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Students Support Breast Cancer Research



The second annual Pink Feet Fundraiser was hosted by the SAC during the month of October. Students volunteered to sell pink feet, boobie birds, and t-shirts to raise money for the Susan G. Komen foundation. This year's t-shirt and bird designs were created by Chris Murone and Jenn Broderick. Students volunteered nearly 200 hours to support the cause. A check in the amount of \$484.39 was presented on behalf of the RMU Honors Program to the Komen Foundation. To show additional support to breast cancer patients, unsold t-shirts will be donated to patients at a local breast cancer clinic.

Lunch with Professor Buxton!

It was a cold, Friday afternoon, but the Honor's Lounge was warm with laughter, friendship, and pizza as the students ate lunch with Dr. Buxton. We munched on pizza while discussing the latest physics conference Dr. Buxton attended. Dr. Buxton also told us about his new role as advisor for the Pre-Med club. Things went beyond the classroom and work when we talked about Dr. Buxton's life in England before coming to the United States and roommate love in the college campus among students. The hour flew by as we chatted among friends and learned how Dr. Buxton hates flying, loves soccer, and prefers Pittsburgh to Cleveland! Thanks Dr. Buxton!

-Sarah Robb



Award-Winning Website

The RMU Honors Program has won first place in the 2010 National Collegiate Honors Council website competition. Honors program websites were judged by students from across the country on content, professionalism and style. The RMU Honors Program website www.rmu.edu/ honors was created and developed by the honor co-directors during the last three years.



Postcards from Abroad

Saludos de Guatemala

By: John Cassamassa

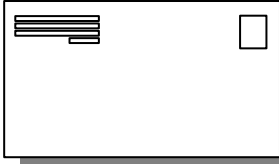
“Toto, I don’t think we’re in Kansas anymore.” That was exactly what I was thinking as we crossed Lake Atitlan and arrived at the small town of Santiago. Two weeks in Antigua had certainly been a new experience for me, but Santiago dwarfed anything that had come before. As we stepped onto the docks we were literally surrounded by a crowd of children. All were wearing brightly colored clothes and none of them were much higher than my waist. They were eagerly trying to convince us to purchase their wares. Belts, sashes, wristbands, necklaces; whatever they had to offer they were trying their hardest to sell. I confess that it was extremely difficult for me to refuse, partly because when a three foot tall girl with large brown eyes asks me to buy a hand woven scarf from her I naturally want to acquiesce if at all possible, but also because I knew that she wasn’t selling those scarves to make a little extra spending cash. Whatever money she was able to earn would almost certainly be used to help pay for dinner that evening.

The experience was truly an “eye-opener” for me. In the United States we have been living with the comforts that the free market can provide for so long that I think we often take many of those comforts for granted. Guatemala, on the other hand, still has a long way to down the road towards development. The larger cities offer many of the same conveniences that can be seen in the States, but as you travel further away from the cities the standard of living can change quite a bit. This is something that is completely different from the U.S. where most of the lower income families live in and around the major cities. More than once I have seen people living right alongside a busy country road, in houses that look like they were built with whatever materials the builders had on hand.

Despite the fact that there is a good deal of poverty in Guatemala it is still a very beautiful and exotic country. There are public markets in almost every town that sell fruit, clothes, hand-carved wooden knick-knacks, and almost everything else in between. One aspect of the public markets that visitors from the U.S. may not know about is that the first price that the vendor quotes is not the only price at which he is willing to sell. In the course of bargaining it is quite possible to convince a street vendor to lower his price by thirty or forty quetzals. Aside from the public markets there is also some breathtaking scenery in Guatemala. The mountains around Lake Atitlan were amazing, and when we were staying in Antigua we could step out our door each morning, turn right and be staring up at an enormous volcano with clouds hugging its sides. There are a great many old buildings like missions and cathedrals that date back to the days when the Spanish ruled Guatemala. Taking pictures inside the churches is prohibited, which was very unfortunate because many of them are gorgeous. Most of them are more than a century old, and when I walk through the doors I feel as though I am stepping back in time.

Even with all of scenery, I would still have to say that the most interesting part of Guatemala is its people. There is much more diversity here than I ever expected to find before I came. The indigenous people are usually short and very dark, but there are also people of mixed heritage called “Ladinos”, who come in many different colors and sizes. I have found most of the people to be very generous, especially if one shows respect for their culture and makes an effort to speak their language. I have not mastered Spanish yet and I frequently have to ask people to repeat themselves, but they are very patient and very willing to help me whenever and however they can.

Most college students who study abroad only stay for a semester, sometimes less. Based on my experience so far in Guatemala, I would definitely recommend that they take more time in order to get the most that they can out of their study abroad experience. I am going to be in Guatemala for a whole year all told, not only because I am enjoying myself but also because I want to become truly immersed in the culture. After two and a half months in the country I am thoroughly convinced that I would never be able to learn all of the things that I wanted to learn in one semester. I know that a whole year is a significant time investment, but college is one of the few times in a person’s life when he or she can afford to take that kind of time to experience all that a foreign country has to offer. At the very least I think that every student should take some time to visit another country. Life isn’t always very generous about providing opportunities to experience the world. College students are among the lucky few who have that opportunity, and I firmly believe that they should take full advantage of it.



