



# ARETÉ

## MONMOUTH UNIVERSITY

*Newsletter of The Honors School*



TABLE OF CONTENTS:

Honors Conference.....1  
 Ghana Medical Mission.....2  
 Washington, DC Internship.....3  
 Study Abroad.....4  
 Letter From the Dean.....4  
 “Welcome Back” BBQ.....5  
 Mentoring Program.....6  
 Arizona.....8  
 Alina Fernandez.....8  
 Post Secret.....9  
 Islamophobia.....9  
 Alumni Spotlight.....10

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### Kansas City Honors Conference: A Hidden Gem of *Rhythms and Currents* Jenna Intersimone

“Why are you going to Kansas City? That’s so random.” This is the general response I got when I told my friends and family I would be flying to Kansas City, Missouri to attend the National Collegiate Honors Council (NCHC) Conference, called *Rhythms and Currents*, alongside Ottaviana DeRuvo, sophomore accounting major; Reenie Menditto, Director of Student Advising for the Honors School; and Dr. William Mitchell, Dean of the Honors School from Wednesday, October 20 to Sunday, October 24.

Ottaviana and I both were a little nervous as we got on our plane. We wondered what the conference and Kansas City would be like. Neither I, Ottaviana, Reenie, nor Dr. Mitchell had ever been there before, and in our heads there was a general image of cornfields and cowboy boots. We became even more nervous when at the Newark Airport, after telling an Airport Security person we were going to Kansas City, he said, “Well, that’s too bad.”

However, throughout our too short four days at the conference, we came to appreciate the city as a much under-appreciated gem. We spent our time meeting fellow Honors students from all over the world, attending thought-provoking sessions presented by dedicated and passionate people, and exploring all that Kansas City, unknown to us at the start, has to offer.

The NCHC started off the conference with an original program called “City as Text” in which students got into small groups of only four or five, which allowed for more intimate conversation, and went to a location in Kansas City of their choice. Each group was given a map, but no specific instructions on how to get to their location. We were only told to split up from our friends, be back by 2:30 pm, and to “get lost.”

City as Text had quite a few different options so that students could really pick out a location that suited them. The choices were the City Market and Steamboat Museum, the Crossroads Art District, the Federal Reserve Museum, the Guadalupe Center, Union Hill, the Kemper Museum of Contemporary Art, the Lindell Library of Technology, the World War I Museum, Sculpture Park, 18th and Vine, Toy Museum, Westport, Train Station, and the 32 fountains scattered across Kansas City.

After I nervously split up from Ottaviana, obeying the “divide up from your friends” rule, I joined a group of two Texan girls and one boy from Kansas to attend the City Market, which is the oldest open air market in the United States, and the Steamboat Museum.

I guess part of the adventure was that I never actually got to see the entirety of the City Market, since we got lost searching for the Missouri River, which, as I heard, is “too thick to drink and too thin to plow.” Apparently, Dr. Mitchell had the same problem finding the river, for when I asked Reenie where he was, she told me, “Well, he went hiking to find the River!”

However, from what I heard, the City Market was a very interesting place full of diversity of food and cultures, where an average of seven languages are spoken daily by its passionate and eager-to-share vendors. Apparently, all you had to do there was go up to anyone and ask how their business was started, and you got in return that person’s life story.

continued on page 7

# Saving Lives, One Country at a Time

Aziz Mama

Life is precious. While most people would hastily agree with that statement, not enough people truly understand what it means. I am just a young man only newly acquainted with some of the beauties and horrors of life, but after having gone with Dr. Aikins and the International Healthcare Volunteers (IHCV) on two medical missions to Ghana I feel confident in saying that I now truly understand that life is precious.

My role on these medical missions was that of Junior Volunteer. Essentially, it was my job to do whatever it was that the other doctors on the mission needed me to do. Whether it was managing the medical supplies, organizing the patient paperwork, running necessary equipment into the Operating Room, or helping to round on patients in the wards, I was constantly kept busy. There seemed to be a never ending and relentless stream of patients in need of care. There were so many different faces, each with their own story, all requiring care and assistance. It was a daunting thing to face.

My response to the daunting task that Dr. Aikins and the IHCV faced was very simple: start working. Everyone on the team wanted to be useful. The number of patients that needed to be seen and the areas where the Ghanaian staff would benefit from learning from the experienced doctors on the team were obvious to everyone. We all wanted to do our best so that upon leaving Ghana we could feel that we not only saw numerous patients, but also managed to leave behind a legacy of learning that would continue to aid the Ghanaian patients even when the team was no longer in Ghana.

