

## My Summer with Martha

By Addy Goff

“Well... I am currently studying abroad in England, so I actually do not think I will be able to make it into the office next week for an interview. Do you have Skype by any chance?” I still remember my nervous response to the recruiter, crossing my fingers as I spoke extra clearly into the phone and tried to isolate myself in the corner of a loud double-decker bus. I knew I wanted to spend the summer interning for a company in a large city, but I also knew that securing an internship and finalizing plans from across the pond was much easier said than done. With a six-hour time difference and ambiguous application portals working against me, I was pleasantly surprised to hear back from my first choice company only a couple of weeks after submitting my resume. After two scratchy Skype calls in front of my bright yellow dorm room wall, I accepted an offer to join Martha Stewart Living Omnimedia’s (MSLO) summer internship program in New York, NY.

Before I began my internship at MSLO, I was intimidated and anxious about working for such an established company. As a marketing major, my “editorial” internship title also concerned me. Sure I love to read Martha’s articles about Christmas cookies and flower arrangements, but what did I know about writing articles that appeal to the millions of consumers who look to “Living” for their monthly lifestyle fix? After just a few weeks on the job, however, I recognized that a simple willingness to learn can go a long way. With limited experience and few industry-specific skills, all interns begin on a relatively even playing field. Therefore, individuals can set themselves apart based on how much effort they are willing to put into learning a new skill and the commitment they apply to see projects to fruition. I learned that eagerness and teachability can be more important than the skills and information you already bring to the table. I also learned that relationship building – a deeply rooted value within Levine culture – is imperative for success, especially in new, professional environments.

Looking back on my experience at MSLO, I could not have asked for a more enriching pre-professional experience. Over the course of 11 weeks, I worked alongside editors and content managers to plan and promote Martha Stewart’s annual American Made Program, which seeks to honor creative entrepreneurs who make high-quality products while also preserving traditional craftsmanship. On a daily basis, I researched potential honorees, presented them to editors, and promoted the program via social media, press releases, and advertisements. From a baker developing a gluten-free flour substitute to a couple hand-dyeing fabric using homegrown indigo – the inspiring stories of past winners set a high bar and encouraged me to seek out only the most deserving and creative entrepreneurs to join this year’s group of honorees.

MSLO’s internship program provided me with opportunities to network with and learn about different departments within the company. Programs such as social gatherings, speaker series, and topic seminars encouraged interns to mingle with employees in the merchandising, broadcasting, and publishing branches of the organization. Our intern lunch with Martha serves as one of my favorite memories from the summer. After devouring salads and cookies prepared by her personal chef, our group of interns listened to Martha as she showed us pictures from her personal life and talked about the experiences that have brought her to where she is today. These events not only contributed to my personal and



*All of the interns received personalized cookbooks during our lunch with Martha*

professional development but also fostered a sense of community and friendship among all of the interns. I will never forget the looks we received as our group of 40-plus interns chatted on the subway after work, making our way to Citi Field to cheer on the Mets in our skirts and sandals. I am confident that I will remain in touch with many of my fellow interns, and I look forward to connecting with them in the future as we each continue to develop professionally.

As a junior in the Belk College of Business, an unexpected benefit from my internship is that I can now directly relate classroom material to specific situations I encountered throughout the course of the summer. Not only are internships valuable for networking and navigating future career paths, they also provide insight and knowledge that enhance other aspects of education. I am looking forward to returning to New York this winter for MSLO’s annual American Made Summit, which celebrates the honorees of the competition. Thinking about catching up with former colleagues and experiencing the fruits of my labor reminds me that some

of the most rewarding experiences occur when you decide to put yourself on the line, fill out that application, and press submit. Reaching for the stars can be scary, but as Martha likes to say, “It is a good thing.”



*Located in the Chelsea district of Manhattan, Martha Stewart Living Omnimedia’s offices span the entire 9th floor of the iconic Starrett Lehigh Building*



# NOLS: The Good, the Bad, and the Ugly

By Tyler Rapp

National Outdoor Leadership School (NOLS) was an experience of a lifetime without a doubt. Meeting the scholars and taking in the breathtaking mountain and starry nighttime views were the most enjoyable parts. Coming into UNC Charlotte as a Levine Scholar, I was yearning for a new family, and on NOLS, I got the opportunity to connect with everyone in the best of ways. While the views and stars were amazing, my least favorite part of the trip was definitely the weather – a popular answer among my classmates for sure. While the difficult weather made me mentally, physically, and emotionally stronger, I would be lying if I said it was easy when we trekked for days in freezing winds, snow, and hail.