Postcards from Abroad



Studying abroad at the University of Limerick in Ireland has been one of the best decisions I have made during my college career at Robert Morris University. Not only is travelling to a new country and meeting new people exceptionally fun, it is educational and life changing. I have grown in many ways since arriving here in Europe.

It was really interesting to hear what people had to say about the United States. It was mentioned more than once in almost every class I took. Teachers used American examples to illustrate their points, and many of my text books were American editions. At the beginning of the semester, new people that I met threw American stereotypes around, but after a while, we were all the same. We were just students and friends.

I met a tremendous amount of people while abroad. It was just like being a freshman, or a “fresher” as they call it, all over again. During the semester, I lived with a few American, a Belgian, a Chinese, and two Spanish students. I was also close friends with a few other American, one French, two Mexican, and two Irish students. My living situation broadened my views about other cultures the most because the people I spent the most time with were the people with whom I lived. My Spanish has improved since I have come here. I have tasted and learned how to make various dishes from Spain, China, and Belgium. Most importantly, I have learned how similar we all are.

I have become a world traveller, or at least a European traveller. During my stay, I not only experienced Ireland but also six other countries. I have seen so many amazing sites. I was able to travel to many towns, cities, and attractions around Ireland, and I also visited Great Britain, Scotland, Portugal, Belgium, Italy, and the Netherlands. I have met people on campus and during my travels from at least a dozen countries. I will be returning home with memories and friends from places all around the world.

Living in and travelling through foreign countries has made me more independent. Along with a few friends, I would search through new cities (some that did not speak English as either their first or second language) for famous sites, a bite to eat, interesting shops, and accommodation for the night. Packing light, reading maps, and being generally flexible became necessary skills. This experience has made me more appreciative. There are a lot of little things that I did not realize I took for granted before coming to Ireland.

I will never forget this experience, and I hope to come back again someday. Never has four months gone by so fast or taught me so much. I recommend studying abroad to anybody and everybody. It will change your life.

By: Kyndra Szymanski

Professor Harold Spends Semester In Germany

Honors co-director, Professor Harold, has been on sabbatical this semester. Earlier this year, Professor Harold received a Fulbright Scholarship from the U.S. Department of State to study how the language of values has influenced American politics. During the Fall semester, Professor Harold has been studying at The Catholic University in Eichstatt, Germany, about 90 minutes from Munich. Professor Harold will conduct research at the university’s Center for Marriage and Family Studies. With his research, Professor Harold is writing a book (tentatively titled “Against Values”) that explores what politicians mean when they use phrases such as “family values” and what the implications are for political discourse.

Roundtables: The Internet and U



On-line Branding

This semester's Roundtables, themed "The Internet and U" was started with a presentation on Online Branding by Professor Kurt Schimmel and Kyle Fisher, CMO for Institutional Advancement. The presentation focused on how companies were attempting to attract followers on the web, often through creative and fun ideas. The main focus was on how many brands worked to create a particular image for themselves via the internet. The most amazing example being how Volkswagen created The Fun Theory. We learned the impact of how a simple video going viral can greatly affect the company's image and marketing. Most of the lecture was filled with entertaining videos from the web and the group was small enough to have an actual discussion. Furthermore, the segment on RMU's Change a Life campaign was also interesting on how Robert Morris came up with their eye-catching new advertising technique.

-Jennifer Broderick



Nursing and the Internet

Professor Val Howard's Round Table primarily focused on increases in technology and technology's implications on the nursing field. Of the numerous topics discussed, electronic medical record keeping was one defining changes that has recently occurred. Today, health care providers continue to switch from paper records to electronic records. This transition allows medical information to be accessed immediately and potentially from any location where an internet connection can be established. This allows information to be shared faster, allowing for more appropriate and quicker patient care. However, electronic medical records also have drawbacks. These include the necessity of a power source, removing paper as a backup, and the potential for hackers to steal information. The previously mentioned issues must be addressed for electronic medical records to be effective in implementation and use. Computer use at the bedside of a patient was also discussed. Today, nurses usually have their own computer to continuously note and track information. Pros and cons to technology use in nursing were examined. Difficult treatment options and diagnoses were also considered. Nevertheless, recent increases in quality of health care can be directly attributed to advances in technology.

