joined together in this noble quest, which is described at www.fairtrade.org.uk/get_involved_makepovertyhistory.htm.

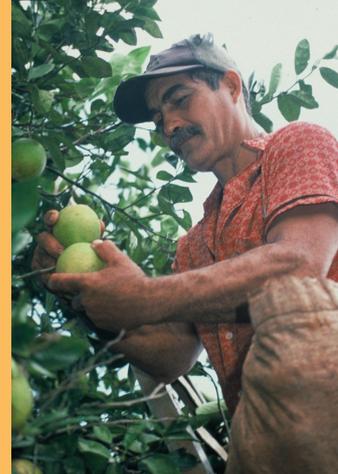
Between working at the Fairtrade Foundation, learning about social consciousness in class, and going on our weekly excursions, which sometimes involved visiting organizations such as Tourism Concern, my habits began to change. For instance, at the grocery store I started noticing and even seeking out products with the Fairtrade logo. From bananas to honey to chocolate to snack bars, I not only enjoyed the great quality of the products, but I also felt better about buying them. I started wishing that more products carried the Fairtrade mark and thinking about how sad it is that the world even needs this type of organization. Shouldn't all products be fairly traded?

Some of my most lasting memories from working at the Fairtrade Foundation are not from the work itself but from conversations with my international coworkers. During my internship, I happened to be the only person from the U.S. One day I was working in the "dispatch"

area with other volunteers. In the midst of filling boxes and mailing out campaign materials, a Dutch woman, a South African woman, and I talked about what had drawn us to the Fairtrade Foundation, which then led to a discussion about social justice on a global scale. In that moment, and even some days in these months since I've returned, I felt more in common with my coworkers than with many of my classmates in the U.S.

Seeing the inner workings of a non-profit from top to bottom was invaluable. I was initially surprised by how large the organization was and that the number of volunteers nearly matched the number of staff. There seemed to be a constant stream of people willing to donate their time and effort to promote this cause.

Having my first experience working directly for a charity, especially in another country, and feeling so at home has taught me a lot about myself and what I'd like to do in my future. As I enter my senior year of college and begin to plan for life after graduation, I know that the most satisfying work that I can do will involve my passion for social justice and social change. The way in which academia has shaped my drive and passion has inspired me to consider teaching as a profession, hopefully at the university level. Being able to challenge and encourage young minds as my professors have done for me would be a rewarding way to take my knowledge, experience, and activism into the classroom and the larger world.



SPONTANEOUS ACTION

BOLSTERING AN AFRICAN IMMIGRANT COMMUNITY

bio

NAME: Michael Kerlin

OCCUPATION:

Consultant with McKinsey & Company

EDUCATION: Harvard

University Business School and Kennedy School of Government, 2005; B.A. from Princeton University, Woodrow Wilson School of Public Policy & International Affairs, 1997

FELLOWSHIP: U.S.

Fulbright Scholar, Lisbon School of Social and Managerial Sciences; English language instructor for African college students studying in Portugal

GLAD YOU PACKED:

Irish music tapes

RECOMMENDED BOOK:

Mountains Beyond Mountains by Tracy Kidder. This book about Dr. Paul Farmer is the most inspiring book I've ever read, and I recommend it to all idealists.

BEST NEW MUSIC:

Tabanka Djaz (Guinea-Bissau)

FAVORITE LOCAL HAUNT:

Pasteleria de Belem, the Krispy Kreme of Portugal

MOST IMPORTANT

NEW SKILL: Learning to speak Guinea-Bissauan Creole

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Back in 1997, I tried my hand at academia for a while. I had received a Fulbright grant, just after college, to research African immigration to Portugal with a focus on the immigrants' efforts to support their countries of origin.

The Instituto Superior de Ciências de Trabalho e da Empresa, loosely translated as the Lisbon School of Social and Managerial Sciences, would be my home. Several of the university's classes, libraries, and professors were to be my tools, along with a small sampling of field research.

The academic thing alone didn't suffice for me though. I also needed to participate in the community that I was studying, and ideally contribute to it. There were roughly 100,000 Africans legally residing in Portugal in the late '90s, and a few hundred thousand more illegal Africans. They came mostly from Portugal's former colonies—Angola, Cape Verde, Guinea-Bissau, Mozambique, and São Tome and Príncipe.

In my second week of nine months in Portugal, I found myself on a train out to Amadora, a nondescript working-class neighborhood that was home to some light industry and several African immigrants. At the northern edge of Amadora's downtown lay the *Encosta Nascente*, or "Fountainside," neighborhood. Contrary to its peace-evoking name, Encosta Nascente was a haphazard collection of simple cement homes, reminiscent of shantytown dwellings in far poorer countries.

I wandered past stray dogs, down one of the two dirt footpaths that lead into Encosta Nascente and toward the neighborhood's community center. The center claimed to offer only after-school tutoring and daycare, but it also served as the neighborhood's proxy city hall—an oasis of order in the midst of dirt, chaos, and petty crime.

The center's directors were intrigued by my offer to chip in some volunteer work. My Portuguese was still quite limited, so we settled on physical education. I would be Encosta Nascente's gym teacher "Teach them something that's not *futebol*,"

said the assistant director. "These kids think that sports don't exist beyond *futebol*."

I followed the assistant director's advice and introduced the children to volleyball, Frisbee, badminton, track and field, and basketball. Roughly half of the children were second-generation Portuguese, children of African immigrants. Their parents had come chasing construction jobs, some as early as the 1960s, and others during the 1990s, when Portugal needed fresh labor to help it gear up for the 1998 World's Fair in Lisbon. Part of Portugal's new minority, the African-descent children in my gym classes would face discrimination and confusion in their teen years. But for now, they were just kids, who played with the white Portuguese and revealed their differences only with an occasional reversion to their parents' Creole languages.

Since the children did not concern themselves much with their parents' homelands, I often felt that my work at the center at Encosta Nascente lay too far from the core of my research. So I sought out more volunteer work with older, more recent immigrants.

I discovered a Portuguese NGO called OIKOS that operated a Center for African Students. The center provided educational resources and study space for university students who had come north on shoestring scholarships from Portugal's former colonies. These were Portuguese Africa's best and brightest, but many of the students worked construction jobs alongside their studies, so they could send money home to their families in Africa.

I offered weekly English classes to the students. Mostly, my classes were indistinguishable from any other English classes that an American might offer in Portugal. But occasionally the differences emerged. During one vocabulary lesson on food, I asked each member of the class to tell me what he or she ate for different meals. When we reached a Guinea-Bissauan student named Pedro it was time for a sentence describing breakfast. Pedro paused



The author befriended Guinea-Bissauan immigrants working in Lisbon.

awkwardly, then said, “I’m sorry. I do not eat anything for breakfast. I do not have money.”