This legacy of learning is in fact what I considered the most important aspect of the medical missions I was on. Despite the best efforts of Dr. Aikins and all the other admirable people involved in the IHCV organization, we are after all only a small group of people. The patient need in Kumasi alone is vast. The patient need in the country of Ghana is nearly unbelievable. The patient need in all of Africa and the rest of the world is impossible to conceive. Small teams of doctors can do great things for the small amount of time that they are present in an area of need, but the real gift that doctors such as Dr. Aikins can bring to a place such as Ghana is knowledge. Knowledge is power – in this case the power to save lives.

A person does not need to lose two liters of blood in a surgery that in America would generally only have a cup of blood loss. People should not have to suffer and be in constant pain when there is a medication or procedure that could allow them to live in comfort instead. A woman should not have to wait until her uterine fibroids are so large that she constantly looks pregnant before she is taken care of. Children should not have to suffer and die when they could be saved by being brought to the hospital at the right time.

It is horrible to watch people suffer. Hope, however, is not lost. Organizations such as the IHCV are doing their best to take a step in the right direction and help alleviate some of this suffering. Many doctors go with Dr. Aikins to a country they have never been to, pay their own way, take time from their own vacation, and go work at an underdeveloped hospital. They do this for the sake of the mission so that they can pass on some of their knowledge and they can help people in need. I have the deepest respect for anyone who is willing to do mission work of this sort. It is not easy to step out of the luxurious environment one is used to and enter a country such as Ghana, which is one of the most developed nations in Africa. Let that put into perspective the trials facing many other far less developed nations.



Pictured above are the streets of **Kumasi, Ghana**.

Picture below is the **KNUST Hospital** in Kumasi, Ghana.



Some of the trials facing Ghana, however, are very simple for a person with even limited means to help alleviate. In the KNUST hospital in Kumasi the Pediatrics Ward did not have blood pressure cuffs for children, and consequently the children's blood pressure could not be taken. Certain pieces of somewhat more expensive surgical equipment could drastically alter the way surgeries are able to be performed. A few instruments could mean the difference between monumental blood loss and possible death and a minimal blood loss in a patient allowing for a speedy recovery. These are some of the little areas in which the average person, such as myself, could make all the difference in a patient's life. I cannot give to the Ghanaian doctors the knowledge possessed by great doctors such as Dr. Aikins, but I can help pay for a piece of equipment that could end up making a difference in the lives of countless numbers of patients.

Looking back on the two medical missions that I took part in with IHCV I would say that I am overall quite happy with what was accomplished and proud to have been a part of these medical mission teams. In the end I can say with no doubt in my mind that we did make a positive difference in the hospital and in the lives of the patients we saw. My proudest moments on these trips were always the happy looks on the faces of the patients who we managed to take care of. After all, it is for them that we were working so hard and for whom we are continuing to work. It was the most rewarding feeling one can imagine to see them smile, and it is something that is impossible for me to forget.



# Getting In on the Action in Washington, DC

Tyler Breder

Over the past summer I was involved in an internship program called The Fund for American Studies offered by Georgetown University. I applied in the spring semester prior to the trip and was accepted into the Engalitcheff Institute on Comparative Economic and Political Systems. This included a two-month internship at a company called CRC Public Relations, as well as two courses at Georgetown University.

I lived on the Georgetown University campus. I want to mention that the campus itself has great architecture and is located barely a ten-minute walk from all sorts of restaurants and night life. Living in Washington, DC was a great experience. I learned to navigate the metro and quickly became familiar with many parts of the city. I had never lived in that kind of environment before; there were many times when I would take a day to myself and experience something new.

I took two challenging but very interesting courses during the summer called Transformation of American Politics and Comparative Economics. I barely had a background in economics and the course I took, in my opinion, was very fascinating. Even with the extra responsibilities it was easy to feel comfortable and succeed in both courses. Most importantly, I really feel that during my time in DC I learned a great deal about the political science field in itself, my own ideology, and the diverse nature of the political and professional sectors.

Some of the greatest aspects of the experience were the opportunities to attend site briefings. During my two-month stay, I had been to the World Bank headquarters, the State Department, and the CIA headquarters. At each of these locations I and other students would hear

from representatives of many departments. There were chances to ask questions and for me it was nice to see that these organizations are really comprised of regular people getting things done. These experiences have definitely made a serious political or professional career a very comfortable idea.

