PARTY POLITICS
alumni act on their ideals

THE SKY IS THE LIMIT
the price and value of liberal arts
An Army of Activists
by Mark Putnam, Central College president

Commencement is always a time of renewal for me. As families celebrate many accomplishments, I have an opportunity to hear their stories. They remind me about the vast changes that occur in the lives of students as they journey through four years of college. Through evolving academic interests, study abroad opportunities, athletic competition, music ensembles and service-learning, our graduates blend knowledge, skill and experience. The most common phrase I hear from graduating seniors is: “I got to do so many things.”

As I meet with alumni around the world, I hear the echoes of that shared experience. The graduates from the 1980s are far different from those in more recent classes and the experiences they journey through four years of college. Through developing new approaches and committed to a set of values reflected in a credential to simply get the next job. The experience of learning and self-discovery, not a transactional task of buying a life of service. Here are a few examples:

For most grads, commencement is not the end of service, but the beginning.
Michael Harris
awarded Fulbright

Michael Harris, professor of English, will return to India after 30 years to study the birth of Buddhism in the 6th century B.C.E. and its rediscovery during the British colonial era 25 centuries later. He was awarded a Fulbright Grant for his research.

Harris has always been fascinated by religion and history. Before he earned his doctorate at Indiana University, he spent two and a half years in Nepal with the Peace Corps and then traveled throughout India for five months. The experience inspired his dissertation on post-colonial literature. For 20 years at Central, he has taught the literature of former British colonies like India, Kenya, Ireland and many Caribbean islands.

The prestigious Fulbright Grant Scholar Program that sends Harris back to India is difficult to receive. Only 1,200 are awarded to U.S. scholars each year. The grant provides the opportunity for Harris to pursue a career-long interest in Buddhism.

His special focus will be the British scholar Alexander Cunningham, who excavated Buddhist sites in the mid-19th century. At the time, the religion had been gone from India for centuries, and many of the sites had been forgotten or mistaken as Hindu. Cunningham and his colleagues were the first to recognize that these sites belonged to a mainstream religion in East Asia and pinpointed India as the birthplace of Buddhism. Harris will spend six months in India visiting the sites where Cunningham excavated, now major attractions for pilgrims. When he returns, he hopes to present his research at Asian studies conferences. More importantly, he will use the research to improve the capstone class he teaches at Central about Buddhist traditions in the Himalayas. It’s a dream that was sparked 30 years ago among the people of Nepal and India.

“For me, in a strange way, this is a kind of homecoming,” he says.

Read more online at news.central.edu.

ELLEN HEITING RETIRES FROM ADMISSION OFFICE

Hearing Ellen Heiting list all the buildings she’s worked in during her 38-year career is like getting a tour of Central geography both old and new. She began in the old student union (on the site of the Marst Student Center) in 1974, working for the education department in the basement. When Geisler Library was built, the department moved there, and Heiting climbed to the second floor of the union to work for the Counseling Center and Upward Bound.

A few years later, she applied for an opening in the admission office. When she got the job, she moved her typewriter over to Aschenbrenner, a little white house on the corner of Broadway and University that’s now a parking lot. Years later, the admission office took over the old biology area in Central Hall, complete with stuffed owls. The office is on the first floor—and recently got an entrance makeover and a new patio with the Phyllis Bornst Plaza.

During her career, Heiting has worked as assistant to five presidents of enrollment. She will retire at the end of August, a few days after her 65th birthday. “I’ve been working since I was 15 years old, and I’m getting tired,” she says with a smile.

Heiting does have a favorite decade at Central—and no grad from other years can blame her. She especially loved the 1980s and early 2000s when her three daughters—Heather Heiting Van Wyl ’94, Amanda Heiting Christiansen ’99 and Jana Heiting-Doune ’04—attended Central. Their interests, such as golf, creative writing, the education department and vocal combos, became nearly discovered passions for her on campus.

Although none of her daughters played softball at Central, Heiting has always been a huge fan. She looks forward to attending many more games in retirement.

But for years, her main passion has been the admission office, which she says is the best place to work on campus. She loves the contact she gets with students, both prospective and current. Every once in a while, she’ll recognize the name of a former student worker on an application for their son or daughter.

“The impact Ellen has made on students and fellow employees is immense,” says Carol Williamson, vice president for enrollment management and dean of admission. “By my calculations, she has had an influence on well over 1,200 individuals during her time here. Thank you just seems like too little.”

