

CADENZA

NEWSLETTER OF THE LAMAR UNIVERSITY HONORS PROGRAM
VOLUME 2. NUMBER 1. SPRING 2007



Spring Break 2008 will bring Honors students from across the country to Lamar University and the Big Thicket National Preserve as part of the National Collegiate Honors Council's new initiative, "Partners in the Parks." The goal of the NCHC program is to cultivate appreciation of America's natural heritage among honors students so that they and their future families will become regular visitors to and protectors of America's National Parks.

In preparation for the spring 2008 visit, Dr. Bruce Drury, LU professor of political science and member of the Big Thicket Association, will coordinate an Honors Seminar (HNRS 3161) for Lamar students focusing on the Big Thicket during early summer 2007. Superintendent of the Big Thicket National

Preserve, Todd Brindle will also participate in offering the one-credit course.

The Honors Seminar will include several visits to locales within the Big Thicket and include an overnight campout. Students will become familiar with the history, geography, ecology and cultural context of the Big Thicket. Each seminar participant will prepare materials for use in the spring 2008 NCHC "Partners in the Parks" program.

Dr. Kevin Dodson, Assistant Honors Director at Lamar, secured a place for Lamar University in the NCHC program through a presentation in Philadelphia in November of 2006. Lamar and the Big Thicket will be one of the first round of "Partners in the Parks" hosts. The project is being spearheaded by Joan Digby of Long Island University's Honors Program.

Lamar High Profile at National Honors Conference

Lamar Honors sent eight students and an Assistant Director to the November 2006 National Collegiate Honors Council meeting in Philadelphia.

Two groups of students presented at the "Idea Exchange." Seniors Stephanie Kelsey (nursing) and Miriam Dark (pre-med) hosted a popular table on "International Volunteerism." Between them, they have now traveled to India, Sri Lanka, Pakistan and Abu Dhabi, United Arab Emirates.

Tony Sarda (economics), Jessica Byerly (general studies) and Erin Tade (engineering) ran an idea table on "Peer Mentoring." Tony is one of the founders of Lamar's Honors Peer Mentoring program.

Senior English major Oscar Villanueva is in his second year as a student representative on the NCHC Executive Board. Graphic design major Nick Vikos, also a senior, saw the logo he designed on everything

in sight at the meeting. Vikos was named winner of the annual nationwide logo competition at last year's NCHC.



Peer Mentoring: New and Already Improved

By Christi Grudier

Honors Peer Mentoring, just beginning its second year at Lamar, has made a few additions to improve one of Honors' newest programs.

Last February, junior Boone Drummond and senior Tony Sarda developed the peer mentoring program for incoming honors students, hoping to make the new students' first semester of college a little bit easier.

"Boone and I were discussing one day how we could have used a lot more information our freshman year in a more organized way," Sarda said. "We wished we had someone there to better acquaint us with the honors program. That's when we asked Dr. Birdwell about forming this program."

Less than six months later, the first group of peer mentors was showing freshmen the ropes on campus.

Since then, the program has come a long way. Three students attended the 2006 NCHC meeting in Philadelphia, Pa., to develop ideas on how to improve for this upcoming year. "Along with making the new students feel welcome, we are going to try and get the new honors students more involved in college activities. We plan to have one project a month involving community service, academic enhancement, or athletics," said Sarda.

With a diverse group of eighteen, the mentors should be successful at meeting their goals for this year. There is at least one representative from each of the five different colleges on campus, and each mentor has his or her own mix of interests and experiences. The peer mentors are so diversified that they will be able to cater to students even better than before and give them the resources they need.

"Peer Mentoring definitely has been and will be an asset to the Honors Program," said sophomore Jessica Byerly, a peer mentor from the previous year. "This program will continue to strengthen and become more active as time goes on."



Tony Sarda and Jessica Byerly shared ideas on peer mentoring at NCHC annual meeting in Philadelphia.

Tony Sarda is optimistic about each year being better than the year before. "With a year's experience under our belts, we will be able to take more action," he said. New peer mentors will engage in their first activity on March 3, 2007, at Spring Open House.



