The Ashland University Honors Program traveled to a local camp as a part of their seventh annual retreat, participating in both leadership and educational activities.

Seventy-four students, along with Honors Program director, Dr. Christopher Swanson, spent a weekend at Camp Otyokwah, a retreat center in Butler, Ohio. Swanson explained why the Honors Program continues to take this trip each fall.

“The cornerstone of the Honors Program is the belief that intellectual stimulation and camaraderie among Honors students gives them a more complete college experience. The Honors Retreat is a great opportunity to develop that camaraderie and is particularly important for incoming freshmen to get to know each other as well as the upperclassmen in the Honors Program. The discussion of the summer reading also gives students the opportunity to engage in intellectual stimulation,” Swanson said.

On Friday night, Swanson led introductory games and activities. Then, later that night, the students discussed their summer reading book, *A Lesson Before Dying*, by Ernest Gaines.

On Saturday morning, the students split into groups, each with a different camp counselor. The groups completed a variety of outdoor challenge activities that allowed them to bond with each other and learn to work together.

Then, after the group activities, eleven students stayed with Swanson to go canoeing. Kayle Timura, a freshman Honors Program student, noted that the team building events were her favorite part because they “were really creative and made us use our physical and mental skills.”

Timura described how she benefited from the trip. “The retreat allowed me to meet many more Honors students and gave me connections. I know some upperclassmen who will happily give me advice anytime,” Timura said.

The retreat took place from Friday, August 22 to Saturday, August 23.
Beginnings and Endings

When you're a freshman, you arrive at college with countless questions. If you're like myself, one question will resonate for the first couple days: what will my professors be like? In your four years at Ashland, you will meet these professors and develop relationships with them that will last years; they will help you through your rough patches, and they will be your constant motivation during your classes and, ultimately, your Capstone.

As a psychology major, I've had the privilege of getting to know all the professors in this department, and this semester, two of them, Dr. Alinde Moore and Dr. Kathy Petrill, retired. Dr. Moore, who has worked at Ashland University since 1985, was my advisor for three years, and I would spend hours in her office talking about any topic we stumbled across. Dr. Petrill, who was a professor since 1991, was my first psychology professor, and the first person I met at Ashland University who made me believe I was going to be okay away from home.

Both professors encourage the incoming freshmen to challenge themselves here: “Be open to discovery and go into different courses with an open mind,” Dr. Petrill says. Dr. Moore agrees, saying, “Don’t get hung up on a course thinking you might not get an A—this is where you find yourself.” They both say that there is so much opportunity here, and freshmen need to be able to branch out to see exactly what Ashland University offers its students.

Ashland University is a wonderful experience for both the students and professors. “Ashland has been my life,” Dr. Moore says fondly, “It has enriched my life, and I am very satisfied even if it wasn’t what I set out to do.” Dr. Petrill found an added pleasure in seeing her students grow in their time here: “It is inspiring and humbling when you get to see freshmen, who are not secure, grow into seniors, who are more confident and ready to contribute to the world.” Dr. Petrill says that students need to learn to like themselves so that they are confident and not afraid to help others.

Dr. Moore and Dr. Petrill helped me grow into the senior that I am today, and I could not be more grateful to them. They will be missed here, but this simply opens up an opportunity for a new beginning with other, equally wonderful professors. I highly encourage freshmen to get to know their professors; you won’t regret it.

In Their Shoes: My Trip to a Greek Orthodox Monastery

On a dark, wet, Friday night, I hopped into a car with three of my fellow Honors students and drove 11 miles to the St. Gregory Palamas Greek Orthodox Monastery, where we stood for two hours in a small, dimly-lit room with the smoke of incense pooling around our feet. Obviously, this was not how any of us originally pictured our Friday night; we were there to fulfill a requirement for one of our Honors classes.

Honors students have the opportunity every semester to take one (or more) of the specific honors classes offered. These are classes capped at 15 students—all of whom are in the Honors Program—that count both toward graduation from the Honors Program and core credits. One of the assignments for my Honors Exploring World Religions class was a site visit, which meant I had to go to a service of a religion that was not my own, hence my adventure with my friends to the Greek Orthodox Monastery.