During retirement, Heiting plans to make her seven grandchildren, ages 15 years to 18 months, her first priority. Her other goal is ambitious. “I plan to read every book in the library,” she says with determination.

That work ethic has made her a valuable staff member for nearly four decades. “One of the nicest compliments you can give someone is that they’re a hard worker,” says Heiting. “I see that in a lot of people on campus. I like to think that I’ve been a hard worker and that the college has gotten its money’s worth out of me in 38 years.”

CENTRAL ACCEPTS WELSH STUDENTS FOR “AMERICAN YEAR”

This fall, five students will arrive on campus from Bangor University in Wales to attend Central College for the 2012-13 academic year. Central and Bangor University recently made an agreement to allow selected Welsh students to insert an “American Year” into their studies. The agreement is expected to last for the foreseeable future, bringing five students to Central each fall.

This is not the first time Central has welcomed students from Wales. The college regularly had groups study on campus in the 1990s.

Although five selected students are majoring in sports science, they will be allowed to take courses in any field they please.

“I think they’ll bring excellent energy to the classroom,” said Anne Petre, the class dean responsible for international students. “The exchange of ideas and perspectives will be an enriching experience for all of us.”

Central students can study at Bangor University through Central College Abroad, which hosts academic programs at eight sites around the world. Central students have been studying in Wales since 1976 and at Bangor University since 2006.

2012 FACULTY AWARDS

Each spring, Central College recognizes faculty members for their leadership in teaching, professional development and service.

The John Wesseling Outstanding Performance Award is given in four categories.

The faculty members who earned the award in effective teaching were:

• Jennifer Dees, assistant professor of education;
• Kathy Korchek, assistant professor of Spanish;
• Kristin Stewart, lecturer of biology.

Walter Cannon, professor of English, received the professional growth and development award.

Lester Dismuke, associate professor of exercise science, received the institutional service award.

Mitchell Lutch, assistant professor of music and director of bands, received the community service award.

In addition to these awards, Oscar Reynaga, instructor of Spanish, was honored with the Huffman Award for outstanding support of international education.
First outright baseball title for Dutch since 1948

Miller repeats as national decathlon champ

Capping one of the top careers in Central athletics history, senior Ethan Miller secured his second straight decathlon title at the NCAA Division III men’s track and field meet in Claremont, Calif., May 28, leading the Dutch to a tie for ninth overall.

Miller, also a five-time Iowa Conference indoor and outdoor MVP, led the Dutch to their fourth straight league men’s championship—and their 14th in the past 22 years.

It was anything but a smooth ride for the 11-time all-America honoree, who also captured the NCAA indoor high jump title in 2011 and was named the Division III men’s field athlete of the year. Miller was injured in January and missed nearly all of the indoor season. It was a struggle returning to peak condition, but he scored 7,017 points at the national meet to win by 230 points. Freshman Eric Larson had an impressive debut, placing fifth.

Joe Dunham was again the league coach of the year and senior sprinter Allen Scovel was the league track athlete of the year.

Meanwhile, Dunham guided the Central women to a surprising second-place league finish.

The Dutch teams had eight all-America honorees at the national meet. Senior Morgan Darrow was third in the shot put and fifth in the hammer throw. The 4x100-meter relay unit of sophomore Mitch Wagener, junior Logan Danko, senior Kyle Wood and Scovel finished fifth—while Wood, senior Trevor Veich, freshman Alex Edwards and Scovel were sixth in the 4x400.

Central cruises to 30th league men’s golf title

Central captured its 30th Iowa Conference men’s golf crown, posting a 37-shot win at the 72-hole league tournament.

That also secured the program’s 31st NCAA Division III tournament berth. The Dutch were 24th in the tournament staged at Howey-in-the-Hills, Fla.

Junior Justin Livingston finished third in the conference after a runner-up effort in 2011, while senior Matt Vegter was fourth, senior Brent Goodenow was fifth and senior Brent Messmore was 12th. Second-year coach Chad Green picked five of their top six players for next season.

Central gains 24th NCAA softball berth

The Central softball team pulled off two walk-off victories in winning three straight games in one day against nationally ranked opponents to claim its first Iowa Conference tournament title since the tourney was re-established in 2006.

In what some had forecast as a down year, Central was 36-10 and earned its 24th NCAA Division III tournament appearance. The Dutch played host to an NCAA regional, finishing fourth, and were ranked No. 9 in the final Division III national rankings.