TIME OUT!

Stephanie Kelsey, Erin Tade and Miriam Dark took some time away from the NCHC schedule in Philadelphia for a quick trip to the Big Apple.

Sightseeing was their main objective, but a little shopping and some New York pizza were readily accommodated.

Student Highlights

BLAKE MITCHELL WRITES:

During summer 2006, I spent eight weeks researching knot and graph theory as part of a Research Experience for Undergraduates (REU) program in mathematics at California State University, San Bernardino. Eight students were selected for this program, all fully supported by the National Science Foundation (NSF) and CSUSB. My specific research problem explored knot energies, which have applications in the study of DNA and polymers.

In our usual college classes we research problems, even though there are often known solutions or limitations. The REU provided questions without these limitations and I learned that investigating a problem does not necessarily mean you have to find a solution. You do not even have to have an initial educated guess at the solution. The real value of the research as a whole is the journey of investigation itself. For instance, most solutions of mathematical conjectures not only solve the given problem, but the proof and analysis often shed light on many areas of mathematical and scientific research, extending beyond the problem itself. The ending result is icing on the cake. This is the aim and idea of research that I have come to know, directly stemming from my REU experience.

I strongly encourage everyone to apply to summer programs. The programs serve as a great life experience, both socially and intellectually. To learn more, search Google for "NSF REU" or more generally for summer undergraduate programs. There are many opportunities available, for both the humanities and sciences.

(Blake Mitchell is a senior mathematics major.)



Director's Notes

Dear Alums and Friends of Honors,

As we approach the closing measures of spring 2007, we are already looking forward to the new academic year. We are well on track to be welcoming a record number of new Honors students in fall 07, including the second crop of Mirabeau Scholars.

We look forward to seeing many of you at our Honors Program Spring Awards Reception on April 10, when we celebrate the accomplishments of our graduating seniors and seek to inspire our incoming scholarship students. The spring reception is always the highlight of our year in Honors and includes awards for student achievements in leadership, scholarship and service as well as the announcement of our Honors Professor of the Year.

Please come visit us when you are on the Lamar campus! Our Honors community includes not just our current students, but our Honors faculty and former faculty, graduates, and family members. We would love to hear from you!

Sincerely,

Donna B. Birdwell

Brothers and Sisters in Honors

All in the Lamar Honors Family

Lamar's Honors Program has had quite a few sibling sets enrolled over the years – 11 to be exact! But Mark Placette (enrolling fall 2007 as a Mirabeau Scholar) is a first – he is the *third* member of his family to participate in LU Honors. Oldest sister Amber Placette was a December Honors Program Graduate (Magna Cum Laude) in English, and sister Allison Placette is a sophomore pre-med biology major. Mark has his sights set on engineering. All are Bridge City HS grads.

Also accepted into the Honors Program for fall 2007 is Patrick Greer, younger brother of Honors junior Meghan Greer. Both Patrick and Meghan are Hardin-Jefferson grads who plan to pursue careers in medicine.

Currently enrolled sibling sets include Port Neches-Groves graduates Jordan Addison (senior, mechanical engineering) and Haley Addison (sophomore, psychology). Haley has signed to play soccer for Lamar's inaugural team starting fall of 2007. Blake Mitchell (senior, mathematics) and younger brother Jeff Mitchell (freshman Mirabeau

Scholar, marketing) came to Lamar from Holliday HS in Wichita Falls and are roommates in the Honors section of Cardinal Village. Also currently enrolled are Orangefield grads Aaron Slacum (senior, chemical engineering) and brother Brian Slacum (sophomore Mirabeau Scholar, economics) as well as Hamshire-Fannett grads Nathan Toutloff (senior, chemical engineering) and Joel Toutloff (sophomore Mirabeau Scholar, physics).