My favorite event definitely had to be attending the site briefing at the CIA headquarters. To get there, I and several other TFAS students took private buses and had to pass through several security checkpoints. To be honest, there is an aspect of this program that gives one a great feeling of importance. Once inside we listened to several different speakers talk about the various departments they represented. I thought the speakers from the National Clandestine Service and the Department of Science and technology were great. They did a good job of breaking down the common perception of the CIA, which for me, included this idea of undercover agents and silenced weapons, and without delving into classified information, informed us of the immense contributions that intelligence organizations like this give. Did you know, for example, that the I-POD/I-PAD thin battery and smart-phone technology comes straight from the CIA?

I would recommend this program to anyone who has an interest in government, journalism, non-profits, or just great learning experiences. There are many schools that constitute the TFAS program with people from literally all over the world. I made many friends and absolutely increased my networking resources. As with anything, one will only get out of it what one puts in, and I am very happy now that I chose to do this with my time.

## Honors School Fast Facts

The Honors School provides several annual events for its students per year, including cultural events, parties, research conferences and an awards dinner.

Students are only admitted into the program if they had a minimum 3.5 GPA in high school and a combined three-part SAT minimum score of 1800, with no score lower than 540.

The Honors school gives about 30 monetary awards to students for strong academic or creative excellence and five \$1,000 grants for outstanding senior thesis proposals.

Outstanding senior theses are bound and placed in the library and the best among these are published in the Honors School research journal, *Crossroads*.

Honors classes are capped at 20 students and many of them are clustered, so that students take two or more courses linked by a common theme together.

There have been several Honors theses presented at national conferences and published by esteemed professional journals.



# From the Jersey Shore to the Australian Coast

Jenna Intersimone

For most college students, the fall semester of their sophomore year means not having that first-year guidance that they had the previous year and learning to navigate college life independently.

Andrew Bachmann, junior Honors student, took this independence to a whole new level by studying abroad in Australia during the fall semester of his sophomore year. Departing from New Jersey at the end of July, he stayed in Australia for about five months, studying at Macquarie University in Sydney.

"I decided to study abroad because I had the chance to do so and I knew I would never get that chance again," said Bachmann. "I wanted to see what Australia would be like."

Bachmann was able to pay for this experience because of his work ethic; he used the money that he has been saving since high school, and also from his scholarships and the Educational Opportunity Fund (EOF.)

Surprisingly, he also said that studying abroad was actually cheaper than what he would have paid at Monmouth because he did not have to pay for a meal plan while at Macquarie since he cooked all of his own meals at the five-person house in which he lived, which was comprised of students from Kenya, Brazil, Australia, and Taiwan.

In the house, the students had their own room and their own bathroom and they shared a living room, a dining room, and a kitchen. He said, "I didn't know how to cook before studying abroad. I definitely screwed up a lot, but it helped me to be more independent. I learned how to take care of myself."

"By the end, everyone in the house became one big family," he said. "I learned about all different cultures from them." There were twenty seven other Monmouth students that traveled with Bachmann; however, he only knew two of the people out of that total.

He also mentioned that it was very irritating for him not to have his car. Also, groceries and other necessities are very expensive because the minimum wage is much higher in Australia and the taxes are much higher.

When traveling abroad, many students say that even

though the experience was the best they have ever had in their life, at times, they felt very homesick. Bachmann, however, said that while in Australia he did not feel very homesick, yet there were some things that he missed from America. But, for him, the experience made up for it in the end.

Also, his parents were very supportive of his decision to study abroad, "My parents were happy for me," he said. "If they were worried, they didn't say so!"

"The best part about being in Australia for me was the surfing," said Bachmann. "It's very different from America. The water is a lot cleaner and there is wildlife everywhere. You could see kangaroos walking around in the woods near the water and these very noisy birds that sounded a lot like monkeys."

To further experience the surfing in Australia, Bachmann also went on a camping trip for four nights with students from a Christian group. They would surf three times a day, and then travel to a different spot to surf the next day. "This way, I got to see a lot more of Australia," he said.

Bachmann was also recommended by a friend to visit Evans Head, a beachside town in Australia. There, Bachmann paid a man who rented out his couch to tourists at his Surf Shack. The man would take Bachmann kayaking and surfing and introduce him to his other friends. One of the man's friends even invited Bachmann to dinner with his family, where he got to taste shark meat.

Bachmann said that Australia closely resembles South America, or a very tropical area. He said that sometimes the neighborhoods would look like those found in America, but other times they would look like those of third world countries. Another difference in Australia is that the traffic goes the opposite direction, which can be very confusing for Americans, and there are no stop signs or traffic lights, only traffic circles.

Bachmann's advice to any student considering studying abroad is to absolutely go. "If you get a chance to go, do it," he said. "Always try to meet as many people as you can because you can learn so much from them."

## A Letter From the Dean

Dr. William Mitchell

Dear Honors Students:

Here are some exciting Honors School initiatives:

One hundred first year students entered the honors school this year. Their average high school GPA is 3.77. Wow!

