

# Living It



## Reflections on a Summer with Leadership Rice

Essays by Leadership Rice Students  
Volume 3  
Fall 2002

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Dear Readers,

The Rice University campus – both serene and cerebral – is bounded by hedges. “The real world,” students observe, is “beyond the hedges.” Those hedges are as much metaphorical as physical. They bound a brief time when young people are invited to listen to scholars and have scholars listen to them, a time to read and reflect, to dive deeply and dabble.

These years of study are precious, and it’s imprudent to dilute them. Yet most college students hunger to see how theory connects to practice, how ideas evolve into action. They want to know what happens in that “real world” so they can chart their own directions. “Should I consider law school?” they ask. “What options are there for me in the world of the arts? Is business something a sociology major might do? What calls me?”

It’s been a great gift for us to see how our summer mentorships give students windows on the world of work as well as windows into their own interests and inclinations. The chance to have a mentor who, with a push and a nudge, helps you grow in confidence, who explains the subtext as well as the text of events and connects you to people and possibilities, is a big part of what attracts great students to Leadership Rice. These essays give you just a peek into the richness and rewards of the mentorship experience.

Because we want our graduates to be good communicators, we offer them a chance to work with Marcia Chamberlain, our gifted and generous writing consultant. Marcia uses this reflective essay assignment to coach the students on writing persuasively, clearly, and briefly. Printing the essays was originally a strategy to focus student attention on the value of revising and rewriting. Turns out it is also a good way to share the Leadership Rice experience with mentors, potential mentors, donors, and students.

It’s a further pleasure when mentors talk about their own satisfactions from mentoring, both personal and professional. In our summer site visits, we are privileged to see the many wonderful organizations and thoughtful, dedicated men and women who share Leadership Rice’s desire to develop the leadership capacities of the next generation.

This year’s Leadership Rice applicants are looking terrific. That means we will again need a terrific group of mentors, so help us spread the word about the Leadership Rice Brainpower Bargain.

Sincerely,

Susan A. Lieberman, Ph.D.  
Leadership Rice Director

Christine D. Adams  
Associate Director

### Leadership Rice 2002 Summer Mentorship Matches

|                         |   |                            |
|-------------------------|---|----------------------------|
| Mary-Margaret Miller    | ABC News  | New York City              |
| Robert Lee              | Arete Corp.   | New York City              |
| Meredith Fant           | Ashoka: Innovators for the Public                           | Arlington, VA              |
| Andrew Weber            | Aviation Facilities Co. Inc.                                | McLean, VA                 |
| Elisa Chen              | Baylor College of Medicine, Office of Public Affairs        | Houston                    |
| Uchenna Agbim           | Baylor Teen Health Clinic                                   | Houston                    |
| Shahnaz Shushtari       | Baylor Teen Health Clinic                                   | Houston                    |
| Alex Kipp               | Center for Bioethics, University of Pennsylvania            | Philadelphia               |
| Lindsay Lawley          | Center for Houston's Future                                 | Houston                    |
| Kye Mesa Barnard        | Center for the Protection of Children's Rights Foundation   | Thailand                   |
| Vasco Bridges           | Cherry Lane Music Group                                     | New York City              |
| Elise Sumnicht          | Children's Assessment Center                                | Houston                    |
| Lauren Blondeau         | Community Family Centers                                    | Houston                    |
| Emily Matuzek           | Community Greens  | Arlington, VA              |
| Esther Brown            | Conscious Pursuits Inc. / Methodist Hospital                | Houston                    |
| Tamar Rachelle Losleben | Cullman & Hurt Community Wildlife Project                   | Tanzania                   |
| Jeff Bishop             | Enercorp  | Morocco                    |
| Peter Huckfeldt*        | Environmental Law and Policy Center                         | Chicago                    |
| Richard Anaya*          | Focalex   | Boston                     |
| Jessica Tripodo         | Friends of Hermann Park                                     | Houston                    |
| Renea Sturm             | Good Neighbor Healthcare Center                             | Houston                    |
| Rebecca Perry           | Greater Houston Collaborative for Children                  | Houston                    |
| Scott McKern*           | Houston Endowment Inc.                                      | Houston                    |
| Carmen Watson           | Houston Independent School District                         | Houston                    |
| Joaquin M. Martínez     | Houston Public Library - Technology                         | Houston                    |
| Daffodil Baez*          | Houston Public Library - Looscan Branch                     | Houston                    |
| Jared Hubbard           | Imaging for Life and the Lloyd Group                        | New York City              |
| Guinevere Casey-Ford    | Inter-Community Development Involvement                     | Kenya                      |
| Mandy Legal *           | Judah, Hanson, Riggs & Associates                           | Houston                    |
| Victoria Thomas         | Mental Health Association of Greater Houston                | Houston                    |
| Lakshmi Sreekumar       | Microsoft Corp.   | Seattle                    |
| Kelli DesRochers        | Museum of Contemporary Art San Diego                        | La Jolla, CA               |
| Theresa Dowell          | National Trust for Historic Preservation                    | Washington, D.C.           |
| Lindsey Maynard         | N. Darlene Walker and Associates                            | Houston                    |
| Alexis Nicole Smith     | Neuman & Bogdonoff  | New York City              |
| Nick Jacobsen           | NIEHS of NIH, Division of Intramural Research               | Research Triangle Park, NC |
| Jeffrey Reitsema        | NIEHS of NIH, Division of Intramural Research               | Research Triangle Park, NC |
| Blake Slansky           | Oceaneering International Inc.                              | Houston                    |
| Christina Ni            | Office for Civil Rights, U.S. Dept. of Health & Human Svcs. | Washington, D.C.           |
| Ben Norris *            | Office of the Secretary, United States Navy                 | Washington, D.C.           |
| Robert Emmett           | Office of the Secretary, United States Navy                 | Washington, D.C.           |
| Veronica Herrera        | PEOPLink.org / Youth Venture                                | Washington, D.C.           |
| Charlotte Albrecht      | Planned Parenthood of Houston and Southeast Texas           | Houston                    |
| Gaia Muallem            | Planned Parenthood of Houston and Southeast Texas           | Houston                    |
| Christine Yarnig        | Reach Out & Read-Texas                                      | Houston                    |
| Laura Sawyer            | Society for the Performing Arts                             | Houston                    |
| Cynthia Browne          | St. Luke's Episcopal Health Charities                       | Houston                    |
| Eduardo Buelna          | St. Luke's Episcopal Health Charities                       | Houston                    |
| Chase Danford           | St. Luke's Episcopal Health Charities                       | Houston                    |
| Nathan Ang              | The Institute for Rehabilitation and Research               | Houston                    |
| Tracy M. Hall           | UNICEF  | New York City              |
| Morgan Gossom           | Urban Harvest   | Houston                    |
| Shirin Hakimzadeh*      | UT Health Science Center at Houston                         | Houston                    |
| Rebecca Schendel        | Virtual Technology Corp.                                    | Washington, D.C.           |
| April Stevens           | Washington Office on Latin America                          | Washington, D.C.           |
| Jill Browning           | Wolf Trap Center for the Performing Arts                    | Washington, D.C.           |
| Emmie Chang*            | Wonder-Space  | Houston                    |
| Josefa Marquez*         | Wonder-Space  | Houston                    |
| Amira Wizig*            | Youth Ventures  | Washington, D.C.           |

*\*Students who did not participate in the writing section of the fall class and do not have reflective narratives*

## **Comments from Student and Mentor Evaluations of the Summer Mentorship Experience**

*The experience has helped define MY leadership abilities and communication skills and helped me grow professionally in ways I never imagined! It has been wonderful!*

- **Community relations director in a Houston nonprofit organization**

*The Leadership Rice students were superb. I certainly do not remember being as mature and capable as they are at 19 or 20!*

- **Director in a Washington, D.C., policy placement**

*Our student was a natural leader and was a perfect match for us. Not only did she contribute with her creative writing and ideas – she energized all of us. We learned from her and refueled ourselves with her enthusiasm.*

- **Public relations director in a Houston arts organization**

*The intangible part of the experience was that the very presence of the intern forced our small staff to stay focused on our work in order to provide a good experience for the student. Having an outsider who was here to work really focused our efforts and moved us forward in a big way.*

- **Project director in a Houston health-education organization**

*We were told not to expect filing, but I did not imagine getting to craft a corporate image!*

- **Undecided major in a Houston corporate placement**

*My mentor is a mover and shaker who has mastered the delicate art of persuasion, to the benefit of her organization. She listens to others, she thinks to herself aloud, she talks about her family (life outside of work – gasp!). She laughs a lot. She's an eternal optimist. She's got unflagging faith in her cause. She's got mettle, and she's got spunk. That's rare these days. I consider myself fortunate to have been able to work with and observe her this summer.*

- **Anthropology and policy studies major in a Houston nonprofit placement**

*I was certainly thrown into a situation where I had to work on all my weaknesses in order to be successful. I had to learn to be an extrovert and to believe in my abilities. An area I need to work on is to voice my opinion to the higher-ups. When they told me “no,” I had to learn that that meant “Tell me why you really need this.” I too often just accepted their decisions without fighting for what I needed.*

- **Psychology major in a Houston nonprofit placement**

*I learned an enormous amount about public policy and the potential in our country for infrastructure and policy changes which will be beneficial both environmentally and economically. These easy changes are not implemented for ridiculous reasons, usually having to do with political pork and lack of foresight. ... I [also] learned the value of pragmatic compromise, and how to behave in the bargaining process. These were lessons learned lobbying for legislation, but they are definitely applicable for many situations. It is good to set your sights high and push the envelope, but when it comes down to decision time, you have to be able to compromise.*

- **Mathematical economic analysis major in a Chicago law placement**

*I've learned the importance of involving yourself in a line of work that you really care about. I've learned how to push forward in a working environment where there is not a lot of pressure, and how to make the most of an assignment. I've also learned how to be a little more diplomatic in my interactions in the working environment. ... – important if I want to be moderately successful in working environments in the future.*

- **Sociology and psychology major in a Washington, D.C. policy placement**

## A Place for Passion

"I'm leavin' on a jet plane. Don't know when I'll be back again." I couldn't stop repeating those famous John Denver song lyrics as I sat on my Bangkok-bound jet plane. The words held a certain ironic significance for me. My original summer placement was at a small, poor orphanage in Katmandu, Nepal. With my bags packed, passport obtained and plane tickets purchased, I was all set for my journey to that mysterious, alluring city in the shadow of the Himalayas. Three days before I was to leave, Leadership Rice called me with the news that they were going to have to pull my funding for the placement due to escalating violence from members of the country's Maoist insurgency.

Shelving my disappointment for the moment, I focused all my energies on securing another mentorship abroad. Because the volunteer organization I was going to work for in Nepal also had placements in India, I set up a mentorship at an orphanage in a small Indian village. Two days and 1 million troops on the Pakistan-India border later, my hopes and plans were again shattered. Reciting every optimistic aphorism I could remember (topped off with a healthy dose of denial, of course), I set out, once again, to find the perfect international summer mentorship.

Through unimaginably good fortune, I was able to find a child-rights organization in Thailand that not only strongly appealed to me, but also was actually willing to create an internship for me to begin within a week and a half. As I boarded my first-ever international flight, singing to myself, I couldn't help wondering when I actually would make it back home. After the experiences of the week, I rather expected that my decision to go to Thailand would somehow bring about some nationwide natural disaster, military coup, or something else along those lines. Ultimately, the transfer, refund, and exchange options on my return tickets proved gratuitous, and I arrived back in the States on the originally scheduled date – after the most intense, life-changing two and a half months I could ever have imagined.

My 10 weeks in Thailand gave me what 21 years of experiences and thousands of dollars in college loans had heretofore been unable to provide: a sense of direction in life. Those who have known me during my two years at Rice know that I tend to change my major about as often as one is supposed to change his or her oil. After four semesters and six majors, my parents were ready for me to go to mime school, as long as I just stuck with it. My enthusiasm in each area seems to rise and fall with the tides, overcoming me with excitement one moment and just as quickly ebbing back into confusion and uncertainty the next. Indeed, my ever-changing travel plans yet again reflected the air of change in my life. After several false starts, which in themselves were each very exciting and compelling, I finally ended up with a set itinerary and a destination that would provide for me, for the first time in my life, true passion. In Thailand, once-abstruse



theories from school became clear as I witnessed them in action and focused on reading people's faces and actions rather than words in a textbook.

I learned about the country's considerable problems with child prostitution and trafficking. While many people are aware of Thailand's sadly abundant supply of prostitutes, few recognize the role of and impact on children in this terrible business. I find it particularly frightening to realize that, according to a recent U.N. report, prostitution accounts for about 13 percent of Thailand's gross domestic product and that one-third of the women involved are minors. Fortunately, beyond just being exposed to the pains this country is suffering, I learned about the significant progress that government and non-government organizations are making in combating these issues. By becoming immersed in a network committed to protecting child rights, I came to realize the many intricacies and difficulties that arise in such a battle and the clever and resourceful means that agencies use to overcome them. The experience tapped my own creative juices and resulted in a deluge of ideas and plans. Working hands-on with people and issues has shown me the real-life successes that result from pursuing ideas we normally abandon out of fear and laziness.

Rather than being merely a summer job, my Thailand mentorship altered the course of my life and provided me with something novel: real direction. Whether my future includes law school, other graduate study, or a combination of the two, I know that I eventually plan to work in international development and human rights. While these areas have long been important to me, this summer taught me the myriad possible ways in which to make a real difference. Instead of working on the 43<sup>rd</sup> floor of a downtown high-rise for a corporate law firm, I know that I belong working with the people, *for* the people. Although naysayers might brush this off as merely another high tide of ambition – my parents, for example, just reply “That’s nice, dear” whenever I excitedly tell them of any new life plans – I recognize that I have finally found true passion. I return to Rice understanding, for the first time, what my place is in this world, and that is the best gift that Leadership Rice or any other program could ever have provided.

## Cliff Diving

*Lele kawa* is the Hawaiian name for a sport that involves leaping into the ocean from a precipice towering hundreds of feet high. Most of us would call it “cliff diving,” and most of us would not even think of attempting it. However, many times we find ourselves on the edge of a cliff in our minds. There we stand within ourselves, petrified by what we see below – something so treacherous, wild, and unknown that our first instinct is to back away. After all, adventures like that are not meant for us, right?

I justified most of my exits this way until I was 19 years old and a sophomore in college. I decided to take the plunge to go backpacking around Europe. The trip was a roller coaster. I found myself in uncomfortable situations, such as sleeping on the deck of a ship crossing the Adriatic Sea in November. Even those harsh, whipping winds could not diminish the joy of the times when I woke up to the sounds and smells of an Italian market opening for the day. My best friend accompanied me, and we made many more friends along the way. I came back to the States with no doubt that it had been well worth the uncertainty on the way down, and well worth the swim to a new shore. I was also left with the conviction that the more risk you take, the more you stand to gain.

When I began to search for a summer internship, I decided to go to the extreme. This time I would go completely alone and make sure that I was in over my head. Splash! I landed in New York City on the corner of 42<sup>nd</sup> Street and Third Avenue. After a canceled trip to India at the last moment, I had traded in my malaria tablets and saris for black pants and a cellular phone. With only a few days’ notice, I found myself on my first cab ride through the city that never sleeps. My charge was an internship at UNICEF.

My first day on the job was also the first day of a two-day conference organized by my mentor, Alan Silverman, on a global learning strategy for HIV/AIDS within the United Nations workplace. In short, this was a meeting to kick off the monumental task of trying to reach 80,000 employees and their families to ensure that they are all educated about HIV/AIDS. I showed up at 8 a.m. and looked around for anyone who looked as if he might be named Alan. I found him already in the conference room, bursting with enthusiasm and ready to go. I was soon to find out that this is Alan’s natural disposition.

I did what I could to help and then took my place among the tables of his highly respectable and experienced colleagues. If you have ever seen a National Geographic special on volcanoes, please recall for a moment the pictures of red and silver magma boiling and bubbling over. This was the feeling in my stomach when I looked around and saw a sea of accomplished, dedicated people who were far more knowledgeable than me.

That first day, I was determined to keep my head above water and did so by giving everything I had. I listened carefully, took meticulous notes, and confiscated every bit of reading material that dared show its cover. After the first week, I was proud just to have made it through the last five days. By the end of the second week, I was becoming

an active member of the UNICEF team. I had been given a role in migration of the knowledge-sharing Web site. After a month I moved on to a Web development project in collaboration with the World Bank. I worked on the site through the rest of my internship.

By the end of the summer, I had completed two projects that were actually helpful to my organization. The icing on the cake was a conference on children in armed conflict that Alan took me to. It was similar to the conference I had experienced on my first day. This time I was able to keep up, offer input, and even make a small group presentation. While I was still surrounded by people more knowledgeable than me, I no longer felt intimidated by them.

To me the U.N. had seemed like a big, important, faraway institution, impermeable for a little girl from Texas. New York City had been a fairy tale flashed on small and big screens all my life, shrouded in mystery and elitism. Now, as I sit on a rooftop reflecting on my summer, with the distant sight of the Manhattan skyline rising just above the top of my paper, I find myself vividly imagining the endless possibilities.

When you dive off a cliff, you never think you will land on your feet, much less take off running. The difference my summer made is in the attitude with which I will approach new challenges in the future. I have become a cliff diver.

Tamar Rachelle Losleben  
Cullman and Hurt Community Wildlife Project  
Sally Capper, Project Director

## You Think Africans Don't Care?

I wait at Jomo Kenyatta International Airport, at the mercy of an anonymous bus. My eyes droop with fatigue; my back slumps like a hunter's weary from enduring hours of watchfulness. What adventure: 40-something hours of air travel, Houston, Philadelphia, delays, Amsterdam, and finally this Nairobi airport. Just one more bumpity bus ride across the Kenya-Tanzania border before I meet my mentor, Sally Capper, project director of the Cullman and Hurt Community Wildlife Project. At the heart of the northern Tanzanian safari circuit, we will educate the villagers living around hunting areas about how to protect and reap the benefits of their graceful gazelles, giant river acacias, and land flowing with milk and wild honey. Our goal is to conserve what could so easily be lost.

I want more than anything to be alert, to see, feel, taste, smell, and hear. Yet weariness pursues me, scattering my thoughts like thousands of wildebeests that spot a lioness sprinting toward them. Like those shaggy creatures, I am a traveler migrating in search of untouched, undeveloped areas. My three canvas bags swell with all the essentials: khaki-colored clothes, SPF-30 sunscreen, loads of Kodak film, and my journal. I still feel unprepared. What knowledge of the outdoors could I, as an ambassador from the developed world, possibly impart to the rural tribes of Tanzania? In my journal I write:

Saturday, May 11, 2002.  
Nairobi Airport, Kenya

Once I dreamed of Africa, that I would smell the brisk savannah air, hear the wild sounds, and sip *chai* while watching the sun sink over the acacia treetops. Is this the Africa that awaits me? Or have I forgotten? Have I changed, and has She? In the newspapers She sounds so angry about her crosses – AIDS, debts, corruption. I want to know the other part of Africa that still lives. What keeps Africa alive?

Do Africans really care about conservation? Perhaps they are too exhausted from trying to survive to be bothered. Instinctively they know the law well – only the fittest survive. I look around at the clusters of sinewy, unemployed Kenyan men waiting to do anything to earn a few shillings. An hour's drive away, across the border, maybe Tanzanians also consider caring for the environment to be a foreign luxury, as distant to them as New York's skyscrapers.

Tanzanians are lucky. Unlike most Africans, they still have expansive open areas of bush where wildlife and humans could coexist efficiently, as tribes such as the Wamaasai, Wahadzabe, and Waarusha have done for decades. But most rural Tanzanians

struggle merely to meet their basic needs, fleeing from the realities of population pressures, decreased soil productivity, and widespread unemployment. By centering their

lives on the present, many villagers living in rural areas overlook the option of preserving trees, land, and wildlife to satisfy present and future needs of both humans and wildlife. When they have a family to feed, they will do anything – harvest the biggest acacia trees to make charcoal, use slash-and-burn agriculture to grow more maize and millet, set their domesticated goats and cattle loose to graze competitively with wilder ungulates. I would probably do the same.

Who am I to say how they should live their lives? Am I more than a blue-eyed, white *mzungu* advocating the only acceptable way to conserve – our way? I wish rural Tanzanians could learn from the environmental mistakes Americans have made (i.e. settlers nearly poaching the buffalo to extinction, building fences to keep animals in and people out, and crowning themselves rulers of the land). Then they would not have to almost lose something in order to save it. There is hope.

It's finally time. The white, oversize minibus circles around to squeeze a few more people inside its steamy belly. I sink down into the last window seat. Scenes whiz by me like a motion picture in fast-forward: lanky giraffes, Maasai boys herding prized goats and cattle, the base of Kili, the dusty border, rolling hills of green wheat and barley, and bustling Arusha, our project's base.

In wonder, I sit and allow my eyes to adjust to the fantastical colors and people. It is more wonderful than I imagined. Tanzanians don't need us to give them anything. I see differences, but they are neither good nor bad – just different. Awareness of the need to allow creativity and divergent viewpoints revealed to me what T.E. Lawrence discovered long ago: "Better to let them do it imperfectly than to do it perfectly yourself, for it is their country, their way, and your time is short." Our way is not necessarily better than theirs. Tanzanians do care, because this is their life, land, and wildlife. It is theirs.

## Dancing With Mark Morris

“Dance groups are notoriously difficult to do, Laura.” Lydia’s words echoed through my head as I opened the thin notebook that housed all the material for my next press release. I had already written three press releases for the Society for the Performing Arts season, what was one more?

“Hard, schmard,” I thought as I began sifting through the biographies, program notes, and reviews. I quickly noticed that there was a rather scant amount of information in the press kit. Mark Morris Dance Group. A half-page biography on Mark Morris. A half-page history of the company. Review. Review. Review. More reviews. The contents of the packet began to appear increasingly less informative as I read through them. Maybe less was not so good.

“Who the heck is Mark Morris?” I asked myself. I just read his *biography*, for crying out loud. Why don’t I know more? OK, so the dance group he founded was the national dance company of Belgium for a few years. That’s cool, but there has to be something else. What about him would make me, or anyone, for that matter, want to come to see his show? These are the types of questions I needed to be asking as I attempted to put together an enticing press release. In going through the classic questions of who, what, when, where, and why, I realized I did not have the information I needed. By the end of my first day with Mark, I figured we just needed to get to know each other a little bit better.