NOLS taught me many lessons about leadership, tolerance, and teamwork that will serve me well in college. If you can lead a group through the middle of Wyoming in the snow, then you can accomplish just about anything! Honestly, I believe that the leadership skills developed at NOLS will carry through when I begin taking initiatives on UNC Charlotte's campus or leadership roles in clubs or committees. The tolerance built from adversity in the wilderness will always be something on which I can draw. Besides the weather aspect, learning to effectively deal with wild emotions, conflicts, and anything else thrown your way is a valuable life skill that can be applied not only to college but life in general. The teamwork exemplified at NOLS was something I had never experienced before. All of the scholars worked together to complete tasks, such as efficiently routing a particular day's hike. However, what I appreciated most was the fact that everyone was very supportive when someone was having a rough day. Everyone was always willing to help, which was amazing and a much-needed trait for a team.

Spending 25 days in the wilderness is definitely a common ground for Levine Scholars. The best way to meet an older Levine is to begin discussing NOLS and comparing experiences. I love how I may not know an upperclassman, but we can immediately connect by discussing NOLS. I strongly believe that NOLS should continue to be the first summer experience. Not only does it create a bond within your class, but it increases your self-awareness. Not having the "necessities" of everyday life such as immediate access to food, water, showers, bathrooms, air conditioning, and heat really shows you how much we take for granted. Life is made so much simpler by having these conveniences, but you never truly realize how much you need them until they are absent for 25 days. For me, not having my phone and access to talk to my family and friends was initially the hardest part. I was upset for most of the first week because I could not talk to my mom and sister everyday as I was so used to doing, but it definitely got easier and helped prepare me for college. Not having communication with the outside world really helped me appreciate nature and a simpler way of life.

NOLS was something that I could have never seen myself completing – or even beginning. Spending 25 days in the wilderness without showers, bathrooms, and more seems insane, but I could not be any happier or more thankful that I had the opportunity to spend that time with 14 great people. Regardless of the rough times NOLS presented, the positive vastly outweighed the negative. I would – and definitely plan – to have another NOLS-like experience in the future.



*Tyler and Eddie Angelbello after conquering the steep peaks of Wyoming*



*A unique tree pattern after being struck by lightning*



*Leysha Caraballo, Tyler, and Vidhya Balasubramanian in front of a beautiful view after a long hike in the snow*



# Getting to Know “Don’t Sass Yo Mama!” and Silly Billy, the Two Newest Crayons in Our Collection

By Jenny Jessen

This semester we have welcomed two new faces into the Levine office – Yolanda Coleman and Billy Roosenberg. Rather than summarize their resumes and the journey that led each of them to take their respective positions, we asked a series of questions that we felt would paint a more accurate portrait of Billy and Yolanda. These questions covered everything from ideal environment to childhood treasures.

The first question asked was deceptively simple, “What is your favorite potato product?” Both Billy and Yolanda struggled to answer as they realized they had to consider not only regular potatoes, with its plethora of by-products, but also sweet potatoes. The final decision from Yolanda was sweet potato tots while Billy settled on potato wedges with lots of ketchup. He did add the caveat of taking sweet potatoes out of the equation because he could not choose any one product over another.

They were then asked to describe their ideal day with weather, location, and activities included. Billy’s ideal day is spent hiking in the mountains on a beautiful Carolina fall day and in the evening, spending time with friends and family around a bonfire. Yolanda, on the other hand, would spend her ideal day at a spa and yoga retreat in Bali with her four best friends and a personal chef.

The answers to our next question, “What is the one song that is guaranteed to make you dance?” did not disappoint. Yolanda said that if “The Wobble” by V.I.C. is on, she is dancing. Billy’s song of choice is “Footloose” by Kenny Loggins. While asking about music, I was curious how long could they listen to their favorite song before it became annoying. Billy said he could listen to a song consistently for about a month before it became annoying, while Yolanda said her listening threshold varies but is significantly reduced if the accompanying video is subpar.

Next we asked two rapid fire questions – Marvel or DC? Disney or Pixar? Yolanda said her clear favorite was Marvel, because “What superhero could compete with the Hulk?” She had a little more difficulty choosing Disney or Pixar but eventually went with Disney for the childhood memories. Billy also said Marvel was an easy choice due to the Avengers, specifically Captain America and Ironman. He, however, chose Pixar because of current productions, though he made sure to add that many of the Disney movies are timeless classics.

We also wanted to know what color their personalities would be if they were a Crayola crayon, what type of plant they would be, and what they treasured most at age 10. Billy said he would be a marbled blue, green, and yellow crayon called, “Silly Billy”, while Yolanda said she would be a crimson crayon called, “Don’t Sass Yo Mama!” named for her Op-ed in high school and college. If she were a plant, Yolanda said she would be a Venus Flytrap because, and this is a direct quote, “It’s awesome.” Billy said he would be a daylily, because they are resilient; they also grow and build other daylily communities. When Yolanda was 10, her most prized possession was a pink heart-shaped diary with matching lock, while Billy’s were his short-lived pets (including newts, fish, and a hamster) as well as his family’s dog and cat.