The students were angry with expensive Portugal, angry with their Portuguese universities that required them to read technical textbooks in English, and angry with the foundations that sponsored them at subsistence levels. But they were also angry with their families back in Africa. Whole families, and extended families, assumed that a scholarship in Portugal was a ticket to riches. The pressures were enormous. “Send me shoes. I only have one pair of shoes. Please send me an extra pair,” a cousin might write. “I need to pay your younger sister’s school fees,” a parent might write.

Some of the most pressured students came from Guinea-Bissau, where well over half the population lived on just a dollar a day. After several conversations with these students, I decided to focus my field research on Guinea-Bissau. I planned to meet with Guinea-Bissauan groups in Portugal and visit their families in the tiny West African nation just south of Senegal.

I traveled to Guinea-Bissau in February, and it was one of my English students from OIKOS who made my trip less daunting. The student, Vital Incopté, had arranged for his family to look after me during my time in the capital city, Bissau. The Incopté family met me at the airport, shared meals with me, and accompanied me on some of my rounds of the city.

Sending a visitor home to his family meant more pressure on Vital though. He had to send money

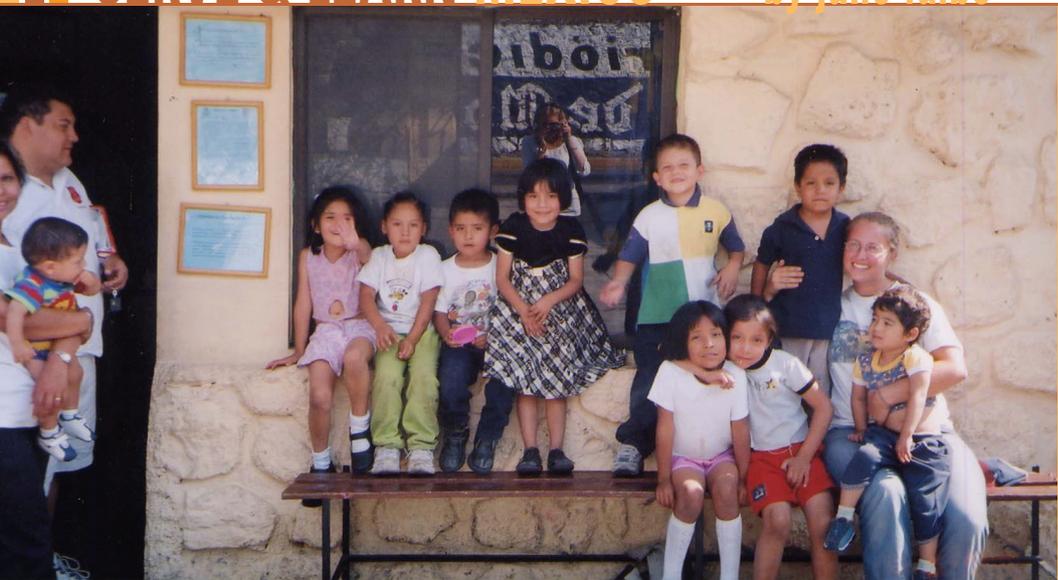
and gifts back with me. Other Guinea-Bissauans that I had met over the course of my volunteer work and field research decided to send money and gifts with me too.

In the end, I transported two children’s backpacks, two shower curtain rods, a deceased immigrant’s suitcase, a letter for a priest, a camera full of film, and \$350.

My heavy load at the airport was still light enough to make me an ideal target for more enterprising remittance senders. One immigrant even tried to convince me to check an industrial tire for him with my luggage.

But it was all worth it. Cousins lit up when they saw their backpacks. Sisters glowed at the thought of replacing rotting shower curtain rods. A mourning father held his son’s belongs. A priest smiled at the memory of one of his star students. A mother took pictures with her new camera and sent them back to Portugal with me for her son. And, with some long awaited extra money in hand, several families stocked up on rice and other household goods.

It was this final community service project—a spontaneous action that stemmed from my tight integration with Lisbon’s African immigrants—that best complemented my research. That tight integration came from seeing research as more than just research, and from pushing the boundaries that normally divide a sociologist from his subjects. I had intended simply to analyze immigrants’ contributions to their homelands, but I never imagined that I would facilitate their efforts to build Africa from afar.



TEACHING ORPHANS

As a recent college graduate, I am bombarded with the typical questions: “What are you going to do now? What kind of job are you looking for?”

With my International Relations major and my interest in service, many close friends and professors have asked, “Why don’t you enter the Peace Corps or work overseas?”

“I’m not ready to go abroad again,” I respond.

Since I have been to eight countries on various study abroad programs over the past two years, people may think it is a case of travel overload.

But it’s not that simple. I have numerous issues I want to work on within myself and in our society before I buy my next ticket. Many of these stem from my service-learning experience in Mexico in my study abroad program of spring 2004.

I moved to Cuernavaca, Mexico in January after spending the previous semester in Guatemala, El Salvador, and Nicaragua. This experience was my first exposure to developing countries; I was hit rather hard by their struggles for social change, and the role the U.S. played in their extensive civil wars.

I began the semester in Mexico in high spirits, ready to continue working on my Spanish, study environmental politics, and start my service-learning internship.

When I first decided to spend part of my time in service, I thought I would be helping others in need. In the previous semester, I had become starkly aware of the privilege that comes from being a white, middle class U.S. citizen. The juxtaposition of the poverty and my privilege convinced me that whatever I did with my life, I needed to try and change the structures that oppress people. And I thought that working abroad was a wonderful way to live out this ideal.

Since I had been a swimming instructor for sev-

eral years, and I loved working with kids, I decided to work at the orphanage Hogar de Niños del Ejercito de Salvación (House of Children of the Salvation Army).

My first visit was an informational session with the director. When I arrived, a few kids ran up to the gate to let me in. Inside the fence was a concrete yard where a few small children in worn clothes were milling around. I walked into the director’s small office cluttered with papers, folders, and art supplies. He was pleased at my interest in the program and showed me around the facility. I was astonished by the immense lack of resources. The classroom consisted of some tables and chairs, a few games, and some gaudy clown decorations on the walls. Some of the children were napping in the prayer room on old, discolored mattresses without sheets. The children who were hanging around outside had no toys to play with, and I wondered what exactly they did with their free time.

As a volunteer, I would be an English teacher for the kindergartners and would also help out with activities like preparing lunch and picking up the children from school.

