UM Responds to Earthquake and Hurricane
By Michael Glowacki, Assistant to the Director of Resident Life

At fall opening, University of Maryland students typically have to contend with difficulties like heavy traffic, crying parents, and too many belongings to fit in their room. In Fall 2011, students and staff moving into residence halls faced an altogether different category of challenges – a 5.8 magnitude earthquake and a potentially-dangerous hurricane.

On Tuesday, August 23, four days before the official opening of the residence halls and during the height of staff training, an earthquake measuring 5.8 on the Richter scale, with its center about 40 miles northwest of Richmond, VA shook buildings and staff members across the campus. While minor damage occurred at the Stamp Student Union and a few other campus buildings, no injuries were reported on campus from the earthquake. Resident Assistants and other staff on their way to The Stamp that afternoon for the annual RA Pep Rally were a bit shaken but not deterred by the unexpected and rare occurrence of an earthquake on the east coast.

Resident Life staff didn’t have very long to ponder the impact of the earthquake, however. As they were making their final preparations for opening weekend, word came that a hurricane was making its way up the eastern seaboard. The storm would bring the potential for heavy rain and strong, dangerous winds to the biggest weekend of the year for Resident Life. Hurricane Irene was scheduled to arrive in College Park at roughly the same time as approximately 12,000 students who would be moving into their residence halls and apartments that weekend.

Check-ins were scheduled for Saturday, August 27 through Tuesday, August 30. Forecasts leading up to the weekend seemed to change on an hourly basis – “the storm is veering east and going out to sea,” “it’s turning back west and on a direct path for the Washington D.C. region.” As the week progressed it became clear that the storm would likely reach College Park sometime on Saturday, the first and largest of our four check-in days.

By Thursday of prep week (Tuesday’s earthquake already seeming like a distant memory) a decision had to be made about check-in. Some local universities were inviting their students to move in on Friday before the storm arrived in the area. Other schools decided to ask students to delay their arrival until the Monday after the storm had passed through. After conferring with units from across the campus – Residential Facilities, Facilities Management, Dining Services, UMD Department of Public Safety, Transportation Services, and the Fire Marshal’s office, Resident Life made the decision to open on Friday, a day ahead of schedule to allow students and families the opportunity to choose the day that would provide them with the safest possible check-in. Students scheduled for Saturday check-in could choose to come in on Friday ahead of the storm or wait until Sunday or Monday after the storm.

A mad dash ensued to make sure that student rooms, RA floors, service desks, dining halls, and parking plans were all ready for a massive check-in that would occur 24 hours earlier than originally planned. A campus-wide, team effort resulted in a very successful check-in on Friday with students and their families very appreciative of Resident Life’s efforts. By 2:00 p.m. on Saturday more than 8,300 students had checked-in to residence halls and apartment communities ahead of the oncoming storm. Check-in activity was suspended from 4:00 p.m. on Saturday through 12:00 p.m. on Sunday during the height of the storm and then resumed on Sunday afternoon.

As with the Earthquake, the University of Maryland campus was relatively lucky in the aftermath of the storm. No injuries were reported on campus. Power was knocked out at South Campus Commons and The Courtyards apartments during the storm and about 400 Courtyards residents remained without power for a little more than 48 hours. Several small trees on campus were lost in the storm but very little other damage was sustained. As things returned to normal with the start of classes on Wednesday, the Diamondback editorial board praised the campus for responding “with foresight and an organized approach that minimized disruption to the already-chaotic time that is move-in weekend.”
As soon as classes ended for the semester on May 20, 2011, a group of eight Resident Life and Honors Humanities student leaders and two staff members excitedly boarded one of the University of Maryland’s sleek black busses and departed campus for JFK airport in New York City. Our destination? Casablanca, Morocco in Northern Africa, and we were looking forward to a two-week experience of a lifetime.

The 2011 Global Experience – Morocco trip was offered through the Department of Resident Life’s Global Learning committee, which for the last few years has created opportunities for residence hall student leaders to experience and explore cultures and engage in service learning in different countries around the world. The 2011 Morocco experience was especially unique in that it was a collaboration between the Department of Resident Life and the Honors Humanities Living and Learning Program. The purpose of the trip was to provide students with an opportunity to gain learning and understanding about culture, history, societal and geopolitical issues, and the contemporary college student experience in Morocco.

