Leaders In Service at Orphanage Outreach
Monte Cristi, Dominican Republic
March 13 – 20, 2010
By Joshua Beeson

In support of the Department of Resident Life’s focus to create new global learning opportunities for residence hall student leaders, the Department launched a new international service-learning experience this past semester: Leaders In Service. The Leaders In Service program, which consisted of four residence hall student leaders and two staff advisors, travelled to Monte Cristi, Dominican Republic. A poor village in the north-west region of the country, Monte Cristi is a village where barefoot children, goats, cows and pigs roam freely on dirt roads.

After arriving Saturday evening and settling into our ramadas (bunk houses) at the orphanage, we spent the evening playing with the children learning our way around the orphanage complex. On Sunday, we received an orientation and walking tour of the surrounding neighborhood and were divided into our teaching teams. During the week (Monday – Thursday) we taught in two different schools in both first and fifth grade classrooms. Each morning and afternoon, we would walk approximately two miles to and from school to teach our 45 minute English lesson. While the content for the day (such as emotions, days of the week, the beach and the weather) were provided by the Orphanage Outreach teaching coordinator, it was up to our teaching teams to design and implement a lesson plan for each day. It was absolutely amazing to see how eager our students were to learn each day!

Our late afternoons and evenings were spent playing with the children at the orphanage and processing our day in small group reflection. Covering everything from our rambunctious students at school to the role power and privilege in society, our discussions provided a profoundly transformative experience for everyone.

On Friday we had the opportunity to relax a bit after an emotionally trying week. After doing a bit of shopping in town and having a traditional Dominican lunch at a local restaurant, we hiked to the top of a mountain, went swimming in the crystal clear ocean and relaxed for a few hours on a beautiful beach. Our week ended all too soon on Saturday morning as we departed for our return to College Park.

Our week in Monte Cristi was an amazingly impactful and transformative time for everyone. As we continue to process and make sense of our experience, we are consistently reminded of the beauty of Monte Cristi and the Dominican people. The Leaders In Service group is still in the process of identifying ways to share our new knowledge with our residential community here at Maryland, but good things are definitely on the horizon! Be on the lookout for an update in the next newsletter, where we hope to share our upcoming educational programs and initiatives!

Leaders In Service Participants:
Shalesha Lake – Vice President of Communications, LaPlata Hall Council
Lisa Piccinini – Resident Assistant, Easton Hall
Brittany Patterson – Office Assistant, Director’s Office
Lauren Shipton – Senator, South Campus Commons Area Council
Tosh Patterson – Assistant Director for South Campus
Joshua Beeson – Resident Director for Cumberland Hall

While in Monte Cristi, the Leaders In Service group partnered with the non-profit organization Orphanage Outreach. Founded in 1995, Orphanage Outreach focuses and supporting a local orphanage and teaching English in the Monte Cristi schools. English is a highly sought after skill in the Dominican and its teaching in school has been mandated by the Dominican government. However, most of the teachers in Monte Cristi do not speak English, so the support provided by Orphanage Outreach volunteers is vital in satisfying the English language requirement.
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!

Remy Shaffer Gomes

What year did you graduate from the University of Maryland?
2000

What positions did you hold in Resident Life while at Maryland?
Resident Assistant, Resident Assistant Ambassador, Peer Dialogue Leader, Common Ground Intern, Teaching Assistant

What are you up to currently?
I just graduated from the College Student Affairs graduate program at The Pennsylvania State University and received my Masters in Education. I recently accepted a full time position as a Coordinator at Penn State and will be working with first year students and supervising a staff of 10 Resident Assistants.

Favorite Memory
Other than meeting my husband during RA training? The people… the shared experience of being an RA from summer training, to late night duty calls, to hall closing, are certainly unique experiences that bond you closely. I am still in touch with my fellow Ellicott RAs and in addition to laughing at old pictures posted on Facebook, we send around periodic “beef and jerky” e-mail updates just like we used to do in staff meeting.

Lessons Learned
I often remark that I use my RA skills every day! The importance of listening comes to mind - it is such a critical skill that’s often overlooked. I also think a lot about the norm setting/roommate contracts we facilitated with our residents and realize those really are best practices for building good relationships at work and in life. I still run into old residents (in fact, just did so in early June at a mutual friend’s wedding) and I was struck by how memorable you are to your residents – the whole fishbowl concept. It’s a great reminder to live your life with integrity and take every opportunity to make a positive impact on the people you encounter.

