

Honorable Mentions

Fall 2014

A Publication of the PSU Honors College Public Relations Committee

A Letter from the Director

Greetings!!

I am pleased to report that things are in great shape here in the PSU Honors College this fall. We have a wonderful new group of freshmen students who have joined our ranks and they are finding their path both around campus and within the HCA. We continue to build upon many of the programs that have been in place over the past few years, and we are always looking to expand and improve upon our organization.

The PITT PROJECT was once again a success as you will read about in this newsletter. I am very proud of the students who participated in this community wide project and I hope it will continue for many years to come. As the holiday season nears, we will be doing our annual Christmas Caroling at area nursing homes, as well as working with the Salvation Army for the Toys for Tots program and Bell Ringing. The freshmen FE class continues to clean up the parking lot after home games and this service is so appreciated by the Physical Plant staff. In all, some great service going on within the group.

With regard to new programs, we are looking to create an Alumni Secretary position this spring whose responsibility it will be to work to stay connected and engaged with Honors College alums. I hope you will respond to the various correspondences you might receive as I think this is an important piece that we need to improve upon.

On behalf of all of the students in the Honors College, I wish you a very happy and safe Holiday Season.

P.S. We want to keep in touch with our alumni of the Honors College so please email us with your recent accomplishments, family updates, or new positions of employment!!! You can email these updates to Dr. Fuchs at cfuchs@pittstate.edu and please include your contact information with your mailing address, phone number, and email address so we can make sure our alumni database is current. We look forward to hearing from you!!!

Dr. Craig Fuchs

Director of Honors College



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HCA Members Branch Out

By Caitlin Martin

Members of the Honors College Association have very busy lives between grades, clubs, and trying to maintain sanity.

Not every member of HCA has time to attend every meeting, but of all of the members that attended the November monthly meeting, almost every person was involved in another club or organization on or off campus. Combined, 81 clubs, organizations, or sports teams were represented by the HCA members in attendance. Some of the most popular clubs included the Pre-Med Club and Phi Eta Sigma.

As you will see in this newsletter, HCA students do not just give back through their involvement in the Honors College. They are all over campus and the community giving back, maintaining scholarship, and representing Pittsburg State University and the Honors College in a positive and influential way.

Honors College students gain international knowledge through interactions with our own international students, as Pitt Pals, and through study abroad opportunities.

Through these organizations and the Honors College, students are given the opportunity to grow and improve themselves while they improve our campus, community, and world.



Freshman Jeffery Yankovich poses with Santa and his Pitt Pal.

Freshmen Give Globally

By Maga Chase

Pages for Paraguay is a project inspired by Patty Silva, a Paraguayan that visited Kansas through the Teacher Exchange Program fostered by the Kansas Paraguay Partners. While she was visiting, Patty shared the story of the children of San Marcos School where she volunteers. San Marcos is an elementary school in Luque, Paraguay, that currently has a room for a library with no books. This is a poor area where neither parents nor the school has money to purchase books. This story inspired the Wichita Public Library, Trees for life International, and the Kansas Paraguay Partner to come together and join Patty to fill the San Marcos library with Spanish language books. The Luque community and families are also working hard to support this project by selling used clothing to raise money to buy furniture and shelves for the library.

When the Paraguayan Student Association (PSA) found about this project, they immediately knew that they could contribute to this cause. Therefore, they joined the campaign that consisted of spreading the word on how to donate money or donate the Spanish books. They went to Transitions classes, distributed flyers, and posted on the Internet. They also gave the opportunity to the Honors Freshman Experience class to participate in a competition against the Transitions classes to see which group was able to collect the most money for the cause. The freshmen competed against three Transitions classes and came out on top. They collected a total of \$88.85.

In total, PSA collected \$232.53. Whenever they told Anne Harris, the coordinator of Pages for Paraguay and Youth Outreach Librarian at Wichita Public Library, her joy was immense.

"You made my day! My week, even!" said Harris. "My personal goal in my head was to raise \$2000 and with the donations from Pittsburg, we'll surely reach that goal!"