The students were selected after submitting an essay describing what they could bring to the experience and what they hoped to learn. In the Spring prior to the trip, they enrolled in a required one-credit class taught by Dr. Orlando and Dr. Voorhees designed to teach them about the history and culture of Morocco and prepare them for international travel. Since one of Dr. Orlando’s areas of scholarly expertise is Moroccan film, cinema, and literature, she was able to offer rich, personal, and experienced insights into life and culture of Morocco. The students also participated in a four-session Common Ground dialogue group offered through the Department of Resident Life. While the topics of the dialogue groups typically focus on contemporary multicultural dilemmas in U.S. society such as abortion, racial profiling, and same-sex marriage, the students in the Morocco class were encouraged to research, compare, and contrast how that particular issue might play out in contemporary Moroccan society.

After an unexpectedly long bus ride to New York, the group finally arrived at JFK where we flew to Madrid, and then on to Casablanca, Morocco. A van met us at the airport and without any rest at all, whisked us away on a five-hour journey to the northern city of Fes, our destination for the first week. Fes is a beautiful city, widely recognized as the center of cultural and religious life in Morocco and known for its ancient medina (old city), historical monuments, beautiful gardens, and dynamic civic life. We were hosted in Fes by Dr. Fatima Sadiqi and Dr. Moha Ennaji at the International Institute for Languages and Cultures (INLAC). They prepared a wonderful and comprehensive week-long program for us that included morning Darija (Moroccan Arabic) classes, traditional tea
breaks, interaction with Moroccan college students, and visits to local NGOs. Additionally, since our hotel was located just outside a gate to the medina, we were able to spend a lot of time exploring the old city. We visited many different kinds of shops, restaurants, a mosque, a university, and the ancient tannery, which operates today in very much the same way it did in 800 AD. Our week in Fes also included a memorable excursion to Volubilis, a beautiful and well-preserved example of ancient Roman ruins located between Fes and Rabat.

On Saturday, May 28 we departed for a day-long journey south, to our next destination for the night, Agadir, a city on the Atlantic Ocean near the foot of the Atlas Mountains. In 1960, Agadir was destroyed by an earthquake that killed 15,000 people, so the city today is an example of a modern, Moroccan beach destination. We stayed that night in a beautiful hotel called the Atlas Kasbah where we were able to hike, walk in the gardens, swim, dine together, and enjoy the beautiful views. A highlight of our time as we left Agadir was the opportunity to pull off the road to watch dozens of camels lounging together in the sun.

From Agadir we headed further south toward Sidi Ifni, our destination for the second week. Ifni is a tiny and remote town located in southern Morocco, so remote that many Moroccans never visit during their lifetimes. In Ifni, we were hosted by Dar Si-Hmad, a foundation dedicated to enhancing life and culture in rural southern Morocco. We visited two women’s cooperatives, one where local village women work to produce argan oil, rare and precious oil extracted from the seed of the argan tree, which only grows in Southern Morocco, and another where the women produce products from the prickly pear cactus. We learned about the role of couscous and mint tea in traditional Moroccan culture, and we watched a film about rap with a group of Moroccan college students and discussed our various cultural reactions to it.

A highlight of our time in Ifni was a mountain hike with donkeys to carry our provisions. A traditional Berber family hosted us in their home for breakfast at the base of the mountain before we began, and then we hiked several miles up (way up!) to tour equipment set up for a “fog harvesting” project, an innovative initiative of our Ifni host, Dr. Jamila Bargach, to harvest needed water for local villages from the daily fog that rolls in high up in the mountains. Before we began our hike back down that afternoon, we were treated to the awe-inspiring sight of the fog rolling in. From that high and beautiful vantage point, we felt like we were on top of the world.

Just when we thought our experience couldn’t get any better, our hosts took us to visit with boys at a traditional and rural Qur’anic school, where we were welcomed warmly and enthusiastically by the students and teachers. Our Maryland students had prepared a YouTube video to share with the boys about their life as students at Maryland, and that was conveyed through a translator since the boys did not speak English. In return, they described for us (through a translator) what their life was like at their school and then treated us to a beautiful and moving memorized recitation of passages from the Qur’an.

On our way back to Casablanca, our last stop of the trip was in Tiznit, a small town renowned for silver jewelry and silver products. To summarize that experience, let’s just say that several members of our group made a few Tiznit merchants very happy that day.