- Phillip Timcheck



On-line Assessment

The Roundtable discussion led by Professor Fuller pertaining to on-line assessment was very stimulating and progressive. The main topics of the Roundtable discussion were on-line learning and on-line assessment. We spoke about the advantages and disadvantages of each, including the problem of accountability of the student enrolled in an on-line course. Professor Fuller guided us in defining cheating and developing solutions to the problem of cheating in on-line assessments. Because Dr. Fuller taught many on-line courses prior to the Roundtable discussion, he was able to offer us an interesting perspective. Not only did we consider the student's perspective on taking an on-line course honestly, but we also took the professor's viewpoint in trusting each student to submit their own work and take their own assessments on-line. Professor Fuller also explained a compelling classification model for higher-level learning called Bloom's Taxonomy. We applied this concept to the type of assessment that is appropriate for on-line classes. This Roundtable discussion was very beneficial because the conversation made us realize that we must be prepared for on-line learning and assessment due to the fact that on-line classes are increasingly being incorporated into secondary and post-secondary education systems.

-Gabriella Gasparich



A Summer in London!

This past summer I did an internship through the Washington Center's Intern Abroad program. The Washington center worked with me and my preferences to find an internship based on my career goals. The other program participants and I spent the a couple of weeks in Washington D.C. getting to know each other, and learning more about our host countries before spending two months abroad. Half of the group went to London, England and the other half went to Sydney, Australia. I did my internship in London in the Trekking and Cycling planning division of Marie Curie Cancer Care. The best part about the experience was living and working in a completely different culture. Sharing travels with the other participants we explored the United Kingdom and the neighboring countries on our weekends. By the end of the summer, I not only gained work experience, but also traveled to beautiful places and had become family with the other participants. Words really don't describe the experience, but I highly recommend it to everyone!



-Tabitha Savka

Relay for Life Comes to RMU!

Relay for Life will sponsor a 24 hour "race" for the cure on April 9-10 in Sewall Arena. This year's theme will be "Carnival for the Cure" and students, as well as members of the community, are encouraged to join a Relay for Life team and to take part in the event. On November 9th, RMU hosted a kick-off event to officially begin recruiting teams to the event. The kick-off event was a success and 24 teams are now committed to participating in April. For more information about Relay for Life and how you can get involved, contact the Office of Student Civic Engagement or email sfst4@mail.rmu.edu.

Co-Directors' Corner

Professor VanDieren attended the National Collegiate Honors Council (NCHC) Annual Conference in Kansas City, Missouri in October. In addition to representing Robert Morris University on the NCHC Small College Committee, two of her panel proposals were accepted for inclusion in the conference. Her panel presentations were titled "Making Science a Larger Part of the Honors Experience" and "Team Teaching in Honors."

Professor VanDieren took away several ideas from the conference that she hopes to use to help improve our honors program. The presentation of Jazz and the Art of Improvisation by Professor Paul Berliner was particularly interesting to VanDieren as she prepares the Math, Music and Art Honors Seminar with Professor Heather Pinson for next semester. After viewing the documentary *The New Recruits*, VanDieren had the opportunity to meet director Seth Kramer. Freshman may recognize him as the director of *The Linguists* which was screened during the pre-session Freshman Seminar.

Beyond the confines of the conference center, Professor VanDieren found some time to explore Kansas City. Memorable were nightly jazz and blues performances (including Samantha Fish - check her out!) and one of the strangest meals that she has ever eaten: duck tongue tacos. She insists, although her brother had her going for awhile, that duck tongues are not a Missouri euphemism for another part of the duck.

Next year's conference will take place in Phoenix, Arizona in October. Professor VanDieren and Professor Harold will present the results of their NCHC Portz Grant award for the Intersections hybrid, undergraduate research conference, and they hope to be able to bring student representatives from RMU to the conference. Students working on their honors theses are encouraged to consider proposing their research for inclusion in the Poster Presentation session of the conference.



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Thank you to the following individuals for your contributions to this newsletter:

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Gabriella Gasparich
Sarah Robb
Professor VanDieren

If you would like to contribute to upcoming Junto publications, please contact honors@rmu.edu

SAC Executive Update

The 2010-2011 Student Advisory Council has been formed. This years elected officers are:

Co-President: Sheila Strong
Co-President: Michelle Beamer
Vice-President: Phillip Timcheck
Secretary: Tabitha Savka
Treasurer: Chris Murone
SGA Representatives: Kayla Newman & Jeff Siwik

This semester, the SAC hosted the Pink Feet Fundraiser and two ice skating events at the Island Sports Center. In the Spring semester, the SAC will host a variety of academic, social, and service events. The SAC is also working to help bring Relay for Life to RMU's campus April 9-10, 2011.

If you have ideas or suggestions about events you would like to see happen through Honors, email honors01@rmu.edu. The SAC would love to hear from you!

Alumnae Profile

Kevin Roach

Studied abroad in: Athens, Greece

Currently: Sr. Account Executive : New Business Development, Pittsburgh Pirates

"Being grouped with other honors students for many of my core classes kept me on the right track and it kept me motivated. Also, the curriculum placed a great emphasis on communications which really pays off! Stick with the program. You will have friends who have easier classes than you. There will also be professors that have a reputation for grading easier than those who are assigned to the honors classes. However, the experience of the honors curriculum is helpful in the long run even though it will be tempting to take the easy route at times. Good luck and keep up the great work!"