Sophomore shortstop Annie Sancone, the conference position player of the year, was a second-team all-America honoree, while freshman designated player Abbey Strajcek was a third-team pick. Senior second baseman, Angela Davis, became Central’s second’s second player ever to become a four-time first-team all-conference pick. Also on the first team were Sancone and Strajcek, while junior pitcher Rhianna Fleetwood and freshman third baseman Whitney Sowers were second-team honorees.

Harris wins league men’s tennis honors

Senior Seth Harris earned all-Iowa Conference men’s tennis honors in singles.

Harris compiled a 14-8 mark at the No. 1 spot, with a 6-2 league record. He finished his Dutch career in third place in school history in singles and doubles victories.

A young Central squad was sixth in the league tournament. Central was 11-12 overall, including 9-12 in spring season play. But the Dutch return five of their top six players for next season.

Ethan Miller’s decathlon crown was his third NCAA Division III title.
The Best Summer Ever

College is the best time of your life, right? Yet somehow the summers are even better. These current and former students explored the world and their future during days of fun and fantasy.

The Circle of Life

When Justin Snyder '01 thinks about the best summer of his life, the soundtrack that comes to mind is the Kenyan song Wapi Wei Wei, which Snyder calls “terrible.” But he ended up buying the album, because it brings back the many bus rides (the cassette tape was played by the driver) around Kenya that led him to baboons, giraffes, elephants, lions, zebras, wildebeests, monkeys and some of the most beautiful scenery he's ever witnessed.

In 2001, fresh from studying in Australia, Snyder made the “no-brainer” decision to join faculty members Paul Weihe, Rex Shahrani and Dan Bruss (the latter two now retired) on the inaugural study abroad program in Kenya. Snyder had dreamed of visiting the Great Rift Valley his entire life. When the group landed in Kenya, they encountered servants to carry their bags and hustlers to steal their money. “Besides the economic turmoil that was evident, the country was welcoming and beautiful,” says Snyder. “It definitely felt as though I was halfway across the world.”

The students were eager to explore the country. In the rainforest, guides from nearby Moi University gave them ecology lessons as they stared in awe at the creatures of the Great Rift, including a 20-foot-long crocodile. In the Maasai Mara National Reserve, two warriors, wearing khakis under their traditional dress, guarded their overnight camp from lions and hyenas and jump-roped with the students. On the savanna, they saw a migration of hundreds of zebras—all lined up in single file.

“The animals, the scenery; the serenity and the natural setting were everything I imagined Kenya to be,” says Snyder. “As an environmental scientist interested in flora and fauna, it was all a dream come true for me.”

Just after the group returned from Africa, tragedy struck on 9/11, and the Kenya program was cancelled for fear of terrorism in the country, which has a history of attacks by Al Qaeda. Despite the short tenure of the program, for a small group of students, including Snyder, it was the best—and the most educational—summer of their lives.

“I learned that the world as we know it is not the world as others know it,” says Snyder. “I saw children living in mud huts who thought the greatest gift in the world was a hat from Western society. To see them so happy despite having so little was something I will never allow myself to forget.”

The Hills are Alive

Spending the summer in the rural Northeast with a bunch of middle-school kids might not be everyone’s idea of a good time. But Liz Dickson ‘99 not only made it through once, she went back for more. During all three of her college summers, Dickson worked at the RCU-affiliated Camp Warwick in New York. She spent the first year as a camp counselor and the next two as the arts and crafts director.

As a freshman, Dickson saw a posting in the Chapel advertising for camp counselors, and she applied on a whim. After finals, she headed out to the green, rolling hills of the camp. “I’m from southwest Iowa—a really small town of 500 people, and I thought it would be neat to go work in New York in the summer,” says Dickson.

The peaceful and pristine atmosphere was not what she expected—so different from New York City—but she came to love it immediately. As a camp counselor, she alternated between the day camp and the longer overnight camp. For each group of elementary or middle school kids, she organized activities, played games and taught Bible lessons. During the overnight camp, she had to stay in the cabin with eight pre-teen girls, working out a showering schedule and trying to sleep over their giggles. But she felt she was helping them grow in their faith.

The next two summers, as arts and crafts director, Dickson had the kids come to her. She created art lessons for each group that coordinated with the Bible passage of the week. It was great practice running her own art classroom, which Dickson would do for seven years before becoming a school counselor in Omaha, Neb. Now, she spends all her working days with her own art classroom, which Dickson would do for seven years before becoming a school counselor in Omaha, Neb. Now, she spends all her working days with middle-school students. The atmosphere might not be as beautiful as the hills of southeast New York, but it’s just as fun.