Riding the bus on my first day of work, butterflies fluttered in my stomach. I arrived as the school-aged kids were finishing lunch. They ate silently, but as soon as they were excused, there was a bustle of activity. Some of them swept and put tables away, while others piled up the dishes and began washing. I was lost in the chaos, with the directors gone for a few hours and the other employees unsure of what to do with me.

When the directors finally returned, they gave me some paper and crayons and said the children could skip their nap time for me to teach them an English class. Since the classroom was locked and the keys

Scenes from
the orphanage
where the writer
(far right) volun-
teered to teach
English



missing, we resorted to setting up a table in the storage room. The 11 three- to five-year-olds were much more interested in looking through all the old junk in the room than paying attention to me. Another employee came into the room a few times to quiet the kids, which resulted in some yelling and hitting. After a long hour, we finally finished the class to have a snack and play some games in the outdoor area. I was exhausted.

During the ride home I kept thinking of an article I had read prior to my internship, “To Hell with Good Intentions” by the late Ivan Illich (See Resources, page 64). His words had made me question my motives on my decision to do an internship in Mexico. Illich believed that the U.S. volunteer does more damage than good when volunteering abroad and only “create[s] disorder.” One reason he believed this is because the gap between the volunteer and the Mexican is extremely wide, and “[t]here is no way for [the volunteer] to really meet with the underprivileged, since there is no common ground whatsoever for you to meet on.”

This is true—I, a woman who grew up in a two-parent, middle class family in the U.S. have a completely different background from these orphaned children who rely on Hogar de Niños to meet their basic needs, as well as their emotional needs of love and stability.

In response to Illich, however, I think that because of these differences between the poor and the upper classes, work needs to be done to lessen that gap. Nevertheless it is essential that the U.S. volunteer does not impose his or her values on the host culture and presume to have all the answers on how problems should be solved.

In my work at the orphanage, I realized that due to my status and my cultural values, I held particular views of how the children should be treated, how

the organization should operate, and how the directors should act. For instance, the other employees shouldn't yell and spank the children, the directors should provide me with more structure, and the kids should have more one-on-one time with the adults.

As time went on, I learned more about the functions and struggles of the organization and why they operated the way they did. For example, the directors who run the program live at the orphanage and have two kids. Since the orphanage relies on funding from individuals and businesses, there is no money available to hire more employees, resulting in only four paid staff members for 40 children. Therefore, the directors never get a break from dealing with the needs of the orphans. Although my class time with the children did improve, I came to understand that my time was too short to accomplish much.

I also reflected on other questions about the societal structures that set the stage for these children to be in an orphanage. I questioned why the mother or relative didn't have enough money to raise his or her child, how their situation related to the employment rate in Mexico, and how the Mexican economy relates proportionally to the economic status of the U.S. As Archbishop Oscar Romero said, “It is not enough to undertake works of charity to alleviate the suffering of the poor; we must transform the structures that create this suffering.”

After my experience, I feel that my role is to change structures within the U.S. that contribute to problems abroad. Although the path to all of these realizations was difficult and frustrating at times, I couldn't have come to the understanding of what I want to do with my life any other way. I hope that I made an impact on the lives of those children, because working at Hogar de Niños definitely impacted my life.

bio

NAME: Julie Falbo

EDUCATION:
Augsburg College,
2005

MAJOR: International Relations

STUDY ABROAD:
Central America and Mexico with the Center for Global Education in 2003-2004

NEXT STEP: Working for AmeriCorps in a Minneapolis public school, and plans to attend graduate school in a few years

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Ernesto encourages students with Down syndrome to experience his guitar hands-on.



MUSIC THERAPY

As a Spanish major, I knew I wanted to study in a Latin American country. I chose the IES Santiago program in part because it incorporates opportunities for internships and service-learning into the traditional classroom experience. For IES, the main difference between an internship and service learning is the type of organization you work for. With service-learning, students are completing community service, so they generally work with indigenous, feminist, ecological, health, and other service organizations or NGOs. While many of my classmates chose internships, I felt that service-learning would be an ideal chance for a non-business major like me to step out of my comfort zone and participate in a professional context of a different kind—a con-

text where I would have an equal opportunity to experience the working world of Chile, drawing on my particular strengths and interests, while giving back to my host community.

During our first few weeks in Santiago, we visited various organizations to get an idea of what fields we could work in. On the brochure from the Asociación Nacional de Discapacitado Mental (ANDIME), a school for children with Down syndrome, I noticed there was a music therapist on staff. Since my other major is music, I had researched music therapy as a possible career path, and this seemed like an ideal opportunity to get a taste of the profession before committing myself.

Music therapy in the U.S., as with most health-

care professions, requires a person to be certified or undergoing the certification process before he or she can interact with the clients; even then, if permission is obtained to observe a music therapy session, there are all kinds of privacy and liability hoops to jump through.

At ANDIME I was able to work with Ernesto, a certified music therapist, for a few hours twice a week. Only a short time into the experience, I began to split my time between Ernesto and the other music teacher, Francisco. While with Ernesto, I mainly observed him in action with his classes; with Francisco, a trained musician and teacher who had never worked with special needs children or music therapy, I was able to implement some of the techniques I'd seen Ernesto use and try out ideas of my own.

I spent my hours at ANDIME walking and clapping in rhythm, swaying and bouncing with hula hoops, picking out melodies on a xylophone, beating on drums, singing songs, conducting impromptu mini ensembles, and loving a group of extremely affectionate kids. All these activities and their effect on the students were evidence of how learning rhythm corresponds to balance and coordination; learning to sing translates to speech; learning to hold a mallet aids muscle development; plucking a string develops fine motor skills; and taking turns on an instrument teaches discipline and social interaction.

By far my most memorable moment at ANDIME happened during one of my classes with Ernesto. Most of the students had severe cases of Down syndrome; several of these students couldn't speak and were only minimally responsive. One such student, Miguelito, was not only severely impaired, but he also had spastic tendencies which left him unable to sit still, make controlled movements, or fix his eyes on anything. On this particular day Ernesto brought out a brand new instrument to use with the class. It was shaped like a small washboard and made of a series of chimes attached on either end to the outer frame with wires and a handle at the bottom. Ernesto held the instrument in front of Miguelito's face, so that he was looking through the spaces in the chimes at Miguelito. He began to run a mallet up and down along the chimes. We watched excitedly as Miguelito's eyes began to search for the chiming sound and then lock onto the mallet and slowly follow it up and down. A seemingly small event was a big step in the motor development of this little boy.

Being on my own in a professional context,

while intimidating, forced me to struggle through the language and retain a lot of general vocabulary as well as vocabulary specific to my work. Singing childhood songs along with the students opened space for a connection that hadn't been possible with my passable but imperfect Spanish. Surprising my host family and friends with these songs delighted them and invited a deeper level of intimacy, as they understood that I truly respected their culture and wanted to know more.