As a staff member accompanying this group of students, the lasting impression that will stand out for me most is how wonderful this group of students was to travel with and how extraordinarily proud they made us at every turn. The Department of Resident Life, the Honors Humanities Program, and the University of Maryland owe these eight students a debt of gratitude for the extraordinary ways in which they consistently served as enthusiastic, responsible, thoughtful, courteous, and respectful ambassadors of our campus and our country. They were a wonderful group to travel with and it was their good spirit that truly shaped our trip to Morocco into an experience of a lifetime.
Where are they now?
Spotlight on UM DRL Alumni

Recently, we caught up with several UM DRL Alumni to learn a bit more about them and what they’ve been up to since graduation. We hope you enjoy learning a bit more about your fellow alumni!

Marianne Baesa

What year did you graduate from the University of Maryland?
2009

What positions did you hold in Resident Life while at Maryland?
RA, South Campus Commons 5&6
TA, EDCP 470

What are you up to currently?
I’m pursuing my master’s degree in International Education at GWU

Favorite Memory
My favorite memory would be working with the staff of Commons 5 & 6, like that time when we decided to create an unspeakable non-alcoholic drink that we were scooping from an actual (but clean) toilet bowl for the South Campus mix-off event, and actually got a lot of people to drink it. I was also fortunate to have amazing residents that made my job rewarding and enjoyable. I am also very glad and grateful for the friendships made with South Campus RAs, many of whom remain as my very good friends today.

Lessons Learned
I have gained a lot of interpersonal and professional skills that I was able to use in the real world, such as time management, problem-solving, team building and program planning. ResLife always made sure we learned the concept of diversity, and the understanding of that is really valuable for any personal or professional interaction.

continued on page 5
**John Brown**

What year did you graduate from the University of Maryland?
I graduated in May of 2006 with a criminology degree.

What positions did you hold in Resident Life while at Maryland?
I started as a Community Assistant for a year, and then was hired as a Student Assistant in the Office of Rights and Responsibilities and Research and Assessment, where I spent about three years. I later accepted a job in the same office as a student supervisor, and then eventually as a full-time Program Management Specialist with the same office. I spent about 4 years working with Resident Life.

What are you up to currently?
I currently work in Human Resources for a large Government Integrator Consulting Practice in the DC area. I support projects for the United States Army, Air Force and Navy by supplying them with I.T. consultants for mission critical endeavors. In addition, I am actively trying to raise awareness for the Alzheimer’s Association, and participate in activities with them as often as possible, including their upcoming Alzheimer’s Walk this month.

Favorite Memory
My favorite memories from Resident Life were as a student worker. I still tell stories of weird things I witnessed as a Community Assistant in Cumberland Hall and the R & R/R & A office. The people I worked with made all of these jobs really great for me. I met some great friends I still have, and some good role models along the way.

Lessons Learned
I think the best lesson I learned in Resident Life is how to work with other people, and what “customer service” really is. If you compare customer service in Resident Life to a lot of other places in the area, we were far better than most. I’ve had to change how I approach customer service in my new job, but I still use some of the same skills I learned while working for Resident Life.

**Joshua Benjoar**

What year did you graduate from the University of Maryland?
I graduated from the University of Maryland in 2002 with my degree in Psychology.

What positions did you hold in Resident Life while at Maryland?
I worked in Resident Life for three years. My Sophomore and Junior years I was an RA in Cumberland Hall, and my Senior year I was a Head resident in Cumberland as well.

What are you up to currently?
I currently work in Human Resources for a large Government Integrator Consulting Practice in the DC area. I support projects for the United States Army, Air Force and Navy by supplying them with I.T. consultants for mission critical endeavors. In addition, I am actively trying to raise awareness for the Alzheimer’s Association, and participate in activities with them as often as possible, including their upcoming Alzheimer’s Walk this month.

Favorite Memory
I have way too many memories from Resident Life to pick just one. I think anyone at my age would go back to college in a heartbeat. The memory that still brings a huge smile to my face was meeting my best friend, Monise Stephenson, my first day at UMD as a Freshman. She was my RA at the time, and inspired me to not only become an RA, but she single-handedly helped pick my major for me. She is still my best friend almost 15 years later, and a force to be reckoned with!