I returned the following day with many of my questions still unanswered, but I was prepared to ask the right people. I contacted Mark’s agent in New York with some of my questions regarding the program he would bring to Houston in October. She was very helpful in addressing my direct inquiries, but I realized the professional world does not go out of its way to offer information where it is not explicitly asked.

Mark was not coming to life. He was still this flat choreographer who seemed to have done a lot in various cities around the world, but nothing would tell me how to sell his show here in Houston. The reviews all raved about his latest masterpiece, but they only went so far. I came to the conclusion that I would have to dig deep into the archives of the Houston Chronicle, reporting on his previous appearances in Houston, to discover the man who was Mark Morris.

“The Bad Boy of Modern Dance” leapt off the computer screen, taking me by surprise. Mark a bad boy? Words such as “riveting,” “audacious,” “wildly original,” and “scandalous” caught my eye as I read on in a flurry of confusion. Here I had been thinking this guy was blasé, and critics were calling him a madman choreographer. Evidently this guy took Tchaikovsky’s *The Nutcracker* and created a work set in the swinging ’60s titled *The Hard Nut*. The things you learn about people when you really look are absolutely astounding. I was feeling closer to Mark already.

There was only one problem: I had reviews on only one of the pieces the group would be performing in Houston but needed feedback on all four works to be presented. I had mentioned this to the agent in an e-mail, but she had not addressed the issue. I decided I had all the information I was going to get, and I sat down to construct the most difficult press release I had yet to write.

I worked for days trying to sugarcoat the group in just the right way so that audiences would be even more excited to see this new and outlandish choreography than I was. It was without a doubt my biggest challenge of the summer. The final straw came the day after I thought I was finished.

“Laura, this is for you,” Lydia said as she handed me a large envelope. I opened it to find a short letter from Mark’s agent, accompanied by a number of reviews of the other shows on the program for October. Even though this information was necessary and helpful to my success, I just wanted to scream.

I returned to the computer to, in the words of Susan Lieberman, “waltz” with Mark. I felt as if I had choreographed my *pièce de résistance* for eight dancers and someone told me I had to add a ninth where one couldn’t possibly fit. Where once I’d had a dearth of information on which to draw, I now had such a plethora that consolidating it into less than two pages of material would pose a problem.

My determination to convince Houston audiences that an encounter with this extraordinary choreographer and his dance group would be the opportunity of a lifetime helped me to pull everything together to form one of my best press releases of the summer. Had it not been the press release from hell, I do not think I would be nearly as excited about seeing his group perform as I am. Mark Morris Dance Group is coming to town, and I am confident that newspapers, radio stations, and audiences will be ready for him. But most of all, so will I.



## **My Art of Living**

Vaguely I recollect being taken outside and being asked to draw the towering, deciduous tree before me. I obediently squinted up, initially blinded by the sunlight peeping through the gnarly branches and brilliant green leaves of my massive maple. Enthralled by the beatific image of those continuously complex, crisscrossing outgrowths, I resolved at age 5 to transmit that imprint in my mind onto paper.

In all my future creative endeavors, these patterns of intertwining branches have wound themselves into my amateur works of art. Beginning from a concave outline of two lines, my pattern divides and unfolds indefinitely through simple Y-junctions, with some branches approaching the heights of the stars while others coalesce back into one another. Finally color is added, erasing previous demarcations that had separated the various branches. In the end an elaborate, curvilinear motif that stretches beyond the limits of the page is revealed.

Much like the intertwined branches in my maple tree, paths that stretch in all directions characterize the shape of my life. As I pursue different interests, propelled by the surge of adrenaline that comes with anything you are passionate about, the possibility of endless junctions and directions arises. What keeps me from wandering too far? These winding paths I follow occasionally feed back into one another, redirecting my growth in a more vertical dimension.

This past summer I worked in Houston, entangled high in the branches of my own tree of life, filled with great expectations for this opportunity of many firsts: the first time living alone, the first time working in the real world, the first time cooking for myself. But after that initial month, the trunk of my tree could no longer support the intricate fanfare of hopes and dreams with which I had entered the summer. I found myself terribly homesick and scared to push myself into uncharted sky. Where had my insatiable thirst for new experiences gone?

Teetering and about to fall, I remembered my close family and friends and tenaciously clung to the tenuous topsoil of their memory. I called my father constantly, lamenting my unbearable loneliness. He said I needed to go out and socialize, find a new community. Gritting my teeth and breathing deeply, I began e-mailing people I didn't know very well, suggesting plans and taking initiative when the only thing I wanted to do was wait out the sick feeling that comes from being alone. Some people responded, some people didn't, but by the end of the summer I had forged some new relationships. Feeling more my former self, I again started journeying into bookstores, musing about life, dabbling in writing, and stretching into new activities. I discovered opportunities to work with abused children through art therapy, found classes in Egyptian dance, and browsed modern design stores to quench my latest forays into modern art and architecture.

But pausing now to reflect back on the summer, I realize that the treetop that had captivated my gaze had effectively blocked what was beneath the surface. My own experience has uncovered the tunneled nature of my former gaze, which obscured the true reality of any tree. A large shade tree can only support its elaborate branching through the existence of an extensive root system.

At 20, I am excited for the future but a little wiser after my summer mentorship experience in Houston, aware that it is the roots of a tree that allow it to grow tall beyond the scope of its initial horizon and to branch out in many different directions.

## Blue

I arrived in La Jolla entirely alone. The beaches were beautiful, my house was perfect, and the weather was sunny and warm – but I was alone and didn't know how to enjoy being by myself. I walked to work every day and sat at my desk in the windowless office doing small tasks at my computer. I chatted occasionally with acquaintances at work, but at the end of the day I went home by myself. I talked on the phone with friends far away, watched hours of boring network television, and went to bed early.

I had been working at the Museum of Contemporary Art San Diego for about a week before I really had time to peruse the gallery spaces and experience the museum. I wandered throughout the museum and studiously examined nearly all of the stark, windowless spaces displaying an architectural exhibit by Venturi Scott Brown and Associates. Like a good architecture student, I focused on lessons I could take away from the designs by the well-known firm.

Then I entered a small gallery in the northwest corner of the museum that was empty except for two comfortable chairs, a small coffee table, and three long windows of pure glass that wrapped the space. I had glimpsed this gallery on my walk to my office each day but had never been inside it. It was absolutely beautiful. The pieces in this gallery were not on the walls but on the windows. They were the windows. The view of the bluest ocean bordered by palm trees and cliffs was framed perfectly by the five-foot-tall mullionless glass strips that cut through the space. Being in the gallery was like being transported to a peaceful, inspiring place outside the thick walls of the institution. I had heard from co-workers that few artists wanted to display their pieces in the Kritchman Family Gallery because they felt they could not compete with the view. This small piece of the Pacific Coast became my favorite place in San Diego.

It was always serenely quiet in the room, yet bright and inviting. I would stare out the windows at the ocean and wonder how it could be so much bluer than any other ocean I'd ever seen. I would steal away during my lunch break and my free time to flip through an art magazine and gaze out the windows. I could gather my thoughts and think about my day and what I wanted to be doing with my time in San Diego. I felt content when I was there and began to look at my summer from a different and more positive angle.

Ultimately I ventured out of the gallery and across the street to the seawall that bordered the beach. The first time I reached the wall and looked out at the blue ocean no longer encapsulated behind glass, it was breathtaking. I began to appreciate how lucky I was to be in such a spectacular location and have so much time to organize my thoughts. The experience of the blue ocean inspired me to take control of my life and grab the opportunities that were right in front of me. I had been in a rut – not wanting to be alone and rejecting connections with the community in La Jolla that I was a part of. I needed to make something of myself in my internship, meet the people I interacted with every day,

spend my free time doing things I loved, explore areas I hadn't yet been to, and try something new, even if it meant just getting food from a different restaurant for dinner. I saw the summer as an amazing opportunity to find out more about myself.

I know now that it was a necessary experience for me to spend that time alone this summer. I am capable of attacking the world by myself. I can live on my own and be responsible. I can tune in to things that I really enjoy and find time to focus on them. I can balance my need for individual time to discover personal and independent pursuits and social time to develop supportive friendships. I could have wasted my entire summer being gloomy about missing my friends and being lonely all the time. Instead I decided to be assertive and challenge myself to grab hold of my world. I walked all around La Jolla and explored surrounding areas and found an art store and started drawing again. I watched my new friends surf, attended museum events on weekends, listened to architecture lectures, and participated enthusiastically in my evening class at the University of California at San Diego. I was a part of a community, yet also developed my personal independence.

Something about the pure endless blue inspired me. I could stare out the windows or over the seawall indefinitely to watch time pass on that small strip of ocean bordered by cliffs and sand. I could take a deep breath and smile because I knew that I was lucky to be alone in that place. I bought a print of a piece by Robert Irwin, an artist who also must have been struck by the power of this special place. His piece *1°2°3°4°* was an installation that cut one square hole out of each of the three windows in my favorite gallery. The print hangs today in my college dorm room as inspiration, though of course the experience is not the same. Now that I'm back at school, I have to take a minute out of my hectic schedule to just relax and remember the blue ocean, the clear sky, the rising cliffs, and the summer I learned to be alone.

Charlotte Albrecht  
Planned Parenthood of Houston and Southeast Texas  
Laurie McGill, Vice President, Medical Services

## Heating Activism

I like the heat to begin and end my day. It wakes me up, intensifies my senses. During the Houston summertime, the heat is sweltering. It seems as if Houstonians hate the heat so much that they have practically built their city indoors. I came to realize my affinity with heat during my Leadership Rice mentorship at Planned Parenthood of Houston and Southeast Texas two summers ago. Planned Parenthood is a nonprofit, nationwide organization that promotes awareness of and fights for the protection of reproductive rights. While there I learned about all aspects of its history, organization, successes, and obstacles – and about my attraction to the heat. During my commute to and from work, I started to roll down my windows and feel the heat seeping into my skin. I found it therapeutic.

As I reflected on my experience at Planned Parenthood, I saw that the heat represented something more for me: passion, more specifically passion for activism. This is perhaps the one word with which I would most want to describe my life now and my life for the future, and it is from Planned Parenthood that I learned to be able to articulate that. I have felt for a long time that my actions are motivated by my beliefs, which in turn are formed by my emotions and “gut feelings.” However, the process of determining what those beliefs are has been long and is still evolving.

Heat was everywhere that summer.

Next to Planned Parenthood is a Crisis Pregnancy Center that advertises “FREE PREGNANCY TESTS” in bright red letters on its building. I remember noticing this on my first day of work and casually wondering if there was an alliance between the two organizations. I was informed later that the “free pregnancy tests” were given only after the client had been counseled to carry her pregnancy to term at all costs. This information simmered in my mind.

I received regular e-mails about state and federal legislation pertaining to reproductive and sexual health. One such e-mail contained information about President Bush’s reinstatement of the global gag rule, which denies U.S. aid money to family-planning clinics in other countries if they distribute information about abortion or provide abortion services, regardless of those countries’ laws. I remember reading a speech that a Nepalese doctor made before Congress. Nepal, which at the time outlawed any form of abortion and imposed severe penalties on women who sought abortions, has one of the highest maternal mortality rates in Asia. This doctor ran a family-planning clinic and was beginning to work with the Nepal government to take steps toward the legalization of abortion. Essentially the global gag rule would force his clinic to choose between working with its own government and receiving support from the United States, without which the clinic might not be able to remain open. Despite his compelling speech and the

stories of many others, the global gag rule was reinstated and remains in effect. I remember the heat I felt in learning about this, angry and appalled at such a reality.

In the mornings, as I walked from the parking lot to the building, there was some excitement as to what I would see. Some days a tall, thin man wearing a purple vest and a headset would be standing in front of Planned Parenthood – a volunteer escort for patients. If I saw this man, then I knew that beyond him, in front of the gates, there would be protesters of different genders, ages, and races, often the same people time after time. Walking past, I could feel the heat from them and from the man in the purple vest. The heat came in many different forms, not just my own; sensing their heat, mine grew more intense.

On my last day at Planned Parenthood, I had many uncertain feelings: The summer was ending; the school year was starting; I was about to go abroad for a semester. I had trouble visualizing what lay ahead of me, and I was both excited and scared. Yet the one certain feeling I had was gratitude. As simple and trite as it may sound, I know this is how I felt when I couldn't quite think of what to say to my mentor. We smiled at each other and hugged; I even felt a little choked up.

I know what the heat has meant to me. Without this experience, I might have continued to take for granted my labeling of myself as “pro-choice.” Now I can say without hesitation what I believe, why I believe it, how I came to that belief, and how I feel about the range of views that differ from my own on the topic of reproductive rights. I can tell you about each spark of the fire burning inside me. More importantly, for the direction of my life, I now know that activism must play a part in my career in order for me to feel as if I am living up to my potential to effect change and lead a truthful and risk-taking life.

At the end of my last day at work, I walked out to my car. I got in, rolled down the windows, and drove away, feeling the heat seep deeper into my skin.

## Musings on the Metro

The most important thing I took away from my experience in Washington, D.C., is not something I can put on my résumé. It's not something I learned during working hours, and it's not something that was deliberately taught to me. It was a lesson I had to learn on my own and one that took the entire summer to sink in, but it was worth all the time and effort because it is the type of knowledge I can take with me anywhere in the world. It's not often that you come across an epiphany like this: I don't ever want to be a regular subway rider.

It's not the logistics of the subway that bother me. I think that the D.C. Metro is an excellent system of public transportation. Within minutes of entering any stop, I can step onto a car and be whisked anywhere within D.C. and even to parts of Maryland and Virginia. The cars are clean, delays are infrequent, and the ticketing system is convenient. I can easily bypass the horror of D.C. traffic and the oppressiveness of the summer heat. Despite all of these benefits, I am still reluctant to ride the subway.

My problem with the subway goes much deeper than the superficial aspects of cleanliness and punctuality. What gets to me is the fact that when you take the subway, you miss the view. Above the maze of subway tunnels, life is happening. People are scurrying around, the leaves are changing colors, vendors are hawking their merchandise, and signs are announcing everything from the year-end sale to the end of the world. In the subway, though, it's nothing but darkness punctuated by fluorescent lighting. You're still surrounded by people, but they're subway people, and that makes them different.

It's not something that happens right away, but after a while, it seems to happen to all of them. Subway riders forget that there is a view. They move from home to work to shopping center without passing through the world that exists above ground. Eventually their life ceases to be anything more than a series of stops: Metro Center, Farragut North, Dupont Circle, Arlington. They no longer remember that life is a journey and that sometimes you have to expend a lot of effort to get where you want to go and that you can't always get there without a few detours along the way.

Detours are important to me. I'm the kind of person who can't even walk in a straight line. There's always something a little out of the way that I want to check out. Sometimes I don't end up back on the path I started on, but I've usually ended up on the path I'm supposed to be on. If it weren't for a detour into the Leadership Rice office to find a job during the school year, I probably never would have ended up in D.C. working for the National Trust. If I hadn't made a brief stop in a German class, I would probably still be stuck in a lab, working toward a degree that I wouldn't have been happy with. Since I am soon to graduate, and I don't have any real concrete idea of what I want to do, I need all the detours I can get. I need to try my hand at as many things as the world will

allow. If I stick to the tracks, I will move from Rice to graduate school to a job to a family to retirement, and I might end up missing the best thing life has to offer me.

Perhaps the subway is economical and reasonable, but the money I would save would never be as valuable to me as the perspective I would lose. That is why I can't ride the subway. I have to be up where things are happening, where I can smell, taste, and touch the excitement and change that are life and where I can remember that it's not so much the destination that counts but the journey.



## Life Flashes

If I could say that things last summer ran smoothly, I would say it. If I could say I was impeccable in every assignment and zealous in seeing everything my city had to offer, I would say it. If I could say I always gave 110 percent, never screwed up, and was the Intern-to-Put-All-Interns-to-Shame, I would say it. Life doesn't quite work that way, and our greatest learning experiences can be painful. While my summer certainly wasn't flawless or free of missteps, its lessons – or life flashes, as I call them – resulted in knowledge far more valuable than the satisfaction of an easy journey.

**Life Flash 1: Listen to your stomach.** When I learned that my placement would require me to be technical-minded and work in a field in which I had no prior interest, I panicked. The bees in my stomach started working overtime, and I began to wonder whether I hadn't made the wrong decision. But I chalked it up to nervousness. Rather than risk shaking things up by examining why I thought I might be making an unsuitable choice, I ignored the nagging feeling. This turned out to be a costly mistake. I realized a month into my internship that my placement wasn't right for me. Rather than attempt to remedy the situation before I committed myself to an organization, I had repressed my concerns. Next time I will trust myself enough to believe I know when something is not a wise decision for me.

**Life Flash 2: Don't fear change.** After working for a few weeks at my original placement and not doing very well, I began to feel horrible about myself. I assumed that I was simply a bad worker and that I wasn't going to get very much out of my mentorship, and I therefore put very effort little in, which of course only made me feel worse. I began reflecting on my position and realized that the timing of my work with my organization was off and that my personality type didn't flourish in the organization's office atmosphere. I am a people-person and thrive on the passion and energy of others. At the time, I was practically living in the office, and during working hours I was around other humans a scant two hours a day. I was stagnant. With the consent of all involved, I decided to switch internships. My decision resulted in a better working environment and a total change in my performance, and it gave me an entirely different perspective on my summer.

**Life Flash 3: Make the most of your experiences.** My summer placement at PEOPLink took me to Washington, D.C. The District of Columbia may not seem very exotic, but it was a place I'd never been before. While at first I tried my best to see what the city offered, at times I tired of it all. I got into a rut. While there is nothing wrong with routine, I don't know whether I'll ever make it back to D.C. Knowing that I never took Liz up on that tour of the White House, that I passed on the chance to go to the Kennedy Center, and that I wasn't exactly methodical in my touring of the Smithsonian is

really dispiriting. I hate the feeling that there were so many places and events I didn't experience. Regret is not something I want to live with again.

**Life Flash 4: Be the person you admire.** Unfortunately my regrets weren't limited to places I didn't see. Sometimes when I heard of someone doing something particularly impressive, I would get a twinge of jealousy. After the summer, I understood that I was bothered because those people I admired were acting in ways I was capable of acting but simply wasn't. These people were my mentors, my co-workers, and my friends. They had some qualities that I respected yet was not emulating. Suddenly I was torn; I began to over-analyze the many reasons I wasn't living up to everything I could be. It took a few months, but finally it occurred to me that rather than beat myself up because I wasn't doing as well as they had, I could simply try to become the type of person I admired.

**Life Flash 5: Go after what you want.** This is possibly the most difficult of all my life flashes. Don't whine; don't complain; refuse to see obstacles as barriers. Just set a goal and go for it. Early in my summer I learned of the National Council of La Raza's yearly conference in Miami. The council is the largest Hispanic organization in the United States, and researching the event excited me like nothing else had that summer. I wanted to attend, but the \$800 fee due in two weeks deterred me. I let a few days pass as I stewed over the benefits of attending versus the cost, and once I decided to go I plowed ahead full force. By the deadline I'd raised all the funds for my trip. I spent six fabulous days in Florida networking, going to workshops, and exposing myself to new ideas and future leaders. The experience taught me that if something seems beyond your ability, try for it anyway. A "No" can only stop you if you let it.

**Life Flash 6: If you aren't screwing up, you aren't learning.** OK, so a mistake a day may seem heinous, but making mistakes can simply mean that you are pushing yourself out of your comfort zone. Sometimes in a meeting I was so anxious at the thought of being wrong that I wouldn't open my mouth to voice an idea, only to hear a mentor say five minutes later what had been going through my head. Or I would make a mistake in an assignment and then feel guilty about it and not want to do that type of work again. Mistakes happen; you learn from them and won't need to make the same ones again.

While some of these life flashes may seem obvious, I would not have understood them without experiencing conflict and working through my problems. Life flashes are tricky things, though. Just committing them to paper will not make them any easier to live by. I know I will be faced with many other scenarios where I will have to stop making excuses and act, risk stepping beyond my comfort zone and possibly making a mistake, and – scariest of all – attempt to live up to my abilities. These choices won't be easier for my having lived through this summer, but I am confident I'll be equipped with the knowledge to make the right decisions.

## Undoing the Label X

During the spring semester of my second year at Rice, I took a course about my generation, titled “Generation X.” Although the lines are somewhat fuzzy, I am right on the edge of Generation X – the MTV generation, the so-called slackers, a generation considered aimless, passionless, and hopeless by the baby-boomer generation of social activism. I realized that I had often felt discouraged when presented with the ever-popular college essay question “What is your passion?” and the scholarship favorite “What motivates you?” Until I began my mentorship, I had done well by most standards, but I had never really been able to espouse any particular dream. I thought of the generation before me as crusaders who made major leaps in the civil-rights movement, wrote great feminist texts, and generally lived lives of passion and change. By contrast, when I thought about my life, I saw only the label X.

At first Leadership Rice was just another place where I thought I would do well but lack passion. Almost immediately upon beginning my mentorship at the Mental Health Association, that perception changed. The more I learned about the plight of the mentally ill and the necessity of advocacy, the more passionate I became, almost without realizing it. Suddenly I felt that my life could effect positive change. I embraced the emotional nature of my workplace: We all rejoiced when funds were created to educate women about the dangers of postpartum depression, and we shared frustration when our efforts to improve the lives of the mentally ill were rebuffed. My mentor explained to me that although she is a very organized person, many of the projects she would have me working on would change suddenly or be canceled at the last moment – that’s the nature of advocacy. I was thrilled to be thrown into random assignments in which the project that was important one day would be superseded by another the next. In moments I might have found frustrating in other circumstances, I instead focused on each detail as it presented itself, knowing that all the effort I was expending might someday make that incremental difference.