I've been meeting with all first year students to introduce them to the Honors School. Always feel free to drop in to see us or get some coffee or snacks.

I've also been meeting with all first-semester juniors to help them begin to think about their theses. If I haven't met with you, walk in or make an appointment! Some students are really anxious about the thesis, but our job is to help you select a topic and to help you complete it by providing advice and information. You don't do it alone!

We've also revised the Thesis Proposal and Thesis Guidelines to make them clearer and to give you more guidance. We would love for every one of you to complete your thesis!

Two students (Jenna Intersimone and Ottaviana De Ruvo) went with Reenie and me to the National Collegiate Honors Conference in Kansas City, Missouri. They had a great time and learned a lot—as did Reenie and I. Maybe you could come to the next conference next fall in Phoenix, Arizona!

Beechwood Hall has been refitted with wireless. There are still some dead spots that we are trying to fix, but Beechwood should be well wired by the time you read this.

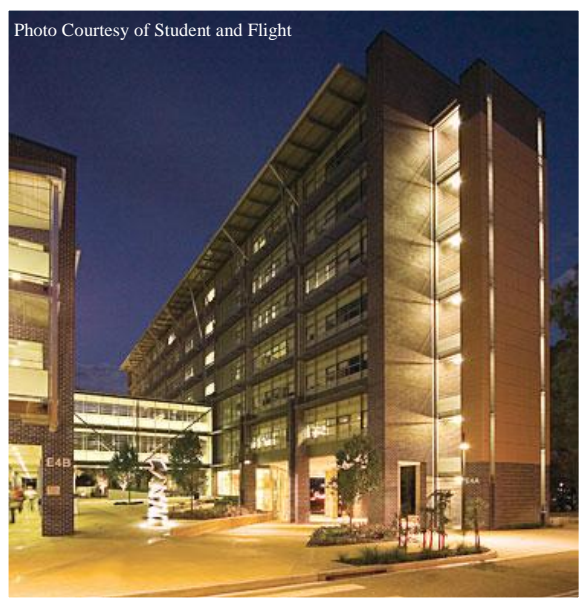
The Student Honors Council is bringing forth its constitution for approval by the SGA. The Executive Committee met with me and Reenie on the night of November 10 and we made several plans, including a Ping Pong tournament to raise money to help provide Thanksgiving dinners for people in surrounding communities.

Always feel free to come in to the office to speak with me, Reenie or Erin. And don't forget the coffee and all the snacks that we keep there for you!

-Dean Mitchell



Photo Courtesy of Student and Flight



Macquarie University in Sydney, Australia

Photo Courtesy of Travel Pod



Evans Head

## Students Gather for “Welcome Back” Barbeque

Nicole Massabrook

On Thursday October 7, the Annual Fall Honors Barbeque was held. Students were welcomed to the front of Beechwood Hall for food, friends and fun. After getting a name tag and a raffle ticket for a door prize, students had a selection of chicken, hot dogs, and hamburgers to eat as well as a wide variety of desserts.

“It was a nice day for a barbeque,” said Kaveri Kashul, referring to the beautiful weather. Students gathered around tables outside to eat and socialize not only with each other but some professors as well. It was a great opportunity for new students to meet others in the honors program. Freshman Matt Doyle said, “I made new friends. It was fantastic!” One student even brought out his acoustic guitar and serenaded the group with songs by Bob Dylan and Pink Floyd.

Door prizes were also given out. The raffle tickets were put into a jar which Reenie Menditto passed around for everyone to give a shake. Then the tickets were pulled. Dr. Mitchell announced the winners of various prizes, including Monmouth mugs, sweatshirts, t-shirts, teddy bears, blankets and footballs.

Overall, it was a very nice barbeque. Everyone seemed to have a good time. Ryan Gilbert said, “It’s times like these that I really appreciate the honors program.”

Photo Courtesy of the Honors School



Dr. Mitchell and Honors School professors enjoy food at the Annual Fall Honors Barbeque

Photo Credit of the Honors School



Students socialize with Professor Szwajkajzer



# Upperclass Hawks Take Freshmen Under Their Wing

Katelyn Nawoyski

The Honors School aims to provide students with the best experience here at Monmouth. This year, it stepped up its game and provided incoming Honors students with a mentoring program to help them to easily transition to Honors college life.

The program was created by Honors professors and then developed by Honors students. Honors sophomores Steven Leonardi and Krista Butler were approached by their Western Civilization professor, Maureen Dorment, who asked them to head the program. They gratefully accepted, hoping to get more involved with the Honors School and help develop the program's success.