As a music major, I appreciated gaining insight into the way in which the average Chilean relates to music. Every time I revealed one of my new children's songs to my Chilean friends, they almost always joined in, singing gustily whether or not they were what one might call "musically adept." When I asked my teenage host brother, Javier, how the Chilean national anthem went, I soon found myself audience to him and his best friend, standing at attention, hands over their hearts, proudly bellowing out the Chilean national anthem while the orchestra blared on the computer speakers behind them. And still, when I catch up every once in a while with Chilean friends on the phone, if I ask them to sing me a song, they will. No reservations, no shyness, no embarrassment.

In the beginning, due to my intimidation about the language and not knowing much about the work, I felt somewhat like a burden. Soon, however, as I learned more and my confidence grew, I was able to really assist, especially Francisco. A kind of partnership grew between us, as we were essentially learning together. Toward the end of the semester, we split the class into two groups; I worked with one, and he with the other, and eventually he allowed me to teach my own class, in which he assisted me, occasionally offering suggestions and valuable feedback. I felt not only empowered and more confident, but that I was helping the therapists and the students by working for free and allowing for more individualized attention.

Now back in the U.S., I find am unsure of my next step. My experience at ANDIME inclined me toward graduate certification in music therapy, but it also sparked a new interest in ethnomusicology, the study of music of other cultures. Perhaps I can find a way to combine them. Between the tedious work of researching graduate schools, looking for jobs, and waffling over which path to pursue, I love going back to my photographs and remembering the school and my students. The pride shining in their eyes each time they accomplished something new was a reward in itself.

bio

NAME: Caitlyn Bodine

EDUCATION: Southwestern University, 2005

MAJOR: Music and Spanish

STUDY ABROAD: Santiago, Chile with IES (Institute for the International Education of Students) www.iesabroad.org

NEXT STEP: Living in Chicago and freelance writing, while looking for a permanent job

NEW FOODS: Congor eel, barnacle, alpaca, and guinea pig

CULTURAL APPRECIATION: Chilean poets, especially Pablo Neruda and Gabriela Mistral

FAVORITE SIDETRIP: Easter Island

E-MAIL: caitlyn.bodine@gmail.com

MAKING THE MOST OF YOUR OPPORTUNITY

bio

NAME: Amanda Poole

OCCUPATION: Teach for America volunteer in New Orleans, L.A.

EDUCATION: Syracuse University, May 2005

MAJOR: Double major in International Relations and Economics

STUDY ABROAD: Syracuse University Division of International Programs (<http://suabroad.syr.edu>)

INTERNSHIPS: Center de Réfugiés and the Council of Europe

LESSON LEARNED: Any stereotypes that I made before I studied in France were absolutely false when I arrived there.

BIGGEST CHALLENGE: Speaking French every night with my host mom for at least an hour at dinner and into the evening, after a long day of classes. But in the end, it was worth it!

MOST INTERESTING TRANSPORTATION: Police escort in Russia

BEST NEW MUSIC: Stefan Eicher (Swiss musician) and Linda Lemay (French musician)

FAVORITE SIDETRIP: Hiking in the Vosges mountains near Strasbourg. There are more than 1200 centuries-old sandstone castles.

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As an International Relations and Economics major with a concentration on Europe and international organizations, my advisers at Syracuse University encouraged me to study abroad even though it was not a requirement. Before I knew it, I was headed to Strasbourg, France—one of the five sites in which Syracuse manages its own center.

At first I had no idea what I was getting myself into. For someone who originally thought Strasbourg was a city in Germany (and not the capital of the Alsatian region in France), I was pretty worried about how I would survive an entire semester—but I had wanted to study abroad ever since enrolling in college.

When I declared International Relations as my major, I was required to take at least two semesters of a foreign language. French was a logical choice, since I had studied it in high school and had an interest in traveling to France.

Strasbourg turned out to provide the perfect study abroad location with its mix of culture, language, and education. Through Syracuse's Department of International Programs Abroad (DIPA), I enrolled in classes that directly fulfilled my major requirements. My professors were employees of organizations such as the Council of Europe and the European Court of Human Rights.

Since I only took one intermediate/advanced French class and all the rest were classes taught in English that would complete my International Relations degree, I decided to stay on for a second semester to concentrate solely on learning French. Through the Syracuse DIPA program I enrolled in the French program at the Université de Marc Bloch in Strasbourg for international students.

I also took advantage of the Syracuse Strasbourg program's internship offerings. I had heard about students interning at the Centre de Réfugiés (Refugee Center), and after taking a class on Human Rights the first semester, I knew that this was an area I was interested in pursuing. As an intern at the center, I was responsible for helping two new Chechan families learn French.

We managed to communicate little by little as my

home visits to these newly arrived refugee families progressed. Many times we resorted to pictures or other tactics to get our points across to each other. Our visits became more personal each time I visited them. We shared stories about our life experiences in our respective countries and tried to persuade each other that not all Chechans and Americans fit into the typical stereotypes the world has created. By far, our brief cultural exchanges were some of the most important experiences of my life.

In addition to my internship at the Refugee Center, I was also awarded an internship—and was eventually hired for the summer—at the Council of Europe, in the Pompidou Group division. The Pompidou Group's primary mission is to combat drug abuse and the illicit trafficking of drugs. Some people may confuse the Council of Europe with one of the European Union's organizations, but in fact it originated in 1945, before the EU ever existed. It works with the European Union but focuses more on social issues such as drugs, youth, education, racism, and human rights. The Council of Europe has approximately 45 European member states, including Turkey and the Russian Federation.

My focus was on youth education and drug prevention. In this role, I had a number of interesting and useful projects, such as writing a manual or "tool kit" for staff trainers in Russia's juvenile detention centers and youth residencies.

I also wrote two mini publications on youth participation in drug prevention programs. For one publication, I focused on the benefits and values of youth participation, and for the second publication I concentrated on guidelines for consultative processes between young people and adults. As a youth myself, I was able to incorporate my own values into the projects. For several weeks I researched these issues throughout Europe in order to create a well-rounded document that would apply to several different cultures. In the end, it was translated into French and Russian, and both the Director of Youth at the Council of Europe and the Russian Federal Drug Agency requested additional copies. It was gratifying to see the concep-

tual work that I had begun in January transformed into action.

For the duration of my internship, I focused primarily on preparations for a forum that would be held in Ekaterinburg, Russian Federation. This was the first year that the Pompidou Group would issue its European Prevention Prize, the purpose of which is to recognize drug prevention projects created and managed by young people throughout Europe. Given that there were no precedents for the Prevention Prize, it was my task to create an information pamphlet to describe the criteria that each project needed in order to be considered. I also had to create an application form with questions that would assist the jury when it reviewed and judged the projects.