We’ve all heard the rhetoric: Life is faster, harsher, more competitive than it was in the past. Generation Xers are bombarded with strident realities: SAT scores, net incomes, computer viruses. There isn’t much time to ponder the abstract. I believe that most people today are taught to deal in the concrete and value the accomplishments they are directly responsible for making. Yet my concrete accomplishments in school and life often felt perfunctory. Grade-point averages and essays are nice, and I am happy when I do well in these areas, but the concrete cannot always satisfy. Rather than the apathetic generation, I think of Gen X as a generation often unable to find passion in the hectic rush of the new, globalized world. But advocates and nonprofit organizations rarely deal in the concrete. From Day 1, my mentor taught me that our agenda would never stay the same for more than a few moments, and we might never know if we did well at the tasks

we chose to tackle. For instance, our visits to Texas representatives and senators were exciting assignments for me, but ultimately abstract in terms of results.

In the same way I would research a paper, I spent days researching these men and women before our visits. The goal of my research was to determine what approach would be most convincing in the 15-20 minutes we would be given to make our appeals. Suddenly my research meant more than a grade. I was dealing with people and the future, neither of which are ever very predictable. Our hope was that our visits might set off a chain of events that could help the mentally ill.

Arriving at the various offices of our legislators, we were invited into plush waiting rooms, offered beverages by well-dressed office assistants, and finally seated in front of the senator or representative of the day. I would glance out the windows of the office building to see downtown Houston sprawled around us and think of the homeless men and women I drove by every day on my way to and from work. I know that my friends and fellow Xers are distressed by suffering, but many of us feel helpless in the face of so much misery. How can we help the poor when we are working as hard as we can, in the midst of an economic recession, just to get jobs for ourselves?

One of the first things I learned when I began my mentorship is the fact that many of the homeless have mental illness and cannot get off the street without help. Another fact: Houston spends less per capita on social programs than almost any other city in the United States. With these thoughts running through my mind, I would listen as my mentor unleashed her passion to these senators and representatives, asking for their help, advocating for the mentally ill. For the most part we were given an attentive audience and then thanked, but I will never know if anything my mentor so eloquently stated had a real effect. We will never be certain that our efforts changed anything.

Objectively, my work could have been seen as difficult, slow-moving, and depressing. If I was truly bound by the supposed limitations of Generation X sentiment, I would have seen it this way, I know. But the truth is, I never really doubted the importance of what we did. Somehow, what was said in those beautiful offices may reach out and touch the lives of one of the homeless and mentally ill people on the street, and that makes every minute worth it. The lessons I learned this summer were not fun, and nor was the work. I did not enjoy realizing that people everywhere suffer from mental illness and cannot advocate for themselves. I did not want to listen to the stories of emotional trauma, abuse, and neglect. I did not want to believe that a whole office of people could spend their lives working toward such gradual change.

But I am so proud to finally have witnessed and embraced passion. I rejoice in the realization that living passionately and working passionately pale in comparison to the capacity within us to hope passionately. With this hope, I have undone my former fear, the label X.

## Introverts Anonymous

Hi, my name is Alex Kipp, and I'm an INTP. For those of you who are unaware of the Myers-Briggs Personality Test, that means I am an Introvert, iNtuitive, a Thinker, and a Perceiver. While my thinker and perceiver scores are fairly low, both my introversion and intuitiveness scores are high. This means, among other things, that I consider meetings, by and large, to be a waste of time. Unfortunately for introverts, we are in the minority; roughly 70 percent of the population is extroverted, leaving only 30 percent for introverts. Because of this, introverts must learn to deal with the quirks and peculiarities of extroverts, especially in the context of meetings. I had this opportunity thrust upon me this summer at the Center for Bioethics at the University of Pennsylvania, and I was able to learn a few lessons from the experience.

At the Center for Bioethics, which is largely concerned with bioethics education, I worked with Carla Messikomer, the chair of the planning committee, to organize a conference. The moment she walked into the room for our first meeting, I noticed that she talked out her ideas and was quite energetic, two telltale signs of an extrovert. While warning bells should have been going off in my head, I was still acclimating to the new job and city, so my extrovert radar was down. Also, since I rarely attend meetings run by extroverts (my previous meeting experience having been mostly in the realm of science, a haven for introverts), I didn't quite know what I should be worried about.

In fact, it initially didn't seem I had much to fret over. Since I was virtually devoid of information about the center and the conference, I spent the meeting focused on soaking up as much data as possible instead of on how Carla and I interacted. When the meeting was over, I wasn't worried about how well Carla and I would work together; I was more concerned about the flood of information I faced. Here were all these details, potentially all my instructions for the conference over the summer, and I didn't have it all processed in my mind. Since I was still too nervous to talk things out with Carla (and she had to leave for other meetings), I decided to try something a bit new. After the meeting, I, like a good introvert, went back to my desk, gathered my notes around me, and created a "battle plan" for myself that laid out all my duties and responsibilities for the summer. I e-mailed this list of duties to Carla, and she said it looked great. (Lesson No. 1: Rewrite notes after meetings; make them more comprehensive and understandable!)

A few weeks later, after I had adjusted to the center, I began to notice the difference in meeting attitudes between Carla and myself. It was then that I realized just how differently introverts and extroverts act in meetings. I went into meetings expecting short, concise points that needed no discussion. Carla went into meetings looking for discussion to nail down the points she had in mind. In the next few meetings, I became flustered at the lengthy discussion on points that I would have decided without any discussion. However, in one meeting, while talking about registration for the conference,

an interesting thing happened: I brought up registering online, a point that hadn't been discussed at length earlier. After a brief discussion, it was decided that we definitely should have online registration. (Lesson No. 2: Valuable insight can be gained from discussions, even if the point appears to be an easy decision.)

Finally, in the last few weeks of my internship at the Center for Bioethics, I was busy finishing up and giving work back to whoever needed it. While I tried to have the final explanatory conversations over e-mail, I found that things still felt unsettled. All the pertinent information was in these e-mails and phone calls and notes, yet there seemed to be some vital part I was missing. In my last week of work, I had many meetings to "officially" wrap things up. Now, after each meeting, I felt as though that vital missing part had been taken care of in the meeting; it was a feeling of reassurance that everyone was on the same page. Things were finished, and I was confident that all the information I passed on was understood by whoever received it. (Lesson No. 3: Meetings can offer important information that cannot be received any other way!)

With these lessons in mind, I feel more capable of handling that 70 percent of the population that is VERY different from me. But do you really think anyone would attend an Introverts Anonymous meeting?

## Summer Colors

My memories of Peacechild have no dull grays or browns; they all seem to be in vivid colors. It was an incredible experience. I saw the world in highlights last summer. It was alive and exciting. These shades of Peacechild captivated my imagination. They are a gift that I have brought back with me to carry around forever.

Peacechild International is a United Kingdom-based charity that empowers children to take responsibility for peace, human rights, and the environment. An ever-changing group of interns manages the organization. During my tenure there, I worked and lived with interns hailing from nine countries. Even before I left for Peacechild, I knew that the mentorship represented an incomparable opportunity. Stars were already firmly placed in my eyes. I was passionate about the noble ideals espoused by the organization and the diverse working environment it offered. Sitting on the train to Peacechild, I thought the sun seemed a little brighter and the grass appeared to be a little greener than usual. I was in love with England and my mentorship before I ever got there.

The summer lived up to its promise. My fellow interns and I were very different from one another in many ways. We were divided not just by race, religion, nationality, and backgrounds, but also by attitudes and habits. But we were united by our commitment to Peacechild and the energy and enthusiasm we brought to our internships. My colleagues continue to inspire respect and affection in me, and I left Peacechild with the conviction that I have laid the foundation for friendships that I will value for many years to come.

My friends were responsible for a great number of life lessons that summer. They questioned my unchallenged notions and helped me learn what my values were and what they really meant to me. They taught me the difference between just embracing the theory of diversity and living with it daily. They were the most educational experience I have had in my life.

I went for long walks every evening I was there. The little town of Buntingford, which is dead at night and should have bored me, made me wax lyrical about the charm of the countryside and the peace of familiar neighborhoods. I realized as I left that I spent more time walking around the streets of Buntingford than I ever have around my home in Houston.

I was lucky to be placed with the exceptional group of people who were my fellow interns that summer. I was fortunate to live in a beautiful location and do idealistic work. Yet in another place and time I might easily have mentally dismissed this group, or I might have seen only the rain and failed to pay attention to the sunshine. I remember the excitement with which I approached my mentorship, and I know that my attitude opened many doors for me.

I used to wake up at Peacechild already excited about the day. That unique environment channeled my enthusiasm in a way that allowed me to see shades I might have missed without those special lights. It taught me the value of taking the time to appreciate my environment. The greatest tribute I can offer in the name of my summer experience is the promise to always preserve such a sense of appreciation. I like the color I painted into my life that summer, and I intend to hold on to it.



## The Letter

"All that we are waiting for is the Letter. Everything else has been done, including both databases."

I hadn't even finished saying what I had to say when a long gasp filled the cramped meeting room. Then some chuckling erupted in the corner. I gazed out over the crowd and noticed some people gesturing in some sort of muddled sign language. I continued to look around, baffled. I finally spoke again, but again it did not help my cause.

"Hopefully the Letter will be done soon so this project can continue forward and ..."

Laughing filled the room one more time, stopping me in midsentence.

"The LETTER. ...."

Pallavi, a co-worker, looked at me. "How many times are you going to keep bringing up this infamous letter?"

This series of events happened in less than 20 seconds, but I would find out later that I had just put myself in a little predicament with the executive director of St. Luke's Episcopal Health Charities. The weekly staff meeting continued, but I sat in my seat, puzzled. Usually Dr. Cooper led the conversation with some of her own jokes, but something about this situation made it seem as if laughter would not have been appropriate.

My mentor and I talked later that day, as usual, and she filled me in about the "hidden joke" that everyone but me had understood. "When you went to Colorado for a week, you missed one very important development," she said. "At the meeting that you missed, Dr. Cooper decided to write 'the Letter' after she realized that she had more expertise in this area."

My eyes opened wide, and my jaw dropped. Clarity replaced all the puzzlement, bewilderment, and confusion in my head. All the hand gestures and laughing made sense. Without meaning to get on the executive director's case, I had. I had just given her a hard time for not having 'the Letter' done. I had just created a political disaster.

I had tried hard for the past couple of weeks to watch very carefully what I said around everyone at SLEHC, but my efforts went down the drain in those 20 eternal seconds. I had been at my mentorship less than three weeks, and already I had messed up.

Once again people got a good laugh, but this time I, too, found it amusing. I realized that no matter how closely you watch what you say, there is always a chance you will slip up and say something offensive to someone. I ended up worrying about it for a little while, but that was a waste of time. Other work needed to be done, so as quickly as I realized what I had done, I dismissed it.

For the rest of my mentorship, everyone joked around about the episode of the Letter. Pallavi and I would laugh at any mention of it. In case you were wondering, the Letter did finally get mailed out to all Texas Medical Center institutions. Everyone at SLEHC felt a big weight lifted from their shoulders, but this feeling would not last long. One final problem was waiting to show its complicated face, unsuspected until the Medical Center institutions received the Letter. But that story is better left untold. ...

## The Baylor Circus

Let the show begin! Ready for an interpretive dancing clown, a woman-empowering bareback rider, a technology-talking body bender, and a *female* ring leader? Neither was I.

My summer in the public affairs office at Baylor College of Medicine was more or less a circus. The “performers” with whom I interacted daily created one of the most exhilarating and teamlike atmospheres I’ve encountered. In fact, they offered me a whole new concept of team. I realized the importance and contributions of individuality and role-playing to a team. Though the office is very functional, this did not equate mundane activities and impersonal workers. Baylor College of Medicine thrives on the diversity of roles played by its performers. Each person had a purpose and goal to fulfill, and they all played out their duties in their own distinct, intriguing fashion. I began to see them more as an assorted circus troupe, complete with ring leader and performers, each with distinctive talents. Together they always created a spectacular finale.

I present to you first none other than my mentor, the ring leader, who was born to be a manager. Her guidebook, *The One Minute Manager Meets the Monkey*, hints at her ability to handle situations and people (and possibly even animals) efficiently and carefully. Her booming voice announces the accolades and promises of the team she orchestrates. Presenting shiny paper stars for outstanding individual efforts and throwing occasional ice cream socials for the entire department, she awards her workers after each successful performance. As a result, members feel significant in the roles they play on the team. Having worked her way up from being an organized receptionist and a people-oriented and savvy journalist, this ring leader is knowledgeable in and works closely with all areas of the department and is able to present a detailed show to the audience. As an effective ring leader, my mentor knows how to turn the spotlight not on herself but on everyone else.

Next up is the bareback rider serving as the women’s health public-relations writer at Baylor. Working with diligence, care, and concentration, she is determined not to fall off task. She ensures that her teammates are aware of her goals, progress, and opinions. Her eye is steady on the task at hand. This calm and elegant rider has the admirable ability to stay balanced in her hectic dealings with ambivalent television reporters and infinite deadlines while also fulfilling the role of mom and wife. Her grounded mindset and rationality contribute a sense of stability in the office and provide a model work ethics for her fellow “performers.”

As the bareback rider gallops away, the audience erupts in giggles and laughter: The clown is striding into the ring. He (the public-relations writer who happens to represent the “testosterone point of view” in any office discussion) offers comic relief in an environment that can all too often be chaotic and tense. His sporadic interpretive

dances, random comments, and pranks always stir a chuckle from others. But when a special routine (an article, in public-relation terms) is due for public showing, this clown knows how to get to work. Finishing with precision and anticipation for the next challenge, he knows the distinction between the time to work and the time to play. The passion and enjoyment he shows in his work remind his co-workers of the joys of being a part of a not-for-profit organization.

Last but not least comes the mind-boggling and jaw-dropping contortionist. As a member of the Web development department at Baylor, he never ceases to amaze everyone with his ability to bend and twist to fit into the several roles he plays. Though many credit his limberness to his young age, his quick reactions and clever ideas confirm his maturity. Even though he's the computer whiz, his abilities allow him to incorporate any role, from Web designer and researcher to executive and consultant. Seeking to broaden his talents by attending medical school, he continues to dazzle people with his ability to adapt.

What you've read is just a glimpse of a few key performers who create the Baylor Circus. Want more? Look around you. The circus is already in place. The Baylor Circus I joined and observed for two months helped shape my perception of the functionality of a team. I have learned that the very people I see every day are potential members of a circus. They don't have to have the exact same desires or pursue goals in similar fashions. Their ability to contribute lies in the uniqueness they display in their roles. Come one, come all! The circus is ready for you to join and enjoy!

## **Civil Rights and Columbia Heights**

First of all, I have to admit that my internship was not as fabulous as everyone else's sounds. The semester before my internship, I had a developing interest in advocacy and its application to policy-making, and I was eager to be a part of that process in our national capital, where a significant portion of civil-rights work occurs. What better place than the Office for Civil Rights in Washington, D.C.? I looked to the coming summer experience as a time to gain perspective and a better understanding of myself, and I thought the internship would be the main source for these changes. In the end, my internship in the Office for Civil Rights was solid but not spectacular: While I did not spend my time chasing papers and making photocopies, the organization was in the second year of its internship program, and there were cracks in the system that needed to be filled. Nonetheless, I got exposure to the daily functioning of a civil-rights attorney and came away with an understanding of the political culture on Capitol Hill and its relation to the creation of policies.

I also looked up to Carole, my intern coordinator, for her modesty, her intelligence, and her calm, efficient way of handling ambiguous situations. Her self-assurance and peace came from deep within, and it was evident that she was balanced and happy, firmly rooted in her beliefs and livelihood. Talking to her opened up insights about myself as I realized the importance of being involved in a line of work for which you truly have a passion.

Besides the internship, my living situation was at least as powerful an experience. Living in northeast Columbia Heights, a dilapidated neighborhood with welfare offices and abandoned buildings I walked past at least twice a day to get to the subway, definitely brought home the realities of poverty and struggle that a large sector of Americans have to deal with. Living in this neighborhood was not intentional, but I think it was the perfect complement to working for the Office for Civil Rights, because it immersed me fully in the living situations of people whom our office tries to help.

I've also been enriched by the housemates I lived with, in a small townhouse packed with nine random people aged 20-26 – a slice of American youth. There was Amelia, who hated the whole house and didn't talk to anyone; Matt, who believes that discrimination doesn't exist anymore in America; Kelley, who's from the Deep South and who believes that races should be separate (it doesn't matter whether they're separate but equal, as long as they're separate); Jenn, who was never around because she was always with her boyfriend; Suzanne, a cynical feminist from Stanford with whom I shared the bathroom and became the best of friends; Henry, whom Suzanne and I called "Chester the molester" due to his treatment of women; Phil, a clueless but genuinely nice guy; and Nick, the hard-core civil-rights activist who inevitably butted heads with Kelley and Matt over every social and political cause.

Living there taught me about tolerance for different beliefs, how to deal with sticky living situations and people, and how to develop deeper relationships, and it gave me a valuable glimpse of how nine unique people can conceptualize and process information and view society, think, react, and be driven in fundamentally different ways. Coming to terms with these differences and finding a good group balance were big but rewarding hurdles to overcome. It's incredible how much I've learned by living at this house. I thoroughly enjoyed it – bad times and all.

## Summer of Friendship

In my interview with Leadership Rice, Susan Lieberman asked me whether, given the funding to start any project I dreamed of, I would take off a year from school to go and do it. I said I wouldn't, because I wouldn't be able to leave my friends – I only have four years with them – for an entire year. What can I say? I love my friends. I didn't, however, think that was the answer Leadership Rice was looking for. Somehow they still accepted me. It turns out I would learn more about friendship over the summer.

When I signed up to work with St. Luke's Episcopal Health Charities, I was told part of my job would involve assisting with interviews in the Alief area. More than anything else about my internship, I was excited about doing fieldwork that might help us understand and improve community health in Alief.

After compiling a quantitative report on Alief, Karen Williams and I embarked on our first interview. The subject was a senior-citizen Vietnamese refugee VISTA worker who teaches English as a second language and citizenship preparation to seniors. After being given an address that led us to a strip mall along the New Chinatown section of Bellaire Boulevard, we located our interviewee. He walked us back to – not an office, as I naively expected, but his classroom. Not an empty classroom, either: We were to conduct our interview with the entire class present. Not exactly an interview anymore.

We became the focus of his and the students' curiosity, and we watched as the instructor prepped the class by asking them typical citizenship questions. I don't think my mentor and I will ever forget two of the questions he expected the students to be asked: Who is your best friend, and who is your enemy? Apparently the instructor thought the appropriate and safe answer to the first question was "My spouse," and if that is not applicable, "My mother." So he seemed somewhat taken aback when he asked me and I replied, "Jeremy. He's not related to me, though."

"Who is your enemy?" A decade ago, the expected answer was "the communists." Now it is "Osama bin Laden" and "terrorists." Not that I think they are my friends. But my enemy? I don't have enemies. Sure, people wrong me sometimes, but I just never seriously considered another person or group my enemy.

I didn't think about my enemies much over the summer – as I said, I don't have enemies. I did think about friends, and friendship. Usually when I felt lonely.

My summer started as it usually does, with me going home. Leaving school this year was different, though. I didn't want to go. I didn't want to say goodbye to my friends who graduated – one of my closest friends, one of my roommates, and many others. It cheered me up to know I would see my best friend a few weeks later. He was leaving to work in Atlanta for the summer about the same time my internship would start, so I had planned to visit him in San Antonio the weekend after the Leadership Rice orientation. Plans don't always work out. My car had to be repaired, so I wasn't even be able to drive

to Houston for the orientation, let alone go to San Antonio. I did get a ride to Houston, but San Antonio was out. I wouldn't see my best friend for three months.

Not only that, but I would see few of my friends over the summer. I spent time with several friends from Rice who were working in Houston, but I was still incredibly lonely. I didn't live with or near any of my friends. One of my priests generously offered his home's guest suite to be my summer quarters, and I gratefully accepted. I was lonely, though. Father Ken just wasn't exactly the buddy-type, maybe because I'm half his age. But he was a generous host, and more than that, he became my friend. We ate many meals together, watched TV together, and both served on a medical mission trip to Bolivia. I'm glad to call him a friend now, as well as a priest. I didn't expect to find friendship with this middle-aged bachelor cleric, but I did.

The trip to Bolivia provided me with more opportunities for friendship. Despite the fact that most team members were twice my age, I formed many friendships. And I'll never forget the friends I made with whom I can't even have a conversation. I couldn't speak Spanish, and few Bolivians I met spoke English, but a smile was usually enough to say everything. I didn't expect to find friendship with people I might never see again, but I did.

Through regular phone calls and Instant Messenger chats, I got to know some my friends better than I had. I never expected those friendships to grow when we didn't even see one another over the summer, but they did.

And of course I made friends at the office. Three of us worked in a one-room office all summer – two Rice interns and the office administrator. Despite our somewhat cramped space, we enjoyed working with one another and joked around all the time. I even became friends with my mentor and the other women on our team, who do research at home and in the field. Our weekly staff meetings lasted about twice as long as they probably should have because everyone talked to one another before, during, and after the agenda items. I didn't expect to make friendships at my summer job. I certainly never expected to form friendships among this group of mostly middle-aged-and-older women. But I did.

I started the summer disappointed because I wouldn't see my best friend for three months, self-pitying because I didn't have anyone to hang out with, and feeling alone. I ended the summer rich in new and more developed friendships. Friendships I didn't expect to find, friendships that found me.



## Giving Back

When I wake up in the morning, they are praying again. Perhaps praying makes you think of quiet, solitude, and serenity – which is what I would have thought before I came to rural Kenya. But praying here is a very loud, impassioned, participatory sort of affair, and, living with the minister in a small house built of mud, I run into it a lot. This morning I have again woken up late, and, like so many mornings, it has been necessary for me to walk into the midst of the prayer meeting in my rainbow pajamas for me to realize what is going on. I feel a little silly, but I am used to feeling silly by now.

I am here in Kenya doing community work, which appears to be more or less like development work, but minus the budget and the Land Rover. I live in the home of the Rev. Reuben Lubanga, the Episcopal minister, and his wife, six children, and two cousins. We have a black-and-white TV that we hook up to a car battery to watch World Cup soccer and a lot of furniture with pieces missing, but no electricity or running water. Someday we are going to have cement walls, but that will have to wait until after the sugar-cane harvest.

The funny thing about my job is that I always thought development workers were supposed to impart knowledge to the people they work with. I don't think I've been imparting much knowledge, except maybe English words to Reuben's 4-year old daughter, but the amount I have learned is incredible. I've learned how to carry things on my head, how to cook *ugale* (corn meal), and how to get on the bus while it's moving (sometimes they just don't stop), but those are the least of the things I have learned.