We are so happy to welcome these two amazing and vibrant people into our office. We look forward to seeing what they bring to the program!



*Yolanda and Billy attended the Panthers football game with the freshmen and met Mr. and Mrs. Levine*

## Freshman Year Pro Tips

By Taelor Malcolm

Being a student at UNC Charlotte for seven weeks has in no way made me an authority on campus life. These are just a few observations I have made in the last few weeks that could help any freshman, especially a freshman who is also navigating his/her way through a new city and new university.

First off, I have gotten lost on campus so many times that it must be a rite of passage. Unless you have the map reading skills of a National Outdoor Leadership School (NOLS) instructor, assume you will get lost at least once. It is not, however, a big deal because sometimes getting lost can be fun. It has actually led me to find new routes with exciting new surroundings. I now make sure that anytime I am going somewhere on campus I have no inkling of where it is located.

As a new student on campus you also have to adjust to the food. There are people in the world that really love Crown Commons’ food, and there are people like me who really miss home-cooked meals. You have several options when it comes to food that is not from Crown. You could spend the declining balance (DB) that you get on your meal plan at places such as Panda Express, Wendy’s, and Chick-fil-a. Make sure to budget yourself because spending all your DB at the beginning of the semester can mess up your budget for the rest of the weeks to come. You could also make the long hike to Southern Village, but that is a once-in-a-blue-moon kind of trip. The other possibility is that you ask a kind upperclassman to use the kitchen in their apartment. They usually remember what it was like to be a freshman with no access to a kitchen, and they are more than willing to share their appliances. Also, the Levine Scholars Program feeds us really well. Between tailgates, Whole Group Seminars, and other events, there is no shortage of food. There is no way that you will starve.

Sometimes I feel like there is way too much to do. What with all of the emails, homework, clubs, and service project commitments, I feel like there is no way that I am ever going to be on top of everything that I have to do. But being around the older Levine scholars and seeing how well put together they are, even if they tell me that it is all a façade, gives me hope for the days when I get my life together. All in all, college can be challenging at times. You can get lost on the way to a meeting, be up until four in the morning writing a paper, miss your parents and their home cooking, or forget to reply to an email. The way I look at it is that this is the beginning of our adult lives, and it is not necessarily going to be easy. There are going to be some down times, but as NOLS taught us, the good times will outweigh the bad.



*The freshmen take a selfie during the Levine Fall Break Beach Retreat*



*Seth Flynn, Taelor, Chris McKinnis, Patrick Butler, Danielle Miller, and Yousef Abdel-Rahman enjoy the festivities during the freshmen Week of Welcome*

# The Gift that Keeps Growing

By James Parkhill

Since October 2013, I have had the privilege of working with the Irwin and Carol Belk Center in Charlotte's Sedgefield neighborhood to improve their facilities and help enhance opportunities for learning and development both inside and outdoors. The Center targets children with disabilities between the ages of six months and five years and is managed by Easter Seals UCP, an international nonprofit organization serving more than one million people with disabilities annually.

The focus of my civic engagement project is to enrich the outdoor spaces at the Center by embracing the natural playground philosophy. Natural playgrounds expose and connect children with the environment in ways that traditional playgrounds cannot by creating positive outcomes for gross and fine motor development, cognitive skills, attention spans, and creativity. Most existing literature and research on natural playgrounds only address typically developing children, so a large difficulty in this project was determining how to incorporate natural elements, such as logs and stumps for climbing, garden beds, and water features, while being appropriate for children with physical and/or cognitive disabilities. It was important to consider the children at the Center who may not be fully mobile or who may have trouble following and understanding directions due to behavioral or language delays.

I targeted five specific areas within the large outdoor environment with which the children's Center has been blessed. First, I built three raised garden beds along existing sidewalk paths that are accessible for children with limited ability for movement. One garden bed is full of plants to encourage tactile and sensory stimulation such as succulents, moss, and herbs with interesting scents and flavors. Another garden bed contains vegetables such as cucumbers, peppers, onions, and potatoes. Burying and digging up the onions and potatoes expands cognitive and fine motor development and allows children to learn more about natural processes. The final garden area includes a garden bed on wheels that can be moved to different sections of the playground, allowing improved accessibility for all children. This bed holds colorful flowers that attract hummingbirds and butterflies for visual stimulation and further interaction with the natural environment. This section also replaced an area full of sand with sod, preventing children from throwing sand and getting it in their eyes while also creating a soft surface for children to play.