Leonardi explained that they asked for student volunteers who would be willing to mentor incoming Honors students to help them get

acclimated to college life. Once they had their volunteers, they had to pair mentors with freshmen. Leonardi and Butler decided to put together the upperclassmen with the freshmen based on majors and gender to create the best matches. Each mentor had about three freshmen.

Mentors were asked to contact their students during the summer to introduce themselves and answer any questions about the Honors school, dorming on campus, or college life.

Sophomore Caroline Lay said she got involved to benefit the students. She said, "I knew that when I was a freshman I would have liked someone to talk with over the summer about what to expect when I came to college." She had a positive reaction from her girls and stayed in contact with them

throughout the summer. One of her mentees was even in her Information Technology class and Caroline said, "We see each other during class and she keeps me updated on how she's settling in."

On the other hand, some of the freshmen were reluctant to involve themselves in the program, and never returned communication with their mentors. Many of the program's upperclassmen hope to see a bigger reaction and participation from the freshmen in the future since it was developed to help them.

Leonardi said, "Hopefully the freshmen were able to have an easier transition by being able to converse with an older student." Both he and Butler plan to continue with this program and hope to increase the program's success and participation in the future.



Dean Mitchell welcomes the Class of 2014 to the Honors School.

## Conference (continued from Page 1)

After all the students got back from their trips to the Kansas City locations, we all gathered together to discuss what we saw so that, in effect, we could all “see” the many sights of Kansas City.

Another main part of the conference was the sessions that were held throughout the days. The sessions were not presented by higher-ups incapable of reaching a student audience, but instead dedicated professors and students who were passionate about their topics concerning everything from “Role-Playing the End of the World” to more practical sessions covering “Standing Out in Today’s Competitive Job Market.”

Also, as a nice break from the sit-down sessions, poster sessions were held where students gathered together to display their own research based on topics they really cared about. Here, attendants could ask the students questions about their research and get a better understanding of “Oh, I Never Thought of That” topics such as “Lady Gaga’s Manipulation of Her Sexuality” and “The Death Pageant.”

Attendants of the NCHC Conference also got a chance to visit the legendary Midland Theatre for a Laughter and Blues Event on Friday, October 22. The Midland Theatre was the most beautiful and intricately decorated theatre I have ever seen with a Wild West feel to it. First, an improvisational comedy group performed, pulling people such as “Professor Z” out of the audience for the dating show portion, as his students cheered excitedly for him.

Afterwards, a blonde girl in a red dress who was very reminiscent of Taylor Swift performed blues songs for the crowd. The crowd ended up shuffling to the front of the theatre, dancing together to her music as a way to unravel from the session-packed day.

One event everyone was talking about in anticipation was a speech by Aron Ralston, who is the man who was trapped by an 800 pound boulder in Blue John Canyon for 6 days and had to amputate his right hand with a blunted multi-tool, then climb down a 65 foot high cliff and hike 7 miles.

Ralston spoke right from his heart about his compelling trial, evoking tears from Reenie, among others, and a standing ovation from the entire crowd, as he told them about how in the moment where he had cut off his hand to free himself he saw in his head a small blonde boy looking at him as if to say, “Daddy, come play with me!” Three years later, Ralston’s wife had a blonde baby

boy named Leo, whose namesake is the courageous lion.

At the same time, the story was comical as he spoke about how “having one hand made for a great pirate Halloween costume” and how he told his doctor when she asked him what his pain level was after he arrived at the hospital missing one hand, “Well earlier today it was about a 10, so I guess now I’m at like a 3.”

One thing I came to realize as the days passed was that Kansas City is a big city with a small-town feel. It is full of friendly, smiley people with a relaxed pace of life who had no problem stopping for pedestrians, giving a stranger directions, or even telling their own stories, which happened quite a few times over the course of our trip.

I also could not have been happier that the people who brought us on this journey were organized, caring Reenie and the “human encyclopedia” that is Dr. Mitchell. I know that throughout the trip they were always looking out for us, whether it was making sure we saw the best sights in the City or that we were eating at the finest, most culturally diverse restaurants.

Even with all of these once-in-a-lifetime experiences, however, I still have to say that the best part of the entire trip was meeting fellow Honors students from everywhere from Amsterdam and the Dominican Republic, to Brazil, Texas, and Florida.

Since all of us were from such different backgrounds and since we only had a few days to get to know each other, the last thing I would have thought was that we would all make such wonderful friendships. However, I came to realize that even though we seemed to have nothing in common (some people I met had never even seen a beach!) we shared much more than anyone could have thought.