I have learned that I am rich. Not just well off, but unimaginably, fabulously wealthy. I have several pairs of shoes. I have hot water piped into my American home. I buy new textbooks every semester. Money practically falls into my lap. When I try to explain how American middle-school students raise money for Kenyan students' school fees, I falter. How do I explain, in a place where college graduates regularly cannot find any form of employment, that a middle-school child can earn enough to pay for a year's school fees by watching a dog for a week? For that matter, how can I explain why anyone would watch a dog to start with, in a place where most people don't *feed* their dogs?

I have also realized that the idea of an unchanging "traditional" way of life is a myth. Things here are changing, fast. Traditions are broken or breaking, and are being replaced, as they always have been, but now at an incredible pace. Furthermore, there is no evidence that the lack of consumer goods around me is the result of a socially conscious choice that people are making. On the contrary, just like most places, everyone here would like to buy as much as possible; they just don't have the money. The main difference is the scale. They don't have the money for a ballpoint pen, and I don't have the money for a new car.

The biggest thing I finally learned, though, is hope. I'm not sure I should even say that I learned it; it was a gift given me by everyone I worked and lived with. Betty

Lubanga always has at least two more children to feed, clothe, and send to school than she really should. Her explanation is simple: Their parents can't, and she can, so she does. Richard Keya makes \$130 a year from the sugar-cane harvest and volunteers all of his time as an HIV/AIDS counselor, dealing every day with the sorts of things that make social workers quit their jobs. Reuben Lubanga started Inter-Community Development Involvement with a VCR and a wheelbarrow, and although he now has a vehicle, he still does more with less than you would think possible. If 10 people living in four rooms of a house built of mud can have that much hope, how can I stand before them with my plane ticket, my passport, and my college degree and say that I can do nothing?

Have you ever wanted to make a difference but felt that it wasn't possible? Have you ever been told that "saving the world" is a child's dream? I have. But inaction is our luxury. Cynicism is our indulgence. The need for change is far enough from us that we can turn our heads, if we like, and pretend that it doesn't exist. Yet to the people I worked with, lack of hope is death. When the need for change stares you in the face and surrounds you, you cannot afford the luxury of inaction.

I am used to feeling silly by now. I felt silly standing there that morning in my pajamas, and I feel silly for thinking that it was ever an option to walk away. It doesn't matter if what you do is difficult or what you see is ugly. You cannot face reality and not try to change it, and once you see the possibility for change, it does not matter how difficult it is to create. The only way out is to turn your face away. I'm not sure I can anymore, but the blessing I have been given is that I no longer need to. I cannot look at Reuben and Richard and Betty and not share their hope. They have given me a gift: They have given me back my faith.

Shahnaz Shushtari  
Baylor Teen Health Clinic  
Dr. Peggy B. Smith, Executive Director,  
and Ruth Buzi, Program Coordinator

## **Instead, Think Small**

In the past decade, the U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention found that more than half of adolescents in the United States reported having unprotected sexual intercourse by age 19. About one quarter of new HIV infections are among this age group, yielding between 1 million and 2 million youths living with HIV (Office of National AIDS Policy, 2000). These are the numbers that manifested right before my eyes on a slightly smaller scale every day of my summer mentorship at Baylor Teen Health Clinic, a nonprofit organization that provides free reproductive-health services to any person 21 years of age or younger.

The physical setting of the clinic inside the county hospital was constant, but the number of inhabitants was always in flux. While I made observatory contact with a large and diverse population on my way in and out of the clinic each day, my confinement within the walls of the small teen clinic for eight weeks allowed me to concentrate on a smaller group of individuals – a fraction of the 16,000 patients the teen clinic sees each year.

Throughout my years of health education in school and a lifetime of afternoon TV specials, I had heard the statistics about teens engaging in high-risk behaviors, but I had never experienced any of it in my own life or through anyone I knew. From my first minutes on the scene, I knew that my mentorship experience would not come with a convenient sugarcoating.

From the outset, the problem appeared too broad for a small group of individuals within a small reproductive-health clinic to tackle. After digesting a mass of statistics from research articles on the subject, I envisioned the problem having power comparable to a tidal wave that could easily overwhelm any feeble effort anyone might make against it. But before I got lost in a sea of t-tests and chi-square analyses, my mentors, Peggy and Ruth, suggested a simplified approach to solving what was repeatedly referred to as “the teen problem”:

1. Realize that the elimination of such an encompassing problem in society is not something that can be achieved in one easy step within a small or even calculable period of time. Don't be afraid to round up when making an educated guess.
2. It requires a large amount of effort, patience, and dedication to a project of this magnitude to see results, just as it required years of persistence and dedication to establish the teen clinic and gain support to keep it running on a limited budget for so many years.

3. By providing free reproductive health care at or above the level of the public sector, the clinic is able to play an active role in changing the lives of teens in Houston. That is really only possible by working outward, one individual at a time. All individual parts must be summed to provide the whole.

The key to my adjustment into the forefront of the “teen problem” was to not be overwhelmed by the numbers involved. Now that I can reflect over my entire experience and the exposure I gained, I am certain that I have the potential to create change in a society that is constantly moving, multiplying, and becoming more and more diverse. My mentors helped me learn about how to put a gigantic goal into a smaller framework. In short, they helped me achieve a larger perspective by reminding me to think small.

## Hidden Heroes

Timmy is 9 years old. He plays Little League and enjoys playing with action figures. On the surface Timmy is your regular, happy-go-lucky American child. But Timmy has been raped repeatedly by his uncle since he was 4 years old.

Child sexual abuse is a horror that no one wants to or should have to deal with. At the Children's Assessment Center, however, dozens of dedicated people do so every day. How can these people do it? What motivates them to continue to see children and families devastated by this evil? The wonderful staff at the Children's Assessment Center is able to provide its valuable services through staff members' desire to make a difference and their willingness to look at the big picture, separating their lives from what they see at work.

The drive to help someone else is the main force behind the good people at the center. Instead of simply talking about what a shame sexual abuse is or turning a blind eye altogether, these people feel a need to do something about the problem. This is a quality that cannot be taught or learned. It is simply something inside that drives and pushes people to work in difficult milieus. What makes this ability most admirable is that so few people possess it. I was in awe of the people at the center, because I knew they were capable of doing something I could not. Every person at the center possesses a strength that enables him or her to face horrible things day in and day out.

A second and equally important characteristic that the workers at the center possess is being able to look at the big picture. Instead of focusing on Timmy and his problem, the employees focus on the fact that they are helping children in general. They don't focus on the face of each of the children they see or think of each separate case. When they reflect on their jobs, the workers focus on the overarching help to children they are providing. Of all the things needed to work in a milieu like this, I think it was this characteristic that I was best able to grasp. It was relatively easy for me to step back and look at the center as a means of helping children instead of getting emotionally involved with individual victims. However, I rarely came in contact with the children. I can only imagine how much more difficult it must be to work on a higher level when you interact with the children all the time – to separate yourself from Timmy's suffering. By looking at the big picture, workers manage to not get sucked into the offenses that have been committed. They focus on the positive overall good instead of the small miseries that make up their jobs.

Another crucial way in which employees of the Children's Assessment Center manage to deal with child sexual abuse every day is by separating their lives from what they see at work. It was explained as taking whatever they see at the center out of their consciousness and leaving it in their desk drawers before heading home. Jeri Feld, a Child Protective Services caseworker, said that if the people at the center allowed

themselves to take home their work, no one would last more than a week. Making sure to have a life separate from your work is important in almost all sectors of employment, but it is necessary if you work with abused children.

The Children's Assessment Center deals with one of the most atrocious things in society. Having seen the children who come in and having listened to their stories, I know this is something I could not handle. Only through their drive to help and by stepping back from the individual children and separating work from life are the special people at the center able to deal with this impossible line of work. I applaud all the workers at the center. They possess a compassion and a dedication that are rare in today's society. The employees of the Children's Assessment Center are our hidden heroes.

## **Ignorant Excellence**

I am a private-school brat. A proud graduate of Greenhill School, I am still amazed at and grateful for the opportunities made possible for me by the finest preparatory program Dallas has to offer. Nevertheless, since my matriculation into Rice University, I have met many incredible people who strongly praise the public school system as the most beneficial educational environment. For those who come to learn, they claim, public schooling presents all of the opportunities of private education without the “preppy bubble” so often tied to the private-school ideal. Just as they pity me for my sheltered upbringing, however, I feel a twinge of sympathy toward these individuals for having been restricted to “those who come to learn.”

I felt no segregation based on intelligence in my high school environment. As far as the “preppy bubble” is concerned, although I did not have to walk through a metal detector every morning, I did not by any means feel disconnected from society. Avenues were set up for us to explore any curiosity or interest in the world around us, whether through community service or through annual drug-awareness lectures and classes. My private-school egotism resulted from the knowledge that we were expected to explore and given every opportunity to do so. As far as I was concerned, no doors were closed to us. I was shocked to learn just how wrong I was in that assumption.

Becoming an intern at Planned Parenthood of Houston and Southeast Texas opened my eyes to a world in desperate need of sex education. Nothing clarified this observation more than my experiences in the clinics. My first clinic visit was as an observer during a teenager’s interview for birth control. In the five-minute update of her history, I was surprised to see that although she came from a lacking system of education, Planned Parenthood had influenced her so that she was well-informed not only about birth control but about the risk for sexually transmitted infections as well.

Listening to a 17-year-old girl describe her knowledge of STIs made me realize just how limited my own understanding was. Since I had access to some of the best resources available, I decided to fill in the gaps in my knowledge. In doing so, however, I had a very disturbing revelation: The source of my ignorance was none other than my distinguished private school, the school that prided itself not only on its excellent academic standards but also on its focus on “real issues.” Somehow, between the drug-awareness weeks and the community-service days, Greenhill completely overlooked the question of sex.

I could not understand the reason for this aberration in the curriculum – it certainly could not be an issue of time or energy. After no more than one hour in the Planned Parenthood library, I was familiar with the famous “STD pictures” that public school students are required to view in health class. After another, I learned that HIV is not the only disease to worry about and that some forms of gonorrhea can even be spread

by skin-to-skin contact. With every ounce of new information, I became more and more aggravated at the huge flaw in what I had thought was a nearly flawless system. How could the Greenhill administrators think for one second that we did not need to be exposed to this crucial information? How could they smilingly send us off to college, proficient in math, science, even French, but frighteningly ignorant in one of the most essential subjects, sexual safety?

There are no negative statistics in a private school. A fair number of girls have had abortions by the time the graduate, but no one talks about it, and the lesson to be learned is disregarded. The biggest obstacles that we face in preventing the spread of unwanted pregnancy and sexually transmitted infection are ignorance and embarrassment. Our culture is ashamed of sex. Greenhill could never laud itself as an institute of learning if we had no math, language, or music programs. But due to the cultural taboo that spreads from privileged to destitute educational districts, we were able to ignore the fact that our sex-education program was, in fact, nonexistent. This widespread ignorance is a disease that cannot be treated by quiet abortions or STI medications. It cannot be ignored by heads of administration or biology teachers. Without acceptance and education, we will always be fighting a losing battle.



## **A Pearl of Great Price**

“The kingdom of heaven is like unto a merchant man, seeking goodly pearls, who, when he had found one pearl of great price, went and sold all that he had, and bought it.” When I began my internship at The Institute for Rehabilitation and Research, I thought I had everything all figured out. TIRR was looking for an intern with skills in finance, while I was looking for work experience. My mentors did their best to educate me about the economics of health care, but I finished my internship learning a far more valuable lesson about finding fulfillment.

My mentors explained to me the philosophy behind their work. Rehabilitation cannot restore what is already lost; some patients may never walk again for the rest of their lives. Instead, the doctors and physical therapists concentrate on helping patients achieve their fullest potential. Every patient holds the promise of a miracle. One learns to draw; another gains the ability to type; still another finds the strength to stand. When a miracle happens, there is great rejoicing over the gift. For the patients, the gift is a second chance at life. For the people at TIRR, the gift is seeing miracles every day.

In the eight weeks of my internship, I have come to appreciate the good work that TIRR does for the community. My internship took me to the Xtreme Sports Camp in July. Co-sponsored by TIRR, it is an annual camp for handicapped children. Here the children have the opportunity to push themselves to the limit. The activities are physically demanding, but they serve a useful purpose: The children learn to cope with their fears and extend their abilities.

At the Xtreme Sports Camp, I had the opportunity to participate in one of the activities. The thrill of exploration took hold of me as I boarded the helicopter. Feeling my pulse accelerate, I fastened my seat belt and strapped on my headset. Steadily the helicopter climbed upward, offering us a gradually expanding panorama. We reached our peak at 4,000 feet above ground level. The view from the top was exhilarating. I could see the camp laid out before me. Horses and cattle grazing peacefully dotted the landscape. Fields of lush and green foliage stretched for miles on end. Then the pilot pulled the lever, and the vista changed dramatically. I could feel the rush through my system as my center of gravity shifted. Within split-seconds, I was viewing the world from an entirely different angle.

Riding a helicopter can be a disorienting experience. An expert pilot can fly the helicopter at a 90-degree angle to the horizon, confounding all sense of direction. From this perspective, Earth is port and sky is starboard. When this paradigm is adopted, the old assumptions do not hold. Things that used to be important become insignificant. New vistas come into view, inviting one to explore new possibilities. Finding oneself in this situation, the only option is to stay on course and hope for a safe journey.

Back in Houston, I accompanied John Kajander, TIRR’s executive vice president, on his rounds. Our visit to the hospital gave us the chance to meet with a pediatric patient

who had just had surgery. The parents were delighted to see their child recovering so well. After meeting the family, I began to understand the truth of Mr. Kajander's words: "When I see our patients recovering from their handicaps and making the most out of their lives, I know that the hard work has been worth it."

Through my internship, I have grown to respect and admire my mentors for their wisdom and strength of character. Listening to their stories, I discern a common thread through their lives. They all started in a field other than health care, and they all achieved great success in their careers. At a crucial moment in their lives, they decided to move to TIRR. Charlie Beall was an Air Force veteran and CEO of Texas Commerce Bank. Highly respected in the industry, he left the bank to join TIRR. The first thing he did was to recruit Mr. Kajander. Mr. Beall became vice chairman of TIRR Systems. Ashley Smith had a successful legal practice and served as a state representative in the Texas Legislature. After joining TIRR in 1997, he is now president and CEO. Mr. Smith still goes to Austin, this time to advise the governor on science and biotechnology development.

When I entered Rice University, I was convinced that I would become an investment banker. Now I am not so sure. Hearing my mentors' stories, I have discovered that there is more to life than having a high salary and getting all the perquisites you want. Ashley Smith was a state representative, an honor and privilege not to be taken lightly, yet he decided to work at a nonprofit hospital. My mentors must have found a more precious and lasting treasure at TIRR. This must be their "pearl of great price."

On my 21<sup>st</sup> birthday, my mentors and co-workers surprised me with a 15-speed bicycle and a gift certificate for a helmet and a lock. I am grateful for these gifts, but I am even more grateful for the words of wisdom they gave me. Mr. Kajander said: "Working at TIRR will not make you rich, but it has given me something meaningful and worthwhile. When you choose a career, do not worry about the money. Follow your heart, and the money will take care of itself." Not long after, Mr. Smith confided in me: "When I go to the governor's office in Austin, I pass by portraits of famous people in the rotunda on the first floor, the second floor, the third floor, all the way to the fourth floor. I remember all the names and faces from 30 years ago. However, when I look at all the faces before that time, I cannot tell the reason for their being famous. It just shows that fame is impermanent. You cannot live your life chasing after fame. Try to find something meaningful in your life, and you will be happy."

My summer internship began as an education in the economics of health care. I did not count on learning a far more valuable lesson from my mentors. Just when I thought I had everything figured out, I was thrown off my balance. I was living a comfortable life, but I was disturbed from my peace. Like the merchant man of the parable, I have to do my own searching. I still do not know what it shall be, but I know that I am getting closer to my "pearl of great price" with every step of the way.

Jessica Tripodo  
Friends of Hermann Park  
Lisa Cuccia, Community Relations Director

## **From the Inside Looking Out**

Sunset. ... 1,400 feet above the Pacific Ocean. ... The precise moment we were waiting for – jump!

The Colorado River. ... Raging white water. ... Only one thing to do – paddle!

Looking upward. ... 1,200 feet of rugged mountain terrain to the peak. ... How should we get there? Climb!

Outside – the challenges of nature, the lessons, and the pure angelic rewards. The power of nature taught me humility, its wonder taught me awe, and its strength taught me endurance. The one thing nature never taught me was its vulnerability. It was only through my adventures inside that I would learn.

The thought of trading in my summer hiking boots for black heels didn't necessarily appeal to me, but for the sake of some "real world" experience that I thought I desperately needed and the fact that "sky diving" wasn't exactly an ideal job qualification to put on my résumé, I reluctantly decided to do it. It was a decision, you will see, that greatly changed my perceptions and life directions.

You see, I've always had a great love affair with the outdoor environment, but I've come to realize it was not an equal relationship; in fact it was quite a selfish one on my part. I looked at nature in terms of what it could do for me, not what I could do for it. I expected it to give (nice weather, outdoor fun and adventure, etc.) while I took. This, however, is not exactly the definition of a healthy relationship. I never once stopped to consider that our outdoor environment was in great danger and I might not get to experience all its wondrous gifts. My summer indoors not only enabled me to realize this but also provided me with the opportunity to help restore nature.

We are losing land every second to urbanization. Urbanization is the process in which green space (fields, trees, wetlands, etc.) is converted into black space (concrete and asphalt). Our cities are becoming concrete jungles, and urban sprawl is leading the way to urban decay. The biodiversity of plant and animal life that once occupied these areas has basically ceased to exist, and many of the city dwellers will never know what they have missed. This places a growing importance on inner-city parks and wildlife sanctuaries, places where green space can be preserved and protected from the new high-rises and strip malls. This meaningful work can't be accomplished from the outside but instead takes a group of dedicated people working on the inside for the good of the out.

It turned out that my challenges and adventures this past summer took quite a different form than they had in the past. I didn't get to jump out of a plane, but I did get to jump into a great adventure. And instead of braving the rapids of the Colorado, I braved the businesses of Houston to cultivate people and funds. I might have missed out on climbing to a mountain peak, but I was able to experience the unparalleled joy of playing a role in the restoration of a dead and deteriorated urban park into one that is

once again filled with greenery and life. I did not get as dirty, but the obstacles were just as challenging, and the victory was just as sweet. Most importantly, I got the chance to give back to nature a little of what it had given to me ... all from the inside looking out.

Mary-Margaret Miller  
ABC News  
Kristi Kendall, Associate Producer

## Inside the Times Square Studio

I still recall every detail of how it all started. Nervously I raced to the Leadership Rice office. I burst in and ripped open the envelope that bore my name. There it was: ABC News, New York, the John Stossel Unit! The only emotion I experienced that overshadowed my excitement was utter terror. I had never even visited New York, and I was going to work there for an entire summer. I thought it was absolute insanity, but never before had I been so enthralled. There I was, instantly transformed from a typical college student at Rice into an insider at a news media giant in the greatest city in the United States!

Sadly, it's all over now. Back in Houston for two more years at Rice, I glance over at a plush pink teddy bear on my window sill with a message embroidered on its tummy that perfectly captures my feelings about this summer: I♥NY. I truly love every memory I have taken away from this summer, from shopping on Fifth Avenue to a sobering venture to ground zero, from a sunny afternoon at a Yankees game to picnicking in Central Park on the Fourth of July.

One night, however, is emblazoned in my mind as perhaps the most interesting experience I had this summer. Every Thursday night, Barbara Walters and John Miller, the hosts of *20/20*, go to the studio in Times Square with the correspondents who will be appearing on the show that week and film the studio aspect of the show. In the last week of my mentorship, I was invited to the studio shoot. My mentor brought me up to the hair and makeup room, and we watched John – Stossel, that is – get ready for his shoot. I still remember his exact words when we arrived: “Well, this is the stupidest part of the business, but I guess it's interesting.” Darn right it's interesting!

When we went down to the studio floor, I was energized by what I saw. The place was practically dripping with cameras and lighting of every sort and from every imaginable angle. Initially I think I must have looked like an awkward outsider – conspicuous as a lowly intern invited to tag along. Minutes later, however, one of the cameramen approached me and told me to go sit behind the executive producer. Naturally I was more than willing to take advantage of this great vantage point. Over his shoulder, I could see the monitors on which he was watching exactly what all of America would see on their televisions 24 hours later. I could hear him issuing directives here and there: Go adjust this light, go straighten John's lapel. I was so absorbed in everything happening right in front of me, over the producer's shoulder, that I hardly thought to turn around and look over my own shoulder to see what that view offered.

When I did, I saw crowds of tourists outside, hands cupped around their eyes to get a peek at the celebrities inside. Looking at them, I realized that I was indeed an insider – not only was I literally inside the studio while they stood out on the sidewalks sweating in the muggy July air, but I was also inside this huge operation we know as

broadcast news. I was an insider to putting together stories that would affect millions of viewers' opinions, an insider to responsibly informing the public on issues that matter to their everyday lives, an insider to promoting changes that I and the people I worked with cared about passionately. I felt like the luckiest student alive.

## Refinding Confidence

The core of any Moroccan city is its medina, a walled enclosure that served to protect the residents from invaders. As the cities have grown in recent years, the walled medinas have not, and they present a stark contrast to the modern cities outside. Inside are twisted alleyways that lead the uninitiated into a chaotic, often dirty, but amazingly beautiful swirl of sound and activity.

If you have ever been to a county fair somewhere in the States, you know the mentality that abounds in the medina. “*Bonjour! Hello! Guten Tag!*” cry the shopkeepers. They know that if they speak your language and make you stay a while to talk, they might get your business. When you respond, either with words or by looking at their wares, the game begins, usually in French:

“Would you look at some of my pottery? It's very good. Touch quality! You like that? For your mother. Very pretty.”

I won't forget my initial encounter in the medina. I stepped just inside the giant wall. In front of me was a sea of colors and goods. I saw a hookah and timidly asked in French, “How much for this?” “That's 200 dirhams.” “Thank you.” Though I wanted to get the hookah, I wasn't prepared to bargain for it, and sheepishly I left.