Each of the three garden areas required careful consideration to ensure that they would be safe, developmentally appropriate for all children, and sustainable. Plants used in each garden bed are nontoxic. So even if their primary purpose does not include consumption, they will not have a harmful effect should children sample them. All plants are also perennial and hardy, so that the staff and teachers at the Center will not have a large burden to maintain the natural areas, and the plants will not die during periods of drought or school breaks. Finally, each of the plants and other constructed elements can have a positive impact on children's development regardless of their developmental level.

The other two outdoor areas that I targeted required more rehabilitation. I created a natural play area inside a previous project that was abandoned, unsafe, and uninteresting to the children. This area had a bench with a roof above it, large patches of mud, and swathes of exposed tarp. I re-mulched the entire exposed area and half-buried several logs and stumps that could be used as balance beams and stepping-stones to develop gross motor skills, spatial awareness, and balance. I also attached a trellis on three sides of the bench and planted honeysuckle along the trellis to eventually create an enclosed and natural space that can be used by children feeling overwhelmed or needing silence and solitude. The honeysuckle attracts insects and offers a sweet snack while also being extremely hardy and fast growing. I am currently building a maze out of bamboo fences in the remaining portion of the natural play area, offering cognitive, physical, and creative



*The flower garden on wheels, revealing the newly sodded play area*



*The raised tactile garden*



*The original conditions at the site of the natural play area*



*The newly mulched natural play area showing the buried logs, stumps, and the covered bench*



*The lattice with honeysuckle growing on it, rolls of bamboo for the bamboo maze can be seen in the background*



stimulation for children with higher energy and activity levels. The last outdoor area that I focused on involved a water drainage that flooded often and had dangerous, unstable coverings over portions of it. I built a low deck-like cover over the drainage and planted papyrus, horsetail, and other nontoxic water plants so the children could access the soggy environment without being unsafe.

I am currently working with a UNC Charlotte professor to create a series of teaching aids and outlines that teachers can use to incorporate the natural elements in the Center's playgrounds into classroom lessons. These plans will hopefully maximize the potential of the natural playground for children with disabilities, allowing targeted lessons and strategies that will further children's growth and development. Working on this project has allowed me to watch the progress of so many interrelated components. Though the Center has been through some recent challenges, it and the children have grown along with the garden and the entire Southend and Sedgefield neighborhoods.

*The new covering over the drainage with some water plants poking through*



## Goodwill Industries of the Southern Piedmont

By Larry Lardieri

When the time came to select a nonprofit agency to intern with during the summer, I felt lost. None of the locations on the list of previous placements really appealed to me. There were plenty of sites that seemed like cool places to work and others that seemed stimulating, but I wanted more. I wanted to assist people face-to-face. This was a large part of why I sought out Goodwill Industries of the Southern Piedmont (GISP). I identified strongly with their mission to teach people job skills and assist them in achieving personal goals. I entered on the first day with the intent to help in just that way and left feeling that I made a positive impact on the people I assisted. It was the best feeling.



*Larry (center) stands with the workforce of the Career Development Center at Goodwill Industries of the Southern Piedmont*

In order to work with both clients and coworkers at GISP, my professional communication skills were crucial. I would begin my work by sitting with a client and figuring out whether they had just lost a job or been released from prison. After collecting some basic information, I would ask them about their previous jobs and what they enjoyed about each one. Next, we discussed what they wanted employers to know about them. From this information, I was able to create a unique, professional, and attractive resume for each of my clients. To craft these resumes to the standards of the Business Relationship Management (BRM) Team, the department in charge of finding out what makes applicants competitive, I had to use my attention to detail, professionalism, and creativity. Since I was working with clients who had diverse histories and work experiences, the way that I would portray information was incredibly important. It could be the difference in someone getting a job or not. As time went on, I improved and went from asking the BRM team for tips to the BRM team asking me if different resume formats worked. The tasks I completed were small steps in the process of elevating the community "through the power of work," which is the mission of GISP.

Through my experiences of meeting people and talking about their lives, I gained a clearer understanding of just how many people in the Charlotte community need help finding employment. I also witnessed the diversity of Charlotte as I worked with people from across the world, including South Sudan and the Democratic Republic of Congo. By sitting down and helping people with something I considered small, such as creating a resume, I could help equip them with the confidence to succeed when they walked out of the door.

While interactions with clients made up the largest part of my internship, I also spoke extensively with some of the leaders of GISP and the community. Through these conversations, I noticed a recurring theme: each person with whom I met seemed to end their tale with how important it is to be open to new experiences and opportunities. This is a characteristic I already possess, but now I have a better understanding of its importance. I also found that talking about my interests was key when interacting with senior leadership because shared experiences always seem to arise.