To our delight, more than 44 applications were submitted. I then went to Hamburg, Germany for a two-day meeting with the jury, which consisted of six youths from all over Europe, including Romania, Russia, Portugal, Germany, England, and Finland. Four professional experts helped the jury assess whether the projects advocated drug prevention policies effectively. It was the first time that a meeting like this had taken place, and by all accounts it was extremely successful and the selection procedure highly effective.

After the Hamburg meeting, I participated in the preparatory meeting for the October 2004 con-



Poole (left) and Masha, a participant at the conference on combating drug use in Europe and Russia.

ference on polydrug use in Ekaterinburg, Russian Federation. Through a grant from Syracuse University, I attended this conference, in which more than 100 young people and experienced professionals participated. For three days, the participants met and worked together in order to understand and learn from each other in the hope of combating the growing plight of drug use throughout Europe and Russia.

By the end of this more than a year-long journey—through service work made possible by my studies—I realized that my greater interest is not international relations but working on issues involving youth. Perhaps this is why I ended up choosing to work for Teach for America as a first step that may eventually grow into work involving larger global issues that affect children worldwide.

tips for a successful experience

To have an educationally rewarding study abroad and internship experience, you have to be as proactive about seeking opportunities in your host country as you would on your home campus—and maybe more so given the language and cultural differences.

• **GET TO KNOW YOUR MENTOR OR SUPERVISOR.** As trite as it may sound,

your exceptional experience begins with the relationship you create with your adviser. Being shy about your relationship will only hinder your ability to work effectively and efficiently with each other.

• **GET TO KNOW YOUR COLLEAGUES AS WELL.** Although they may not be proficient in your particular field, they too possess a wealth of knowledge regarding other aspects of

the field and, most importantly, about the organization itself.

• **SEEK MORE WORK.** I insisted on doing as much as I could for the Refugee Center and the Council of Europe. Rather than waiting for someone to hand me projects all the time, I tried to think of ways in which I could improve a particular task by either going into more detail or thinking of a better way to

convey the message.

• **BE WILLING TO GO OUTSIDE OF YOUR COMFORT ZONE.** Honestly, I was a little nervous about visiting refugee families because I would not be able to communicate fully with them. But by making the effort to visit the families on a regular basis and calling them to schedule appointments, I was able to show them that I cared. In the end, we built a rap-

port that involved many laughs and more and more communication.

• **SEEK HELP FROM OTHERS WHO ARE NOT A PART OF YOUR INTERNSHIP.** This allows you to gain a different perspective. Sometimes it's useful to hear the opinion of others who are not used to the structure and rhetoric of the organization you work with.

—A.P.

Brazilian *marisqueiras* (shellfish collectors) are working to improve their rights and wages.

THE SHELLFISH COLLECTORS

My independent study project (ISP) proposal was due in a few days, and aside from all of the details to be worked out, I still wanted to find a way to give—not just take. I was on the School for International Training (SIT) Brazil: Culture, Development, and Social Justice program, and after three months of intensive language training, lectures, and excursions, I would be on my own for a month, doing research. For me, it was important to be more than a researcher who would arrive, research, and leave. I wanted to make sure that I would provide a service to the community that had offered to take me in.

My community was Fortim, a small coastal town in the northeastern Brazilian state of Ceará. I was drawn to the town by the story of their “*marisqueiras*,” or women who collect shellfish. These women are working together to actualize women’s rights, carry out NGO projects, and raise their income. The truth is, I wanted to see a grassroots movement—for women led by women—in action.

My plan was to shad-



ow three different leaders of the *marisqueira* movement, and to interview as many others as possible. The homestay was one of the most informative and rewarding parts of my time in Brazil. The *marisqueiras* I stayed with were happy to let me tag along during their days. I spent the most time with my first hostess, Dona Maria Nunes de Aquino. Dona Maria was the first woman in the state and the second in all of Brazil to be elected president of the local fisherman’s union. When Dona Maria woke up, I woke up. When she went to work, I went to work. While she did work around the house in the afternoon, I organized my notes and did

my writing for the day. I accompanied her on endless errands around town, watched her make dinner, and talked with her friends and family in the evening. Not only did I not been living with her. A hammock was my bed and her granddaughters my companions for much of the day. If I had not lived with her—and if she had not so heartily welcomed me—never could I have come to so deeply appreciate the great responsibility she carried on her shoulders.

So it was with all of the homestays. Each family I

lived with had three generations under one roof, and though my research only required me to spend time with one, I made friends with all.

When I left Fortim, I left only intangible things, with one exception. Inside an envelope I enclosed a bound copy of my final research paper, written in Portuguese. I felt that the best service I could provide was the work that I had poured my heart, soul, and intellect into. My paper documented the lives of the *marisqueiras* and their work. In a small way, I contributed to their written history, their story.

>>>Read Bianca’s full paper at AbroadViewMagazine.com.

bio

NAME: Bianca Z. Santos

EDUCATION: Rice University, 2005

MAJOR: History

STUDY ABROAD: SIT Study Abroad, Brazil: Culture, Development, and Social Justice. www.sit.edu

MOST MEMORABLE EXPERIENCE: The going away party that my host family and friends threw for me.

NEW FOODS: *Sururu*, a tiny black shellfish that I ate in large quantities in a delicious sauce, and *acerola*, a small red fruit related to the cherry that is full of vitamin C.

GLAD YOU BROUGHT: Sunscreen—Brazilian sun is unforgiving.

ADVICE: Spend time with the people you work with outside of the structured service hours.

CULTURAL APPRECIATION: *Forro*, the local type of music and dance in Fortim

FAVORITE SIDETRIP: Salvador, the capital of the state of Bahia—the most vibrant city I have ever visited.

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TELLING TALES

A few years ago, I added a service-learning component to the summer study abroad course I teach on the anthropology of contemporary Greece. Along with readings, lectures, field trips, and other forms of experiential learning, students now work individually or in pairs with various organizations on the Cycladic island of Paros. These organizations have included the stray animal welfare society, health clinic, public library, island web site, local archaeological service, marine ecology center, traditional dance group, local newspaper, and even the mayor's office.

When I first asked students to evaluate their service experiences, I expected that I would hear about skills they had gained, the impact they had made, and what they had learned about the anthropology of modern Greece. These results did emerge, but so did something I had not expected. What students mentioned most often and valued most highly was what one student described as “connecting with the local Greeks and hearing their voices and desires.” Or as another student put it, “It was the unintended community engagement that I found to be most rewarding.”