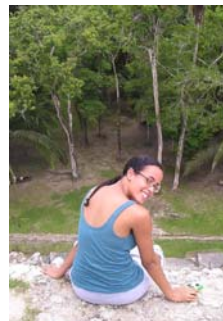
Allison Baskin (senior, civil engineering, Port Neches-Groves) is the sister of 2005 Honors Program Graduate Ryan Baskin (mechanical engineering). Tim Beier (junior, mechanical engineering, Vidor HS) is the brother of 2004 Honors Program Graduate Eric Beier, currently completing his Ph.D. in industrial engineering at Texas A&M University. In his first semester spring 2007 at LU is Jonathan Jeter (general business, graduate of Port Neches-Groves), brother of 2003 Honors Program Graduate Joseph Jeter (mechanical engineering).

Two sets of siblings actually received degrees at the same LU commencement – sisters Jenni and Beth Yelverton (Honors Program Graduates in 2004) and twins Christina and Karen Cook (Honors Program Graduates in 2003). The Yelverton sisters graduated from Community Christian in Orange and the Cook twins are graduates of West Orange-Stark High School.

Student Highlights

JOSMERY RAMIREZ WRITES:

I recently traveled to Belize for a service project, representing the Lamar Rotaract Club. When I heard about the opportunity, I knew it was something I wanted to be a part of! Three of my peers and I created a camp of music, arts and crafts, and fun-with-science for children between



the ages of four and thirteen.

This five-day event had a different theme each day, such as Beach Day and Space Day. I led the children in fun songs like B-I-N-G-O and Baby Shark, and even taught them a bit about Mozart! It was such a blessing to have them rush up to me after the day's excitement and

beg to hear more! I was able to step outside my comfort zone, to view a different reality. Things we take for granted were stripped away, and it was very liberating. I grew up so much, learning more about myself each day. We even climbed Mayan Temples the day before we left, and I know the entire experience is something I will never forget. (Josmery Ramirez is a sophomore music major.)

Erica Williams Uses Research to Tackle Important Issues

by Crystal Frost

Honors senior Erica Williams is earning her stripes as a respected undergraduate researcher in the field of political science.

Dr. James Vanderleeuw, professor of political science, named Williams as a co-author of his latest project, "The 2006 New Orleans Mayoral Election: The Political Ramifications of a Large-Scale Natural Disaster." As his student assistant, Williams became deeply involved in the research.

"Her help was of sufficient quality and quantity to qualify her for the title of co-author," Vanderleeuw said. "Co-authorship is not something I would lightly give. I was impressed with her work."

Erica's portion of the research covered hurricane Katrina's impact on New Orleans politics. She presented this work at the American Political Science Association's annual professional meeting in Philadelphia in September 2006.

"This is the most prestigious meeting in political science. I was honored to be there and to be around some of the greatest minds of today," Williams said. "I also got a lot of positive feedback and respect from those who saw my presentation."

The research is now under review for the APSA peer-reviewed journal *PS*.

Williams decided to take the research in her own direction for her Honors Thesis. Her work with Vanderleeuw mainly focused on the effect of hurricane Katrina on the white vote in New Orleans. She now wants to focus attention on the black vote.

"Nobody asks about the black vote. I want to ask what no one on else is asking," Williams said.

The black population of New Orleans largely did not vote for Ray Nagin before Katrina. After the disaster, they overwhelmingly voted for him. Williams' goal is to explain the shift in the context of race.

"This is a topic that needs to be discussed. Besides, there's no way I would allow something this big to happen to such a disproportionate amount of people on my watch without saying something about it," she said. This research will look at the disaster and the reasons for the reaction of black voters.

Williams also has completed a research project as a McNair Scholar. In that project, she looked at the relationship of HIV/AIDS stigmatization and the belief in HIV/AIDS conspiracy theories among HIV-positive African Americans.

"When the supply of information is less than the

demand for information, conspiracy theories will increase," she said.

Attitudes of a community about HIV/AIDS and access to information about the diseases will affect whether people believe in conspiracy theories about the origins of the diseases.

Williams presented her oral defense of this research in October and she is now editing it for publication.

Williams, who participated in the Ralph Bunche Institute at Duke University in summer 2005, is looking forward to graduate school, and she knows that the research she is doing will give her the experience she needs to be accepted and succeed.

