

THE IOWA STATE HONORS ALUMNI NEWSLETTER

WITH HONORS

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Would you like to wish the Honors Program a Happy Birthday? A financial "birthday present" will help us celebrate our 50th anniversary in the 2010-11 academic year. A gift of \$50 could help with the fall celebration as well as activities at VEISHEA. A gift of \$500 could support student research, pay for an Honors seminar in the coming year, or be directed as you wish. Of course these gifts are tax-deductible, but in addition there are other ways to give that can maximize tax benefits. The ISU Foundation would be glad to advise you.

Honors Celebrates Fifty Years

An array of birthday celebrations will mark the Honors Program's 50th anniversary this fall. "Birthday" events are planned for the week of September 27-October 2, with special events continuing throughout the year.

"We are still making plans, but we hope lots of alumni will join us to celebrate," said Honors Faculty Director Susan Yager. The fall celebration will include faculty-student competitions in the Memorial Union, a speaker for the First-Year Honors Program, and a tailgate party before the football game against Texas Tech. These events also coincide with Cyclone Family Weekend, when friends and alumni are welcomed back to campus.

While Iowa State undergraduates began to earn departmental honors as early as the 1940s, the Honors Program as a whole traces its formal beginnings to 1960, when it enrolled about 40 students.

As of press time, more than 1000 students are enrolled in the Honors Program, and this year more than 100 students from the six undergraduate colleges completed their degrees in Honors. Its headquarters, established in Old Botany (now Catt Hall) in 1967, moved to Osborn Cottage in 1975 and Pearson Hall in 2001, before settling in Jischke in 2002.

Over the years, the program has been noted for both continuity and innovation. For example, credit-bearing Honors Seminars have been offered since 1967 (and non-credit seminars earlier than that), and a strong first-year program has been in place since 1973. Innovations over the years include the growth of quiet housing for Honors students, who can choose from three Honors houses and two clusters (partial floors) if they wish to live with other Honors students. The computer lab in Jischke, with eight PCs and two Mac

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Report from Alumni Board Meeting

At its Fall 2009 meeting, the Honors Alumni Board met with many outstanding students, including Danielle Sponder ('09, Apparel Design and Marketing), whose work in fashion design earned her a \$25,000 scholarship, and Anna Mullen (junior, Anthropology), who has already presented her research in national venues. Board members also saw some great senior projects that received national and international recognition. It is certain that the students in Jischke today are as motivated, bright, and engaging as you were when you attended Iowa State.

It is clear that the University recognizes the significance of the Honors program. Nonetheless, and more than ever, the

program needs our support to thrive. The number of students has increased, creating greater demand for Honors courses. In addition, Honors is working to offer more to students in the sophomore through senior years. Senior Honors projects continue to have needs that students and the program can't always afford to meet.

If you were a leader in FHP or participated in the First-Year Honors Mentor Program, you know the benefits that come with commitment to Honors. Often, that commitment leads to greater rewards – opportunities to develop leadership skills, to think on your feet when things didn't go

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Liz Beck makes friends with Luis, a squirrel monkey, in Peru.

Liz Beck Monkeys Around in Peru

Those who know former Honors Director Liz Beck ('74, History) are aware that you just can't keep her in Ames! Among Liz's latest travels was a trip to the Madre Selva Field Station in the Peruvian Amazon jungle with the National Collegiate Honors Conference's Honors Semesters Committee, which she co-chairs.

While in Peru, Liz went boating on the Amazon and visited a village of Yagua Indians, the jungle's original inhabitants. Just getting up at night for a glass of water was an adventure, with power shut down for the night, mosquito netting to escape, and the ever-possible presence of

tarantulas and poisonous millipedes on the floor. But these hardships were nothing compared to the chance to see and learn new things, not to mention making friends with Luis, a squirrel monkey, at an animal preserve.

Liz also spent a week revisiting Cuzco and Machu Picchu. The trip was a lesson in cultural differences, from the sea-level lives of the Yaguas to the high-altitude lives of the Incans. Next summer Liz will spend three weeks in Tanzania, traveling to Kilimanjaro and then to the Serengeti. She'll be in Ames, though, for Honors' 50th Birthday in the fall.

Honors Students Receive Nationally Competitive Awards

Samuel Bird ('12, Global Resource Systems and Economics) has been named a 2010 Udall Scholar. This award is for undergraduates planning careers related to the environment or Native American issues. Sam is one of 80 scholars selected from a national field of applicants. Another Honors student, Clark Colby (senior, Architecture and Environmental Studies), received an honorable mention.

