Your Environmental Road Trip Speaks at Ashland University

By: Valerie Grosso
On March 31, the Honors Program hosted its semiannual lecture. This spring the Honors Program hosted speakers from Your Environmental Road Trip (YERT). Two of YERT’s founding members, Mark Dixon and Ben Evans, chronicled their year-long trek across America using self-imposed “road rules” and shared their discoveries learned along the way. While exploring America’s unique approach to environmental sustainability traveling in a 2006 Ford Escape Hybrid, Dixon and Evans, along with Evans’ wife, Julie, sought to learn about a variety of ecological processes and met hundreds of interesting, innovative people along the way. The rules included such challenges as creating no more than one shoebox of garbage for all three of them each month (and their garbage stayed with them in the car the whole time!), restricting water use to no more than 25 gallons per person daily and not using incandescent lights. To put some of this in perspective, the average American makes around 33 shoe boxes of garbage each month! Their experience is captured in a full length feature film and Dixon shared clips of the film throughout the lecture. Dixon encouraged the audience to think locally and shared information on many topics including peak oil, resource depletion and garbage. The YERT members are committed to helping America address these and many more environmental issues. Their unique approach is solutions-oriented and their message is one of love for humanity and love of the earth. After leaving Ashland, Dixon and Evans headed to Yale University for the YERT feature film world premiere at the Environmental Film Festival at Yale (EFFY). Their lecture left an impact on those who attended and encouraged us to think about ways that we can have a positive impact on the environment. We wish them all the best as they continue to educate others and promote their film.

Honors Housing Remains Popular

By: Jeni Dodd
One of the great features of the Honors Program at Ashland University is the option for freshmen students to select Honors housing that is located in dorms most students would not be allowed to live in until their upperclass years. Honors women are housed in Clayton Hall; and Jacobs Hall has five double rooms for Honors men. Clayton is unique because it offers “suite” style living where two rooms are connected by a middle common room that all four suitmates share. The women like the community feel on the Honors floor since they are taking similar classes and have similar interests. Jacobs’ dorm rooms tend to be on the large side which makes it a desirable dorm. Honors men like the large room size, the respectfulness of floor members and the study atmosphere the dorm provides. According to Nancy Andres, Honors Program Coordinator, upperclass Honors students select their rooms first; then all incoming freshmen that request Honors housing are put on a list in order of when they are accepted into the Honors Program. An individual who is accepted into the Program in September is more likely to get into Honors housing than an individual accepted in February. So I guess there’s truth in the saying “the early bird catches the worm!” Honors housing continues to be popular among Honors Program students as demand has grown each year since its inception in fall 2009.
Ashland University Honors Program Goes International!

By: Melany Bagnola
On May 6, five Honors Program students will finish classes and set out on the next journey in their lives. These students, as well as Honors Program Director Dr. Christopher Swanson, will embark on a journey of a lifetime through the capitals of Europe! The tour will include visits to London, Paris, Prague and Berlin. On the first day in each city, the students will dive into a “City as Text” excursion, where they will discover history and culture before delving into sightseeing with their guide. However, before the students fly off to Europe, a little classroom time is necessary.

The Capitals of Europe tour is linked with the Spring 2011 Honors 390: Honors Interdisciplinary Seminar course. The class is divided into four sections, highlighting each city individually. The Paris unit focuses on art that can be found at the Louvre. To prepare for Prague, the students read Kafka’s The Trial and discussed the interesting elements it encompasses. For Berlin, they watched the movie The Lives of Others and held a discussion. The London segment included reading Shakespeare’s All’s Well That Ends Well, which the students will see live at the Globe Theater during their time in England.

Upon interviewing Meredith Liedtke, growing enthusiasm for the trip was evident. Meredith first heard of the tour during a visit to Ashland University and it sparked her interest right away. Always wanting to visit Europe and also being a fan of flying, Meredith exclaims, “I’m very excited, I can’t wait! I’m so excited!” She looks forward to riding a train for the first time, sightseeing and especially seeing the Eiffel Tower. The students will also complete a final project based on all of their experiences during the journey. The Capitals of Europe tour is sure to be a richly rewarding trip!

Relay For Life

By: Kassey Sikora
8 a.m. Saturday, April 2. No normal person is awake at 8 a.m. on an ordinary Saturday. Except there was nothing ordinary about this particular Saturday. In an hour, Ashland’s campus would kick off its second annual Relay for Life in the Rec Center. This was the first year I’d done Relay at AU and the first year the Honors Society collectively participated.