Before this summer, I was known as the confident one. I always knew I could get myself out of any situation by standing up straight, looking my opponent in the eye, and smooth-talking my way out. But while others lost luggage on the flight to Morocco this summer, I seemed to have lost all confidence in myself.

It all started innocently enough. I went into the Leadership Rice office during the school year and told the staff I wanted to go to a foreign environment to help people. The perfect combination for me was at an alternative energy company in Casablanca. A Rice alum named Andy Karsner founded the company, and each summer several interns journey to Africa to work for him. This summer there were five of us, four from Rice and one from the Johns Hopkins School of International Studies.

Stepping off the plane in Casablanca, I started to get that “What the hell am I doing here?” feeling as we passed guards with machine guns and signs written in languages I didn't know. The feeling didn't die down on the way to Andy's apartment, and it got worse as we toured the city. There were people everywhere! And it was all so foreign and different.

My sense of being overwhelmed continued that first night. After I woke up from a nap at 9:30, Andy had a feast waiting for the interns and some of his friends from the U.S. Department of Energy. Sitting around the table with all these unfamiliar people in an unfamiliar setting, I did what I always do in uncomfortable situations – I stopped talking and started listening. I was once told that I have a special gift of being able to sit back and observe a scene before jumping in, and I needed to figure this one out.

But the thing is, I never did figure out the scene, the entire summer. Andy started mentioning in front of others that I was really quiet and that I needed to talk more. Though I wrote in my journal that it didn't bother me, I started to pigeonhole myself as the quiet one, and with that, the confidence was gone. Though I was still comfortable around the interns, I wasn't comfortable around my co-workers or with Morocco in general. It was so difficult to talk to cabdrivers or shopkeepers, and I really didn't feel in control of my environment. And the confidence stayed gone.

It took six weeks to get there, but a trip to the Fez medina finally got me back on my feet. Fez is a wonderful ancient city, with magnificent plaster tucked away behind ordinary walls. After a full day of sightseeing, Donald and I split off from the rest of the group to buy souvenirs. There's only one place to go for that, so we hit the medina.

I normally looked to others in my group to initiate conversations with the shopkeepers, but that night in Fez, it was me responding in a French/Arabic mix: "I like these. But no, 400 dirhams is too much. They are not good quality. I give you 150, you give me these." When he would only go down to 180, it was me starting to walk out of the store. He grabbed my arm. "OK, 150." I couldn't explain it, I still don't know why it happened, but suddenly my confidence was back.

That Saturday, all of my transactions went like that. I was walking through the dark alleyways with my back straight and a slightly smug smile on my face. I was speaking to all storekeepers in my version of French, and even if they responded in English, I still spoke French.

My confidence high continued for the rest of the week, and though it eventually became subdued, it's still there, ready to be reawakened when needed. There's not nearly enough space to share with you what Morocco taught me this summer, but stripping me down to a scared shy person and forcing me to overcome that was pretty damn important.



## Planned Spontaneity

*Snap. ... Crackle. ... Pop. ...* Those are the sounds my heart made one day in June when it finally clicked that this would be my last summer before I graduated from college. It was my last summer to sit back and soak everything in without feeling mounting pressure to wade through everything I have seen, learned, and experienced to find the key that will unlock my plans for the future. I realized in an instant that the summer would fly by like a snap of my fingers, and I would be facing crunch time – career services would be flooding my inbox with e-mails regarding recruiting sessions, school and program applications would be due, interviews would be coming up, and decisions would have to be made. I felt as if fear of the real world and of my own indecisiveness regarding the future were putting me in a headlock and demanding something I did not know how to give.

Did I want to go to law school and study public-interest law, as I had always imagined? Would graduate school in public policy or international affairs be a better match for my interests? What about my love of exploring the rest of the world – should I fill out an application for the Peace Corps or try to win a traveling fellowship such as a Fulbright or Watson? How could I afford to do any of this when I had no money and was burdened by too much debt? Should I just be practical and sacrifice my real interests for a while to work and save up money? All of these questions and conflicting interests staged a war in my mind that left me feeling unsettled and joking to my roommate that I should force myself to be one of those girls whose sole goal in life is to marry a rich guy who will take care of her for the rest of her days so she'll never had to worry about anything.

So I started this summer full of questions about how to balance my wants and needs, with this prodding voice in my head telling me that I needed to come up with a plan of action for my life. Besides being torn among my many interests, I also felt burdened by the difficulty of balancing my own desires against the responsibilities placed on me by my family. I would be the first person in my family to graduate from college, and I felt the hopes and dreams of so many people I knew resting on my shoulders. I was their golden child. Everyone had invested so much in me and expected so much of me in return – especially since I was coming out of prestigious Rice University and not just our local community college - that I did not feel I could make any decisions that might lead me off the straight and narrow path without disappointing so many and thus feeling selfish. With all these eyes following my every move going into senior year and the stress of my unique family situation, I did not feel I could make any decision based solely on what I wanted for *myself* because I would alter the course of several other lives in the process.

I struggled with figuring out an acceptable level of selfishness – should I live my life completely for myself, forgo family responsibilities, and thus limit the options of

people I love dearly, or should I alter my life course to better suit their needs and thereby sacrifice, or at least postpone, my own dreams? I have always battled with these questions, and probably always will, but they were weighing extra heavily on my mind this summer as I realized I could not put them off any longer.

I am sure anyone reading this must be wondering if I figured out the answers to any of these questions and created some kind of game plan for my life. No, actually I did not, but the important thing is that I finally truly began to believe that I did not have to. I had told myself many times before that I did not have to have everything figured out, but there was always this nagging voice in my head saying that was only what I wanted to believe because it made things easier, not because it was a practical approach to my future. This summer I finally accepted the fact that I am not one of those people who know exactly what they are going to do in life and have every step along the way planned out. I realized that I am a generalist – I am passionate about many things and not quite ready to settle down and orient my life around one specific area. I realized that although many people kept subtly pushing me to jump right into graduate school or law school, I considered either of those options a big investment in an area I was not yet ready to say I wanted to specialize in.

I decided that I am going to step back from the engulfing, busy American lifestyle and take things one step at a time instead of trying to lay it all out in one full sweep. I have the rest of my life ahead of me, so why should I let anyone convince me I need to fall into the pattern of starting my lifelong career as soon as possible or else I'll lose my way? My heart finally convinced my head that initially exploring a particular path after graduation, such as teaching or international development work, will not lock me into a set route and prevent me from switching gears whenever I decide to.

So maybe I'll do Teach for America and work with the inner-city kids I have always had a burden for and then take a year to travel the world and learn from the cultures that have always captivated me. Maybe I'll go to work on a political campaign and scope out the Capitol Hill scene to see if it's for me or not and then decide if I really want to go to law school. I still do not have things planned out, but I learned enough about myself this summer to realize that that is not the way I want to lead my life in the first place. I may have to decide on the first step I want to take in the next nine months or so, but after that I want to just go with the flow of life and see where it leads me. These are the years when I will have the most flexibility in my life, and I want to take advantage of that before I settle down and specialize in law, education, international development, or whatever field I decide provides the best fit for my interests and skills. I want to explore anything and everything, try out all my interests to see where my calling lies, and be spontaneous for a while instead of mapping out a step-by-step blueprint for my life. For now, that is all the planning I need.

## **A Different View of the World**

Before I started my mentorship at the Greater Houston Collaborative for Children, I viewed the working world differently than I do now. I see now that there are people who are passionate about addressing the many problems in our world. Prior to my mentorship, I saw organizations and foundations that aimed to fix the gaps. But mostly I thought of people as cynically going about their lives thinking, “I’m just one person, what can I do?” To me, only college kids were idealistic. However, that perspective was greatly changed through the people I met during my summer mentorship at the Greater Houston Collaborative for Children. These people were passionate and unselfish in their commitment to correct the problems in the child-care industry in Texas.

My mentor, Carol Shattuck, generously allowed me to go to many planning, board, proposal, and workshop meetings, which were educational. All had at least one thing in common: All participants were focused, supportive of one another, and eager. For example, at a workshop with an expert on child-care funding, I was amazed at how intensely people were concentrating and how many questions they asked.

The variety of people working to reform child care also surprised me. My first thought was that only child-care providers would be involved. However, participants ranged from business people and schools to parents and government representatives. I thought it was great that such a diverse group of people worked toward improving child care, because each brought along a different perspective and knowledge that could be incorporated into the plan of action. It was also astounding that such a diverse group could collaborate effectively, although scheduling meetings was a bit challenging.

Although I have not worked a great deal in a business focused on making a profit, it seemed to me that these people enjoyed their jobs more than the average business person. That makes sense, because they have another purpose besides making a living: They are making the world better and people’s lives easier. One of my colleagues had worked in a business prior to joining our collaborative; although he was now being paid less, he seemed to enjoy his work more. With his master’s and law degrees, he could easily be making much more, but he chose to stay and help create change in Houston and Texas.

It was great working with these people through the course of the summer. It was as if we were on a team, because we were working toward a common goal. There was no need for internal competition, and I felt a great deal of support being offered by everyone. There was no condescension to me because I was only an intern; everyone was willing and eager to help me understand the case for change. This made for an ideal work environment that eased my transition into working from 8 to 5 o’clock every day. Also, this supportive environment served to rally everyone’s energy, because at times people did become tired and weighed down by the massive goal we were attempting to meet. At

times I felt overwhelmed and exasperated, and I would think to myself, “This problem is just too enormous to change” or, “This is hopeless.” However, this attitude never lasted long, thanks to the atmosphere and the attitudes of my colleagues. I attribute this ephemeral feeling to the “we can do it” and “it must be changed” dispositions of my colleagues.

I definitely view the working world much differently now than I did at the start of the summer. Through all the people I met at the Greater Houston Collaborative, I found a whole new perspective: There are many people committed to change, not just college kids but people of all ages. This experience has also shaped my expectations and demands of a career. I want and hope to work in a supportive atmosphere similar to that offered by my mentorship.

## **Fashion, Style, and Leadership**

Fashion and its importance in the work world – oh, where do I begin? It is widely agreed that fashion and style are defining aspects of how people judge you. And if you are going to be a leader, you'd better dress like it!

Picture this: You are sitting in a conference room, waiting to meet the CEO of a well-known company. A woman totters in wearing baggy khakis and a wrinkled white blouse. Another lady follows her in a black suit (knee-length skirt, of course) with a crisp gray blouse underneath. She saunters in without missing a beat, even though her 2-inch pointy heels do not look very comfortable. Her jewelry is black and cream to match accents on her shoes, purse, and briefcase.

Now they both head toward the seat at the head of the table – which one is the CEO? I bet your first reaction would not be hesitant at all. The second woman in the sharp suit with confident attitude to match is your pick. Why? Because people immediately form judgments based on appearance – and leaders are expected to look professional.

I am confident in saying that many Rice students think appearance has nothing to do with how people should perceive you. It may be true that people SHOULD not judge by appearance, but they do. Fashion may have nothing to do with intelligence, but it definitely has a lot to do with leading a group of people. I am convinced that fashion and style directly relate to leadership, because I have four women in my life who have proved it. My two prissy sisters, my prissy mother, and my prissy grandmother all have held leadership positions in their lives, and they swear that when you are up-to-date with the appropriate dress style of the times, you garner more respect and power.

Now, I have to admit that I was shocked when my grandmother pranced in to one of my basketball games in a dark purple suit with purple heels and a purple purse. At the time, I had little respect for anyone who felt the need to show off like that. A few years later, I have a completely different opinion. After spending more time in the real world, I have found that what I wear is directly related to how I am viewed. When I am dressed professionally, I am deemed intelligent, mature, and hard-working. When I am in a tank top and shorts, I am deemed young and carefree. And, of course, when I am in sweat pants and an old jacket, I am deemed lazy and less intelligent.

What does this all mean? It means that when I want to garner respect and be held in high esteem, I'd better look like it! And when do leaders want to garner respect? ALWAYS! I have observed that respected leaders of successful families, organizations, government, and companies always look nice. They have taken into consideration what other people (their followers or potential followers) would think about them and what they represent when they make an appearance. This does not mean that leaders who do not groom and dress in a professional manner are not worthy of respect or are not

excellent workers in their fields. But more often than not they have an uphill battle to prove their competency, simply because of how they present themselves.

Notice that President George Dubya always has on a nicely tailored blue or black suit with a simple yet fashionable tie. He stands behind numerous podiums every week looking uncomfortable as hell. We all know that he wishes he had on shorts, a T-shirt, and cowboy boots, yet his advisers tell him he must look stylish and confident. Why? Because he is the leader of our country, and no one feels comfortable seeing a man in an old jumpsuit lead the free world.

This may seem silly or way out of line, but it is true. So next time you think about raising your hand to argue with the nice lady who has come to present what is appropriate dress (and proper etiquette) for a business setting, remember this: Displaying appropriate fashion and style implies that you pay attention to details and know that the little things count. Now *that's* leadership.

Uchenna Agbim  
Baylor Teen Health Clinic  
Peggy B. Smith, Executive Director,  
and Ruth Buzi, Program Coordinator

## **The Power of the Personal: A Lesson in Hope from a 15-Year-Old**

No one can deny the power of the personal. It is easy to dismiss problems that run rampant through our society by lumping them into a great indistinct other. If it is not tangible, then we can reject its importance. Last summer, being HIV-positive became personal for me when a 15-year-old African-American girl – I will call her Anna for reasons of anonymity – strolled into the Baylor Teen Health Clinic, accompanied by her sister.

The two girls were visiting the clinic for their annual gynecological exams. A year ago, Anna had been identified as HIV-positive. My heart stopped. This was the girl. This was the girl I had heard about from co-workers, the girl who became HIV-positive as a callow 14-year-old. I was absolutely shocked and distressed at this finding. How could someone at the age of 14 contract HIV? After my summer experience, these thoughts seem naïve, but I was surprisingly removed from situations of this type.

I was given the opportunity to sit in on Anna's counseling session. I gazed at her face as she described her thoughts to the social worker. Her features were so young and vibrant, yet I could see glimpses of melancholy when she nonchalantly spoke about her activities. It is difficult for me to articulate my feelings at that moment, because my thoughts were so blurred. At first I was stunned as Anna recounted some of her daily activities, but then my heart began to pour out for her when I realized that most of her situation and circumstances were completely beyond her control. For example, she is not to blame for living in a substandard environment or for having inadequate social support from family and friends. Her revealing anecdotes about her disadvantaged life were a shocking reality.

During the course of her conversation with the social worker, I studied her face and features more carefully. When she spoke, I could distinguish wrinkles in her forehead. Even though she was young, the wrinkles appeared more pronounced than they should be for a 15-year-old. They indicated that she had been through much turbulence in her life. Her eyes were childlike – big, soft, and dark brown – but looking into them deeply, I thought she appeared to be questioning where she could find hope or joy. Her cheeks belied any glimpses of aging; they were slightly enlarged and became much puffier when she smiled. Words sped out of her mouth, and the inflections of her voice animatedly rose and fell. She chuckled and laughed occasionally, sounding innocent. Her speech and her chuckles expressed her youth.

I realized during those moments of looking at Anna that this was the first time I had ever identified a human face with an issue of this magnitude. The feeling that arose inside me was like a sudden deluge. Even though I knew situations like this occurred frequently, the effect of meeting and briefly interacting with Anna was tremendous. It

broadened my perspective on the lives of adolescents who visit the Baylor Teen Health Clinic.

Demographically, most are like Anna. A majority are young African-American or Hispanic women from broken families. They all come to the clinic looking for help and some semblance of hope.

Soon Anna finished her counseling session with the social worker and went into an adjacent office to be seen for her medical examination. I began to worry more about Anna's well-being. Does she realize the magnitude and devastation of this disease? Where would she sleep tonight? Who is watching out for her? Should anyone at the age of 15 ever need to question where to find hope? These and other thoughts ran through my mind. I did not know what to think. I was overcome with emotions. I longed to help her. I longed to make a change.

After Anna's examination, she walked back into the main section of the clinic with her sister to schedule their next appointment with the clerk. I could hear her talk and laugh her innocent laugh. I quickly glanced at her face before she started walking out the door. A small smile appeared on her face. Was it hope? I don't know. At that moment, I realized that putting a face to an issue was incredibly powerful. But I realized that understanding that hope exists in a bleak situation was even more poignant.



## **Leer**

*“Families living in poverty often lack the money to buy new books, as well as access to libraries. ... Reading difficulty contributes to school failure, which increases the risk of absenteeism, leaving school, juvenile delinquency, substance abuse, and teenage pregnancy – all of which perpetuate the cycles of poverty.”*

I am not a social idiot. My childhood in a blue-collar neighborhood filled with memories of bodegas, handball, and 50-cent popsicles is followed by adolescence on Long Island. In a place where cruises in the Bahamas are the norm and student parking lots resemble luxury-car dealerships, my Taurus sputters along on good days. Neither of my parents is a neurosurgeon, and I consider myself fairly plugged into normality. Herricks Senior High School administrators pride themselves on the tremendous diversity of a student body populated by Wangs, Guptas, and Goldsteins. Growing up, I even know a Diaz or two.

After suburbia, my next stop lands me at Rice University in Texas. My parents take comfort in the fact that their hard-earned dollars are not going to waste. Can I tell someone my life story in three different languages? Sure. Can I write a 15-page paper on anthropological perspectives in genetics? Not a problem. Can I dance a mean salsa? I’m practically proficient, or so I like to tell myself. At Rice I expand my horizons: I attend my first rodeo, make friends from strange places like Las Cruces and Plano, and two-step to George Strait. They exhort us to “go beyond the hedges” at Rice. I congratulate myself for having succeeded.

But have I really?

Rice is a private university comprising a diverse ethnic cross-section of individuals from a fair share of socioeconomic backgrounds, but it’s a safe bet that a majority of them rarely worry about how the budget can be stretched to accommodate yet another unexpected child. “The real world” is a mysterious destination that my high school teachers and professors are rather fond of. “Go there, live it,” they cajole us. It is all too easy to ignore that suggestion in the face of papers, parties, and problem sets. In the end I still read about the maladies of life from the cushy comforts of a chair safely ensconced in the depths of Fondren Library.

While working for Reach Out & Read, one of my main tasks is to conduct patient interviews. I remember my first patient interview, a somewhat frazzled experience with my halting Spanish and occasional nervous gestures. The “real world” is Maria. She is a young woman with two children in tow and one on the way.

*“¿Tiene el seguro medico?”*

*“No.”* No. She cannot afford medical insurance. Weird.

*“¿Cuántas veces lee usted con sus niños para una semana?”*

*“Cero.”* Zero. She has no books at home. No Cat-in-the-Hat?

“¿Porque?”

“*No se puede leer.*” She doesn’t know how to read. Hearing someone say that aloud is startling.

The parents I interview, predominantly mothers, are my age or younger. When I discover that they already have one, two, three children, I am struck by one of three emotions. First, my 19 years of existence make me feel positively geriatric. Second comes awe at the tremendous responsibilities they have. And then I feel a guilty sense of relief. For them, high school is a luxury, and college is a dream. Not all 17-year-olds are worried about going to the Friday football game, because motherhood consumes more time than you'd think. Spring of senior year is not defined by the prom. There is no sense in spending money on some poufy concoction of taffeta and velvet when feeding the kids is a concern. There are certain things that Herricks High and the Rice experience have not prepared me for.

Indeed, the ability to sign your own name is not a given. When I meet one woman who cannot even read the interview consent form, I have no idea what to say. When a face is attached to a problem, it hits you. Illiteracy has a face. The real world has yanked me out of my comfort zone, and it’s about time.

So actually, I take it back. I used to be a social idiot.

Blake Slansky  
Oceaneering International Inc.  
Anthony Franklin, Strategic Business Analyst

## The Lateral

'Twas the week before the Fourth of July,  
and all through the company,  
Not a project was stirring,  
not even one for me!

It isn't a secret. Things at the office can get slow before major holidays. Let me give you the scenario, a refresher: Joe from accounting leaves for Austin, and now Sally the project manager can't get her numbers to make a budget. With no Joe, Sally leaves early, and with her goes Bob the engineer, who knows that no work can be done without Sally's guiding hand. The saga continues. Soon anyone who is left is stuck, biding his time with early lunches and long coffee breaks. Hello, my name is Blake Slansky, and I was stuck!

Conditions were right for marking time, clicking away on the Internet, and eating donuts. My mentor, Anthony Franklin, did not let that happen. Anthony realized that things were slowing down on his end, and passed me off to his boss, Bruce Garthwaite, who invited me to take a leading role in the gathering of information and ideas for a very important marketing meeting.

As I received instructions for my work from Bruce, it became clear to me that I wasn't being treated as a summer student employee. Instead Bruce spoke with me as a trusted colleague, soliciting my insights along the way. He also took an interest in my questions about the subsea oil and gas industry and explained a great deal about major characteristics of the sphere. An hour and a half later, I was off to do my work. I felt ownership of this project and knew that I could add value to it.

The next few days of work were exciting. My work on the project allowed me to analyze data on my own and to choose the best way to present my findings to the rest of the company. I also was forced to search outside the company for ideas and data. This allowed me to practice making effective requests of others, some of whom had no idea what I was after. I had not interacted with anyone during my earlier work at Oceaneering, so getting on the phone and shopping around for data was an especially interesting experience for me. I soon found that I would have to pay to have some data prepared. Spending about \$500 of company money made my decisions and requests all the more important!

Within a few days, I had made some important observations and compiled them into a binder that included data, graphs, and a brief outline. I was very proud that I had created a stand-alone source of discussion for the upcoming meeting, which was to take place at corporate headquarters after I left for the summer and was to be attended by many top managers. I presented my finished project to Bruce, who provided me with

positive, objective feedback. Bruce also promised to point out my ownership of many of the ideas at the meeting.

I was not at Oceaneering for the meeting but was told by a colleague that my information took center stage for most of the six-hour extravaganza. Bruce was an excellent influence during the project, and I am grateful to have been able to work with him. I wouldn't have had this great experience, however, had it not been for my mentor, Anthony, who knew when it was best to lateral the ball.