I felt very much at home wandering the streets of Kansas City with people I had only known for a few hours and talking about everything from our career goals and cultural differences to our favorite movies, as we set off to see The Edge of Hell, a renowned haunted house at the end of the city.

Our trip was fantastic, filled with everything from fountains and parks to bustling nightlife and theaters, and many driven Honors students whom I got the privilege to meet.

If you ever get a chance like this, even if it means missing a couple of classes or taking you away from your friends for a couple of days, please take it. If you don’t, you’ll never know if that kid you said “hey” to in an elevator could end up exploring a fantastic new city with you just a few hours later.



Photo Courtesy Ottaviana DeRuvo

**Ottaviana DeRuvo** exploring the Missouri River with her newfound friends.



Photo Courtesy of Ottaviana DeRuvo

**Jenna Intersimone and Ottaviana DeRuvo** in front of one of the 32 fountains in Kansas City.



# Arizona: A State of Paranoia

Amanda Gruber

Dan DeVivo, filmmaker, visited Monmouth University to discuss and share some of his upcoming documentary *Arizona: A State of Paranoia* on September 23 in the Wilson Auditorium.

DeVivo graduated from Harvard University in 1999 with a Bachelors in Social Anthropology. He used his skills as a Social Anthropology major to begin filmmaking in order to bring to light issues of injustice in America.

His first film, *Crossing Arizona*, highlighted the changed U.S. border policies and how citizens were reacting to a problem that they had never had such intense experiences with before. Fences being built in Texas and California to keep out illegal immigrants created a funnel effect, drawing the flow of illegal immigration to move into Arizona. Dead bodies began appearing in the Arizona desert, and the media directly focused upon the issue of immigration laws and control. DeVivo's goals in his films are to explain and to humanize the conditions of illegal immigration, focusing on the conditions in Arizona.

This film is a work in progress for DeVivo. It directly focuses on Maricopa County, a location in Arizona where the illegal immigrant population is highly concentrated and has been met by the unwavering force of Sheriff Joseph Arpaio. With his force of trained officers, Arpaio has been at battle with illegal immigrants. Although it is not customary for local law enforcement to have the power to screen for immigration issues, Arpaio and his men have that right, and they enforce it mercilessly. According to Arpaio, "The moment you cross the border illegally, you're a criminal."

There have been various accounts of the police in Maricopa using violent force, including physical and verbal abuse, against their illegal immigrant prisoners. For example, a pregnant illegal immigrant was stopped for a minor traffic violation and, being unable to provide a valid license, was arrested. She spent the night as a prisoner in a cold concrete room, despite the fact that her due date was drawing dangerously near. Once she began having contractions, the woman was taken to a hospital as a prisoner, and was forced to deliver her baby in shackles. She was then not permitted to hold her child, or see her for two months after she was born.

In addition to the countless personal stories of abuse, discrimination, and racial profiling, *Arizona: A State of Paranoia* also shows Sheriff Arpaio's Tent City Jail, which DeVivo publicly compared to a concentration camp. The prisoners inside are brutally mistreated. Arpaio has denied his concentration camp statement and has attempted to convince the public that his prisoners are "happy" in the Tent City Jail.

Becky Dermanjian, first year Honors student, reported her reaction to the immigrant condition shown in the documentary. "It was really disturbing to know that this type of cruelty still exists here in America," she said.

DeVivo explained the immigrant condition in Arizona, as well as the United States immigration policy in both his film and in the brief question session following. The United States citizenship process is highly outdated, he said, as there is a 15-20 year waitlist that one must apply for to even begin the citizenship consideration process. The waitlist, in addition to high fees and criteria, make it very difficult for immigrants to be granted citizenship.

The majority of illegal immigrants living in Arizona simply need work to support their families. Countless families have left their countries to escape poverty and brutal drug wars, not to create them here in the United States. One prisoner in the Tent City Jail explained, "We're not terrorists, we just want to put bread on the table for our families." The United States is known as a land of freedom, but the crisis in Arizona illustrates something entirely different, according to DeVivo. As one immigrant woman in Maricopa explains, "Arizona is turning into a Hell for Hispanics."

# Alina Fernandez: Child of Castro, Refugee from Cuba

Melisa Safchinsky

Alina Fernandez, who is Fidel Castro's illegitimate daughter, came to Monmouth University to speak on November 13 at 8:00 pm in the Pollak Theatre. Ms. Fernandez fled the Communist regime of Cuba in 1993 and now travels the world, telling about her life in Cuba and the hardships that the Cuban people suffered under her father's rule.