“Camp Warwick helped me to understand students and to make relationships with young people,” says Dickson. “It helped me connect with kids, which is paramount to any successful teaching job.”

She may not have known it then, but those long nights in the cabin and that goofy fun with the campers made for the best summer of her life—and built a foundation for the rest of it.

The Ghost Particle

Senior Nate Herring spent his summer in Baton Rouge studying a massive, invisible force in the universe. Sounds pretty Star Trekkin’, right? But neutrino particles are a key element in experimental particle physics—the study of the structure of matter, not to mention Leonid’s specialty on The Big Bang Theory.

A physics and philosophy major, Herring was a student researcher at Louisiana State University as part of Research Experience for Undergraduates (REU), a program of the National Science Foundation. This was Herring’s second summer in the lab; last year, he went through a tough application process, competing with students from well-known physics programs such as Harvard and MIT. His work was held in such high regard there that he was invited back this summer to continue studying the elusive particles.

“Neutrinos are sort of like ghost particles,” says Herring. “Trillions of them fly through your body every second, but because of their unique properties, one interacts with a particle in your body only about every 30 years.”

Herring was part of a team studying a newly discovered phenomenon called neutrino oscillation. Building an experiment to research it can cost millions of dollars and take 5-7 years. So Herring helped prepare the team for when the experiment is ready. He designed a computer program that can digitally simulate the experiment and another that can analyze the data gathered.

“Before I write a program, I have to know exactly what I want it to do,” says Herring. “This requires planning out the program on paper or in my head before I sit down to write it.”

After graduation, Herring hopes to return to LSU for one more year of research before going to graduate school, a stepping stone toward his dream of teaching physics at a large research university. The experience he gained this summer will be instrumental in reaching that goal.

“I really enjoy the brain exercise I got just from being there,” he says.
The Traveling Mothers

In 2008, two eight-year-old Russian boys slept in beds next to each other in an orphanage in Petrozavodsk, just over 300 miles from the Arctic Circle. Although they weren’t brothers, they both had Scandinavian heritage, were part of the same family group in the orphanage and were going to Iowa in June.

Early that same year, Barb Watson ’83 was certain she wanted to adopt a child. She signed up for Camp Hope, a nonprofit that pairs older orphans from Russia with American families looking to adopt. One of the two boys, Daniil, came to Barb’s house for a week.

In contrast, when Celia Novelo Huante ’91 and her husband David first heard of Camp Hope, they weren’t sure adoption was the right choice. Already the parents of two girls, they had flirted with the idea of adopting internationally. So they came to a Camp Hope event, where they met the other boy, Kirill. Celia was moved immediately. “He was so sweet,” she says of Kirill. “We needed a son, and he needed parents. We met him on a Monday and decided on a Tuesday. It was fate.”

Meanwhile, Barb bonded with Daniil (Danny, for short), who had lost a father to tuberculosis before being taken from his mother because she was unfit to raise him. Despite all the hardships he had gone through in his young life, Barb found him joyful, a boy who loved pranks and always had energy for the next thing.

Both women had made up their minds. They were going to adopt. At a meeting Barb hosted for other families, Celia stuck her head in the kitchen and saw a painting of the Central bridge. “Did you go to Central?” she asked in shock.

It turned out the women had been born a world apart—Barb grew up in Iowa while Celia came from Merida, Yucatan. She enrolled at Central on the urging of George Ann Huck, the director of Central’s study abroad program at the time. Despite their different origins, their paths in life led them separately to a single orphanage nearly 5,000 miles from Pella.

Since then, the two women have become close friends—especially as they struggled through the adoption process, which involved several trips to Russia and difficult legal complications. After the adoptions were final in 2009, Barb and Celia, both based in the Des Moines area, began spending more time together. And Daniil and Kirill—already “family” in the orphanage—became close friends.

“I never could imagine that someone from Merida would end up going to Central, settling in Iowa and adopting at the same time I did,” says Barb. “I truly believe because of these two little boys that we will always stay in touch.”
“He is one of a few people that has literally changed my life.”

Although they didn’t stay close over the intervening years, the friends did keep in contact through letters and Christmas cards—and later through email when that technology hit the scene. It was through that medium that they learned both Lynn and Jerry would be in Florida around the same time. Marty decided to hit the Sunshine State, too, and they organized a reunion in Key West.