Such remarks, repeated time and again, have brought home to me that the human bond that arises in international service-learning may be just as important as the actual service itself. These bonds cross national and cultural boundaries, thus—at least momentarily—freeing both students and service agencies to transcend divisions that previously kept them apart. Such bonds arise when people work side by side, no matter how menial the task. They also arise when people gradually, carefully tell each other the stories of their lives and communities, a sharing that often occurs as people relax and come to trust each other. These stories are sometimes fictional, folkloric, or mythological; at other times, they are historical, analytical, or descriptive. In previous offerings of my course, I had asked students to interview local residents. The human connections created by the in-

terviews, however, paled when placed next to those that resulted from service-learning, and the stories that students were told in the latter went much deeper.

Why are stories such an important part of the process of connection and transformation that occurs in service-learning? There is an authenticity to them: they are unmediated, direct, and often heartfelt. They also enable the storytellers to reflect on their lives, to recognize and articulate what is important about self, family, and community, and to present this within the framework of their own concepts and understandings. At the same time, they draw listeners out of their own worlds and into others, in ways that are simultaneously cognitive, emotional, and personal. And they demonstrate fundamental respect and reciprocity between listeners and tellers. Stories restructure thinking and cement social relationships in ways that statistical tables—however useful these may be—rarely do.

I have come to see storytelling as an essential element of successful service-learning. Stuffing envelopes at the mayor's office moves from the mundane to the meaningful as students and co-workers trade stories. Storytelling can sometimes even be the goal of service-learning, particularly when students collaboratively assist local groups in telling their stories to a broader audience, through newspapers, web sites, or videos.

Students sometimes tell me they are worried that they are learning more than they are contributing in their projects, because the people they work with are always telling them stories. My response is that sometimes learning what others want to tell you is a service in and of itself, particularly when people feel that their voices have not been heard before.

>>SUSAN BUCK SUTTON directs the International Programs Office and is Chancellor's Professor of Anthropology at Indiana University—Purdue University Indianapolis (IUPUI). She is on the IUPUI local committee for the IPSL distinguished partner program. Sutton@iupui.edu.

story time

To engage in shared storytelling, you have to be ready to share your own stories, and you have to actively seek out the stories of others. Here are some pointers for how you might learn your community's stories.

● ASK OFTEN AND LISTEN

CAREFULLY. Take the initiative to ask about the origins of the community, important events in its history, the issues that now confront it, and the hopes people have for its future. Then step back and let the story of the community go where it may, with only occasional prompts for elaboration or explanation. Allow the story to mature over days, even weeks. The key lies in enabling storytellers to relate narratives in their own way, their own words, and at their own pace. This is why service-learning produces better stories than one-time interviews. Stories are, by their very nature, progressive and evolving. They move a narrative across time and space. And as they are told and retold, the narrative itself moves forward and understandings deepen.

● INTERPRET STORIES WITHIN THEIR

OWN CONEXTS. Try to understand these stories on their own terms. Identify their themes, word choices, symbols, and structure, just as you might a poem or novel. What events have been singled out as critical in the community's past? What other kinds of events have been omitted? What is the meaning of this selectivity? View this through what can be called a contextual or relativistic framework. Learn to recognize and deconstruct external stereotypes of the community, so that you can move past them toward a view that reflects the positioning and views of the community itself. This does not mean relating the stories only to some romanticized version of untouched, traditional culture. Instead, it means looking comprehensively at the values, social structures, pressures, **CONTINUED ON PAGE 62**



HARD LESSONS FROM A CALCUTTA ORPHANAGE

bio

NAME: Sofia Jasani

EDUCATION:
Goucher College, 2006

MAJOR: Psychology and
Sociology

ADVICE: If your program does not have a support system to deal with the feelings you have regarding your service, take my classmate's advice and set up some "debriefing sessions," where you can get together with your fellow students and share your experiences.

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Sitting on the rooftop of Shishu Bhavan, Mother Teresa's home for orphaned children in Calcutta, I wasn't aware of the usual break-time sights and sounds. The constant bustle of the city below didn't reach my ears, my lungs were impervious to the mid-morning smog, and I didn't even feel the chai's heat burning me through the tin cup I clutched in my hands. Instead I was thinking about Rajesh, who had died the day before. His tiny little body, with its thin, twisted limbs and angelic face, gave out in the hospital during his fourth visit there in as many months.

I perched rather precariously on a far corner of the roof, avoiding the dripping laundry hanging above my head. Two other long-term volunteers, both strong and quiet Italian women who had grown close to Rajesh and worked closely with him in his last months, were also sitting off by themselves—reflecting, I can only assume, on life and loss, and regaining their strength to return

to the surviving children once our break was over.

I was listening to a conversation between two teenaged volunteers who had arrived in India earlier that week. They talked about how at home, "they just don't know what its like here, man."

I didn't want to hear a single word of it; I didn't want to hear them objectively discuss the impossibility of teaching these children because they don't speak English. I wanted to ask them if they had noticed that a little boy had died, that now his little brother is all alone in the world, and he isn't even aware of his loss.

Unlike the other children at Mother Teresa's Home for the Destitute and Dying, most of whom are only vaguely conscious of life around them, Rajesh was beautiful and serene, aware of this world as only someone close to the next one can be. He'd had a bad case of tuberculosis, and what I assumed to be either polio or cerebral palsy, because his limbs were so twisted, emaciated, and stiff. He

Children at Shishu Bhavan, the Mother Teresa home for orphaned children in Calcutta, where the author volunteered.



serving in india

Sofia Jasani studied with IPSL's (The International Partnership for Service-Learning and Leadership) semester-long India program in Calcutta.

• WHY SERVE & LEARN

IN INDIA India is not just a country; it is a sub-continent. The diversity of cultures, languages, religions, classes, and castes is immense. One of the most ancient of civilizations, today it struggles with all the issues and concerns of the contemporary world. Studying the evolution of India, as one empire

succeeded another, and the blending or separation of cultural traditions makes a fascinating and instructive experience in human social and intellectual history. Students should be prepared for a very real, profound, challenging, and sometimes disturbing experience as they encounter the conditions under which many Indians live.

• **PROGRAM DESIGN** At the beginning of the session, students serve for three weeks at Mother Teresa's Homes, providing care and support

to destitute children, women and men, and the ill of Calcutta. At the same time, they study the cultures and issues of India under the guidance of the program director—a leading Indian scholar native to and educated in Calcutta—and visiting other cities and towns. Students then continue volunteer service of their choice for 10 weeks, while pursuing a study program through Loreto College.