Lessons Learned
Everything in life is about teamwork. I definitely learned that while being an RA and HR in Cumberland Hall. I remember how quickly the RA teams pulled together following September 11th, and then two weeks later when the tornado hit our campus. For many of our residents it was their first week or two away from home. We put together candle lit vigils in the quads, we went door to door within the buildings to make sure residents felt secure, and most importantly, I think we realized the importance of working together to ensure the safety and quality of life on campus at UMD.

**Alumni News Notes**

Mike Fassbach (2001-2005) and his partner are celebrating their one year wedding anniversary in October. Mike recently completed his M.S. in Curriculum and Instruction (School Administration). He now works as an education research associate on the National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP) at the NAEP State Service Center in Rockville, MD.

Jeff Grim (2004 – 2006) is now an Assistant Director of Residence Life at Southern Methodist University.

Dana Juntunen (2001-2003) was promoted from Director, Office of Student Conduct to Director, Office of Student Rights and Responsibilities; now overseeing Office of Student Conduct and Dispute Resolution Services at the University of Central Florida.

Amye Lee (2008-2010) shares that she became engaged this past June to fellow CSP alumna Greg Rheault, who worked with the Office of Fraternity and Sorority Life while at UMD. Congratulations, Amye!

Leslie Sadler Meyerhoff is now the Interim Associate Director of Cornell United Religious Work. In this role, she works with the chaplains and university community to create interfath understanding and dialogue, offers spiritual and religious programs and services, and provides memorial services when students die.

Daniel Ostick (2002-2008) successfully defended his dissertation on “A Grounded Theory of Lesbian and Gay Leadership Self-Efficacy Development” in September in the College Student Personnel program in the College of Education here at the University. Congratulations, Dr. O!

John Pellecchia is looking to reconnect with his RA alumna from Hagerstown Hall - ’78-’79 and ’79-’80. He can be reached at jpellecchia@comcast.net

Tom Segar (1992-1996) was appointed Vice President of Student Affairs at Shepherd University on August 1st and successfully defended dissertation in the College Student Personnel program at the University of Maryland on September 19th. Way to go, Dr. Segar!

continued on page 6
Alumni News, from page 5

UMD Resident Life Staff Transitions

The Department of Resident Life at the University of Maryland is thrilled to welcome the following staff members to our team:

Victor Adebusola is the new graduate assistant for Oakland Hall/Denton Community

Andrew Anderson is the new graduate assistant for Syn*Quest Collaborative

Patrick Bateman is the new graduate assistant for Cambridge Community Rights & Responsibilities

Edward Bempong is the new coordinator for Syn*Quest Collaborative

JaQuan Bryant is the new resident director for Easton Hall

Chamika Ellis is the new resident director for Hagerstown Hall

Jonathan Ferguson is the new graduate administrative coordinator for South Hill Community

Dan Hairfield is the new assistant coordinator for South Campus Administrative Operations

Kelly Hartman is the new graduate coordinator for Off-Campus Housing Services

Lily Henderson is the new graduate coordinator for Human Resources

Ryan Manning is the new resident director for Carroll, Caroline, Worcester and Wicomico Halls

Laura Matsumoto is the new resident director for South Campus Commons Buildings 5 & 6

Allison Panila is the new resident director for LaPlata Hall

Dennis Scott is the new resident director for Anne Arundel, Dorchester, Queen Anne’s, St. Mary’s, and Somerset Halls

Amanda Torres is the new resident director for Elkton Hall

Jacklyn Welsheimer is the new resident director for Leonardtown

Ren Werbin is the new resident director for Centreville Hall

Please join us in congratulating the following Resident Life staff members on their transitions to new positions in our department:

Lisa Alexander is the resident director for Oakland Hall

Craig Leets is the resident director for Ellicott Hall

Kelly Ridings is the acting coordinator for housing partnerships

Announcements and Updates

Congratulations to Dr. Grandner

On October 4th, Deborah Grandner, Director of Resident Life, was awarded the President’s Distinguished Service Award. The award recognizes exceptional performance, leadership and service by members of the University staff. Recipients have a record of exemplary performance and distinctive contributions to the operation of an administrative, academic, research or service unit on campus. Congratulations, Deb!

Staying in touch

If you have news you’d like to share for the next newsletter, or need to update your contact information or know of other UM Resident Life Alumni who haven’t yet joined our network, please contact Dennis Passarella-George at dgeorge@umd.edu or 301.314.7484.

Visit the DRL Alumni site for updated information:
www.resnet.umd.edu/alumninetwork