Andrew Weber  
Aviation Facilities Co. Inc.  
Frank Chambers, President and CEO,  
and Dan Ungerleider, Vice President and CFO

## **A Summer of New Experiences**

Arriving in Washington, D.C., this past summer, I knew very little about what would happen in the next 12 weeks. Besides such obvious concerns as “How are my roommates going to be?” and “What am I going to do with this summer?” I had many questions about where I was in life and where I was going. In a way, the summer wound up creating more questions than answers. However, I do credit my summer experience with answering one of them.

When a number of people from the office went out to lunch during my second week, Eric (the second-youngest in the company, other than myself) asked what I wanted to do when I graduated. I told him I didn’t know. His response was to pull the car over, look me dead in the eye and say, “Good, because your woman will tell you what you’re going to do.” Now that this critical dilemma for nearly every college student had been solved, I instantly considered the summer to be a success.

Eric was one of 20 in the cast of characters with whom I worked for 12 weeks at Aviation Facilities Co. AFCO owns and manages property at 14 airports around the country, mostly air-cargo facilities.

The nature of the business attracts a variety of people, from accountants to recent college graduates to retired military personnel. Among them was an ex-Marine fighter pilot who on a number of occasions referred to himself as God. As one can imagine, no matter how boring the work, no matter how dry the assignment, this would make for an interesting office environment. I was added to the mix as someone who had never worked in an office before (I had worked at a gym and as a bartender the previous summer). Still, my mentors, Vice President and CFO Dan Ungerleider and President and CEO Frank Chambers, fostered a cooperative office environment in which everyone seemed to get along. Even though I was only “summer help,” they treated me as a competent member of the team and trusted me to work on projects that were important to the company.

This was a two-way street. I started with less complicated tasks, such as basic researching and updating of insurance records. As I successfully completed each project and showed I could be relied upon to do satisfactory work in a timely manner, Mr. Chambers and Mr. Ungerleider trusted me to do more important work. By the last week, I was trusted to create and draft business contracts for the company. Looking back at the progression of the work I completed, I feel that I learned a lot about making solid first impressions and the importance and benefits of achieving trust.

Mr. Chambers and Mr. Ungerleider made sure that I was exposed to all phases of their business. One of the major services of the company is property management. I had the opportunity to see how it all works by going to visit my company’s facilities at Baltimore-Washington Airport, and that was an education unto itself. Seeing how air freight (the business of most of our tenants) operates was an eye-opener that exposed me

to the infrastructure that sustains our nation's commerce. Keeping tenants happy is a difficult job that requires working with a variety of people, from disgruntled postal employees to roofers and plumbers.

A number of employees work to attract new business. The development people are the best-dressed, have the best tans, and work the shortest hours. When not traveling, they spend much of the day on the phone working over prospective customers, or pretending that they are. It is also their responsibility to arrange financing for projects. Interestingly, I came at an exciting time for the company. I assisted on the acquisition of financing to build an airport in Branson, Mo., which will be the first privately funded airport in the United States. I also worked on a new project at Luton Airport, outside London, which will represent AFCO's first international project. I wrote the operating agreement for the subsidiary that AFCO will form for this and future business in the U.K.

Though I am still uncertain about my future, my summer helped me gain a lot of insight. In addition to getting an invaluable "hands-on" education in business, I met a great group of people who set a great example of corporate responsibility, at a time when that seems almost a contradiction in terms. They showed me how spending a little more effort to build a friendly work environment translates to success in business. Most importantly, they set a standard for professionalism that I hope to carry forward in my future endeavors.

Carmen Watson  
Houston Independent School District  
Dr. Harriet Arvey, Director, Student Support Services

### **Passion, Persistence, Progress**

“Yeah, I see drugs every day at my school, usually people dealing them and doing them at school. It’s a big problem.” How long have we been fighting the war on drugs? And yet I heard this comment last summer from a ninth-grade student. Instead of worrying about getting good grades or getting their homework done on time, students struggle with alcohol and cigarettes, cheating, violence, abuse, poverty, and a host of other issues. Educators try everything they can think of to help kids, to make the school environment better, to be role models, and yet it seems as if nothing changes. They continually search for new approaches, new ideas that have created change in other areas. Their tireless dedication comes from their profound passion for improving the lives and futures of their students. They cannot give up. They care too much about the kids.

I spent my summer working with educators like this. In the Student Support Services office of the Houston Independent School District, former teachers and counselors work with Counseling and Guidance, Safe and Drug-Free Schools, Health Education, and Psychological Services to find and implement new programs and curricula to help Houston’s students succeed within and outside the classroom. As a future classroom teacher, I found this a wonderful opportunity to take a look at education from a different perspective. I saw the importance of extra-academic factors in students’ education, learning how emotional, physical, and sociological factors affect performance in school. I was also able to observe and participate in possible solutions to problems students face.

Through my research this summer, I found many stories of HISD students who had succeeded against the odds, thanks to the efforts of Student Support Services. One student had failed several grade levels, was in recovery from drug addiction, and was planning to drop out of school when he got into a program called Reconnecting Youth, which is designed to help students at risk of dropping out find importance and relevance in their high school education again. This student has now graduated and is attending a community college. Another program called Peer Assistance and Leadership, or PAL, trains students to help their peers. These students learn mediation, peer counseling, and leadership skills and participate in community-service projects. The program builds confidence as students discover that they can make a difference in people’s lives, including and especially their own.

The success of these programs is an encouragement and incentive for educators in the midst of the continuing glaring need for change and the depressing statistics of students who still fall through the cracks despite their best efforts. For my colleagues this summer, seeing a difference in the life of one student is the reward for their persistence. Remembering these few success stories provides needed hope when educators face situations like that of a distraught summer-school student this year. This student was

three weeks away from graduating from high school, but she had no place to live during those three weeks, and if she missed one more day, she would have to repeat the entire year. At age 18, she was no longer eligible for foster care, and many shelters would not accept her because she was either too young or too old. The entire day at the psychology clinic where I was working, calls went out to shelter after shelter searching for a place for this student. We pulled out the Yellow Pages and called every possible appropriate listing, but every shelter was filled to capacity. Even if we had been able to find a place for her to stay, we lost contact with the student, because she would not answer or return our phone calls. We still do not know the end of this student's story.

Educators do all they can to rescue students from circumstances that threaten to destroy them, but there are and always will be many stories like this one, stories with sad endings or no endings at all. Why bother? Why work so hard to see only a few out of so many students overcome and succeed? Because it makes a difference to the one whose life was changed. Because the passion to help is too strong to resist. Because progress is always one student at a time.



Jared Hubbard  
Imaging for Life and the Lloyd Group  
Marc Manuel, Executive Vice President,  
and Adam Eiseman, Chairman and CEO

## Leading Into the Wind

This summer, with the help of Leadership Rice, I took a leap and splashed down in the heart of New York City. In order that I might learn to swim among the fast currents of the city that never sleeps, I took on a personal project, in the spirit of Leadership Rice, to discover the essence of leadership. I have not finished my quest, in fact it looks to be a lifelong pursuit, but I do hope to share a little of what I found in New York.

Here are some of the questions I sought to answer: What is a leader? How does one become a leader? How does one motivate “the troops”? How does a leader communicate vision? What kind of team is the best to assemble? Most importantly, how does someone like myself, who is not a “born” leader, learn the necessary skills of leadership for this challenging world we live in?

My search led me far and wide, from the pages of history to everyday life. I read several books on the subject; two of the most helpful were Jim Collins’ *Good to Great* and Christopher Kolenda’s *Leadership: The Warrior’s Art*. Extensive biographical readings about leaders throughout history helped. So did the opportunity to work at two companies, both of which have unique leadership styles with unique leaders attached.

In truth, I learned almost as many things that do not make good leaders as things that do. Collins does an excellent job of separating leaders into categories. The most effective leaders for the long-term performance of a company, he says, are Level 5 leaders, who are humble enough to surround themselves with excellent, free-thinking subordinates. Below Level 5 leaders are the more common Level 4 leaders, who are charismatic and can be brilliant. The problem these leaders have is that they never truly develop their subordinates. This often makes them flashes in the pan: They achieve greatness when they focus on a problem, but once they are gone, so is the greatness.

Many of the qualities we ascribe to leaders are those of Level 4 leaders, and in fact they don’t lead to successful teams that can continue on after their leaders’ departure. I find this to be a critical test – whether a team can survive and thrive after the departure of its leader. The humility that allows a person to build something greater than himself is truly the quality of an excellent leader.

Looking through history (a particular passion of mine), I find that leaders of the past can be categorized in these two categories, which correspond very well to the length and success of their countries after their departure. Alexander the Great, military genius though he was, allowed no one to approach his position; he ruled with arrogance, which eventually led to mutiny among his “team.” Upon his death, his subordinates went in their own directions and in so doing destroyed the empire his brilliance had built. Genghis Khan was a different type of military commander. Though an extremely ruthless general, the Khan handpicked his generals based exclusively on merit. He trusted them,

demanded results from them, and let them operate on their own merits. When Genghis Khan died and his conquests were split between his sons, his team stayed together and decided to collectively “rule the world” without internal warring. Thus the difference between a team-building Level 5 leader and a brilliant individual Level 4 leader.

One of the keys to any leader’s success is leading by example. Whether it is Caesar fighting at the front of his legions or modern executives like my mentors working longer and harder than anyone else in the company, setting an example for others to follow is critical to getting people to achieve the vision that a leader sets out.

Leadership is about communicating a vision and motivating followers to help you achieve that vision. It doesn’t matter whether the vision is forging an empire or meeting third-quarter sales results, the same principles apply. Being a humble team-builder who leads by example will result in better long-term results, no matter what the objective is. Although I still have many questions to answer, I believe I have come much closer than I was a few months ago to understanding what a leader is and how I can be one.

Jill Browning  
Wolf Trap Center for the Performing Arts  
David Perrett, Director, Annual Fund

## A Summer at Wolf Trap

Facing a summer at Wolf Trap back in May, I admit that my expectations were a bit shaky. In fact, I had no idea what to expect. Sure, I was anticipating an exciting summer in Washington, D.C. – living with a close friend of mine and savoring my independence – but I had only heard of Wolf Trap for the first time a few months before, and my notions of what I would be doing were vague, to say the least.

From the second I arrived at the development office at Wolf Trap, I was overwhelmed by the excitement and enthusiasm of my co-workers. The door to our office was decorated with an artistically challenged yet encouraging sign saying, “Welcome Jill!” Dave, my mentor, greeted me in a polite yet eager manner and mentioned no fewer than 10 times in the first hour how pleased they were to have me working there and how excited they all were to get to know me. All the members of the office echoed this sentiment frequently as I was taken around and introduced. My qualms about starting work in an unfamiliar place were drowned out almost immediately by this flood of passionate greetings.

As the summer progressed, the eventual subsiding of the novelty of my arrival that I expected barely took place. Even 11 weeks into my internship, everyone in the development office was just as eager to answer a question, respond to an e-mail, or explain a procedure as they were the day of my arrival. I cannot think of a better group of people to have spent my summer with, and I really regret that my first job will very likely lack such wonderful colleagues.

Looking back at all the experiences that combined to form my summer mentorship, I tried to isolate a certain occasion that stood out in my memory. As hard as that task was, considering all the great memories, I settled on a certain night midway through the summer. Wolf Trap was hosting a dinner for all the interns and the board members – a mixer intended to cross the generational gap and allow the interns to mingle and network with all the wonderfully connected personalities of Washington society.

I felt rather lucky at this event because my Wolf Trap mentor, someone matched with each intern separately from the supervisors, was assistant to the president, and she knew *everyone*. I met at least 10 really interesting people that night, all of whom had staggering connections and seemed genuinely pleased to meet me. We ate a delicious catered meal and sat out under the stars, waiting for the show to begin.

Another benefit of my job was free tickets. As a Wolf Trap intern, I could request up to two tickets for each performance. To have free entertainment in a city as expensive as Washington was inestimable. Looking back, I can barely believe the quality and number of performances I attended. Performers such as Jewel, Blues Traveler, the Indigo Girls, the cranberries, the Temptations, and numerous others humbled me as I sat on the lawn with my complimentary ticket.

This particular night, we attended a performance of Barrage, a fascinating group of Irish fiddlers who perform in the style of Riverdance. As I sat in the box, surrounded in such an impressive venue by my mentor, other Wolf Trap interns, and several prominent board members, I realized how *amazing* my summer was. I had so many opportunities and experiences that characterized my summer and altered a lot of my outlooks.

My summer at Wolf Trap was an incredible experience because of: the constant interaction with all the amazing staff and members of the Wolf Trap family, the once-in-a-lifetime opportunity to witness world-class performing artists for free, the chance to experience what a career in arts administration entails, the weekly lunches where the interns got to hear from various members of the Wolf Trap staff, the pairing of interns with outstanding mentors from the D.C. community, various field trips around the area (including trips to the Kennedy Center and Arena Stage), the tremendous connections made through the far-reaching network of the Wolf Trap community, and *so much more* that I cannot even express in this reflection.

Robert Lee  
Arete Corp.  
James Meier, President

## **The Value of Opportunity**

I've never had to ask myself why I liked New York. My parents, my friends, and random people I meet on the street have asked me why anyone would be willing to pay obscene amounts of money to live nose to nose with 8 million people in a loud, dangerous, dirty city. I could never say what it was that appealed to me so much, although I always knew it did. This summer I found out. New York is a city filled with millions of people who are willing to have countless indignities heaped upon them for the sake of being somewhere where everyone wakes up each morning and knows that they matter, that what they do sets paths for others to follow, and that they and the millions of other people doing it with them are making a difference.

This past summer I got a mentorship from Leadership Rice and the Kauffman Center for Entrepreneurial Leadership to work at the Arete Corp. in New York City. Arete is a small company that does project consulting for nonprofit firms, and as its summer mentorship student I was involved in just about every aspect of its business, from accounting and office management to data analysis and report writing. I learned a good deal from the job itself, but by far the most rewarding aspect of the mentorship was the opportunity to spend three months living and working in the city I had always dreamed of.

I think I began to realize that I was somewhere truly special one weekend shortly after my arrival when I decided to walk to Central Park. Just on the walk there I was able to go to an Italian-American festival, see the taping of one of my favorite television shows, and get my picture taken outside a famous nightclub. When I got there, I was overwhelmed not only by the concept of a huge rural oasis in the middle of America's densest city, but also by the sheer volume and diversity of people there. In two hours of walking around, I saw a rollerblading exhibition, donated money to a marcher for the African-American HIV/AIDS Awareness March, and ran into some friends I had met earlier that week. In one afternoon on my way to the park, I got to see and do more than I would normally in a month.

One of the most exciting and instructive things for me about being in New York was the vitality of the entire city – it seemed as if everything and everyone were more alive than anything else I had experienced. Since I was sent there on an entrepreneurial mentorship, I tried to pay particular attention to new businesses in the area. I know there are entrepreneurs all over the country, but it seemed to me that the Big Apple fostered an atmosphere more conducive to people identifying their niche in the world and setting out to fill it. In my 12 weeks I met people who founded educational consulting companies, hair salons, nightclub-promotions firms, and even an haute cuisine restaurant set in the middle of a park at Union Square. I've heard it said that it's OK to be a freak in big cities because there are so many people around that someone is bound to appreciate it. I think

the same thing holds true for businesses in New York – there are so many people that no matter how small a niche you set out to fill with your business, there's bound to be someone who wants its services.

I also met people this summer who showed me through their life stories that it's OK to not know what you want out of life, so long as you pursue your goals and don't ever let yourself become uninteresting. One good friend of mine left the London School of Economics after earning his graduate degree to work on political campaigns, followed by some work with a marketing company, then some media-relations work, and now he is an executive with a public-relations firm. Another person I met started out as an accounts-payable accountant with a small telephone company and is now the vice president of human resources for a major wireless telecom company.

These two men set out to follow their dreams in an environment full of opportunity and ended up finding exactly the sort of job they never knew they wanted. This, more than anything else, has emboldened me. In the right climate and with the right attitude, it IS possible to find your dreams, even if you don't yet know what they are.

## **The Graduation Ceremony**

“Do we need more chairs?” I asked my mentor, Rene Caudillo. When he replied in the affirmative, I thought he was being either incredibly optimistic or naive. We already had more than 60 seats in the small auditorium, soon to be filled with the families and graduates of our Countdown to College program. I could hardly believe that the session had ended; only six weeks ago we had implored these same teenagers to give up their summer in order to study with us.

I nostalgically recalled that first open house in the auditorium. We had invited all the students and their parents to the Community Family Centers to learn about our program and to fill out forms. My co-workers and I had been scrambling to get field trips, community-service outings, and college visits scheduled before that night. We awaited the arrival of our students with nervous excitement – the open house was our first time to meet the teenagers with whom we would be working all summer. Unfortunately, due to a deluge that flooded the area at the same time, very few people made it to the auditorium that night. I was disappointed with the low turnout, but at the same time I felt a little relieved that I would not have to maintain a facade of tranquillity over my growing nervousness.

At the graduation ceremony, students, families, and major donors began to trickle into the auditorium. Looking at all my students, I realized how much I had changed over the summer. Initially I had been terrified by all the responsibility the mentorship required: The curriculum for the entire class was up to my discretion. But once the program began, I rapidly learned to trust my own decisions. I discovered how to create and teach lessons that were interesting, fun, and helpful. I found that everyone enjoyed team competitions, while rote memorization of vocabulary generated more yawns than enthusiasm. No longer the timid intern, I fearlessly fought for our group both inside and outside the center. I learned how to become a true leader.

As the starting time for the graduation ceremony approached, more and more people arrived at the center. All summer I had had to cajole my students to arrive on time; even so, classes usually began 15 minutes late. Now I could hardly believe the vast numbers of people arriving before the ceremony was scheduled to begin. By the time the director began her speech, some audience members were standing because all the seats had been taken.

The graduation was truly a time of celebration. Unlike any ceremony I had ever attended, this one was interactive. The director often called upon audience members to communicate their thoughts about the program with the rest of the group. Parents, grandparents, and students enthusiastically shared their experiences with the entire audience. The pride emanating from the room was palpable. These parents celebrated the completion of the six-week course with as much enthusiasm as if their children had won

the Nobel Prize. Cameras flashed, and people cheered. I could not stop smiling all evening.



## **A Character Study of the Big Apple**

I am a racist. Additionally I am a sexist, culturally deprived homophobic from Mississippi. Growing up in the American South, I collected the habit of distinguishing people by their race, gender, and culture. Although my common sense often speaks to me about the evils of making judgments based on the differences among people, my background as a bigot surfaced upon my arrival in the most diverse city in the world.

From the first time I walked through LaGuardia Airport, I felt the excitement of a country bumpkin happy to be visiting the big city. I knew that living in New York City would show me patterns of life far different from those in Mississippi. Driving through Queens from the airport, I noticed the many different shades of color that existed beyond simple black and white, and once I reached Manhattan, I felt the magnitude as millions of people had something more important to do than I did. They were all too busy to notice the minutiae that separates a construction worker from a street vendor, or a Wall Street broker from a pro bono attorney. But I noticed. Every day as I walked through the Times Square subway station, the city's busiest, I would smile as a mother spoke to her daughter, a group of businessmen conversed about something important, or a man argued with the subway conductor – all interacting in a language that sounded nothing like the English I was used to hearing. New York City allowed me to witness cultures only stereotyped on television, and I hadn't even gotten to work yet.

I got off the subway at the 34<sup>th</sup> Street station, where one side of the street houses Macy's, the world's largest department store. I noticed that it attracted middle- to upper-class shoppers and tourists, while the long block of firms on the other side of the street featured businessmen speaking Korean. I walked past these stores with names I couldn't read and ended up at 6 E. 32<sup>nd</sup> St. As if this portrait of diversity weren't enough, I was soon introduced to Dan Rosenbaum, my mentor at Cherry Lane. A classically trained pianist and an opera fan, Mr. Rosenbaum knew more about pop music than my 13-year-old cousin who thrives on MTV and Seventeen magazine. As he spoke to me about the music industry I hope to enter, I became aware of his business sense and willingness to teach. To me, Mr. Rosenbaum personified New York: intelligent, proud, and always busy. A large poster of the Flatiron Building hung in his office, and his desk was continuously covered with work. Meanwhile, his demeanor was always calm, and his grammar was perfect. Mr. Rosenbaum not only provided me with the knowledge to support my aspirations in the music industry, but he was also a great case study: a grand example of the culture of a true New Yorker.

The president of Cherry Lane Music Group impressed me, too. Aida Gurwicz always appeared as the best-dressed, most levelheaded, and most intimidating member of the company. She broke all stereotypes floating in my mind for female managers, and she did her job well. Most of the employees knew her and liked her, but all employees

respected her. She was the boss. I remember the times we would be in the elevator together, and it felt as if I were standing next to a movie star. Too intimidated to say hello, I just watched her apply her sunglasses in preparation for a sun-drenched New York summer day and made the trip down from the 11th floor in silence. One day the president of the United States will be a woman, and she will resemble the president of Cherry Lane. Her position in that company opened my eyes to the possibilities and actualization of successful women in corporate America.

My true culture shock, however, appeared at my desk two weeks into my mentorship. He had three rings in his left ear and wore shiny white sneakers with khakis. His name was Seth. A 20-year-old from a predominantly Italian neighborhood on Staten Island, Seth Schneider was like me: an intern who wanted to make it big in the music industry. With his machismo in speech and actions, he could have been Tony Soprano's long-lost son; his favorite pastimes happened to be playing jazz saxophone and freestyle rapping. As Seth liked to say, "The girls all think I'm Italian and like it, so I don't complain." Spending his days listening to songs whose rights Cherry Lane managed, Seth soon adopted a favorite: *I Need Jesus* by Gary Chapman – very ironic when I realized he was Jewish. The bond Seth and I shared went beyond music. He was my lunch companion every day, and the more I learned about him, the more I liked him. Unknowingly, he taught me more about diversity than four years at any institution.

My summer mentorship created many opportunities for personal growth. The greatest opportunity arose when I realized that New York offered more than a break from the boredom of home and that my job was more than just a place to earn money and gain insight into the industry. This experience in New York opened my eyes to the fact that the reality of the Deep South, where racial, gender, and cultural separations prevail, is not the reality of our nation. I truly *experienced* this summer mentorship, and I learned so much from every facet of it. I thank each person who contributed to this growth, including Dan Rosenbaum, Aida Gurwicz and Seth Schneider.

### Answering Dr. Lieberman With *The Sound of Music*

**The question:** “Lindsay, what makes you different from the other talented students at Rice? Why should I choose *you* for my leadership program?”