Jordan West

What year did you graduate from the University of Maryland?
May 2008

What positions did you hold in Resident Life while at Maryland?
Resident Assistant, Resident Assistant Ambassador, Peer Dialogue Leader, Common Ground Intern, Teaching Assistant

What are you up to currently?
I just graduated from the College Student Affairs graduate program at The Pennsylvania State University and received my Masters in Education. I recently accepted a full time position as a Coordinator at Penn State and will be working with first year students and supervising a staff of 10 Resident Assistants.

Favorite Memory
I always managed to be part of a wonderful staff! Despite the countless hours that went into training, both fall and spring, it seems effortless to get through the day because of my supervisors (Tosh and Ashley) and staff. To this day, I keep in contact with almost all of my co-RAs that I worked with over the course of three years in the RA position. As someone who ultimately sought a Student Affairs career path, the opportunity to be so involved at UMD in DRL will forever be appreciated because it opened several opportunities to network with other practitioners outside of UMD when the department sponsored me to attend NCORE in 2007 and MACUHO as a VIP. The idea of a fun, loving, and family structured working environment was undoubtedly shown through DRL.

Lessons Learned
The number one lesson I took away and find myself saying to others today is “you live in a fishbowl.” Of course as an RA it was easy to find that applicable, but as I grew out of the RA role and into the graduate assistant and full time practitioner role, the intensity behind the statement grew significantly. With Student Affairs being such a small and tight network in itself, it became expected that your performance would easily be known by potential future employers and colleagues overall. It has made me stay on my “P’s and Q’s” and really guide others. I now have the knowledge from my graduate program that explains and supports the work in the field, which has only increased my interest in student development. Although I was actually helping to facilitate that development from the first day as an RA, I see the intentionality and scholarship that goes into the work of the field.

UMD Resident Life Staff Transitions

We are pleased to welcome the following new staff members to our Resident Life team:

Ann Becks is the new Graduate Coordinator for Research and Assessment.

Jordan Draper is the new Graduate Coordinator for Rights and Responsibilities.

Lee Hinga is the new Resident Director for Cumberland Hall.

Belinda Huang is the new Graduate Coordinator for the Common Ground Multicultural Dialogue Program.

Michael Melnyk is a new Resident Director in the South Hill Community.

Mark Noll is the new Graduate Coordinator for Human Resources.

Timothy Rogers is a new Graduate Coordinator for Educational and Outreach programs.

Kia Weeden is the new Coordinator for Educational and Outreach Programs.

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Where are they now?

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Chuck Woods

What year did you graduate from the University of Maryland?
Chuck came to the University of Maryland in 1965. He graduated with a bachelor’s degree in business in 1970 and with a Master of Education in Counseling & Personnel in 1972.

What positions did you hold in Resident Life?
Cambridge Complex President, RHA President (the 2nd RHA President at Maryland), Resident Assistant, Graduate Resident, Director of Housing for the Cambridge Community until June, 1973.

What are you currently up to?
Chuck has been retired from Fairfax County Public Schools Human Relations for 10 years. Currently he enjoys charity work and fishing. He referees basketball year-round and works with Annandale Christian Community for Action – an organization that provides food and other services for the poor.

Favorite Memory
Working in Resident Life during the last 60s/early 70s was a tumultuous time. During his last few years as Director of the Cambridge Community, his student staff handled serious situations involving racial conflicts, sex, drugs, protests, and police actions related to the Vietnam War. It was during the time of the first racial integration in the residence halls. Resident life was handling all of this on their own without other resources because they just didn’t exist yet. He was very proud of how his staff handled these matters.

Lessons learned
Working in Resident Life, he learned good communication skills, confirmed his value system for valuing and developing people, gained experience working with people from different backgrounds, and the ability to apply this education in life and work. He gained counseling and communication training alongside real life skills. He gained much confidence in these skills that were beneficial to him in his future after Maryland. Chuck recently came back to visit during our Spring Resident Life Alumni and Friends reception. He would like to commend the people who work in Resident Life now, making it a top notch program. He sees it as the fulfillment of the work that they started in the early 70s, especially the integration of faculty and academics in to the residence hall community.