>>For more information, go to: www.ipsl.org/programs/india.html.

had grown worse, eating less and less, with a fever that increased impossibly each day. His breathing had always been labored and noisy, but during the last few days each quick breath came with a struggle, and I could see his great effort to get air in and out of his twitching nostrils. The last morning I spent with him, I wasn't thinking deep thoughts or pondering the purpose and benefits of service; I was just using my humanness to connect with him and comfort him. I didn't have the training or skills to save his life; I didn't have the words to speak his language; I didn't have the money to take him away from this place; all I had was a lap to hold him in.

The fissure is tangible between the new, smiling volunteers who come and go and wax philosophical and speak in big important voices, and people like the two Italian women and me. We have progressed through the awe of this city with its poverty, bustling masses, sick children, and proselytizing missionaries, and have gone through several stages of questioning and awareness. We have stopped complaining about the way things are, or feeling self righteous about "giving our time."

Alone with my thoughts at night, questions about the value of my service haunt me: If it makes

me feel good, is it still a sacrifice? Have I grown and learned and loved and therefore received more from these children than I have given them? This debilitating thinking is only temporary; although doubts and anxiety can never leave your mind fully, the seasoned volunteer knows how to leave both reason and emotion behind to pursue action. Instead of just questioning how to change things, we simply come every day and act.

What divides those green volunteers from their seasoned counterparts is not superiority of character, morality, or age—it is just time and experience. We all start out fumbling, but because we make a commitment to stay for a substantial amount of time and our experience abroad revolves around our service, we learn the necessity of following our instincts, getting to know the children as individuals, and remembering that all of the wonderful and productive things we are doing to challenge the kids and the system are nothing but a drop in the bucket. But this is okay, because every moment with these kids—all of the times both frustrating and miraculous—is fulfilling and joy-inspiring.

>> You can read more about Sofia's experience on her blog: www.sofiastravels.blogspot.com.

“ I thought the hardest thing to overcome would be the intensity of the poverty I witnessed, but in fact it was returning home, to squeaky clean streets, flushable toilets, and fully stocked grocery stores. ”

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 59

opportunities, international networks, and assumptions that shape life in that community. It even means including yourself as part of the story as you think about your impact in the community and why it is important to community members that you understand them in a certain way.

In such a manner you will learn stories that take you into the community and change your way of thinking. Learning such stories of place and community may be the goal of your service project, if you intend to tell these stories more broadly. But even if the stories are not the goal, they provide a conceptual framework by which your service project becomes meaningful.

LEARN FROM THE COMMUNITY.

Such stories demonstrate respect, interest, and desire to learn from the community. When American students, who represent the wealthiest and most powerful nation on earth, listen carefully to how communities in other nations see themselves, they take an important step away from paternalism and toward reciprocity.

STUDYING ABROAD & GIVING BACK

If your study abroad program does not have a formal service-learning component, there are still ways you can positively engage with your host community:

CHOOSE YOUR COMMUNITY WISELY Study abroad programs are typically immersed in several communities simultaneously, or with different communities at different points of the program. Selecting a community to work with should entail more than preferences—you should also consider the type and mission of the program or university, the needs of the community, and how much time you have. Working through the program or university to the greatest extent possible will help you refine your possibilities. Finding and establishing a relationship with a community leader will be an important first step.

DETERMINE YOUR PARAMETERS Consider your own expectations and those of the community and whether the engagement will be formal or informal. For example, you may choose to work with a community's elderly residents, volunteer to supervise a community playground, or get involved with an already active student group on campus. For any of these, you could commit to participate for a set amount of time or be "on-call."

FOLLOW THROUGH Once the community and type of engagement has been decided, you should make sure the experience is working for everyone. Checking back with your main contact in the community, as well as others with whom you are working, will make them feel like you are genuinely concerned. Check in with yourself, as well, to make sure you are getting what you hoped from the experience. If anyone is not satisfied, have a discussion to plan for improvement.

UNDERSTAND YOUR GOALS What are your personal goals for studying abroad? What are the goals of your program? The answers to these two questions and understanding the broader purpose of engaging with your host community are critical to the ultimate success of your study abroad experience.

FOLLOW YOUR PRINCIPLES There are a number of strategies that you can follow in order to make the most out of your experience with host communities. One possible strategy comes from the four core principles of Service-Learning itself: 1) Engagement; 2) Reflection; 3) Reciprocity; and 4) Public Dissemination. In other words, ensure that you are making meaningful connections with your community; take time to think about these

tools for reflection

Reflection is an essential component of service-learning. It can help you grapple with your work's impact and consider sustainable solutions to ongoing problems beyond the quick-fix of temporary volunteerism. Examples include:

• **READING AND WRITING:** Use articles or

books, especially ones with differing viewpoints, as a foundation for journaling or academic writing.

• **LETTERS AND JOURNALS:** Consider how your experience relates to other parts of the world and how issues of conflict, communication, race, gender, power and privilege, economics, organizational

behavior, and the role of the individual in society are relevant to your experience. You might write letters home or to community leaders, and keep a journal.

• **ARTISTIC REFLECTION:** Art, music, and theater can provide excellent outlets for you to reflect on your experi-

ences and express what you are learning.

• **ADVOCATE FOR SYSTEMIC CHANGE:** Consider how the policies of your home country might affect your host country. You may be inspired to educate others or advocate for change at home and abroad.

—Laura Colket

interactions and the learning that comes from them; find ways for your community to also benefit from your presence; and tell your story to the world so that your learning experience gets shared with others.

PREPARE YOURSELF Wherever your study abroad experience takes you, and for whatever length of time, preparation is key. Researching local issues, including cultural, safety, and health considerations, can have a huge impact on the time it takes you to open yourself up to learning.

AN EXAMPLE OF COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT Like education itself, the ways in which you engage with and learn from local communities can take shape through both formal and informal educational activities.

Students on the School for Field Studies (SFS) programs, for example, are required not only to partake of the more formal, credit-bearing aspects of community-based research; they are also required to participate in less formal areas of community integration through activities such as teaching English, environmental clean-ups, fundraising for local schools, and hosting and participating in various festivals. Carrie Simon, student affairs

manager, SFS Turks & Caicos, Summer 2005, had this to say about the service aspect of the program:

“Saturday morning was filled with many different community outreach opportunities. One group of students went to the disabled center and painted on poster boards with the four men who live there. Another group ventured out by boat to Admirals Aquarium, a snorkel site, and cleaned the underwater snorkel trail that takes you around the reef and teaches you about the coral and fish in the vicinity. The other groups worked on marine-oriented workbook pages for the local school children, and posters and handouts for spaying and neutering of local pets. During the second week of July veterinarians from the U.S. will be on South Caicos providing a free spaying and neutering service for feral and domesticated dogs and cats. This is not only a wonderful service that they are performing, but it is also a great opportunity for the students to provide information to the South Caicos community on the importance of spaying and neutering your pet.”