I think my summer at GISP was the best choice I could have made as a Charlotte citizen and aspiring engineer. The diverse communication skills that I was able to hone will help me on project teams and other areas of my profession in the future. This was a very important part of my experience, but more than that, I will miss the wonderful people and work environment that I was a part of every day!





*Overlooking the view from the peak of the Baths of Aphrodite in Paphos, Cyprus*

## Paradise Found: A Semester Abroad in Cyprus

By Isabella Calpakis

During my first two years at UNC Charlotte, I fell in love with North Carolina. As an out-of-state student, I never thought twice about stepping onto planes since it is my main method of transportation whenever I return home to New York. When it became time to decide on a study abroad destination, I had the world before me. My final decision was to spend the spring semester of my sophomore year on the island of Cyprus, a Mediterranean oasis. My grandparents raised my mother and aunt in Cyprus, and all of my family there was thrilled to hear that their “American cousin” was crossing the pond for longer than just a vacation stay.

With my beloved Nikon tucked safely in my backpack and my wardrobe stuffed in suitcases, I began the 15-hour journey to my new home. Orientation allowed all of the students to meet, and then the semester began. I was thrilled to be taking four classes that suited my interests while also satisfying my credit hour requirement: Persuasion, Pop Culture, Photography, and Human Nutrition. Through Global Semesters, students were placed in off-campus housing that offered gorgeous views of Cyprus’ capital, Nicosia. My love for the island became something that is indescribable. The sun was always shining, the people were kinder than necessary, and the island boasts some of the most magnificent shores in the world. I had traveled to Cyprus once before when I was younger, but at 19, I was able to appreciate the Cypriot culture and understand why my grandparents are so proud of their home.

Since Cyprus is an island, the only option for traveling outside of the country is by plane. Luckily for my Global Semesters classmates and I, Ryan Air and Easy Jet proved to be willing accomplices. In April we decided to make the most of our spring break by embarking on a month-long journey across Europe. Our first stop was Basel, Switzerland, where we quickly fell in love with the place the Swiss call home. After visiting Zurich, Lucerne, and Freiburg, Germany, we returned back to base in Cyprus to pack for our next trip. Two days later, we flew to Athens and visited the Greek islands



*Paros, Greece*



*Overlooking the canal in Zurich, Switzerland*



*Gondola ride in Venice, Italy*





*Overlooking the harbor during sunset with study abroad friends in Paphos, Cyprus*

of Hydra, Paros, and Aegina during a day-long boat trip. I attended church with my cousins at the Metropolitan Cathedral of Athens for Orthodox Easter, and the next morning my travel companions and I flew to Rome. After a few days of sightseeing, we drove to Pisa before heading to our hotel in Florence. It was by far one of my favorite cities on the trip – the authentic Italian culture and layout of the city were immersive and meeting locals was a highlight. I also met up with a fellow Levine Scholar who also happened to be in Florence. Finding a familiar face in a foreign city was the most incredible part of the entire break. After Florence, we visited Venice for a day and flew out to Barcelona, our last city of the trip.

Studying abroad helped me realize that no matter where you are in the world, not every single day will be perfect. Some days I was beyond the point of exhaustion from so much travel, some days homesickness hit hard, and some days I absolutely dreaded the end of the semester when I would have to leave the island that had been so good to me. These aspects challenged my character in a way that it had never been challenged before. I could either sit in my apartment counting down the days until it was time to go home, or open my door and embrace the day.

I returned home with a better understanding of how extraordinarily humbling travel can be. I realized that the most important lessons – such as sharing a smile with someone who does not speak your language or rejoicing in the middle of an airport thousands of miles from home – may not be learned in a classroom. I figured out that what matters most is never where you are, but with whom you share the journey. Before venturing into the sweet Mediterranean, I was told that studying abroad would be the greatest semester of my life. On my plane ride back to America after the five greatest months of my life, I realized just how much truth that statement held.



*Aegina, Greece*



*Boat ride over Lake Zurich, Switzerland*



# Charlotte Football is All Grown Up

By Jefferson Cooper

In my time as a member of Niner Nation, I have missed only two home football games. On both occasions, I was either glued to the radio or reading play-by-play updates on my phone. Needless to say, I love football. I grew up in college towns and have been to countless football games with thousands of screaming fans, seas of parking lots filled with tailgaters, and game-day traditions that have lasted generations. To an average high school senior, a college football team might have been a bonus when looking at a potential school. For me, it was a necessity.

I was a freshman during Charlotte Football's inaugural year. In my opinion, the first two seasons of Charlotte football felt like something of a test run. I felt somewhat responsible for the future legacy of our program and began analyzing every aspect of our game-day experience. I critiqued aspects such as student attendance, pregame music, jersey selection, tailgating atmosphere and the weather. The list was endless as I tried to make our school's football experience fit into a mold that it was not quite ready to fill.