**The response:** *stunned silence*

That was not how I intended my Leadership Rice interview to end, but sadly, that was all I could muster. I have never considered myself a stellar interviewee, but this performance made “decent” a generous adjective. I had been definitively, decidedly, and disgustingly stumped. When Dr. Lieberman asked her question, I had no idea what made me different. What’s worse, I still had no idea an hour, a day, and a week later.

This dismal lack of response made the eventual offer of a mentorship nothing short of shocking. Shock, however, soon gave way to an almost obsessive determination to prove myself. I felt mandated to come to some profound insight over the course of the summer to validate my selection, but insight, I found, does not occur on command.

The first roadblock to epiphany appeared on Day 1 of my mentorship: business. My job was to write brochure and Web site text for an organization that was business-centered and proud of it, when for most of my sentient life I had thought of business the way most children think of spinach: It may be good for you, but I can’t stomach it. I needed to present as favorable something I viewed as alien and uncomfortable: fertile ground for writer’s block. I reached my lowest point when the CEO stopped by to check on my progress. Taking one look at my blank computer screen, he quipped, “You do know how to write, don’t you?” And I thought Dr. Lieberman asked tough questions.

A few weeks later I completed a working draft of my brochure and sent it out for review. The first few responses were favorable; the CEO even wrote “Good job” on the top of his copy. Then I received a phone call from one of the outside reviewers, who wanted to critique my work orally. One hour later, my five-page opus, “Good job” and all, had been reduced to a two-page skeleton of its former self, and not a single, solitary sentence was left unmarked. I could hear Dr. Lieberman in the back of my mind: “Why should I choose you for my program?” Because I give critics a lot of material to work with?

While still recovering from this humbling experience, I was invited to sit in on a much-anticipated meeting of our board of directors. Finally something positive! To put it mildly, I felt like a mortal invited to sit in on a meeting on Mount Olympus. Surely this chance would provide me with the insight I needed to answer Dr. Lieberman. Wrong again. It turns out that corporate giants, like the Greek deities of ancient days, are noticeably human in spite of their power. This meeting contained the same elements of derision, argument, confusion, and frustration that I had seen in groups since grade

school. I drove home consumed more by questions than by the profound ideas I had anticipated.

Still, as the summer progressed, I digested this experience with my mentor to find meaning in the ambiguity. I also worked to become comfortable operating in the world of business, and my writing began to take on a sincerity that substantially enhanced its quality. Furthermore, I took my outside reviewers so seriously that a ruthless but insightful comment on a draft could make my day. In fact, the same critic who had devastated my first draft later said of my fifth draft that it “brought the gold” out of the organization’s ideas.

Near the end of my mentorship, I had clearly made progress, but I still felt myself lacking the kind of insight I had hoped would validate me. To make matters worse, I unexpectedly fell ill while visiting my parents for the weekend and found myself stuck for three days with no work, no books, no energy, and no voice. So I did what any good American would do: I resorted to the family movie collection. I’m not sure what inspired my selection, but I somehow ended up wrapped in blankets on the sofa watching *The Sound of Music*, and that was when insight struck. Far away from my downtown Houston office, I sat in my childhood living room, watched Julie Andrews skip through Salzburg singing *I Have Confidence*, and finally put my summer in perspective.

I may not have earned a writing award, become a business guru, or turned the head of Dr. Lieberman, but I, like Maria, had built confidence! I had learned to adapt to uncomfortable situations. I had learned how to take and leverage criticism to improve my work. I had learned to become comfortable with ambiguity in practice. I had – dare I say it – learned new things about myself.

**The question:** “Why, Lindsay Lawley, should I choose *you* for my program?”

**The response:** “Besides what you see, I have confidence in me!”

Lakshmi Sreekumar  
Microsoft Corp.  
Brooke Chapman, Program Manager

## The View From My Window

This summer I worked at the Microsoft Corp. as a program management intern in the Windows Platform SDK. My role as a program manager revolved around developing, optimizing, and sometimes simplifying algorithms. My internship was a great learning experience for me.

Almost every computer-science class I've taken at Rice had at least a few Windows-bashing sessions. I must admit that I was an avid part of this at some point in my career at Rice. I have been an ardent UNIX programmer, with little exposure to programming on Windows. Of course, Windows programming was off limits in a lot of my courses at Rice. When talking about the Windows operating system, my professors would say, "Now UNIX is a real OS, and Windows is just \*\*\*\*."

My first week at work, I met with my developer to discuss the design specification I had written for the project. We decided it would be a good idea to run some tests on the existing code to see the points of failure that I my algorithm would improve. Promptly I pulled up a DOS window and typed:

```
C :> ls
```

My developer looked at me, startled, and said, "Ah, you're one of those UNIX people, aren't you?" I said, "Umm, no, err, yes." Recollecting the incident, it doesn't seem that big of a deal anymore. But right then I felt uneasy and out of place. Here I was at Microsoft typing UNIX commands on DOS. No big deal. As my developer would say, "It's all part of the learning experience." After my meeting, I re-evaluated the whole situation, and it struck me that I would have to make my crossover. To my professors and fellow UNIX lovers, I would now officially be "one of them." I almost felt as if I were betraying and letting them down. I darted to the cafeteria, took three straight shots of espresso, shook my head out, and thought:

"This is most certainly going to be a challenge, and I'd better take it seriously. In order to succeed at Microsoft and develop quality software, I need to believe in the products that are made here. It is more than just writing code. I need to convince myself that I am working on bleeding-edge technology that pushes the limits of software systems. The sooner I adapt, the better off I will be."

At the end of that day, I had my first prototype program, written and compiled in Windows XP. I felt a great sense of relief. I realized it was not about taking sides and refusing to open my mind to new ideas. Instead it was about embracing new technologies and adapting my skills to develop them. In the next few weeks, I found myself truly believing in Windows software-development products, and that certainly helped me view my piece of work from a different perspective than when I was at Rice.

## The “Why”

I wiped the sweat off my face, tried discreetly to scrape the rat feces off my shoes, and whined inside. Why was I here in a concrete jungle, sweating in my “business casual” polyester pants and balancing in my new slides, to measure the dimensions of an inner-city alleyway that reeked of rat urine? All the other Leadership Rice interns were in their offices with air conditioning, working on causes they were passionate about.

My self-pitying stream of thought was interrupted by the familiar shriek of children at play, and I stretched my neck to get a better look at the sources of the voices. Two elementary-aged girls were standing atop two shaky concrete walls, playing with broken hula hoops and giggling over the sounds of traffic. The camp counselor in me wanted to get those girls off the walls and tell them to play somewhere safe, but the only alternatives to the crumbling concrete were the concrete slabs doubling as their back yard and the alleyway, both of which were sprinkled with broken glass. What a far cry from suburban Minnesota, where I lived at their age with my huge, green back yard and swing set. My inner voice stopped whining, and I now had a mission, a reason for contributing: so that these girls would have a safe place to play, even in downtown Baltimore.

The motivation brought by those girls finally connected me to my hours of work over the past month. I had been involved in every aspect of Community Greens, a nonprofit working to construct private, shared green space in the interiors of urban lots. I had helped design a Web page, researched greens, interviewed residents living around the areas, written grant proposals, and convinced foundations that Community Greens would improve the social, economic, and environmental prospects facing urban areas. I knew how to use the action verbs of the nonprofit world and would go on and on about “implementing” this or “facilitating” that to sell people on the idea. Still, I lacked my co-workers’ background in community planning and passion for environmental issues. Somehow the environment didn’t inspire me, and I tired quickly of talking about gardens and the complicated logistics of implementing them in the city. Even ornate gardens in the before-and-after pictures didn’t inspire me, and while I believed the Community Greens concept was an ingenious idea, I didn’t feel drawn to it until those girls showed me how my work could help people – not cities or the environment but children playing with broken hula hoops amongst rat feces and broken glass. I needed people to inspire me.

Still pondering this realization about myself and my work, I stood up, steadied myself against the hot concrete bricks, and called out measurements to the architecture student at the other end of the tape measure. Two doors down from the little girls with the hula hoops, an elderly face peeked through a dingy kitchen window, eyeing our moves suspiciously. This same wrinkled face appeared beside me a few minutes later, asking

questions, telling us about the neighbors, and listening to the architect's design for a garden. "You folks are really going to do this for us?" he asked.

"Yeah," I replied. "That's why we're here – to help you."

I finally understood.

## Appearances

Glancing out the window of the plane, I began my anticipatory reverie as I considered the leader I was to become through my summer leadership position. As each downy softness floated by, I saw not clouds but many messengers just for me. Pink, white, gray, silver-lined, and sunlit-striped, each with its own miniature revelation for my leadership endeavor.

**Pink:** the royalty and honor that I surely will obtain

**White:** the purity and goodness that I surely will induce

**Gray:** the hindrances that must be conquered by my will

**Silver-lined:** all the blessings that heaven will bestow

**Sunlit-striped:** my continued influence that will take root throughout the world

Considering the influence I was to have, I was more than ready to commence my summer leadership adventure. “Why, I will go and change the world myself,” I thought. There may be some hindrances, but once they are conquered, there is no end to the royalty, honor, purity, goodness, blessings, and influence to be achieved.

With that decision made, I began to ensure I was a prepared leader. When Monday morning came, I was up before dawn. Always one to attempt a lasting impression, I preened and pressed before launching into a lengthy quiet time of reflection, Bible study, and prayer. As I headed out the door, I made yet another check to be sure all was in order.

I arrived at the light-blue metal building in Houston’s Fourth Ward at 7:30 a.m. From the outside, it’s nearly impossible to guess that doctors might work there. About the only hint is a converted grocery-store sign with the name Good Neighbor Healthcare Center. So this was where I was to be a leader.

Surveying the surroundings, I made a quick assessment of any obvious possibilities for change. At least it didn’t look as though coming up with ideas would be very hard. First of all, the flow of this clinic was so slow that it could most certainly be readily improved. Already I noticed a long line, which had formed outside as patients waited for hours in hopes that they might be seen early by the doctor or the Gold Card lady. Second, the waiting room could be made more comfortable and inviting. I noticed the sagging, torn chairs and lack of toys for the children. Third, the patients could provide the needed information before their appointments and be expected to come at their scheduled times so as not to delay anyone. By the end of the summer, I envisioned a cozy waiting room with the few children happily occupied in reading and playing together. The patients and doctors would be enabled to schedule and keep their appointments without delay.

Having made my initial impression, I pranced in wide-eyed and ready to change the world. “Leadership Rice,” my nametag proudly declared. Such an odd label to place



on a clueless young college student, my co-workers must have thought as they asked me, “¿Habla español?” and realized I couldn’t even reply, “Poquito.” As they shook their heads, they handed me a chart and instructed me to call my first patient, who, like most of the patients here, was a recent immigrant from Mexico and could not understand one word I said. Bewildered, I looked around for a translator, only to become conscious of the fact that I was the sole person in the vicinity attempting to speak English.

Upon realizing that the 90 percent of patients who were Hispanic also spoke Spanish, I decided to try another approach. I attempted to locate the leader of my department. I was promptly informed that she had been out for months for health reasons. In addition, my mentor, the overall clinic “leader,” worked at the other end of the hall, handling all the business aspects of the clinic. It didn’t sound as if I’d hear from her very often, either.

My frustration began to give way to despair as I realized that leading was not going to be as simple as I had anticipated. “Oh, well,” I thought, “I guess I can learn something here, but it sure won’t be about leadership. Hmm. ... There were a lot of pigeons in the parking lot. Oh, but they already have a leader. Too bad!”

Fortunately, as the summer progressed, I found leadership where I least expected it. Certainly it was not to the tune of royalty, honor, purity, goodness, conquest, wealth, global influence, or other such enchanting heralds. Instead I saw doctors taking time to convey their belief in each child and inspire them with greater possibilities of what they might become. There were social workers who could generate enough confidence and trust to help a hurting family. There were medical assistants who listened and listened and explained and explained, even if it was the hundredth time to clarify that a diabetic actually should take the prescribed medicine. And yes, there were the patients themselves. They continually impressed me with stamina, courage, and faith that enabled them to carry on and lead their families, despite poverty and unbelievably trying circumstances. Thankfully, there were also assorted co-workers who reached out and adopted me, even if I was just another clueless transient student.

As for me, instead of taking a stereotypical role of leader or attempting to create sweeping changes, I learned what leadership could be. What does it truly mean to be a leader? What does it mean to make a difference? What can make my life meaningful? This summer, I believe I began to answer those questions. I learned that leading can occur in any position and at any level, because leading is an attitude. The one requirement is for an individual to have enough initiative to surmount difficulties so that change can happen. These are the people who make a difference, even if it is one person at a time. With this understanding, I believe I was a good leader. In the process, I was a follower, a listener, a medical assistant, a baby sitter, a friend, and an adviser. All of these are useful, all of these are vital, and all are the makings of a leader.

Meanwhile, those clouds are ever drifting by. I wonder if I misread them. Finally I ask, “Pink, white, gray, silver-lined, and sunlit-striped: What is the message you bring to me?”

Then, only then, they reveal: “There are not just five colors, five messages, five fortunes for thee. Nevertheless, if you watch, you will find: **NOTHING EVER IS AS IT APPEARS TO BE.**”

Esther Brown  
Conscious Pursuits Inc. / Methodist Hospital  
Cindy Wigglesworth, President,  
and the Rev. Tom Daugherty, Vice President for Spiritual Care

## Four Letters That Changed My Life

I didn't know it at first, but this was the summer of Myers-Briggs. It wasn't enough that I had previously known the four personality dichotomies, nor that I researched the Myers-Briggs Type Indicator (MBTI) for my mentor, nor that I took an extended version of the test as part of my job. ... No, I had to attend a four-hour Leadership Rice MBTI workshop to round it all off! Still, as I explored and tested for the four dichotomies – Introvert/Extrovert, iNtuitive/Sensing, Thinking/Feeling, and Perceiving/Judging – a change worked its way in my heart. I started noticing one eerie correlation after another, and before I knew it, I was so devoted that I even considered writing my own test, just for fun. Yes, ladies and gentlemen: This is the tale of how I became an MBTI convert.

Like any good conversion, of course, my story starts with a life of faithlessness and unbelief. I began the summer as a skeptic, viewing any four-letter summary of an individual as an essentially worthless categorization. Sure, the profiles of my own type were strikingly familiar, but I dismissed them as descriptions vague enough to fit anyone. Then came that blessed day of the Leadership Rice MBTI workshop. As the speaker began to explain traits of iNtuitive people, I had a sudden flashback from a week earlier.

*I am annoyed and bored at the job-orientation session, which consists almost entirely of PowerPoint presentations. Later, while chatting with my mentor's secretary, I express my dislike of rigid, overly structured lectures. To my surprise, she replies, "Actually, I really like PowerPoint presentations."*

As I remembered her response, a stunning revelation struck me: Not everyone *was* like me! My iNtuitive nature, which preferred flowing interaction to clear-cut explanation, felt alien to the Sensing natures of my co-worker and the presenter. After that realization, my eyes and ears were opened; I was a changed woman.

As the seminar went on, I began to understand all the ways in which I either "clicked" or "didn't click" with people, but had never realized why. It suddenly made sense why I chose to spend my weekends alone at home: I wasn't being anti-social – the Introvert in me simply needed to recharge. Likewise, I understood why I got along so well with certain friends: As later testing confirmed, they were all almost exactly the same type as I was. By the end of the seminar, I had to resist the urge to jump up and testify to how true the speaker's words were.

Still, any young faith has to stand up to the challenge of everyday experiences – and in my case, my new-found beliefs received plenty of validation, from my work life to my love life. Over the summer I became involved with a young man who, as I discovered later, was a Feeler to my Thinking. At one point, while working out the details of our relationship, we decided to simultaneously write about our respective thoughts. He wrote

a beautiful description of why he loved me; I wrote a numbered list of pros and cons for different romantic possibilities. Although we both laughed amicably at our differences, we were clearly thinking in distinct ways! Conversely, Myers-Briggs also helped me understand why some relationships *didn't* work. After a friend of mine complained all summer about how much one of my acquaintances irritated him, he discovered that she was his precise opposite type.

MBTI did more than help me understand my personal life and relationships, though; through its lens, I could understand my co-workers in illuminating new ways. In my mentorship, I had been placed with employees who had few traits in common with me – in other words, people whom I might have previously deemed incomprehensible. At one point, a Sensing co-worker criticized a report for being nonlinear, when in my opinion it had explained my points perfectly. Thanks to MBTI, though, I knew that she was pointing out something that really *was* a problem for her 70 percent of the population.

Even more fascinating was the difference between Perceiving and Judging. All but one of my co-workers were Judging types – structure-based and neatness-oriented – and when I moved into my Perceiving mentor's office to work, it was delightful to see his secretary attempt to organize his files. He had arranged his office exactly the way I preferred, with stacks of paper scattered everywhere, but she was horrified at the “chaotic mess.” My new awareness of MBTI allowed me to sympathize with her plight while silently smiling at the knowledge that my mentor wasn't alone.

Indeed, as time goes by, I keep discovering more true believers: business people, clergy, students, consultants – people from all ages and professions, united by this tool for self-discovery and understanding of others. Can MBTI bring about world peace? Possibly, but probably not. Can it save your sanity, enhance your love life, advance your career, and whiten your teeth while you sleep? Maybe, but don't hold your breath. But can it revolutionize the way you see yourself and those around you? It did for me, and it could for you, too.

## **Making Connections**

As the time approached, I found myself experiencing feelings I most certainly had not expected. After all, this was not my first last day on the job. In every other such instance, I had awaited that last hour with a sense of great anticipation and excitement. Finally, work was finished for another summer! It meant that it was time to get back to school and friends, and the end of the dread of going to bed knowing I had to get up at 7 the following morning. But although all these things were again true, my feelings were much different. I felt reluctant to go, and sadness crept in as I said goodbye to all of my co-workers. This was certainly to be expected when parting from the people with whom I had become friends in the two and a half months I had worked there, but I was surprised to find that it was also present when shaking the hands of my bosses, with whom I had not really had much direct contact.

Looking back, I realize that what set this summer apart were the relationships I made with the people I worked with. I found out that this can often make more of a difference in the enjoyment and even significance of a job than the actual content of the work being performed. This goes further than simply becoming friends with people you spend the most time with, although that was very helpful in and of itself. The success of an individual in almost any business setting has so much to do with the connections and friendships he establishes. Because of my relationship with both of my bosses, I feel I now have a good chance of getting an even better job next year. This realization is nice in some ways, but kind of disappointing in others.

I spent a majority of my summer working for a branch of the National Institutes of Health in the Research Triangle in North Carolina. I worked on several projects involving clinical asthma research, specifically analyzing indoor allergen levels and their possible effects on asthma and other allergic diseases. It was a great experience for me, my first real opportunity to work in a serious academic environment. I learned some good laboratory techniques that will certainly be helpful in the future. I also learned how to deal with the public when working on a company project.

But I did not learn anything that would not have been possible at any number of other research labs across the country. Without a doubt the most important part of this summer for me in the long run were the connections I made. They will benefit me more than the experience I now have. Part of me is happy to know this, but another part is upset. Similar connections are the reason I was able to work at NIH in the first place. It was the program I participated in, not my credentials, that got me the job. Likewise, it will most likely be the connections from this job that will get me my next summer internship or job. Networking and politics greatly frustrate me at times. But that seems to be how the business world works, for the most part.

## Questions and Quiche at Neuman & Bogdonoff

“Nuts,” I mumbled as blue-cheese dressing splattered onto the pile of drafts and notes scattered around my desk. Cleaning the small spill from the field of paper that was my desktop was only a momentary interruption as I devoured the last of my Caesar salad and entered information into the computer. I turned to investigate the loud racket that had caused me to drop the food on the desk. As soon as I looked over my shoulder, Sarah came running in with an immaculately decorated cheesecake that needed to have been across town 10 minutes ago, but the delivery staff was gone. I watched Kevin, a sales representative, grab his cell phone and the cake and leave the office in a hurry. And it was over, just as quickly as it began. As we all returned to our tasks, I thought, “Noon, and only one disaster all day. ... Good for us!”

In hindsight, my plans for the summer after sophomore year were a little ridiculous. I knew what I wanted to study and do, but it didn’t occur to me that the physical location of my placement would make such a profound difference. Other students often ask me, “How was your summer?” or, “What did you do this summer?” My response is always the same: I say with the appropriate enthusiasm, “I did a Leadership Rice mentorship at a catering firm in New York City.” It’s always amusing to watch the glaze of confusion wash over their eyes. As I explain further, their puzzlement usually fades, but for a moment they have a taste of my mind-set for the entire summer.

It is accurate to say that Rice doesn’t have an overwhelming culinary education department, so when Susan approached me with the idea of spending the summer at a catering firm, I responded with the expected perplexity. She explained to me that it was not a cooking position, but rather one on the business side. The firm needed an outside consultant of sorts to re-evaluate some of its selection and training procedures. I am a psychology major, and at the time I was completely engrossed in the industrial/organizational division. As such, I was to deal mostly with the staff-organization end of the spectrum. This mentorship thoroughly interested and excited me, and when I signed on for the project, I was positive that this was going to be the most relevant and successful summer to date.

I completely ignored the fact that this marvelous opportunity was set in the context of a catering firm. Neuman & Bogdonoff is by no means a backyard operation, but I did greatly underestimate the effect that one’s setting has on one’s activities. The catering business is a very fast-paced, ever-changing, service-oriented industry. The office was always alive with cooks, cleaners, secretaries, sales people, and managers running to and fro. They brandished a myriad of tools, from order forms and faxes to cakes and glazed roasts. They were open for business at 6 a.m. and didn’t close until 7 p.m.

I expected that the business department would be completely exclusive and separate from the kitchen and delivery section. I have never been more wrong in my life. Neuman & Bogdonoff is a company of approximately 50 employees, and they share a family mentality. Everyone knows everyone else's name, birthday, and habits. In fact, the office was so integrated that the business workers often went on deliveries or helped with food packing when necessary. There were quite a few days when I noticed Austin, the general manager, going out on lunch deliveries.