Announcements and Updates

South Campus Commons goes for the Gold
South Campus Commons Building 7 (www.resnet.umd.edu/residence_halls/commons/) opened in January 2010; welcoming an additional 368 residents to on-campus housing. In June, we received notification that South Campus Commons 7 officially achieved LEED (Leadership in Energy and Environmental Design) Gold certification; the first building on our campus to do so! You can learn more about LEED at www.usgbc.org.

Oakland Hall Construction Continues
Construction is well underway on Oakland Hall, the University of Maryland’s newest nine floor undergraduate residence hall, will be home to more than 700 UM students beginning in August 2011. Check out live pictures of the construction site from a camera mounted atop Elkton Hall by visiting http://oxblue.com/pro/open/clarkconstruction/oakhaldormitory You can also read more about the construction project, design of Oakland Hall, and related renovation projects online at www.resnet.umd.edu/oaklandhall

UM Searches for its next President
After 12 years of dedicated service to the University of Maryland, President C.D. Mote will retire from his position as President in August. We thank President Mote for his leadership to our campus! To learn more about President Mote’s accomplishments, please visit www.president.umd.edu/legacy/accomplishments.pdf

Chancellor Kirwan and the UMS Board of Regents have appointed a search and screening committee to conduct an international search for our next president. You can learn more about the presidential search process at www.umd.edu/presidentialsearch/

Dr. Patricia Mielke Retires
This spring we also bid farewell to Pat Mielke, Assistant Vice President for Student Affairs and former Director of Resident Life. After 34 years at the University of Maryland, Pat retired in May to move out west to Arizona. Pat has influenced every aspect of the on-campus living experience for our students. She was instrumental in the creation and enhancement of the campus’ living-learning programs and the creation of our public-private housing partnerships. She has also served as a teacher and mentor to countless housing professionals at Maryland and beyond. Please join us in wishing Pat all the best in her retirement and remind her every chance you get that she’s a Terp For Life!

James C. Grimm National Housing Training Institute
This June marked the 20th anniversary of NHTI and the 10th year that the institute has been hosted by the University of Maryland. NHTI, an

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

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Alumni News Notes

Kathleen Gardner and Craig Woodsmall are thrilled to announce the arrival of Owen Cooper Woodsmall. Owen was born on March 4 and weighed in at 8.5 pounds!

Jill Engel-Hellman shares that Madeline Clare Hellman was born on June 24, 2010.

Sumner Handy recently earned his Master’s of Education in Teaching degree from the University of Hawaii’i at Mānoa. He has also just finished his work with Teach For America.

Mike and Dennis Passarella-George share that their son, Joshua David Passarella-George was born on July 8.

Jason Schneiderman’s second book of poems, Striking Surface, won the Richard Snyder Prize from Ashland Poetry Press. He has also received a Second Year Winter Fellowship from The Fine Arts Work Center in Provincetown.

Dan Tillapaugh accepted a new position at the University of San Diego as Graduate Assistant for the Department of Leadership Studies and Instructor, Leadership Studies. He will be working in the same office as alum Paige Haber just like when they were graduate coordinators together in Resident Life!

Greg Toya, former graduate resident director for Easton Hall, and Arlene Miyashiro are engaged! Greg is currently a doctoral candidate in the UCSD/CSUSM Educational Leadership Program working on the dissertation.

Jordan West has accepted a full-time Coordinator position in the Department of Residence Life at Penn State! She starts her new job on August 2.

Announcements and Updates

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intensive professional development opportunity for housing professionals, was created by Jim Grimm, Pam Schreiber, and Norb Dunkel. The first Institute was held at the University of Florida in 1991. In 2001, the Institute moved to the University of Maryland. In 2005, the Institute was re-named the James C. Grimm National Housing Training Institute in honor of one of its founders. More than 650 people have attended the Institute since 1991. After 10 years, the University of Maryland handed over the reins to the University of Georgia with the official passing of the baton occurring at the closing banquet of this summer’s Institute.

UMD Resident Life Staff Transitions

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

Kumba Gbakima is the interim Administrative Assistant for the South Campus Commons Community.

Craig Leets is the new Graduate Administrative Coordinator for the Leonardtown Community.

Judy Martinez is the new Resident Director for Hagerstown Hall.

Krystle Seu is a new Graduate Coordinator for Educational and Outreach programs.

Special welcome to Dr. Mary Hummel who will join the University of Maryland family as the new Assistant Vice President for Student Affairs this August!

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.

The NHTI class of 2010 with Faculty.