Udall winners show promise of making significant contributions through scientific advances, service, or community action. Sam lived and worked in Uganda last summer as part of the ISU-Makerere University Uganda Service Learning Program. In addition, he has organized fundraisers to purchase building supplies for Ugandan schools. Sam, who wants to study ways to "improve small-scale farmer incomes in developing countries," plans to attend graduate school in applied economics and sustainable development.

Connor Schenck ('12, Computer Science) is a 2010 Goldwater Scholar. This scholarship is the nation's premier undergraduate award in mathematics, natural sciences, and engineering.

Connor is one of 278 Goldwater Scholars selected from more than 1100 nominees nationwide. Connor has an interest in artificial intelligence and robotics, and plans to earn a doctoral degree.

In addition, Nora Tobin ('10, Political Science and International Studies) was named to USA TODAY's All-USA College Academic First Team for 2010. Nora, a four-year member of the Honors Program, was a World Food Prize intern and studied abroad twice while at ISU.

Sam, Connor, and Nora all participated in the Honors First-Year Honors Mentor Program, which pairs Honors students with faculty in an introduction to research. Sam and Nora worked with Robert Mazur, Associate Professor of Sociology, at the Center for Sustainable Rural Livelihoods, and Connor worked with Alex Stoytchev, Assistant Professor in Electrical and Computer Engineering, in the Developmental Robotics Lab.

"The first-year research program helped all these students in their intellectual development and their readiness for these competitive awards," said Dana

Schumacher, Honors Assistant Director for Scholarship and Research. The university's success in garnering this prestigious recognition is thanks in large part to Dana's efforts. With more excellent Honors students in the ranks, Dana looks forward to even more success in competitive scholarships and fellowships.

Honors Roundup

- Honors 121 students will tackle a common reading this year. All FHP students will discuss Colson Whitehead's *Apex Hides the Hurt* (Doubleday, 2006) in seminar sections in September. Whitehead's novel was selected for its humor, its ideas about names and identity, and the questions it raises about finding an authentic culture.

- The Symposium on Undergraduate Research and Creative Expression welcomed 80 participants this year, of whom 27 were in Honors. Nine Honors students were among the 20 Iowa Staters at Research in the Capitol in March, when state legislators meet with students from Iowa's Regent institutions.

- This year's winners for excellence in Honors teaching and advising are Olga Mesropova, Associate Professor of World Languages and Cultures, and Dana Haugli, Senior Lecturer in Aerospace Engineering. Honors students also recognized Stephanie Zywicki, a graduate student in Curriculum and Instruction, and Carol Cordell, adviser in Kinesiology, with the Robert W. Parks Awards for teaching and advising.

Alumni Report *(continued from page 1)*

as planned, and to form deep friendships. Today's students benefit from these experiences but need our support so that key activities like the fall retreat can continue to build the Honors community.

We can give back to Honors in many ways, including via a "birthday present" (see page 1). We can stay in touch via the Family Book, or remain active

by coaching or mentoring an Honors student, perhaps through an internship. Visit Jischke during the school year, even by webcast or Skype. If you live in Iowa, remind your representative about Research in the Capitol, which brings Honors students and other top undergraduates to Des Moines in March (see details at www.honors.iastate.edu/HonorsWebPage/current/research.php).

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Young Alumni Return to Campus, Play Kaleidoquiz in Jischke

When the Jischke Honors Building has more than its usual tally of computers, fast-food remnants, and people snoozing on couches, it must be Exam Week. Or Kaleidoquiz! Many Honors alumni remember Kaleidoquiz, KURE's team-based trivia competition, which in 2010 marked its 44th year. This year, a team including several Honors alumni, the Super-Secret KQ Kommandos, used Jischke as its weekend headquarters for Kaleidoquiz and finished third among the 22 teams competing.

The 39-member team (about 70 percent Honors students or alums) was organized by Ian Ringgenberg ('08, Anthropology) and Scott King ('08, Materials Engineering). Alumni came from as far as Huntsville, Alabama for the event. Undergraduates also participated on the team, including students from outside Honors who learned about the team through connections in the Government of the Student Body.

Among the high points of the weekend were a trip to Minneapolis and a single-take music video. Team members also kept up with the frequent scavenger-hunt challenges that pepper the 26-hour competition. Team members collected or created items ranging from a man dressed as Lady Gaga to a (forged) seven year-old jar of peanut butter.