PSA would like to thank everyone who gave, especially the Honors Freshman Experience Class. Thanks to all the support of Pitt State students, PSA helped provide 148 students with the possibility of dreaming for a better future. Who knows? Maybe we have inspired the next F. Scott Fitzgerald or the next Dr. Seuss!



Emilia Cardenas (Vice President) Gabriel Peña (President), and Andrés Chu (treasurer) of the Paraguayan Student Association count the money raised for Pages for Paraguay.

Pitt Project is Successful

By Alex Battitori

Twenty-five students from the Honors College Association participated in this year's Pitt Project on Saturday, Nov. 1.

The Pitt Project was started by the HCA as a way for students to gain community service hours. Each year, volunteers travel to homes in the Pittsburgh area to rake leaves, clean gutters, trim shrubs, dig posts, and paint.

This year, volunteers worked from 9:30 a.m. to 12:30 p.m. to complete eight jobs throughout the community.

"As a freshman, this was my first time to participate in the Pitt Project," Jessi Headrick, freshman in English education said. "My group and I were given the task of cleaning gutters for an elderly couple. They were truly appreciative of the work we did. Although it was just a few hours out of our day, it meant a lot to them. It was rewarding to me, knowing how grateful they were for the simple job we accomplished. I definitely plan on participating in the Pitt Project again in the future! I encourage anyone who hasn't volunteered for the event to consider doing so next year!"

Planning for the Pitt Project began in September with the formation of church group, inspection, and donation committees. The 20 total members of these committees were responsible for spreading the word about the project and subsequently raising funds and inspecting work sites to ensure everything went according to plan the morning of the project.

Regarding this year's project, sophomore plastics engineering student and Community Service Committee Chair Jordyn Showers said, "The project was a success! All jobs that the volunteers performed had good results, and the community members seemed extremely satisfied with their projects being completed."

In addition to HCA students, five members of Lambda Sigma and four members of Students for Violence Prevention volunteered their time for the Pitt Project. Tools were rented from the SGA Big Event Committee.

HCA hopes that the Pitt Project will be even larger in the coming years.

Representatives Attend NCHC

By Kya Rogers

Between November 5 and 9, Dr. Craig Fuchs, HCA president Alexis McKinnon, and freshman representative Garrett Harmon met with groups from a multitude of different schools and organizations in Denver, Colorado to discuss the topics of interest in the National Collegiate Honors College. Many presentations and demonstrations were covered, events were held, and workshops were open to all in attendance.

There were also classes that covered a variety of areas including music, poetry, film, yoga, and dance. From the PSU Honors College, both class representatives, executives, Dr. Fuchs, as well as any others interested took the trip to the conference for the five days.



Representatives captured one of the many presentations available at the conference.



Dr. Fuchs, McKinnon, and Harmon pose for a conference selfie.

They all discussed topics ranging from peer mentors to student governments and councils in relation to the Honors College. These subjects were a focus in discussions and presentations, and everyone worked to improve these parts of the Honors College. The entire purpose of the conference is exactly that: to cover issues that may have arisen, to improve areas in the Honors College through the other schools, and to evaluate the organization in general.

Five days conversing about the Honors College may seem as though it's nearly a week of business, but that's certainly not the case. Discussions were meant to be welcoming and casual, not strict and formal. Garrett Harmon, the freshman class representative for PSU's Honors College and a major in biology, encourages others to go to the conference. "[It was] very intriguing, and you learn about college structure and the Honors College structure. It's very valuable to go to."

Book Club Studies Local Classic

By Victoria Ho

The Honors College Book Club had its first meeting at Dr. Fuch's house on November 16th to discuss the novel "Life in a Jar" by Jack Mayer. The novel, proposed to the club by freshman Erin Simons, follows the story of a group of southeast Kansas teens that uncovered the formerly unknown Holocaust hero Irena Sendler, who saved 2,500 children during the Nazi takeover of Poland in 1939. These high school students originally produced a play of the same title for the National History Day competition that now travels internationally.

Students at the meeting discussed how Irena Sendler, who saved 2.5 times more people than Oskar Schindler, the real-life hero behind the Hollywood classic "Schindler's List," could still remain almost completely unknown until 1999. Erin Simons, an Elementary Education major, stated when the girls originally did an Internet search for information on Sender, they only got one hit. "What could you do from there?" Erin postulated. Many high school students would have given up. But the young women behind "Life in a Jar" did not.