But something was different about Charlotte's second home football game of the year against Florida Atlantic University (FAU), and the feeling was electric. For me, the excitement started with an email from Dr. Michael Richardson, our faithful tailgating host: "Menu: 15 pounds of BBQ, mac and cheese, slaw and all the fixin's plus alternative selections, drinks and dessert." That message nearly brought tears to my eyes as it was my first realization that the tailgate food selection had been changed from breakfast to dinner as the FAU game marked the debut of the newly installed stadium lights. When game day finally arrived, I ate so much barbeque that I worried I may miss some of the game with a severe stomachache. Yet as I sat back and considered getting a second helping, I realized that the atmosphere that night was better than any game before.

Still being somewhat skeptical, I made my way to the new student tailgating village that had been relocated next to a grassy area no more than a stone's throw away from the main student entrance. Upon arrival, a familiar feeling came over me as I gazed upon the sea of tents filled with dancing students eating hotdogs and listening to blaring music. This was the electric football atmosphere with which I had grown up. Excitement filled the air as my fellow students and I were packed in droves waiting to file into the stadium and support our 49ers.

I walked into the stadium 30 minutes before kickoff to watch the teams warm up. Charlotte was dressed in all black to commemorate the first night game; FAU looked big and somewhat intimidating. Some doubts and questions still ran through my head. What if the students did not make it in? What if we lose by 50? What if the cloudy drizzle turned into an all out downpour? But somehow, despite the weather and the formidable opponent, the students arrived. I watched in amazement as the stadium was filled to a standing room only capacity. The student section was nearly busting at the seams during the National Anthem, and during the coin toss, I received a text from a friend who said the line to enter the stadium was still backed up.

Charlotte lost that night to FAU, 17-7. Despite the loss, I left the game with a smile on my face. We completed a night game in front of a record 17,444 fans. It was the most fun I ever had at a Niner football game. Charlotte football is all grown up, and I am thrilled to say I got to see it happen.



*Students cheer for the 49ers at their second home football game of the season*



# St. Baldrick's: The Bald and the Beautiful

By Ryan Mach

On September 25, 2015, I made an interesting fashion choice. I got the top of my head (temporarily) tattooed. This was not just my decision but the result of helping to host a fundraising event, participating in said event, and, most importantly, bending to the will of a 5-year-old.

Let's start with hosting the fundraiser. This event was for St. Baldrick's Foundation, a nonprofit, which raises funds and support for pediatric cancer research. The fundraiser culminates in an event in which participants, called "shavees," shave their heads to show support and raise awareness. I participated in the event last year when I joined the Psychology Student Coalition on campus. The president at the time was a member of the sorority that brought St. Baldrick's to UNC Charlotte. She was a shavee and convinced me to do the same.

This year, as president of the Psychology Student Coalition, I was happy to help again. I gave advice on how to advertise the event, encouraged my club members to participate, and helped with set up. On the day of the event, I walked in, laden with cups and drinks and puffing from the exertion of the climb to the top floor of the Student Union, only to find that none of the items I brought were needed. Instead, they needed someone to organize the list of shavees, as we had more than 20 and only three haircutters.

During this time, our first speaker of the night began her speech. From what I hear, she did an amazing job and brought home the importance of this research as a survivor of a pediatric brain tumor. Not only did she survive, she has thrived. She is also a good friend and a testament to the benefits of always staying positive. Unfortunately, I was still busy organizing the shavee list during her speech, so I did not get to experience it firsthand. Otherwise, I would have been leading the standing ovation she received. As I furiously tried to pull the list together, they put up the greatest attraction of the night. It was not the food, the henna station, or even cornhole. It was something greater than all of these – the bouncy house.

Yes, the greatest of all childhood attractions. I was so excited to see this that I rushed to finish organizing so I could bounce. After indulging my childishness for a while, an actual 5-year-old asked me to bounce with him. I was in the middle of making a fool of myself and making my new little friend laugh when I was called to get my head shaved. During the haircut, my new friend did his best to make me laugh and to get my haircutter to make a mistake. It was a messy situation, but we pulled through – my head intact. At the suggestion of a friend, my next stop was the henna station. For those who do not know, henna is a temporary tattoo. I asked the tattoo artist to put something on my head and ended up with "49ers." If that is not school spirit, I do not know what is! The next day, I went to the UNC Charlotte football game in my morph suit and was a huge hit on the jumbotron for my mad dance moves...and definitely not for my odd outfit and tattooed head.

