



ISSUE 2

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The Difference

THE CENTER FOR SERVICE & LEARNING NEWSLETTER

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COMING TO AMERICA

Guest Writer: Maggie Boissard

The Thursday morning of second block break, instead of sleeping in, Diane Kelly and I met in downtown Colorado Springs to help move a recently immigrated Nepalese family to a new apartment. Kelly, a freshman, and I, a senior, are members of Colorado College's Refugee Assistance Program (RAP). Since the spring of 2008, RAP, a student run organization, has paired groups of CC students with refugee families in an effort to help reach self-sufficiency. Since its inception, RAP has partnered with local refugee resettlement agencies to help make the transition of newly immigrated refugee families, as easy as possible.

RAP began when the French Department contacted the Center for Service and Learning in hope of finding somewhere in the community where students studying the language could utilize it in the real world. The Center eventually came into contact with Lutheran Family Services, a refugee resettlement organization. LFS had recently begun working with a refugee family from Burundi, a small African country where Kirundi and French are the official languages.



I and several other students jumped at the opportunity, and by spring of 2008, we were working with a Burundian father, Bonithe, and his three daughters.

Since its inception, the response to RAP has been incredible. By the fall of 2008, the group had nearly quadrupled in size. To best utilize our newfound numbers, we broke into several different teams of six or seven students. Each team is paired with a family.

Diane and I, along with four LFS employees and a retired Air Force volunteer, helped move our family to a new apartment. Hira, the father of the family, helped us with the move, and despite his limited English (the family arrived in the United States only a month ago) he was a great asset.

We began the day at the LFS storage unit which is full of donated items and conveniently located next to the family's apartment complex. The storage unit held beds, bed frames, dressers, tables, lamps, and many others items. As a federally funded organization, LFS is required to follow certain government regulations. Each refugee is required to have two drawers in a dresser or two shelves in a closet. LFS, however, goes above and beyond, providing a television set and paintings to decorate the apartment.

After loading the U-Haul, we drove to their new apartment and began to unload items. We then helped organize the rooms, make beds, wash dishes, and just worked to make everything look great.

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Student Leaders of '04

Where are they now?

Alumni converged on Colorado College this October for Homecoming Weekend. For the class of 2004, it marked their fifth year since graduation. The Difference caught up with a few of the '04 grads, who spent much of their CC careers in the Center or serving the community, to find out where they are now, five years later.

Liesl Peterson

What was your major at CC?

Biology with a French minor.

What community service or leadership roles were you involved with while at CC?

I started my community service experiences during New Student Orientation in my first year. From there, I created an organization called "Raptor's Resource" that traveled to the Pueblo Raptor Center every Saturday to volunteer. In my junior year, Amy Belcastro and I started the CC branch of "Roots & Shoots," an after-school elementary program that allowed students to create their own service projects to assist animals, the environment, and the human community. I also led New Student Orientation trips my sophomore through senior years.

What are you doing now?

I am currently getting my Ph.D. in Ecology and Evolutionary Biology from CU, studying the impact of climate change on the American pika (a rabbit-like mammal that lives in high elevation rock slopes - most CC mountaineering types probably know and love 'em). I hope to teach college ecology/wildlife biology at the college level.

What was your favorite memory of community service at CC?

I think one of my favorite, fun memories from my service time at CC was when we brought the Roots & Shoots kids to campus and made a giant peace dove (out of bed sheets) for the International Day of Peace. Working with kids is always an adventure, and yet, kids' ideas for peace can be really creative - Middle East leaders should take some tips from a 3rd grader!



How has participating in community service at CC affected your life, 5 years later?

Working with the Center for Service and Learning had a major impact on my career choice. My experiences in community service led me to the conclusion that education is the key to affecting real change in our world. While it is imperative that we have community service programs to help the world in the short-term, only with a change in mentality about and understanding of the world's challenges can we truly address them. This is particularly the case in conservation, my chosen field of study. An even better fix? Combine education with service, something I experienced at CC, and hope to continue as a professor.

And, last but not least, where do you see yourself in five years?

Well, I'm halfway through my Ph.D., so I hope that I will have just started as an assistant professor somewhere in the West. But you never can tell - my husband (also CC class of '04) and I may just run off and join the Peace Corps or teach internationally. The beauty of a liberal arts education is that it keeps you thinking outside the box!

Ben Shellhorn



What did you major in?

I was all over the board when I was at CC, which is probably one of the best things about the way the school and academic community is structured--students get to indulge all facets of their creative mind. I dabbled in film (which is in the English Department) and economics (only a couple of credits short of the major) but ultimately settled with a Drama degree. My life is, and will always be, dramatic.

What was your job at the Center for Service and Learning ?

I enjoyed pestering Gay Victoria. She's great--a little crazy--but great, and, thankfully, has a great enough personality to tolerate my shenanigans. Of course, harassing Elizabeth Pudder was always a joy as well. So even when I wasn't in charge of the Center's website, snapping pictures of all the group happenings, etc., I was stirring the pot in the office. It was my calling. Oh, I led a few student trips as well. Dug a couple ditches. Made some macaroni art.