When we first entered the monastery, three of my five senses were automatically engaged. It was dark. It smelled like sweet smoke. And it was completely silent. We all took a seat in front of the altar and after about five minutes the room was full of people. We sat for 15 minutes in complete silence, taking in our surroundings and absorbing the shock of the vast culture change, from Convo’s rambunctious chatter to the still silence that surrounded us.

On the first day of the Honors Exploring World Religions class, Dr. Aune explained the mindset to have when exploring and learning about other religions. He said that the purpose of the class was not to convert anyone or find ways a religion was “wrong,” but rather to understand the religion from the perspective of a follower of that religion. This mindset was reinforced in my experience at the Greek Orthodox Monastery. I had never experienced anything like it in my life and it taught me that in order to respect the differences of others we have to overcome our own discomfort and look at things from their perspectives.
All Across the Globe

Every year, Ashland University sponsors many opportunities for students to experience cultures in other countries. Some trips last a week or two while others are for an entire semester. Some are more academically focused while others are service or mission oriented. Regardless of the nature and duration of the trip, students who go abroad return to Ashland with a unique perspective of the world and countless stories to tell.

This past summer, Honors Program students Alaina Berry and Kelly Crowl traveled abroad for several weeks. While Alaina’s trip to Costa Rica was academically focused and Kelly went on a mission trip sponsored through AU’s Center for Religious Life to South Africa, both women share a love for the native people that they met on their respective trips.

¡Pura vida!: Living and Learning in Costa Rica

By Alaina Berry

When I look back on my college years, my trip to Costa Rica will encompass some of my fondest memories. I participated in the AU in Costa Rica Study Abroad Program from mid-May until mid-June of 2014. While abroad, I stayed with my host family (my mama Marta and my sister Alexandra) from a small town called Santa Ana and attended class for five days during the week at Conversa – a beautiful school overlooking the mountainside. My classes, my conversations with my family, and my interactions with bus drivers, servers, and vendors, were all conducted in Spanish. While this may seem intimidating (which it was to me), it helped to know that the ticos (the Costa Rican people) understood that Spanish was not my first language.

The ticos were incredibly patient with me. While I muddled my way through basic sentences, they really listened – asking questions to make sure that they understood me and often gently correcting me so that I didn’t make the same mistake twice (which I did). One encounter I will never forget was with a security guard who worked at one of the museums in San José, Costa Rica’s capital. After checking my friend’s and my bags and clearing us through the gateway, we told him that we were with the group of girls ahead of us so that he didn’t have to give directions a second time. He was surprised that we spoke Spanish and endearingly replied in Spanish that he didn’t know the proper word in English, but he thought that we were very nice girls.

While this may seem like a small moment compared to our adventures hiking up to Monteverde to zip line, traversing to Irazú to see a volcano, exploring the busy, downtown city-life in San José, or basking in the sun while visiting with monkeys in Manuel Antonio National Park, this one man proved how it is a person’s attitude and friendly disposition that can make a moment especially memorable. I had an incredible experience during my time in Costa Rica – building language skills, understanding a new culture, and expanding my horizons – and I have the ticos to thank for that.

¡Pura vida!

South Africa – One World, One Family

By Kelly Crowl

From lion parks to playing with African children to trying to speak Zulu, the memories and stories that I have from my three and a half week trip to Molweni, South Africa are endless. As I look back on my time spent on the other side of the world, I realize that it was the people that I encountered that made it such a life changing experience.

The family that my team stayed with in Molweni excitedly welcomed us into their home and were always excited to spend time with us. Even though our “Ma” only spoke Zulu—the native language of the area—she eagerly waited for us to return each day. Every night she cooked us delicious dinners, and in the mornings, she woke up early to warm huge pots of water for our baths. She even offered to wash all of our clothing (an offer even more impressive as laundry was done by hand)! We spent as much time as possible with her and her children, ranging in age from 8 to 29, as they spent their evenings trying to teach us Zulu and we tried to help them improve their English skills. Despite the language barrier that we often faced with the family, their hospitality and willingness to open their homes to us allowed us an authentic experience in the Valley with people who were just as excited to spend time with us as we were with them.