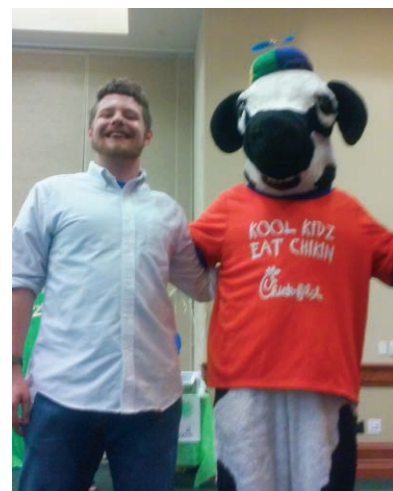
In the end, we raised a "hair" under \$6,000 during the event. I heard some great speakers, I gained a new friend, and I made some questionable fashion decisions. What a great night!



*A member of Alpha Omega Epsilon, post-shaving with one of her supporters*



*Ryan's henna tattoo*



*Ryan spends some quality time with the Chick-Fil-A cow during the St. Baldrick's fundraiser*



# Hippos Eat Tomatoes: Lessons Learned in South Africa

By Justin Reid

After having my first cup of coffee to shake off the jetlag and stepping out into the street that first morning in Stellenbosch, South Africa, I had one of those rare moments of genuine transcendence. Looking out past the traditional, Dutch architecture of the town to the surrounding mountains in the beautiful Cape Winelands inspired captivation. There is a recognizable spirit in the place, evocative of some beauty both jointly created by and also beyond God and man.

This beauty belies a historical and ongoing struggle of inequality within the town and all of South Africa. Apartheid, a system of racial segregation in South Africa that lasted from 1948 to 1994, has left a visible imprint on the nation. In fact, the building in which the architects of apartheid signed the system into law still stands in Stellenbosch. During apartheid, people of color were forcibly removed from their homes, not allowed to live or work in “Whites-only” areas, and strictly punished for being in the wrong place at the wrong time without official documentation.

In the wake of such a brutal system being removed from law only 21 years ago, it is not hard to imagine that inequality still persists. The major cities are overwhelmingly White in population, and people of color are typically seen in service roles working for White-owned businesses. However, my first true look at the vast gaps between those at the top and bottom of the social strata was my trip through Kayamandi. An informal settlement located on the outskirts of Stellenbosch, Kayamandi houses Black residents living in abject poverty. Crude homes made of plywood with corrugated metal roofs are the typical dwellings, and running water in the homes is most certainly not a given. Barbershops and street vendors are the only visible signs of employment in the area. I was taken aback; to see people who are every bit as valid and important as any other human living in these conditions and hidden from sight in the splendor of Stellenbosch really personalized my understanding of the harsh apartheid regime.

The coursework for the program was in two parts; the first of which was a class on the HIV/AIDS epidemic worldwide down to the smaller scale within South Africa. In addition to learning what the disease is, much of the instruction focused on the ethics of the issue. When it comes to sexually transmitted infections, many people are quick to believe it is the result of a poor moral choice. Others provide a different explanation for why it is still a widespread problem and why, in some circumstances, it makes logical sense for people to put themselves in a situation in which contracting the disease is possible. For a poor young girl from an informal settlement who struggles to put food on the table, trading sexual favors for money and transportation to meet immediate needs makes rational sense. It was this sort of lesson that served as a reminder to me that issues such as the HIV/AIDS epidemic are human issues – meaning they are infinitely more complex and personal than a surface-level discussion can explain and that compassion and understanding are key to understanding.

In the second course we worked with a community leader in a primary school. The school was in a mostly poor farming area just outside of Stellenbosch, and the focus of this course was ethical and sustainable community development. In our group’s time there, models of top-down aid were vigorously challenged in favor of bottom-up approaches focused on personal relationships. The problem with the former approach is perfectly characterized by a story from a TED Talk by Ernesto Sirotti about a group of Italian workers teaching Zambian people how to grow tomatoes. Believing they were going to solve Zambian hunger, they were surprised that the locals had no interest in the project. Soon after the tomatoes grew large and ripe, hippos came and ate every last one of them. What was the response from the Zambians when the Italians asked why they did not tell them about the hippos? “You never asked.” In being skeptical about bad aid, I now have to ask myself, “Do I have the community’s best interests at heart?” when getting involved in any community engagement project.

There were small, fun excursions throughout the trip, too. We went to a wildlife reserve where elephants and lions came within feet of our truck, I hiked with a group to the top of Lion’s Head, and we visited the scenic Cape Point. Overall, I brought home important lessons about my role in the world and taking an ethical, sustainable stance in community engagement.