On my first day, I was sent to the kitchen to learn the ropes. I helped with a lunch order, went on deliveries, watched cookies and brownies being prepared, and helped receive and enter orders for the next day. The idea was that to be a fully capable and versatile employee, I needed to understand the way the business worked. It was essential for me to understand the policies and culture of this particular workplace so that I could contribute effectively to it.

After my first few days, I realized the importance of the setting and context. What I had learned in class about performance appraisals and selection tools were just the template from which I had to form my own hypotheses, plans, and actions. Working in such an active and close-knit environment forced me to look at the employees not as subjects but rather as people working toward unified goals. Developing my own performance evaluation tools and selection procedures was more of an exercise to expand my skills for working with people than an assignment for an organization. I truly appreciated the opportunity for that kind of growth.

Moreover, the largest lesson of the summer stemmed from that exercise in growth: I learned the importance of living more in *questions* than in answers. This has been a Leadership Rice credo from Day 1, and I finally fully understand the importance of that lesson. The catering business was completely new and foreign to me, so learning was probably the biggest part of my summer. I can honestly say that just about every day at Neuman & Bogdonoff taught me something new about business, employee relations, or food. It became of utmost importance for me to ask the right questions that would yield effective and helpful answers.

I don't feel that all of my goals for the summer were fully realized, but there is a lot to be said for delay of gratification. This summer taught me a great deal about my abilities in the business world and myself. In the future I hope that the lessons I learned from Neuman & Bogdonoff and Leadership Rice will enable me to contribute more and with greater quality to my next position.

## **A Mistake I Wouldn't Make Again**

Before I even arrived in Washington, D.C., I had already made my biggest mistake of the summer. With an almost total lack of knowledge and busting at the seams with self-confidence, I had found a place to live *all by myself*. Throughout the month between my mentorship placement and my departure for D.C., my housing situation was a constant hassle to me. I was frustrated with Leadership Rice for not providing assistance, but more than that I was torn between the “responsible” act of scouring the sublet ads for a free room and the “using my network” option of asking friends and relatives for help. I knew that both paths had their virtues within the Leadership Rice paradigm, but in the end I think it was my ego rather than a desire to do right that won out. Despite the multiple options given to me by my congressman’s office, relatives, and friends of friends, I chose to send a security deposit in early May to the owner of a “group house” I had found in Hyattsville, Md.

The reasons that decision was wrong are so numerous and so glaringly obvious to me now that I have a hard time remembering how I rationalized it to myself. As they say, hindsight is 20/20. The abbreviated description I often give of the group house goes something like this: “A complete dive, crawling with roaches and swimming in trash, full of divorced alcoholic 40-something males who were all too happy to share the *one* bathroom with a 20-year-old intern.” Oh, how I wished I had taken someone else’s advice, anyone’s, those first few terrifying nights in that house! Even if I was truly naive enough to have ignored the connotations of the term “group house,” I should at least have tried to be closer than 18 miles to my job in Alexandria, Va. Barring that, I could at the very least have made sure I was within walking distance of a Metro stop. Somehow, though, I was blinded by the romanticized, Greenwich Village communal-style living I had only read about.

My stubborn nature lasted two days before I finally picked up a newspaper and started looking for other options. By the third day, my first day at my summer mentorship with Virtual Technology Corp., I had made the exact same mistake all over again. Despite the kind offers that my mentor, Mara, immediately made to help me find a better (and closer!) home, I was now more determined than ever to succeed without the help of others. The apartment I ended up in was a lot safer and cleaner than the group house, but just as far away from my job, and even more inconveniently located for Metro use. As the summer wore on and my commute to work settled in at around one hour each way, I had plenty of time to think about my mistake. After 12 weeks of working with my mentor, I truly got to the bottom of things and learned my lesson.

The most important thing I learned from Mara is that humility is indeed a virtue and that there is no shame in simply seeking out the help and advice of others. Taking her

role as a mentor to heart, Mara never hesitated to discuss her thought process with me. She often worked out verbally to me her motivations for taking certain courses of action or for saying certain things to the people she supervises. Mara always went right to the sometimes not-so-glamorous truth with me. She never tried to position herself in a better light, because there was an important goal at stake: my education. One day, toward the end of the summer, I had lunch with Mara and another female executive. They told me that they often get together, “just to bounce things off of one another.” That lunch made me realize that even an independent and intelligent person like Mara needs input from other people in order to make the best decisions.

If I had put the situation into perspective, the way Mara did every day for me, and realized that a roof over my head was more important than appearing independent, I might have taken others’ advice back in May. If I had realized, once I arrived, that asking for help is not necessarily a sign of weakness, I might have saved myself the embarrassment of making the same mistake twice. Now, after a summer in the Leadership Rice mentorship experience, I can honestly say that is one mistake I don’t have to make thrice.



## Dirt, Sweat, and Lookin' Fine

After two hours of digging up grass in the horrendous heat and suffocating humidity of Houston, I decided to take a break. When I had finished gulping down my bottled water, I suddenly became very aware of all the dirt and sweat caked over my entire body. The realization that I probably smelled about as good as I looked was beginning to make me very self-conscious, so you can imagine my surprise when I heard someone whisper, “Hey – pssst – girl! You lookin’ fine! What’s your name?”

A 14-year-old boy with a faded red cap turned backward on his head and a shovel slung over his shoulder was grinning slyly in my direction. I glanced around, but since no one else was nearby, I had to assume he was talking to me. I returned the smile and told him my name was Morgan.

“Morgan, huh?” he said. “That’s a pretty name. You got a boyfriend?”

“Actually, I do,” I replied, a little embarrassed.

Refusing to be deterred, the boy responded cheerily, “Well, do you want another?”

“I think my first boyfriend might get a little mad if I got a second one,” I said, trying to be diplomatic.

The boy cracked another devious smirk and answered, “That’s OK. He don’t got to know about it. ... Anyway, I got to get back to work. I’ll talk to you later.”

As he walked away, I smiled to myself and thought, *Well, at least he’s got good taste.*

Watching some of the other special-ed students working diligently in the garden, I was struck by the irony of the situation. These kids had been working hard out in the heat for several hours, just like me, sweating and getting dirt in every existing crevice of their skin and clothes, yet unlike me, they actually seemed happy about it. Most of them were singing, talking, laughing, joking, and just having a great time, regardless of the heat or filth or physical demands. While I was lamenting, *I’m so glad I only have to do this for a couple of days*, these students were rejoicing, *I’m so glad I get to do this for a couple of days*.

The thing that really came to mind was the word so often used to describe these kids: “handicapped.” It seemed so inappropriate at that moment.

Because of all my leadership training and experience, I, of course, was thinking of ways in which I would improve this project to make it more bearable, if I were in charge – start earlier in the morning when it’s not so hot, work for shorter periods of time, have more breaks, get better tools, and so on and so forth. But these kids were showing an important aspect of leadership that I often forget – making the most of any situation. I get so caught up in thinking about how I would improve a situation that many times I forget to just sit back and enjoy myself. If anyone was handicapped, it was me.

Often we must work under less-than-ideal circumstances, and being able to make the best of any situation is one of the most important aspects of leadership. And equally important is the ability to have fun. These were things I had lost sight of over time, and I'm glad this group of students brought that to my attention.

Thankfully, the boy in the faded red cap was able to see past the dirt and sweat and make the best of me, and in doing so, he brought my smile back to leadership.

## **Programming at the Library**

I worked in the Houston Public Library's Technology Department for nine weeks this summer. I learned so many things about leadership and about myself; this summer has been a revelation. I was allowed to experience all of this because I was accepted into Leadership Rice, whose primary goal is to help Rice students develop their leadership skills through an internship supplemented with weekly meetings to guide students through the growing process that occurs throughout the summer. On top of that, participating students take a class in the fall that aids them further in this developmental experience. At first I was a bit skeptical of this whole ordeal, but after having gone through my internship and meetings, I have to say that this experience has been unforgettable and irreplaceable.

One of the main concepts stressed by the Leadership Rice family is commitment. The Houston Public Library's Technology Department was not my first placement; I was supposed to work for the Harris County Courts, but the person I was going to work under took a job in the private sector, so that fell through. When I first heard the news, I was understandably disappointed, as I was under the impression that I was out of a job for the summer. I received a call from Leadership Rice stressing its commitment to finding me another opportunity. It had made a promise and was not going to break it because of this minor setback. Within a day or two, I received another call from the office informing me that the Houston Public Library was excited to have me on board for nine weeks. This incident has allowed me to realize that in order to be an effective leader, one must follow through on promises.

My project was to design an electronic request form to replace the existing paper version. It was very challenging at first, especially since I was going to be working in a programming language I had never used before. After I had learned the basics of the language, the program progressed quickly, and I was able to complete it in less than a month. Since I finished earlier than expected, my mentor decided to expand the application to include various other functions. It took me the next month to develop my project to this new level. I met weekly with the librarians who would be using the system. Since I was receiving positive feedback, I was confident that upon final presentation my program would be implemented. In total and utter disbelief, I listened as librarians expressed their contentment with the system I had been hired to replace. They felt no need to replace the old system with the one I had taken two months to complete.

After several meetings between my mentor and the librarians, they agreed to at least use the project in its initial state, meaning that only my last month's work would be going down the drain. I had mixed feelings about this resolution – I was glad that not all my work had been in vain, but disappointed that part of it had been. At first I took this personally, but after some reflection, I realized that it had nothing to do with me and

everything to do with their hesitancy to try a new method. I even found that I was well-liked as a person, and everyone was proud of how I handled the situation. I know now that things like this happen all the time in the working world, and one has to learn to deal with such situations. Regardless of the success of my program, I succeeded as an intern because I followed through on my commitment and finished my application.

Robert Emmett  
Secretary of the Navy  
Douglas Combs, Special Assistant to the Secretary of the Navy

## Out to Lunch

The highlight of my summer was lunch. Most of the time lunch is just a meal eaten sometime in the middle of the day for varying lengths of time (depending on how hard one works) but at the Pentagon lunch was an experience like I had never had. The very first thing I did in my mentorship was have lunch with the Special Assistant to the Secretary of the Navy. Lunch immediately ceased being about my interaction with the food and became all about the interaction with new people in new places, all teaching me unique lessons.

I showed up to meet with my mentor, and the Secretary's speechwriter who I also worked with, and of course to have lunch with them. The first person I met was the office administrative assistant, a corporal in the Marine Corps. There are a lot of high-ranking officers in the Pentagon and seeing two and three star admirals and generals becomes common, but this corporal managed to stand out and get recognized by the Secretary. The Secretary had personally decorated the corporal for repeatedly re-entering the burning Pentagon to save people on September 11, 2001. The tasks I was to perform were speech preparation, research, analysis of a myriad of vision statements and budget plans, as well as just greeting people, and these certainly didn't require the same level of bravery as what the corporal had done, but then again neither did most of the jobs done in the Pentagon. Lunch gave me the opportunity to see the multitude of ways people contribute to the military as well as emphasizing the need for people like the corporal to always be ready for physically placing themselves in danger to help others.

One of my opportunities was to eat lunch in the Secretary's private dining with my mentor. I had the opportunity to talk about Texas football with the Secretary on the way in and by luck had the opportunity to sit next to a retired four star general in the air force, currently serving as an Assistant Secretary of the Navy. I was regaled with stories of flying forward air control missions over Vietnam in a slow unarmed airplane and leading a major military command in support of the coalition forces as they prepared to go into battle during the Gulf War. As Assistant Secretary this hero had retired his uniform and given up command of troops. Instead he spent his time making sure the Navy's facilities were running and supplied and working on ways to make them much more efficient, in order to have more money for the war fighters and ultimately more for taxpayers. Most of the people in that room were doing the same type of job, working everyday to make the Navy more efficient, more safe, and more effective. However, those working behind the scenes in the Pentagon are constantly reminded just why they need to care so much about running the military better, at the next table over there were two Congressional Medal of Honor winners, men who had literally put their lives on the line, and the very type of people that the behind the scenes officials at the Pentagon support.

Some days we would order from the Secretary's mess for my mentor and his guests. Whether I joined my mentor or not I would accompany the corporal down the hall to pick up the food just so that I could stop in the kitchen to see marines cooking in aprons-- camouflage aprons. When I was invited to join in these lunches I got to see exciting briefings about missile defense and how the Navy was planning to contribute to the defense of the country. Limited by my lack of a security clearance I didn't get to sit in on everything but when I did I got to see the video of a successful missile-to-missile shot. The opportunity to hear about a politically charged topic like missile defense from the person who designs the missiles without any kind of filter is unique because most of the time such a topic is only heard through the filter of what a writer or editor includes or what an interviewer chooses to ask. The result was that I could clearly see that no one is trying to hide failure or overemphasize success; they are doing what they swore an oath to do by attempting to make systems to defend the country and its interests. Of course not everyone I met at lunch was agreed as to how to make the most effective Navy.

Lunch in other places showed more of the debate that Washington is famous for, and highlighted the difference in organizations where hierarchy is clear and important and those where it is not. One such lunch about how to save the Navy money at a Washington think tank was like being dropped into the middle of the Sunday morning talk shows. Everyone had an impressive title and all opened their comments with the line, "Well, actually, I disagree with all of you." Another lunch took me to a meeting of surface warfare officers to hear even more about missile defense and observe the shop chat of frontline naval officers. These two lunches provided a good lesson in the separation of military and civilian leadership. The civilians had acrimonious debates that reached conclusions on the future vision for the military only after great time and energy. The line officers preparing for their next command cared about the policies that were the focus of the civilian debate but were focused on how the outcome of those debates would affect missions they would be called on to perform, how well-trained and prepared their sailors would be, and how it would affect their personal lives.

Lunch provided more than a meal or a break from work. It provided some of the best lessons in leadership and sacrifice available at the Pentagon. Lunch also provided interesting information on the future of the military as well as a reassuring look at the structure of power in our country. Through lunch I was able to see the importance of many of the parts that contribute to the mammoth organizations known as the Navy and the Department of Defense. There is clearly more to defending the nation than weapons and the people who handle them: there are all of the people who support them. I never expected to gain so much by being out to lunch.

## **An Ashoka Elevator Speech**

### Pop Quiz:

1. What is Ashoka?
  - (A) A global non-profit organization that searches the world for social entrepreneurs and promotes the profession of social entrepreneurship.
  - (B) An ancient Indian Emperor who unified India in the 3<sup>rd</sup> century B.C. and whose name means “the active absence of sorrow.”
  - (C) The organization that pioneered the "social venture capital" approach in international development.
  - (D) The only organization with an active global fellowship of social entrepreneurs.

No clue? Don't worry; it's actually a trick quiz. All the answers are correct.

One of the biggest ambiguities I faced this summer was deciphering what Ashoka actually does; I knew that it is a non-profit organization, but what they actually do was elusive to me. The joke around the Ashoka office is that there is no good elevator speech to satisfy the innocent question, “Where do you work?” Two minutes is just not sufficient to explain how Ashoka is aiding over twelve hundred Fellows in forty-three countries to change the world. Therefore, one of the first things “Ashokites” are taught is “Ashoka Talking Points to Make Your Point Clearly, Consistently and Concisely.” These talking points guide the Ashoka beginner through such tricky queries as “What is a social entrepreneur?” or “That’s interesting, but it’s pretty new isn’t it?”

In my beginning weeks I used the Talking Points in many conversations to help explain Ashoka to outsiders. Despite gaining a better understanding of what Ashoka does, it was still difficult for me to internalize and make tangible the real work of Ashoka. The heart of Ashoka are its Fellows, and while working on a project to update the Fellows' profiles I gained exposure to the great works of Ashoka Fellows around the world. However, reading the profiles made the Fellows work seem even more intangible. Who were these people who could change an entire country’s systems? The Fellows are social entrepreneurs, meaning they are unique individuals who change social systems on a large scale. In Ashoka terms “Social entrepreneurs are not content just to give a fish or teach how to fish. They will not rest until they have revolutionized the fishing industry.”

I was able to meet several international Fellows at the Ashoka orientation ceremony. As excited as I was to discuss the Fellows projects with them, they were equally excited to discuss with me about my university experiences, my favorite books, and good D.C. restaurants. They treated me not as a co-worker but as a friend.

Particularly memorable was meeting Ashoka Brazil Fellow Wellington Santos, founder of Doctors of Joy, an organization that has brightened the lives of thousands of sick children and humanized the hospital experience by integrating humor into Brazilian hospitals. Here was the core of Ashoka's being. Some might classify Wellington as merely a clown, for that is what his business card says. Seeing past the clown to the fundamental social changes occurring in Brazil through Wellington's work is what Ashoka's all about. Ashoka doesn't invest in companies, or stocks, or resources. They invest in people who others would call clowns, people who in reality are system-changing social entrepreneurs. A global fellowship of friends working to make the world a better place is what Ashoka gets in return. I'd say that's a pretty good return on your investment.

Meeting the Fellows felt like meeting famed celebrities. These individuals are profoundly improving the lives of millions of people in their countries. Talking with the Fellows and learning about how they accomplished their dreams finally made Ashoka 'real' to me. This opportunity altered my conception of Fellows from profiles on a computer screen, or the answer to a Talking Point, to reality. The meaning of Ashoka came together. This was the reason why I was in Washington D.C., to help these amazing individuals in their pursuits for a better world. I no longer needed the Ashoka Talking Points.



## Is That Your Final Answer?

Popularized by the game show *Who Wants to Be a Millionaire*, the question “Is that your final answer?” never gave me any trouble in the past. For as long as I can remember, I have enjoyed with smug satisfaction the instant gratification of arriving at an answer in class. Partly for this reason, I love the science and engineering classes that make up my bioengineering major at Rice. It is easy to reach closure when success is primarily defined by memorizing and regurgitating the required facts. I prefer the concrete and absolute over the abstract and indefinite any day. Shades of gray have rarely interested me; it is the black and white I crave.

My summer in a lab researching fruit-fly genetics started out as just another left-brain pursuit geared toward my interests. It is ironic, therefore, that it was in this familiar environment that I was exposed to and adopted a new approach to problem-solving and searching for answers. My time at the National Institute of Environmental Health Sciences taught me what no class or academic experience ever had – that it is often the question, rather than the answer, that deserves the most attention.

One of the first statements I recall Dr. Lieberman making during Leadership Rice orientation was a challenge to live more in questions than answers during the summer. Ha! Give me a break. All I could think of at the time was how amused my future mentor would be if he could hear what garbage I was being taught. Of what use would I be to Dr. Mason if I cared more about questions than the results?

These thoughts pervaded the research I was undertaking early in the summer. Dr. Mason gave me a well-defined project and told me exactly what data he hoped I could acquire. I naively and eagerly set out to find the answers, and after some initial setbacks, I thought I was finally getting somewhere by the end of the first month. But when I proudly presented what I had found to Dr. Mason, the response I got was unexpected. Instead of accepting the data at face value and moving on, he offered multiple explanations for the observed results and proposed questions that could be asked experimentally to improve and refine the research. What I had considered to be definitive “answers” had in fact raised many more questions to be addressed.

Experience had taught Dr. Mason not to jump to conclusions and to consider all the possibilities. I learned to pay particular attention when he said, “The question we’re trying to ask is. . .” Besides providing the rationale for experiments, asking the right questions facilitates the acquisition of meaningful data. The majority of a researcher’s time is spent dealing with unexpected results or carefully planning further experiments, so it is crucial to be comfortable with ambiguity. Dr. Mason taught me not only that questions lead to answers, but also that conclusions or data that might otherwise be considered final answers can and should lead to even more questions.

In addition to discovering the importance of questions this summer, I was surprised to find out that it is questions, more so than answers, that motivate many people in research. Dr. Mason described the design of effective, convincing experiments as a huge but deeply satisfying challenge. Another principal investigator described the process of exploring a novel phenomenon, rather than the discovery itself, as the driving force behind his work. It was my interactions with these scientists that encouraged me to re-evaluate the emphasis I had once placed on final answers.

Much of what this summer taught me about the process of scientific research is applicable to everyday life outside academia. On a broader level, I consider the relationship between question and answer to be comparable to a lyric from the Aerosmith song *Amazing*: “Life’s a journey, not a destination.” While the destination helps keep things in perspective, enjoyment and fulfillment can come not merely from arriving at a goal, but also from approaching it from many angles. It is with this new outlook that I feel more fully prepared to tackle the challenges of my future.

As for my final answer? I do not have one yet, but I am no longer in any particular hurry.

# The Gift of Mentoring

Recently, we came upon a book called *BIG QUESTIONS, WORTHY DREAMS: Mentoring Young Adults in Their Search for Meaning, Purpose and Faith*. What Sharon Daloz Parks, the author, writes about the value of mentoring struck a harmonious chord with us and captured adroitly what we have observed.

Mentors, if you have ever doubted the contributions you make, we hope the following excerpts from this book will increase your appreciation for the role you play:

*To varying degrees and in differing forms, mentors worthy of the name embody and inspire the possibility of committed and meaningful adulthood. On the other side of the formation of critical awareness, a good mentor is an antidote to mere cynicism.*

*Mentors dance an intricate two-step, because they practice the art of supporting and challenging more or less simultaneously...the art of mentoring is located, in part, in assessing the readiness of the protégé to recognize and creatively respond to heretofore unseen opportunities, ideas, dangers, relationships, and solutions. Good mentors almost always practice a kind of tough love.*

*At their best, mentors keep finding ways to call forth the kind of dialogue in which the protégé's experience and the distinctive voice it may birth can learn to speak with integrity and power in the force field of life....the mentor knows that each life has a distinctive contribution to make to our common life, and if this contribution is not made, a life is diminished and the commons is impoverished.*

*Forming a worthy dream also depends on access to positive images of self linked with a compelling sense of possibility and aspiration. Although this can happen through awards and grades, it is most profound when the young adult is affirmed in ways that convey a faithful correspondence between his or her own aspirations and positive reflection in the eyes of another whom the young adult values and trusts. This is the power of confirmation that mentoring communities hold.*

*Participating in an organization that successfully enacts a worthy purpose gives flesh to the intuition that one is part of a larger and meaningful whole – and that one's own power is amplified when set in resonance with that of others who seek a common goal...Though the young adult may not find the same again, the conviction takes root that it is possible to take on ambitious dreams in a complex, interdependent world. Given such an experience, one learns the power of participation in something larger than oneself and knows that viable modes of shared action can be effective and transforming.*

*When the relationship works, the meaning and satisfactions that it yields are gifts to both the protégé and the mentor.*

Leadership Rice Staff