Ms. Fernandez started the lecture by explaining her relationship with her parents. She detailed how her parents met, and the letters that her mother, though married to someone else, wrote to Castro while he was in jail. She went on to explain how her mother offered her home to Castro as a base to plan the revolution. Her stepfather and half-sister eventually fled and as a child, she had a hard time understanding that her family was considered an enemy of the state.

Ms. Fernandez was very young when Castro came to power. She associated the changes in Cuba with the American cartoons on television being interrupted with long speeches by Castro and public executions.

What followed was a description of what she described as an "endless revolution" in Cuba. Fernandez went from praying in front of the television of the bearded man to finish so the cartoons could come back on to finding out at age ten that the bearded man was actually her father. She continued to incorporate stories of her own life with details about Cuba's political activities and the hardships the Cuban people were suffering throughout the presentation.

The façade of glorious Cuba broke for Fernandez when she found out who her father was. People proceeded to come to her to ask her for help and she realized there was nothing she could do. Later in her life, she became a dissident and was forced to flee Cuba in 1993.



# “The Most Trusted Stranger” in America Visits the University

Rachel Kenny

On Friday, October 8, Frank Warren, the creator of the PostSecret project, came to share his stories and secrets with Monmouth University in Pollak Theatre. Warren, who was travelling on his “PostSecret Live” Fall Tour, is the creator of the #1 non-commercial blog in the world. PostSecret.com features anonymous secrets on individually and creatively decorated postcards sent in by people all over the world.

Anxiously waiting to hear the secrets behind the secrets, Monmouth students and other fans lined up outside the theater in advance. Some of the PostSecret books were on sale in the theatre lobby. As the theater filled up and the show began, audience members were invited to sit closer to the stage, instantly giving the show a more personal feel. Warren walked onto the stage as the All American Rejects’ “Dirty Little Secret” music video played on the background screen.

Warren introduced himself as “the most trusted stranger in America,” and briefly explained how his project worked. He then shared some of the recent postcards as examples for anyone who was unfamiliar with the website. As he moved on, Warren began to explain the emotional motives behind his project. He shared some of his own secrets with the audience, including a poor relationship with his mother, personally seeing his friend take his own life, and his own unhappiness. At one point, Warren posted a secret online featuring a picture of an old door with the message, “The holes in this door are from when my mom beat me.” After this, more people sent in pictures of broken doors, representing their own stories of abuse and childhood fear.

Even though people may hide these stories from even the closest friends, sharing secrets with strangers, as well as viewing strangers’ secrets, can be liberating. Somewhere in the world, someone could be sharing the same secret you are hiding. Emily Scarano, a first-year student, said, “I was really moved not only by the secrets of others that Frank Warren shared, but also by his very personal secrets that he was able to confide to a room full of strangers.”

Near the end of the presentation, Warren invited people from the audience to share their secrets, releasing anything they had kept to themselves. “Frank brought us all together as an audience because of his PostSecret books,” said Scarano. “We felt so comfortable together that some of us even revealed our secrets to strangers out loud at the end of the show.” At the end of the presentation, Warren told the audience that it is our individual secrets that bring us together and connect all of us. He concluded the show with a comment from a past audience member: “Maybe the reason why you have no ending for your talk is because there’s not supposed to be one.”

After the presentation, Warren signed books and met with fans onstage. Krystal Orlando, a first year student and longtime fan of the PostSecret project, thoroughly enjoyed the show. “I was the first one to get my book signed, which was a plus. I consistently read the weekly Sunday Secrets as well as all the books when they come out, so it was nice to actually get a chance to meet the guy who put everything together and know his secrets for a change,” she said. Scarano said, “I enjoyed the presentation immensely and felt a common bond with all humanity afterwards, because we all have secrets - secrets that we all want to stop holding inside.”

## The Time for Healing is Now

Terence Bodak

The wounds of September of 11<sup>th</sup> are still fresh in the hearts and minds of Americans, but we cannot allow the pain we still feel from that fateful Tuesday morning to cloud our judgment as reasonable people. This past September saw the callings for a national “burn a Qur’an Day” and other protests against Muslims, which coincided with the dissatisfaction of many that an Islamic community center would be built within blocks of Ground Zero. Whether we as Americans agree or disagree, it is clear that as a result of the debate of the Islamic community center, Islamophobia is more widespread today than it was in the weeks and months following the 9/11 attacks.

The men who attacked our country that day were Muslims, but they do not represent the Islamic community anymore than the Ku Klux Klan represents the Protestant community in the United States. To associate the actions of a group of religious extremists with the actions of the whole religious community is irrational. Nine years after 9/11, we must realize that we cannot continue to let Islamophobia interfere with the way we act towards each other. We as Americans need to help each other heal the wounds of our relationships with the members of the Islamic community not only abroad, but also most importantly right here right here in America. Calls for interfaith dialogue must be answered in order to heal America’s divided religious community.