The trio first met as French majors at Central. Lynn and Marty were assigned as roommates, and at first Marty thought they couldn’t be more different. Marty had traveled—to France in high school and then a summer in North Carolina—and Lynn seemed shy and had stayed close to home. Jerry, on the other hand, was always cracking jokes. He did spot-on imitations of their professors.

Their senior year, they all decided to study in France together. On a tight budget, they often ate at the hot dog and crepe stands in the Latin Quarter and delved into flea markets for deals on jeans. They used discounted train tickets to travel around the country. When Jerry wanted to go for a walk, he would come into the courtyard of the women’s dorm—the farthest he was allowed to go—and yell through the windows until Marty or Lynn heard him.

“We could talk about almost anything,” said Lynn. “We shared a common goal in our travels—to get to know the people, culture and language of France.”

The three friends—all from small towns in Iowa—spent one last evening together at Marty’s condo in Florida. The reunion in Key West—though not as exciting as the Luxembourg Gardens or the Palace of Versailles—was a meeting of three kindred spirits who bonded before they had even begun their careers. It was a perfect trip for retirees reminiscing about how they got their start. And it didn’t hurt that the margaritas were good.

The Three Musketeers

When Marty Samp’s ’74, Lynn Herndon Howard ’74 and Jerry Vroegh ’74 arrived at their condo in Key West this winter, it brought back a crisp and clear memory: the Hall of Mirrors at Versailles. After becoming enamored with the palace during a class visit, the trio had returned later for a day trip and picnic. But a quick look at the animal prints smothering the condo of mirrors brought them back to reality. It was 2012, nearly 40 years since they had studied abroad in Paris, and they were back together again.

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“We could talk about almost anything.”
As James Madison famously pointed out, people do not have halos. Thus, government is necessary. These alumni working in politics have different ideas on how to make our states and our country more perfect unions.

IF MEN WERE ANGELS

The Capitol’s Chief

In 1982, Jeff Boeyink ’85 walked into a booth to cast his first vote in an election. It’s a momentous few seconds for any young person, but it turned out to be especially important for Boeyink. He voted for Terry Branstad for Iowa governor. Thirty years later, he is working as Branstad’s chief of staff. Branstad is the longest-serving governor in the state of Iowa; his first term spanned from 1983 to 1999. During the late ‘90s, Boeyink worked with the Republican governor as a lobbyist on taxpayer and fiscal issues. In 2009, Branstad asked Boeyink to lead his re-election campaign and then, when they won, to be his chief of staff. “I just couldn’t say no,” says Boeyink. “Terry Branstad is an icon. For someone growing up in the 80s, he was the only governor I knew for a long time.”

During that decade and the next, Boeyink worked as a lobbyist, campaign strategist and fundraiser for political action committees (PACs) in Iowa. Now Boeyink and the governor talk several times a day over the phone or in person. Boeyink calls himself the chief operating officer of the government. He manages the day-to-day workings of the entire executive branch, including a staff of more than 20.

Boeyink’s job is really a 24/7 lifestyle. He is the first line of defense when disaster—whether natural or political—strikes, like when the Missouri River flooded last May. On normal days, he arrives at the Capitol in Des Moines at 6:30 a.m. before heading off to a dozen meetings and answering more than 100 emails. “The beauty of this job is that every day is so different,” says Boeyink.

That’s because there’s always a different problem to tackle. One proud moment for Boeyink was the victory after a fierce budget battle in 2011 that lasted until the very last day of the fiscal year. Boeyink estimates that there will soon be $1 billion in budget surplus.

Although the details of budgets and boards might bore non-politicians, Boeyink loves that state government has a real human impact. Anyone who pays state income tax, receives an Iowa Tuition Grant or holds a job is affected by the government. “This is where you want to be,” says Boeyink about state politics. “The size of government at this level is still small enough that you can make a difference.”

The urge to improve life for other people is what motivates Boeyink during his long hours in the Capitol or when the phone rings during his early Saturday morning golf sessions. He calls himself—and all politicians—idealist. “We believe we have the ability to make positive changes. It doesn’t matter what party you’re from. We just go about it a little differently.”

WE BELIEVE WE HAVE THE ABILITY TO MAKE POSITIVE CHANGES

The People’s Servant

“I hope Janie Morrison will live 1,000 years and never die,” says Miljana Furundzic of Mount Prospect, Ill. “When I met her, I thought she must be an angel.”