"Honors students have a big advantage in Kaleidoquiz," said Ian, since "not only are many of us involved around campus and beyond, but most of us have been



'Quizzers included Susan Fratzke ('09 Political Science, International Studies), Ian Ringgenberg ('08, Anthropology), and Ming-Yee Li ('10, Graphic Design). Photo courtesy of Ming-Yee Li.

memorizing useless trivia since long before we thought we could get points out of it." Contests challenged students to identify Super Nintendo games by their sound effects, engaging the "geek" in many, while a mural design competition brought out creativity in others.

Honors houses in the residence halls did well this year in Kaleidoquiz, and Martin Starbuck, the Honors floor in six-year-old Martin Hall, took first place, the first win

for that floor. Lyon Harwood, perennially a strong contender, finished sixth among 22 teams.

The event's size is not what it once was – about 800 students participated this year, as compared to as many as 6000 at one time – but the intensity remains the same. In fact, the intensity level may have ratcheted higher in recent years, as the Internet has prompted quizmasters to seek harder and more obscure questions.

For Honors Junior, It's CNN Today; Tomorrow, the *Daily*

Jessica Opoien ('12, Journalism) is having a busy summer and a busier fall. Winner of multiple awards for her work on the Iowa State *Daily*, Jessie is an intern at CNN in Manhattan. When she returns to campus, there'll be no chance to rest, as she takes on the role of *Daily* editor-in-chief this fall.

Jessie has always been "passionate about writing and reading" and in high school became a "news junkie." As a first-year Honors student and resident of Martin Starbuck, she appreciated her classmates' support as she got started on the *Daily*. The "built-in community" of Honors gave her "feedback, support, and inspiration," as her friends even posted her opinion

columns in the halls.

At CNN, Jessie has run teleprompters, transcribed interviews, pitched story ideas, and researched for an interview, and is pleased to be working with an ISU alumna, Christine Romans. "There are plenty of opportunities to go beyond a typical intern experience, and I'm doing my best to take advantage of all of them."

An Iowa native who now calls Wisconsin home, Jessie may not be the first junior to run the *Daily*, but it's a rarity. "In a way, my 'life plan' has been shaken up" by the appointment, but "in a good way," she says. Under her leadership, she'd like the *Daily* to engage its audience in conversation,

rather than use a traditional news format.

Jessie plans to move the *Daily* into more social communication (Twitter, Facebook, YouTube) as well as maintaining the printed product. She may develop her Honors senior project from her work on the *Daily*.

In this midpoint of her college career, Jessie sees the First-Year Honors Program (FHP) as a huge help in her success. As a co-leader of an FHP seminar, Jessie learned "to plan ahead and act in the best interests of a group," principles she will implement as editor-in-chief. She only wishes she had "more time to be involved in Honors activities and seminars!"

Honors Offers Learning, Service Opportunities Abroad

Honors students traveled to Oaxaca, Mexico, this spring for a 10-day service-learning project, and staff are seeking more opportunities for Honors students to experience other countries and cultures.

Nine students participated in Honors'

first Service-Learning Honors Seminar, with the Oaxaca trip as the focal point of a two-credit study of the history, politics, and culture of Mexico. This seminar was developed by Honors Administrative Director Laurie Fiegel and Associate

Dean of LAS Dawn Bratsch-Prince with first- and second-year students in mind.

In an area with no running water or electricity, students worked

to build an addition onto a school in southern Mexico. Students lived with host families in Oaxaca and traveled 25 minutes each morning to a "colonia" or rural subdivision to build a new classroom for the tiny, two-room building. The students' trip also included excursions and lectures on the local political, social, and economic environment.

A second service-learning trip to Belize is planned for 2011. In addition, Honors Faculty Director Susan Yager will visit Rome's John Cabot University to explore the possibility of an Honors experience there.



Honors students worked to build an addition to a rural school on their service-learning trip to Oaxaca, Mexico, in March.

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machines (as well as a wi-fi connection), is a far cry from the single computer in Osborn in the early 1980s.

Despite many changes, the aim of the program remains that voiced by Ed Lewis, then Associate Vice President for Academic Affairs, in 1987. Honors aspires to be "a community of scholars, composed of students and faculty who share a commitment to academic excellence and who represent a cutting edge of undergraduate education at Iowa State University."

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