"Her research will separate her from the crowd and will get some attention," Vanderleeuw said. "This gives her a leg up on everyone else. She should be proud."

Williams will be an Honors Program Graduate in May 2007, after which she expects to begin graduate study.



Honors Students and Mirabeau Scholars Form Relay for Life Teams



Lamar University will hold its first annual Relay for Life in Cardinal Stadium, with Honors Student Association and Mirabeau Scholars right there in the midst of the action.

On April 13 and 14, volunteers, survivors and other participants will team up and walk for hours to support the American Cancer Society and cancer research.

The two honors teams have already begun fundraising to compete to be the top money raising team. HSA, headed by sophomore Christi Grudier, and the Mirabeau Scholars, headed by freshman Michaela McCoy, have set high standards that they both plan to meet.

"I would love for the HSA to be the team that raises the most money, but that isn't what this is about," said Grudier. "Our main goal is to raise a sufficient amount that will hopefully make a difference in cancer research."

Survivors or friends and family of a loved one lost by cancer are especially urged to come. A special ceremony will be held in honor of those who have survived and for the memory of those who have passed on.

If you would like to participate in Lamar Relay for Life, you may contact the Honors program to receive additional information or go to www.LamarRelay.org.

Summer Read Author Delivers Lectures

Richard Rubenstein, author of Lamar Honors' 2006 Summer Read selection, delivered two lectures on November 2 to Honors students and the Lamar and greater Golden Triangle communities.

An afternoon presentation focused on the Summer Read text, *Aristotle's Children: How Christians, Muslims, and Jews Rediscovered Ancient Wisdom and Illuminated the Middle Ages*, exploring the relationships among philosophy,

science, and religion through an examination of the ideas of the Greek philosopher Aristotle and the resulting Aristotelian tradition. In particular, the book and lecture examined the loss of that tradition at the end of antiquity and its recovery through the work of Christian, Jewish, and Muslim philosophers during the Middle Ages.



The evening lecture introduced Rubenstein's latest publication, *Thus Saith the Lord: The Revolutionary Moral Vision of Isaiah and Jeremiah*, a treatise on the response of the Hebrew prophets to the emergence of the Assyrian empire and the enduring legacy of the universalism of that prophetic tradition.

Professor Rubenstein is Professor of Conflict Resolution and Public Affairs at George Mason University. He earned his B.A. in History and Literature from Harvard in 1959. As a Rhodes Scholar, he attended Oxford, where he was awarded an M.A. in Jurisprudence in 1961. He graduated from Harvard Law School with a J.D. in 1963. Professor Rubenstein is the author of seven books.

The lectures were made possible by a grant from Humanities Texas, the state affiliate of the National Endowment for the Humanities, with assistance from the Lamar University Honors

Program, Lamar's Center for Philosophical Studies, and Lamar University Provost, Dr. Stephen Doblin. Additionally, Professor Rubenstein's lectures will be broadcast in March 2007 on Lamar University's cable access channel with support from the National Collegiate Honors Council through a Portz Grant. Honors Assistant Director Dr. Kevin Dodson coordinated the events.

Summer Read 2007

The summer reading selection for 2007-8 will be Pulitzer Prize-winning author Tracy Kidder's *Mountains Beyond Mountains: The Quest of Dr. Paul Farmer, a Man Who Would Cure the World*. Dr. Farmer, who holds both the M.D. and Ph.D. in medical anthropology, is founder of Partners in Health and a professor at Harvard University Medical School. Information about Dr. Farmer and Partners in Health is available at <http://www.pih.org/home.html>.

HONORS Graduates: Encore!

Jenny Achilles (HPG 2003) spent 2006 in San Salvador, El Salvador, thanks to a generous Rotary International Ambassadorial Scholarship. Through that sponsorship she was able to attend communication classes at the Universidad de Centroamérica. Jenny served as an international observer during the elections for mayors and representatives in March 2006 and taught English classes at an NGO in the capital.