Miljana is a Serbian immigrant and a home health care worker in the Illinois 33rd district. A few years ago, her husband Batric became severely psychologically disabled. On behalf of the district office for Illinois State Senator Dan Kotowski, Janie Morrison ’71 helped Batric apply for Social Security Disability benefits, saved their home by doing a loan modification and helped Miljana get a job and pursue a certified nursing assistant (CNA) license.

“There are no words for my gratitude,” says Miljana. “She’s my best friend and my family member.”

Such stories and praise are commonplace for Morrison, who runs Kotowski’s office with one assistant and several interns. Their aim is to help the constituents of the 33rd district in any way they can—working on issues like food stamps, childcare, Medicare and Medicaid, counseling, veteran’s benefits and loan refinancing. “We are helping people survive in this economy,” says Morrison.

Dan Kotowski, a Democrat, is known for his efforts at reform, says Morrison. “He’s inspiring and motivating, and we all pledged our lives to him while in public office.” She keeps in daily contact to update him on the goings-on in the district office in Park Ridge, one of several towns in the district in the northwest Chicago suburbs.

Morrison first got involved in politics as executive director to the faculty union at Temple University in Philadelphia, which lobbied in presidential, state and local elections. Then, as assistant to the president for another American Federation of Teachers affiliate, she met Kotowski, who asked her to run his campaign. After their victory, she became district director for seven years and counting. Kotowski is up for re-election this November, but as district director, Morrison is not allowed to be involved or even have knowledge of the campaign.
The Philosopher Candidate

When John Hospers ’39 was an 18-year-old freshman at Central College, he took an astronomy class with Dean Henry Pieterpen, who soon realized there was a problem. “You know more about this than I do,” Pieterpen told Hospers and turned over the class. For the rest of the semester, Hospers taught college juniors and seniors about light years, galaxies and Saturn’s rings.

Despite his passion for all things astronomical, Hospers ended up in a field that had little to do with stars—unless you count the academic celebrity kind. He became a college professor, aesthetics philosopher, textbook author and the first Libertarian candidate for president—even earning one electoral vote.

Hospers was born in Pella in 1918, and the small Dutch town was key in forming his political philosophy. His great-grandfather fled the second emigration from the Netherlands to Pella in 1849. “Concepts like government assistance were completely alien to these settlers,” Hospers wrote in a memoir. “Life was precarious, but when illness or natural catastrophe struck, relatives and neighbors were there to give assistance. It would not have occurred to them to ask for money from the government any more than to rob their neighbors’ houses. God had given them rich land, was that not enough?”

After graduation, Hospers earned a master’s in literature from the University of Iowa and a doctorate in philosophy from Colombia University. His dissertation on meaning and truth in the arts remained in print for 35 years, and he taught philosophy at universities around the country. One day, Hospers went to a lecture at Brooklyn College by Ayn Rand, author of Atlas Shrugged, founder of the objectivist philosophy and an icon for libertarians to this day. Afterwards, Hospers invited her to lunch. She promised him an hour; they ended up talking for four. The two philosophers became close friends, often discussing the role of government until 4 or 6 a.m.

Hospers credited Rand as a muse for both his writing and his teaching, and she reminded him that was his most important profession in the world. In 1971, he published Libertarianism: A Political Philosophy for Tomorrows, the first academic book on the subject.

It was that book that secured his nomination as presidential candidate for the Libertarian party, created in 1972. Hospers wasn’t sure it was even a good idea for such a new party to field a candidate, but he accepted with aplomb, cracking jokes about it with colleagues. “I was a little bit fluffed and a little bit terrified,” he wrote. “I was a college professor, and the next day a candidate for the nation’s highest office.”

Hospers knew he had no chance of winning, but he used the opportunity to spread the burgeoning ideas of libertarianism. Hospers later wrote about the “upright and haughty questioning” that came from voters, particularly the question, “What will you do for me if elected?” His response was unconventional: “I’ll leave you alone to live your life as you choose.”

When the Electoral College met, an elector from Virginia rejected his promise to vote for Nixon and threw his hat to Hospers instead. The candidate called it the biggest surprise of the election. He was flooded with letters and calls of congratulations. Despite his brief flirtation with political office, Hospers’s true love was teaching and writing. Kevin Robb, who taught with Hospers at the University of Southern California (USC) for many years, says that he shined in the classroom. Dozens of students would crowd around him after class until he would finally shout, “I need lunch!”