You might ask what our theme was. Although each team was supposed to select a theme of a different country, ours was Techno Geek. We had four ‘old school’ video games set up on laptops: Super Mario, Tetris, Pac Man and Sonic. Additionally, people could have their pictures taken with a cardboard cutout of Mario and Luigi and giant Tetris blocks.

With a dedicated team of officers and 11 walkers the day went by flawlessly. The day lasted about 18 hours and was filled with fun, music and activities. No homework was finished that day, but the sense of accomplishment I felt after it was all over was much greater than accomplishing any school work. It was a relief to have such a large event over with, but also sad as it was the last major event I’d be a part of as both an Honors Society student and as president. As a campus, we managed to raise over $13,000 for cancer research. I can’t wait to come back in five or ten years and see the magnitude to which Relay has grown here at Ashland University and hear how much we’ve raised then. The American Cancer Society is more than a worthy cause and I’m delighted to see students rallying behind something so important.
The twelve graduating Honors Program members have studied a wide variety of majors and have all had their own unique experience with the Honors Program. Each Honors Program senior creates a Capstone Project to be presented before graduation. The Capstone Project allows students to delve deeper into their field of study and use critical thinking and important skills to develop a thesis. The senior class of 2011 has presented a large array of subjects from a coffee shop business plan to an analysis of probability.

Kara Biltz:
“Exploring the Platonic Relationship between Probability and Yahtzee”

Amy Drossman:
“Identifying Novel Regulatory Regions of the Zebrasfish αBb-crystallin Promoter”

Sarah Muse:
"An Analysis of the Federal Government Balance Sheet"

Corey Barnett:
"VIEWNU L.L.C. Business Plan"

Sarah Ebinger:
"The Social Adjustment of International Students at a Private University"

Phillip Wages:
"The Toxic Effects of Atrazine and Permethrin as a Mixture"

Michelle Conti:
"Fruits of the Faith: Reading Jesus' Parables from an Agricultural Perspective"

Sean Smith:
"Where the Wild Things Were: Tackling the Terrible Teeth of Costume Design"

Sara Garska:
“Good Questions, Better Tools: A Guidebook for Fledgling Grant Writers”

Jeanne Du Bois:
"Where ya Bean? A Coffee Shop Bakery Business Plan"

Keith Darsee:
“Transcendental Metaphysics and Beauty”

Allie Shuman:

“I think the best benefit of being in the Honors Program is the requirement to do a Capstone Project. Working on mine now has made me feel prepared to go to graduate school and do research there.” ~ Kara Biltz, Mathematics and History

“The Honors Program is not only a great opportunity to meet new people and get involved, but it also allows you to push yourself and become a better and stronger individual intellectually.” ~ Amy Drossman, Biology

“The Honors Program here at Ashland has given me the opportunity to study topics and classes that normally I wouldn’t have even thought about registering for.” ~ Sarah Muse, Economics and International Political Studies
Thank you to all of our Honors Society Officers and Honors Program Interns

Honor Society Officers for 2010/2011:
President: Kassey Sikora
Vice President: Lindsey Knapp
Secretary: Theresa Riley
Treasurer: Nader Shihada
Public Relations: Jessica Anderson
Freshman Reps: Kati Higaki & Melany Bagnola
Interns: Val Grosso, Kassey Sikora, Sarah Guarino, Nick Granitz, Jeni Dodd & Melany Bagnola

Letter from the Editor

Hi, Everyone!

Wow! Another semester done, another year complete! It is amazing how fast this semester flew. Freshmen, congratulations on completing your first year of college, you did it! To everyone else I hope that you had another great year at Ashland University. I want to once again thank everyone who helped to make this newsletter a success! Thank you to Nancy Andres for putting up with me and all of my questions and helping me whenever I needed it! Thank you to all of the interns for doing such an awesome job researching and writing articles for the newsletter. I have definitely enjoyed my time as editor this year. I have learned from the experience and I am excited to see how our newsletter will continue to progress!

I hope that everyone has a safe, relaxing, and enjoyable summer. I am looking forward to seeing everyone again in August for another school year!

I would like to leave you with a quote that I heard again recently and I believe it gives us all a lot to think about. “Do not go where the path may lead, but instead go where there is no path and leave a trail” ~ Ralph Waldo Emerson.

My challenge to everyone this summer is to dare to try something different, do something that breaks you out of your comfort zone, make a difference in so many ways this summer!

~ Val Grosso