>> This article was adapted from a 2005 NAFSA Conference presentation by **MARY LOU FORWARD**, School for International Training; **BRADLEY RINK**, Council on International Educational Exchange; and **DIANE ROBINSON**, The School for Field Studies.

SERVICE-LEARNING CONFERENCES

Abroad View thanks Barbara Wanasek, of the International Partnership for Service-Learning and Leadership (IPSL), and Beth Rascoe, of Council on International Educational Exchange (CIEE) for their contributions to this issue's Closer Look on The Rewards of Service-Learning. Both IPSL and CIEE are holding conferences this fall that will address the issue of service-learning.

HEARING AND TELLING: ESSENTIAL SKILLS FOR INTERCULTURAL SERVICE-LEARNING

Co-sponsored by IPSL and South Dakota State University. **DATE:** Oct. 16-22, 2005
LOCATION: Rapid City, S.D.

This conference brings together educators and service providers from around the world to consider how service-learning lays the foundation for leadership that in turn builds stronger, healthier, and more peaceful and just societies. Using the Lakota Nation context as an example of such development, the conference will include lectures, concurrent sessions, discussion groups, poster sessions, and a visit to the Pine Ridge Indian Reservation service-learning sites. The primary theme of the conference will be the value of story-telling and listening in service-learning, with explorations of how American Indian cultures offer insights into refining these skills. Contact: Barbara Wanasek, IPSL Conference Coordinator, 212-986-0989 or conferences@ipsl.org. For more information: www.ipsl.org/organization/conferences.html.

TAKING PART: EXPERIENTIAL LEARNING IN EDUCATION ABROAD

Sponsored by CIEE. **DATE:** Nov. 16-19, 2005 **LOCATION:** Scheduled for New Orleans, L.A. at press time

This conference will bring together international education leaders and colleagues to discuss integrating experiential learning into study abroad, including encouraging students to take an active role in their education through service-learning abroad. There will be a special session, "Real World," for nominated students to present their perspectives on experiential learning and its outcomes. Among the student participants are Amanda Poole (article, page 56) and Bianca Santos (article, page 58). For more information: www.ciee.org/annual_conference.aspx.

RESOURCES

The following resources were compiled by William Nolting, Director of Overseas Opportunities at the University of Michigan International Center, www.umich.edu/~icenter/overseas, and James L. Citron, Dean of Overseas Studies at Lexia International, www.lexiaintl.org.

• **ALTERNATIVES TO THE PEACE CORPS: A DIRECTORY OF GLOBAL VOLUNTEER OPPORTUNITIES** by Jennifer Willsea. 2003 (10th ed.). 144 pp. \$9.95 plus shipping from Food First Books; foodfirst@foodfirst.org, www.foodfirst.org. Thoroughly researched guide to voluntary service, study, and alternative travel overseas and in the U.S. that addresses the political and economic causes of poverty.

• **BUILDING BRIDGES: THE ALLYN & BACON STUDENT GUIDE TO SERVICE-LEARNING** by Doris M. Hamner. 2002. Boston, MA: Allyn & Bacon. Written by a former college instructor with extensive service-learning experience, this supplemental text is intended for undergraduates to read when considering a service-learning project and to use as a manual while they are participating in service-learning.

• **CONFESSIONS OF A FORMER CULTURAL RELATIVIST** by Henry H. Bagish. This paper, originally presented as the Second Annual Faculty Lecture at Santa Barbara City College, 1981, is available at http://4sbccfaculty.org/lecture/80s/lectures/Henry_Bagish.html.

• **HOW CAN I HELP? STORIES AND REFLECTIONS ON SERVICE** by R. Dass and P. Gorman. 1997. Alfred A. Knopf.

• **HOW TO LIVE YOUR DREAM OF VOLUNTEERING ABROAD** by Joseph Collins, Stefano DeZerega, and Zahara Heckscher. 2002. 467 pp. \$17. Penguin-Putnam; www.volunteeroverseas.org. This highly-recommended book (and its web site) provides a comprehensive overview of volunteering abroad, including evaluations of over 100 volunteer organizations. Twelve chapters cover topics such as: *Is Volunteering Overseas Right for You*, *Pros and Cons of the Peace Corps*, *Doing it Without a Program*, *Overcoming Financial Obstacles*, *How to Be an Effective International Volunteer*, and *Staying Involved When You Get Back*.

• **HOW TO SERVE AND LEARN EFFECTIVELY: STUDENTS TELL STUDENTS** by Howard Berry and Linda A. Chisholm.

(1992, 1st ed.; 2nd ed. available fall 2005). International Partnership for Service-Learning and Leadership, 815 2nd Ave., Ste. 315, New York, NY 10017; 212-986-0989, fax 212-986-5039; pslnt@aol.com, www.ipsl.org. Reality-testing and exploration of motivations for students considering volunteering overseas.

• **IDEALIST.ORG** is a good database and listing of volunteer service opportunities.

• **INTERNATIONAL VOLUNTEER PROGRAMS ASSOCIATION (IVPA)**, www.volunteerinternational.org. The web site of this U.S.-based nonprofit association features a searchable database of volunteer-abroad programs. IVPA's members are encouraged to follow IVPA's principles (listed on the web site) for good programs.

• **INTERNATIONAL VOLUNTEER PROJECTS (CIEE)**. Free brochure from CIEE, 7 Custom House Street, 3rd Floor, Portland ME 04101, 1-800-40-study, www.ciee.org. Describes more than 600 low-cost short-term summer voluntary service options available through CIEE in over 25 countries of Europe, Africa, and North America.

• **THE NATIONAL SOCIETY FOR EXPERIENTIAL EDUCATION**, www.nsee.org, and its highly recommended publication: *Service-Learning Reader: Reflections and Perspectives on Service*, edited by Gail Albert and the Staff of the Center for Service-Learning at the University of Vermont. This recommended resource has some excellent pieces written by diverse thinkers including Robert Coles, Deepak Chopra, John Dewey, Paulo Freire, Martin Luther King Jr., and Jesse Jackson.

• **TO HELL WITH GOOD INTENTIONS**, www.bicyclingfish.com/illich.htm. Ivan Illich made this provocative address to the Conference on InterAmerican Student Projects, Cuernavaca, Mexico, April 20, 1968.

• **UNIVERSITY OF VERMONT CAREER CENTER'S SERVICE-LEARNING READING ASSIGNMENTS AND ESSAY QUESTIONS**, www.uvm.edu/~career/?Page=students/get_exp/sli_readings.html.