“It became an important friendship in my life,” says Robb. “John was one of the most genuine, decent human beings you’ll ever meet. He was personally a shy man, but he was marvelous once he was on his feet.”

John Hoedeman, a lawyer in Minneapolis, was first introduced to libertarianism at USC, where he read Hospers’s book in class. He believes that many young people of his generation found the movement through Rand’s books and then deepened their understanding through Hospers.

“When it came to putting the economic science of freedom into the words of politics, I think John Hospers probably did that better than anybody else before him,” says Hoedeman.

He calls Hospers a frontrunner in the libertarian movement, whose ideas have been taken up by the tea party and Congressman Ron Paul. Robb says that Hospers would likely disagree with some of the stances of the modern movement, especially on social issues, but the attention he brought to libertarianism was a factor in its rise to prominence.

Hospers retired from USC in 1988 and passed away in 2011. But his work is still influencing new generations of thinkers looking for a different way. “And so it is, hope springs eternal,” wrote Hospers. “And perhaps this hope can still be realized, here in America, while we are alive and able to witness for ourselves the unfolding of events, and perhaps even able in some degree to influence them.”
Up, Up & AWAY

Things seem a little bit more expensive these days. Have you noticed? A better question: Have you lived on earth the past 10, 30 or 50 years? If so, you’re bound to recognize the inflation that keeps your days “soaring” from one hour to the next.

IS LIBERAL ARTS WORTH THE EXPENSE?
Fifty years ago, a year at a private, nonprofit college cost about $900. Today, Central’s tuition—with room and board—is $39,134. That may sound exorbitant, especially to people who graduated back in the golden days of cheap education. But the times they are a-changin’, as Baby Boomer alums know. Today, the critical thinking skills, global learning and interdisciplinary perspective that are hallmarks of a Central education are more valuable than ever.

Consider this:
• 98 percent of Central students receive financial aid.
• 96 percent of grads are either employed in the field of their choice or enrolled in graduate school within a year of graduation.

WHAT DO YOU SPLURGE ON?
Alums recount their favorite purchases from the year they graduated and what they’d cost today.

7:00 AM TIME FOR AN OMELET
50 YEARS AGO $0.64 30 YEARS AGO $0.87 10 YEARS AGO $0.93
A DOZEN EGGS TODAY: $1.97

8:30 AM FILL UP THE CAR BEFORE HEADING TO WORK
50 YEARS AGO $0.31 30 YEARS AGO $1.30 10 YEARS AGO $1.36
A GALLON OF REGULAR UNLEADED GAS TODAY: $3.49

6:00 PM BACK HOME AFTER A LONG DAY
50 YEARS AGO $1.18 30 YEARS AGO $0.77 10 YEARS AGO $0.25
AVERAGE HOME PRICE TODAY: $242,300

6:30 PM CHECK THE FRIDGE FOR DINNER INGREDIENTS
50 YEARS AGO $0.39 30 YEARS AGO $0.87 10 YEARS AGO $1.78
AVERAGE FOOD EXPENDITURES PER MONTH TODAY: $233.01

1:00 PM YOU GET A CALL FROM SCHOOL. YOUR SON HAS BROKEN HIS LEG AT RECESS.
50 YEARS AGO $23.50 30 YEARS AGO $92.50 10 YEARS AGO $285.60
MEDICAL EXPENSES PER MONTH TODAY: $411.92

8:00 PM TIME FOR YOUR FAVORITE TV SHOW
50 YEARS AGO no cable yet, of course!
30 YEARS AGO $104.00 10 YEARS AGO $295.00
AVERAGE MONTHLY CABLE & SATELLITE BILLS FOR TV & RADIO TODAY: $378.97

JOEL ROHDE ’07 $3,800
“An engagement/wedding ring for my wife Pamela Lang Rohde ’05 and our honeymoon.”
NOW: $4,205
MARY POPSON KLEIN ’95 $300
“A Brother WP-3410 word processor. Goodbye, Liquid Paper and correction tape! Used it for Keith Ratzlaff’s writing course.”
NOW: $492
JODI GRABER BULLOCK ’02 $135,000
“My townhouse. Still have it as a rental property!”
NOW: $159,448
JANET DIETRICH THOMPSON ’91 $40
“I bought an expensive jacket from Lands’ End, which I still have many years later, by the way!”
NOW: $57.39
MARY MCDONALD RICHARD ’72 $25
“An ‘extravagantly expensive’ History of Art book that is still on my shelves.”
NOW: $57.39
KIM HUITINK BUTLER ’86 $500
“A kitchen table. My son Jay Sikkink ’10 now uses it in his apartment.”
NOW: $1,047
HARRIET WOLBRINK ’71 $200
“A round-trip ticket from Paris to New York at Christmas.”
NOW: $1,133
ROBIN BUICK ’04 $100
“Adopted a dog”
NOW: $1,271