She returned to the United States on December 30 to finish her master's degree at the University of Texas at Austin, while working at the UT Latino and Latina in WWII Oral History Project.

Jenny continues to share presentations on her experience in El Salvador and can be contacted at classic_chic@juno.com.

HONORS Graduates: Encore!

Daniel Chand, 2002 Honors Program alumnus, and his wife Carol Cuccio, are currently serving in the Peace Corps in Zambia. Daniel and Carol work with farmers in rural Zambia to promote conservation and better agricultural practices.



As their primary project, both Daniel and Carol work as extension agents for the Zambian Department of Fisheries. "I think it's very fitting that we work with Department of

Fisheries," said Daniel. "As the old adage goes... 'Give a man a fish, and he will eat for a day. Teach a man to fish, and he will eat for a lifetime.'"

"I could not think of a better job for us than to teach people how to fish," he said.

Like many of its neighboring countries in southern and central Africa, Zambia suffers from a number of public-health crises such as HIV/AIDS and malaria. For this reason, Daniel and Carol also work to educate villagers about how they can avoid these diseases.

Honors Program Graduate Brandan Still started his law studies in fall 2006 at Harvard University. Brandan received his BBA in Management in May 2006. Brandan is a former Rotary International Ambassadorial Scholar to Ireland.



Let us know what YOU are doing so we can include you in our next issue!



Erin Tade, Stephanie Kelsey and Miriam Dark (not pictured) promoted "International Volunteerism" at the NCHC Idea Exchange in Philadelphia.

Premed Volunteers Among Earthquake Victims in Pakistan

by Lauren Wigley

While most students found time to bask in the warmth of summer, Miriam Dark was serving others in the sweltering heat of Pakistan. After a week-long orientation in India, Dark spent six weeks in Pakistan on a medical mission funded by Lamar's Baptist Student Ministry and Go Now Missions.

Interviewing in Dallas to choose her destination, Dark, a senior pre-medical student at Lamar, decided on the trip to South Asia. With many friends from India, Dark had wanted to visit the country for some time, but the actual experience was "like nothing ever before."

Dark visited several hospitals, trailing doctors as they made their rounds and talking with them through translators about their work. She performed simple tasks like taking blood pressure while learning about some of India's pre-modern medical practices. Watching a woman give birth in a delivery room swarming with flies, she was able to see firsthand how "lucky we are here in America."

Dark was saddened to see what little medical care women in India receive. She said the women often stood in line all night to be seen by a doctor or nurse. At the medical camps she stayed at in the Himalayas, Dark said people came from hours away and hiked miles seeking treatment.

"This kind of thing really opens up your eyes," Dark said. Dark's trip focused on more than just medicine. She took time to share in her faith with the people of India, teaching childhood praise songs to the women she worked alongside in the fields. For Dark, the overall experience was indescribable, but for certain, she is all about expanding one's horizons.

"I would love to go back to India one day as an actual physician. Everyone should go abroad," Dark asserts.

Miriam Dark will be an Honors Program Graduate in May 2007, after which she expects to enroll in medical school.



Student Highlights

LINDSEY CAUTHEN WRITES:

My initial exposure to basic research was provided through Dr. Dale Ortego's project centered on measuring ground level ozone. This served as a catalyst to an independent research project correlating respiratory emergencies and ground level ozone emissions in the Southeast Texas area. This, in turn, took me to several national and international meetings including GPHC in San Antonio, NCHC in New Orleans, Sigma Xi in Montreal, Canada, and LSRC here at Lamar. I found that increased exposure to constructive criticism, exploration of secondary research questions and topics, academic stimulation provided by my peers, and a few awards began to propel me toward further research interests.



I continued research in the Biology department with Dr. Michael Haiduk, investigating the genetic subtleties and crossovers in two similar species of diamondback rattlesnake. Armed with the techniques I learned during this project, I applied for summer programs in medical

research. I was accepted and spent the next two summers in the Experimental Hematology/Oncology laboratory of Dr. Andrew Davidoff at St. Jude Children's Research Hospital in Memphis, Tennessee.