*Justin stands at the iconic Cape of Good Hope in South Africa*



# Beyond Classroom Walls

By Katie Waldroup

As a dual special and elementary education major, I have conquered mountains that I never thought I could climb. There are times that I have succeeded: papers written, tests passed, countries traveled, and internships completed. There are also times that I have stumbled along the way or failed to meet my goals. The challenge of senior year is both exhilarating and daunting, but I know that I will make it through. I have made it this far because I kept my head up and my feet moving. I am not stopping anytime soon. I survived the Alaskan wilderness, a summer internship with Urban Ministry Center, two months teaching in Cusco, Peru, three weeks studying diversity in South African schools, and 6.5 semesters on UNC Charlotte's beautiful campus. With less than a year until I graduate and enter the professional world as an educator, I can look back at the past few years and say I did not merely survive, I thrived.

It is exhilarating to begin to see how everything fits together. I can take the lessons I learned through my summer adventures, the content I learned in classes, and the skills I learned from clinical experiences in the community to form my own methods and perspectives. A year from now I hope to have my own classroom where I can help my students learn to build their own experiences from whatever life gives them. It is simple to read about a procedure in a book, but it is an incredibly complex task to assess the needs of real students and develop a plan to benefit them. Some days are easier than others; sometimes students benefit from my decisions, and sometimes they continue to struggle. On the tough days, I remember hiking through the snowy passes of the Northern Talkeetna Mountains in Alaska when the only way to the other side was to take one step at a time. It did not matter how slowly we went, only that we stayed together and kept moving. The same is true for my students; no matter how they struggle, it only matters that we stay together as a team and keep working one step at a time.

The key to helping my students succeed is a skill I have been learning all of my life – building personal relationships. My favorite teachers and mentors since I was a child have always been those who take the time to learn about me before insisting I learn from them. The first time I gave serious thought to this concept was during my internship with Urban Ministry Center, a Charlotte nonprofit that serves individuals affected by homelessness. Each person I met had a unique story of how poverty affected her or him, and each person had a unique set of challenges and needs. But before I could learn, I first had to listen. The same is true for my students and everyone else I meet in life. We cannot know the strengths or needs of another person without first building a relationship, and we cannot effectively help each other without first building a foundation of trust.

Two very different experiences abroad taught me very similar lessons. I spent two months volunteering at an elementary school and an orphanage for girls in Cusco, Peru where I lived with a Peruvian family and developed my Spanish skills. Facing daily challenges and getting sick twice taught me how to climb a mountain one step at a time. In Stellenbosch, South Africa I studied the diversity in their schools with faculty and students from UNC Charlotte and Stellenbosch University. From these experiences, I learned that teaching must be culturally responsive, and again, knowledge of cultural differences must come from positive personal relationships with individual students.



*Katie during her NOLS trip in Alaska*



*Katie overlooking Cusco, Peru*



*Katie spent two months volunteering at an elementary school and an orphanage for girls in Cusco, Peru*

My time at UNC Charlotte, spent between courses on campus and clinical experiences in local elementary classrooms, has reinforced and expounded upon the lessons I learned in my summer experiences. My professors have helped me balance evidence-based methods and research with valuing the unique gifts of each student. The teachers and students from my clinical experiences have mentored and challenged me by refining my skills and encouraging me to step out of my comfort zone. I have learned that to be an effective educator and global citizen, I must be aware of my own strengths, weaknesses, and biases, so I can continually work to better myself and benefit those around me. Senior year is not the culmination of an education; it is the beginning of learning how my greatest passions can meet the world's greatest needs.





UNC CHARLOTTE

The Levine Scholars Program  
9201 University City Boulevard  
Charlotte, NC 28223

# The Levine Scholars Program

The Levine Scholars Program is a four-year scholarship that includes full tuition, room, board and four summer experiences, including study abroad, which will develop leadership skills and social awareness. In 2010, the inaugural class of Levine Scholars enrolled at UNC Charlotte and approximately 20 scholarships are awarded to high school seniors every year. The Levine Scholarship is valued at \$105,000 for in-state students and \$155,000 for out-of-state students over four years.

Levine Scholars are talented high school seniors from across the United States whose accomplishments epitomize the values of philanthropists Sandra and Leon Levine, including a demonstrated commitment to community service, intellectual curiosity and the capacity for ethical leadership. Through community engagement, mentoring relationships with civic and

business leaders in Charlotte, and a rigorous academic program, Levine Scholars develop the characteristics necessary to produce positive change in the communities in which they live and work. Scholars are able to turn their community service interest into actions with community service grants of \$8,000 to support their work in the community.

It is this unique connection to Charlotte – its resources, leaders and challenges – that differentiates this program from other scholarships of its kind. The program is specifically designed to expose Levine Scholars to the urban culture of a thriving city and to engage them in service to address needs of the citizens of Charlotte.



*Levine Scholars Class of 2016*