The HCA Book Club met again in early December to discuss the novel; however, the club also hosted two individuals involved with the creation of the play, Mr. C and Megan Stewart, to join in on the discussion. This is a rare opportunity for HCA students to experience this amazing story from a different perspective, and the club was very excited to meet with them.

Photo from:

http://admissions.vanderbilt.edu/insidedores/2012/04/yom-hashoah-reach-out/life_in_a_jar_header/

Peer Mentors Guide Freshmen

By Kya Rogers

Of all the benefits given to students by the Honors College, perhaps the part that freshmen look forward to most that first year is having Peer Mentors.

Sophomore HCA members that are willing to help sign up to become a Peer Mentor to provide advice for the new freshmen, and when the new school year begins, the groups are assigned. The pairings aren't random, though; both peer mentors and freshmen fill out forms to find similar majors and interests to help everyone get along and have as much assistance possible.

Throughout the year, the groups meet when they can and talk about anything and everything, ranging from helpful hints to mere socialization. The meetings aren't just an update, but a chance to go out and relax with friends in between studying and homework, because a peer mentor is more than just another advisor. Mentors are experienced students, as well as friends.

Sometimes groups may have conflicting personalities, but most groups have had no problems with this. Hannah Whitesell, a sophomore peer mentor majoring in elementary education, says, "It's good to have different kinds of people because there could be other people that could relate to that. I'm loud and obnoxious and in your face, and some people don't react well to that. Different personalities complement each other."

Even the most extreme personality traits could not keep the harmony out of the groups, because conflict is not what the mentors are there for. Peer mentors sign up with the intention of helping newcomers, no matter the person, and are always happy to be of service. Many of the freshmen realize this, and it has inspired many of them to apply to become peer mentors in 2015-2016. By doing so, the freshmen of this year can continue the tradition as the sophomores of next year.



One of the Peer Mentor groups meets.

Freshmen Give Back

By Charles Ault

This year, the freshman HCA class helped clean up trash in the parking lot next to Carnie Smith Stadium after every single home football game. The cleanup was organized by freshman class president Garrett Harmon and usually featured around a dozen volunteers.

The freshman class has been helping pick up trash after home games for a few years now. However, the selection of this as the class' community service project was not a given. Early in the year the class voted on what community service they would like to do as a group. Many great ideas were put forth by members of the class but in all eventuality it was decided by vote that the class would help clean after football games as they have in the past.

"Once we decided that our class would continue cleanup for another year, organization consisted of keeping records of everyone's attendance and sending reminders prior to games," said freshman class president Garrett Harmon.

Every cleanup went well and this job that would usually take the grounds crew three or four hours was usually finished in under an hour. The university supplied students with trash bags, gloves, and pincers to pick up trash with, and hand sanitizer to clean up with after cleanup was done. These considerations made the cleanup go smoothly and quickly.

To show their appreciation of the job the HCA did in cleaning up the parking lot the PSU grounds crew gave the freshmen class a pizza party on their last day of Freshman experience.

"The lot was always well cleaned and it was very rewarding to see the appreciation of the physical plant staff," said Harmon.

The cleanup was a wonderful opportunity for freshmen to get volunteer hours, to help ensure the beauty of Gorilla Village and the surrounding area, and to help the staff of PSU that would usually clean the lot to get home to their families earlier than they normally would. The activity will likely be carried on in the future by incoming freshman classes with the strong desire to give back when they can.

HCA Enjoys Homecoming Fun

By Victoria Ho

This year was a very successful one for the Honors College Association in the fall Homecoming festivities. Activities included the Gorilla Games, Spirit Art competition, and the campaign for Homecoming King and Queen.

This year, the Gorilla Games activities included obstacle courses and "Minute-to-Win-It"-style games. Instead of competing head-to-head with other organizations, teams were timed on how quickly they completed an event, and were ranked accordingly. The HCA team won the co-ed division. Team members were Meghan Winford, Gavin Houser, Lizzy Willis, Carson Letchworth, Garrett Harmon, and Marisa Page.