“Dialogue” is often defined as a simple conversation, debate, or argument, and thus it is dismissed as an ineffective way of solving a problem. Dialogue is not any of those; rather, it is something much more. Those who participate in a dialogue neither seek to prove the other side wrong, nor do they seek to make themselves look superior. In a dialogue, all members are equals and their opinions are considered as such. The goal of a dialogue is to walk away with a common understanding of all involved, as well as to come away with a commonly achieved goal. This common understanding and goal allow those involved in dialogue to have a plan in place to completely erase the issue that brought them together in the first place, making it an issue no longer; instead of resolving an issue, dialogue dissolves the issue altogether. As dialogue allows its participants to speak openly, it is the perfect setting to help resolve our prejudices towards Muslims.

Prominent members of the Jewish, Christian, and Islamic communities have already begun to take a stand against religious intolerance in America. Rabbi Marc Schneier of the Foundation for Ethnic Understanding hosts a twinning program each year in which a synagogue and a mosque are “twinned” together during Rosh Hashanah and Ramadan, as they coincide with each other on the calendar.

continued on page 10

## Healing (continued from page 9)

The twinning program allows members of the Jewish and Islamic communities to seek a common understanding of the other faith; the common understanding will result ideally in a unified voice against religious intolerance. Theodore Cardinal McCarrick is speaking out against religious intolerance, going as far as to claim it un-American. Most importantly, Imam Feisal Rauf, the controversial Islamic leader behind the Ground Zero community center, has asked Americans to think of each other as just that: fellow Americans.

By strengthening interfaith relations and answering the calls for interfaith dialogues to dissolve issues present among the three monotheistic religions, we can truly begin to heal the wounds of 9/11. Although we cannot undo the actions of that day, we can undo what has resulted from it. Americans must come to realize that there is no need to hate fellow Americans just because they are of a different religious background. Instead of focusing on the differences in the three religions, Americans must look closer at the similar morals and principles among them. When this happens, Americans will again love their neighbors regardless of differences, just as the Torah, the Bible, and the Qur'an all instruct their followers to do.

### Alumni Spotlight: Cody Pitts '10

Nicole Moreira

"Don't limit yourself," he said when we first chatted last spring. When it comes to practicing what you preach, Cody Pitts, from Waterbury, Connecticut, is the epitome of defying limits. Rather than simply fulfilling requirements, Cody has gone above and beyond in every area of his life. Whether it's schoolwork, community service, his passion for the arts, or simply enjoying the little things in life, Cody pushes himself to extraordinary lengths to make the most of every experience.

Cody earned a Bachelor of Science in Chemistry at Monmouth University, while also completing a double minor in Physics and Musical Theater. He graduated in May of 2010 with an outstanding 4.0 grade point average. While attending Monmouth University, Cody was the Vice President of the Chemistry Club and was the 2010 recipient of the Analytical Chemistry Award.

Although Cody largely excelled in academia, his true love lies within the arts. Cody has been acting since he was only three months old and has been performing in musicals since the age of five. He was involved in all of the Monmouth University musicals, in which he was always cast in leading roles, including the wonderfully dashing White Knight in *Alice in Wonderland*. Some might recognize Cody for his small appearances on *Law & Order*, *Gossip Girl*, or even as the original voice over for *Blue's Clues'* Slippery Soap character. Cody began voice lessons mid-way throughout his college career and was talented enough to join Monmouth University's elite Chamber Choir.

Cody has also been a member of the Screen Actors' Guild for the past four years and the American Federation of Television and Radio Artists for the past 3 years. For fun, he is scuba certified and skin diver certified. To give back to his community, Cody is a registered EMT.

One of Cody's more recent accomplishments was participating in the Song, Stage, and Screen Conference held at the University of Winchester in the UK this past September. He and musical theater professor Sheri Anderson presented a paper that featured an abstract discussion of the



musical, "Bring in da Noise, Bring in da Funk" using scientific language. It highlighted the subject of physics as its own language and used scientific terms in an abstract manner to describe the relationships developed within the musical.

Cody is currently in the process of applying for a variety of Ph.D. programs but is also very much enjoying his year off. He recently traveled to Juno to participate in a charity event, while enjoying the adventures and exploration of Alaska along the way.

Cody has credited the Honors School for much of his success stating, "The Honors School is hands down, one of the best things MU has to offer." Although he has left behind huge shoes to fill, the students of Monmouth University's Honors School wish him the best of luck in all of his future endeavors, as we know even more great things are yet to come.

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