There were also two sisters we met who enthusiastically shared their hearts and home with us. Even though they lived on minimal funds, they eagerly welcomed us in for a delicious home-cooked dinner on our last night in Molweni. Repeatedly, the sisters hugged each of us and said how thankful they were to have us in their homes and to be sharing their food with us. They told us that they had been praying for their brothers and sisters across the ocean and were thrilled to finally meet us. These ladies reminded me of the simple beauty of love that can be found in all people—whether we have known them our entire lives or met just a few days ago.
Greetings!

When in college, it’s easy to focus on the future—whether that’s making it to the end of the semester or life after graduation. We’re trained to constantly look toward and plan for the future; this isn’t a bad thing, but it can easily consume our thoughts and take us away from the people placed in our lives at the moment. Take time today to be present in the moment—take advantage of unplanned opportunities that come your way, enjoy the people in your life right now, and take time to do something that enjoy you enjoy every day.

The Honors Program at Ashland University offers both academic and social programs that are great ways to spend time with great people; engage in the Program and get to know some of the students, staff, and spend time in the present with the people around you!

Abundant and enormous thanks to Dr. Swanson, Becky Schaaf, the Honors Society Officers and Interns, and all the other members of the Honors Program who make the Honors Bugle and the Honors Program possible. It is the combination of the social and academic aspects that make this a truly fantastic program. None of this would be possible without you.

Kelly Crowl  
Editor

One of Ashland’s excellent educational aspects is the opportunity to attend symposiums throughout the year by professionals in your academic field. As a biology major, I found myself at two quite interesting research talks this semester.

The first talk was given by an Ohio State psychology professor by the name of Dr. Lisa Christian, who explained her research on stress and immune function in pregnant women. She had designed and completed a project to determine if there is a relationship between pregnancy and the ability to tolerate stress. She assessed stress levels by evaluating serum cytokines, which are released in the body as it experiences stress. The Trier Social Stress test, which instills interpersonal stress through an intimidating interview with stone-faced interrogators, was completed for 40 women and stress levels were measured by the cytokine analysis and the ladies’ personal evaluations. Throughout her talk, Dr. Christian referenced the crucial role that her research students played, one that many students at Ashland also fill. Overall, the study found that white pregnant women were more able to handle the stress of the Trier test than white non-pregnant women, though no parallel trend was observed in the African American group. It was very encouraging to see several Ashland psychology professors attending the symposium, serving as a reminder that the scientific community is expansive and that research discoveries can be new and pertinent to even the highest trained experts in academia.

A few days later, biologist Dr. Christine Weingart from Denison University presented her work with an onion bacteria called *Burkholderia cenocepacia*. It seems that this specific bacteria is a concern for cystic fibrosis patients, since it often infects the mucus in their lungs and displays a terrifyingly large range of symptoms. My previous knowledge was considerably increased as Dr. Weingart shared her technique of eliminating a protein in the bacteria in order to determine the protein’s unique role in the cell and, thence, how to treat the condition. Dr. Weingart’s research – though highly academic – seemed relatable in a sense, since she referenced the fact that her procedure required her to determine, by trial and error, a very specific environment for the bacteria. She actually experimented with corn, onion roots, human saliva, soil, and even raw sewage in order to progress with her project. This research is still underway, and Dr. Weingart plans to discover the secrets of this bacteria in order to develop a strategy about bacterial analysis and to treat cystic fibrosis patients with the infection.

To make the most of current research, Ashland brings experts and researchers from a multitude of disciplines to present to students and faculty who care to listen. Maybe attending a presentation like these will form new networking relationships for you or spark an interest to grow bacteria with raw sewage. Perhaps it will simply inspire you with a great idea for a thesis. You never know, it could be life-changing!

Dr. Lisa Christian  
Psychology Professor  
The Ohio State University

Dr. Christine Weingart  
Biology Professor  
Denison University

Academics Outside the Classroom  
By Alyssa Predota

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