HCA also participated in the spirit art fashion show. This year's spirit animal was the emperor tarmin, brought to life by first-year student Kolleen Gladden. Kolleen, who is a double-major in Creative Writing and Commercial Art, said she had a great time representing Honors College as the "hipster" nerdy monkey.

The Honors College Association was also represented in the competition for Homecoming Court. After a long process, candidates Garrett Eckols and Lauren Renner made it into the top 18.



The Honors College Association Gorilla Games team from left to right: Meghan Winford, Gavin Houser, Lizzy Willis, Carson Letchworth, Garrett Harmon, and Marisa Page. The team won first in the co-ed division, bringing home the gold for HCA.

Alumnus Spotlight: Leslie Thomas

By Alex Battitori

Leslie Thomas is a Pittsburg State University graduate and former Honors College Presidential Scholar who since graduating has climbed to the top in the world of medicine.

Thomas graduated from PSU in 1998 with a bachelor's degree in biology/pre-med before attending University of Pittsburgh School of Medicine, one of the premiere destinations for graduates seeking to attend medical school.

Following his graduation from medical school, he became an internal medicine resident from 2004-2007 and a nephrology fellow from 2007-2010 at Mayo Clinic in Rochester, Minn. After completing his postdoctoral training, he began working at Mayo Clinic in Scottsdale, Ariz. where he is now a consultant in the division of nephrology and hypertension.

"My decision to pursue medicine was made chiefly because of my overall interest in science and my desire to have a positive impact on society," Thomas said.

As a consultant, his day-to-day responsibilities consist of seeing patients with all manner of kidney diseases, electrolyte disorders and difficult-to-treat blood pressure problems.

"My work is almost exclusively comprised of seeing patients that have been referred to me by other doctors," he said. "Because I work at an academic center, I also spend time teaching resident physicians and nephrology fellows, doing research on various projects and completing administrative work."

As to how being a part of the Honors College Association helped him achieve his goal of becoming a doctor, Thomas said, "Being surrounded by students who were like me and had excelled academically was a motivating influence to work even harder at my own course work.

"Also, the ability to take 'honors' courses was great. I still remember to this day my freshman level honors philosophy class and how it augmented my view of the world and my view of how others (my classmates) perceived things so differently than myself."

Thomas resides in Scottsdale with his wife Mary Laura and their daughter Corinne.



Leslie Thomas is a 1998 Pittsburg State University graduate and former Honors College Presidential Scholar who now works as a consultant in the division of nephrology and hypertension at the Mayo Clinic in Scottsdale, Ariz.

Photo from:
MAYO CLINIC

HCA Gets Social

By Charles Ault

During the month of October, the Honors College held a pumpkin carving contest for its members. The event took place at Dr. Fuch's house. Many people turned out for the event including freshmen as well as upperclassmen. The attendees indulged in pizza and beverages provided by Dr. Fuchs. Dr. Fuch's wife even made cookies for the event. Participants of the pumpkin carving contest were asked to provide their own pumpkins and tools. However, several students came solely to enjoy watching the efforts of others and appreciate the festive atmosphere.

Pumpkins could be carved either individually or through group efforts. Participants were inspired by everything from classic Halloween stories to pop culture. Honors students used many techniques to produce their creations, including carving tools, paint, and permanent markers. In total, six pumpkins were completed. The lineup consisted of a pumpkin with the likeness of the Headless Horseman, one cat surrounded with stars and a crescent moon, one artistically finished owl, one reproduction of everyone's favorite boy wizard, Harry Potter, one minion from the beloved movie *Despicable Me* and one classic happy Jack-o-lantern face.

The pumpkins were lit up with tea candles and brought to the table for the panel of judges to view. After careful consideration, the judges awarded the artist behind the owl with the title of top pumpkin carver. After this, a group picture was taken to commemorate the event. A good time was had by all. As one event goer, Kristen Daniel, stated, "It was a lot of fun, even if you were not decorating a pumpkin, you could still cheer for the ones who were and have some good food while mingling. Events like this are great because I do not get to see many members of the honors college on a regular basis."



Members of the honors college work together to carve the best pumpkin possible to win the title of champion at the HCA pumpkin carving event.