Where did you go to graduate school?

I went to the New School University in New York. I received a master's in Media Studies. I focused on me-

dia management and spent my production time in Digital design. It was a mixed bag, but, all in all, it brought me to NYC, which was my subconscious goal.

Where are you living now?

Still roughing it on 14th street in NYC.

What is your current/future profession?

Current: Beverage extraordinaire at BR Guest.

Future: Millionaire thirty-something retiree.

What was your favorite memory of community service at CC?

One memory that still sticks with me occurred during my first week at CC. I don't even remember the occasion, but it was during new school orientation, and I joined a group that helped play with children from broken families. This was before we sent students on far away voyages and long-term volunteer events. It was at a park within walking distance from CC. I just remember receiving a t-shirt from the Center--a green one. Oh yeah, this is when the NSO trip was called Streetwise, I think. Anyway, I was the only guy in the group and after an afternoon of playing with underprivileged kids, I was a little tired. But at the end of the event, one of the few boys in the group of kids came up and asked for my shirt. He confided in me that he only had a few in his size at his home, so, reluctantly, I handed mine over. The event was over, and I was a little tired from my afternoon play date, and I was topless.

How do you think participating in leadership programs or community service has affected your life, 5 years later?

That's tough. It took my semi-perfect bubble of a world and popped it. It exposed me to an entirely different world that, thankfully, has opened my eyes immensely.

Did it impact which profession you chose?

Not yet? I don't like to think the profession I am in is the one I am meant to be a part of. Still waiting for that "dare to be great" moment.

And, last but not least, where do you see yourself in five years?

Daring to be great.

A Few Facts About Refugees

- There were 15.2 million refugees worldwide at the end of 2008.¹
- There are nearly 270,000 refugees in the United States.¹
- In 2008, 60,192 refugees arrived in the US. The projected number for 2009 is 75,000.²
- Close to 2,500 Nepalese refugees live the United States.¹

Information obtained from:

United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR)¹
US Department of State²

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Yashoda, the mother, along with their two daughters and one son, sixteen year old Hema, seven year old Jivika, and thirteen year old Ram, arrived as we washed dishes. Hema and Ram, who have already begun high school, spoke excellent English for only being in the country for a month. We spent a majority of our time, however, with Hira and Yashoda. One of the biggest goals of RAP is to help prepare adult refugees for potential interviews and for when they eventually enter the workforce.

Despite being taken from their homeland and placed in a completely alien environment, Hira and his family are not completely cut off from Nepal. They are several other Nepalese families living in or near their apartment complex. Many of whom have or are still working with LFS. Seven of Nep-

alese families came to the family's apartment while we were present.

Although we spent much of the day setting up their new home, Diane and I also spent our time building relationships with the family members and the community. We asked questions and tried to listen to everything they had to say, whether or not they were speaking directly to us. We stayed there until after midday, soaking in everything, our minds racing with ideas about how we could provide for our new family's needs.

Our journey with Hira and his family did not end Thursday. Over the next six blocks, my group and I will first work on conversation and interview skills with Hira and possibly Yashoda and Hema. We will also help hunt for jobs in the Colorado Springs area.

Along with my group and the other group working with a Nepalese family, we also have a group with a refugee family from Cuba and due to even more growth this year, RAP is continuing to expand. While, RAP's initial purpose was to work with LFS refugee families our involvement has led to more volunteer opportunities available for students. Recently, we have partnered with the Colorado Springs' public school system, District 11's, new Conversation Partners Program. We meet with them Monday through Thursday from 1:00-2:00pm at the Pikes Peak Public Library. We also work with D11's adult ESL program at Helen Hunt Elementary School.

Volunteering for the Refugee Assistance Program, however, is much more than helping refugees learn English, find jobs, and finish their homework. We strive to help the families build confidence and integrate into Colorado Springs and American culture as a whole. We realize we are some of their first friends in the United States, so we make sure our dedicated and passionate volunteers do everything and anything to help our families.

If you are interested in joining the Refugee Assistance Program, please email me at margaret.boissard@coloradocollege.edu.

New Student Staff!!!



COLIN MCCAREY
CO-MANAGER OF CC

Upcoming Events:

Grant Writing Workshop— 3rd block break, November 19th and 20th from 9:00am to 5:00pm. The workshop will cover aspects of searching for and writing grants. Only 18 spots available, sign up in the Center for Service and Learning- \$45

CC Arts and Crafts Fair— December 4th-6th. Worner.
- BreakOut will be raising money by selling goods from the Women's Bean Project, a Denver non-profit that provides job and entrepreneurial skills to women with a history of unemployment
-The CC trip to Peru will be selling scarves, hats, and gloves from Peru to help fund this year's trip