At St. Jude, I was exposed to endless resources in scientific research and expertise. I was assigned my own project working on learning the mechanisms of certain potentially therapeutic drugs against neuroblastoma and glioblastoma (particularly aggressive tumors). I was also able to shadow my mentor and his cases as the Chief of General Pediatric Surgery. The opportunity to engage in research that could potentially help others overcome the devastation of cancer was an incredible experience. I was also able to hone my technical and critical thinking skills through problem solving, experimental planning, scientific writing, and weekly progress reports to my mentor. From this experience, I realized that it was indeed a great thing to step outside my comfort zone. My first summer's research at St. Jude was recently printed in the Journal of Surgery (with me as co-author) and is now in the first phase of clinical. In addition I used this research to fulfill the requirements for my Honors Thesis. I have also presented this project at St. Jude and at Sigma Xi in Detroit, Michigan where I received one of four superior rankings in my topic.

At the Sigma Xi conference, I met Dr. Fuller Bazer, who discovered and isolated one of the

proteins featured in my project. He offered me (and I accepted) a year long research appointment in medical research at Texas A&M University. This will expand my previous project to include treatment of osteoporosis and exploration of other possible applications.

I look back now and realize the incredible journey a single idea has taken due to the support and encouragement of others. In the future, I look forward to using my experiences to aid and encourage others in their search to, in essence, overcome themselves and realize the possibilities of living outside their "zone."

(Lindsey Cauthen is a senior, double majoring in music performance and biology, with a chemistry minor.)

Recent Honors Theses

Lindsey Cauthen

B.S. Biology (Chemistry Minor) and B.A. Music, May 2007 (Thesis presented December 2006)
Thesis Supervisor: Dr. Ana Christensen
Research Director: Dr. Andrew M. Davidoff, St. Jude Children's Research Hospital
"Efficacy of Zoledronic Acid Against Neuroblastoma in the Bone, An *In vitro* and *In vivo* Analysis"

Stephanie Kelsey

B. S. Nursing, December 2006
Thesis Supervisor: Dr. Iva Hall
"Mental Trauma Lingers After Winds Subside: Psychological Impact of Hurricane Rita on Children"

Divya Verma

B.A. Economics (Anthropology Minor), December 2006
Thesis Supervisor: Dr. Donna B. Birdwell
"Encounters with Preservation, Development and Ecotourism: A Comparative Study of Rural Communities in Brazil and Ecuador"

Devin M. Jones

B.S. Civil Engineering, May 2006
Thesis Supervisor: Dr. Robert L. Yuan
"Investigation of a Fiber-Reinforced Polymer Composite Boat Trailer Leaf Spring"

Joseph F. Hunt

B.S. Math and B.S. Physics, May 2006
Thesis Supervisor: Dr. Cristian Bahrim
"Quantum Phenomena in Collisions Between Rare Gas Atoms"



HONORS
PROGRAM
GRADUATES

DECEMBER
2006

Amber Placette (English), Stephanie Kelsey (Nursing), Cody Cook (Computer Science), Honors Director, Dr. Donna Birdwell, Divya Verma (Economics), Hailey Stevens (Accounting).

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Staff Writers/Editors

Crystal Frost
Christi Grudier
Lauren Wigley

The University Honors Program

P.O. Box 10968
Lamar University
Beaumont, TX 77710

Phone: 409-880-8658

On the web: <http://dept.lamar.edu/honors/>



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Honors Student Association president Andrew Kemmerling accompanied Ann Shaw Award winner Stephanie Kelsey to the Toast to Leadership Banquet. Stephanie is a past president of HSA.



Honors senior Oscar Villanueva (right) had the opportunity for informal discussion with Political Science professor Dr. Elena Sandovici at the Alumni Association's "A Dinner and 12 Strangers" pre-law gathering. Oscar will be an Honors Program Graduate in May.



2004 Honors Program Grads Robbie Waters Robichau and Beth Yelverton got together recently to reminisce. Robbie is completing graduate work at Texas A&M and Beth is an assistant to the Honors Program Director at Texas Woman's University in Denton.