85 PERCENT OF CENTRAL STUDENTS RECEIVE FINANCIAL AID.
96 PERCENT OF GRADS ARE EITHER EMPLOYED IN THE FIELD OF THEIR CHOICE OR ENROLLED IN GRADUATE SCHOOL WITHIN A YEAR OF GRADUATION.
Alumni are invited to submit Newsnotes to the alumni office. We want to hear about recent promotions, honors, relocations, marriages and births to keep classmates and friends informed about important changes in your life. Email alumni@central.edu or update information online at civitas.central.edu. News items also are welcome by phone, 800-447-0287 or 641-628-5154. Or send a note to Central College Alumni Office, 812 University, Campus Box 5200, Pella, IA 50219.

THE '40S
Carl Vogelaar ’48 was chosen to go on the Honor Flight for WWII veterans to Washington D.C. in May. While in the nation’s capital, the group visited many historic sites, including the WWII memorial and the changing of the guard at Arlington Cemetery. Carl and wife Joan Ver Meer Vogelaar ’48 live in Santa Rosa, Calif.

THE '50S
Leonard Kalkwarf ’50 was recognized for his volunteer work in 2011 by the President’s Council on Service and Civic Participation with a Presidential Volunteer Service Award. Leonard and wife Beverly live in Springfield, Va.
THE '60S

Rosemary Fry Miller ’61 and husband Richard Miller ’62 of Morgan, Vt., celebrated 50 years of marriage June 4.

Bob Pentico ’64 and Nancy Oliver Pentico ’65 are enjoying retirement in Sun City Hilton Head, S.C., where Nancy is an active volunteer and continues to golf. Bob was elected president of the Athletic Club of the Lowcountry, where he works with sportscasters and athletes at the college and professional level. Bob plays shortstop on the softball team for 65-69-year-olds, which qualified as the number one team from his state for the 2013 Senior Olympics.

Doug Schakel ’64 completed his third season as the assistant women’s basketball coach at Johnson County Community College. The Cavaliers appeared in their third consecutive NJCAA Elite Eight national tournament and posted the only 30-win season in the history of the school’s program. Doug and his wife Sharon Reno Schakel ’67 live in Olafte, Kan., where Karen is a volunteer teaching assistant in the Johnson County Community College ESL program, teaching English to immigrants from the Kansas City area.

THE '70S

Barbara Hopkins Kadlec ’71 retired in March 2011 and returned to her hometown of Guthrie Center. Barbara enjoys being in Iowa after living away for several years. During her career, Barbara worked mainly in Germany for the military in the drug and alcohol program and in the Army’s continuing education system.

Susan Leverene Grossman ’74 of Arcadia, Calif., is a case manager at the DeSoto County Homeless Coalition, a diabetic educator and a SHINE (Serving Health Insurance Needs of Seniors) counselor for the State of Florida. Carolyn Rutan ’77 and Robert Forston of Apple Valley, Calif., were married Oct. 22. Carolyn resigned her position as athletic director to begin teaching full-time in the physical education department at Granite High School.

Terry Weiss ’76 is retired and living in Omaha, Neb. Recently, Terry has enjoyed connecting with Central and fellow alumni.

THE '80S

Sullia Smith Stepto ’84 of Killimancook, Va., gathered in Des Moines this spring with six of her ASE sisters to celebrate their 60th birthdays. The origins of ASE began with this group of freshmen girls and flourished during their four years as Central students. Their friendships remain strong with the help of the annual Christmas letter, occasional gatherings and Facebook. They are pictured (left to right): Kelley James Nading ’84 of Owensboro, Ky.; Jan Westerveld ’84 of Pella, Iowa; Sheila Smith Stepto ’84, Nancy Gray Pears ’84 of Boone, Iowa; Beth Holcomb ’84 of Pella and Jill Fairen Bormann ’84 of Pella.

THE '90S

Gretchen DeSmidt Leitner ’88 is the director of communications for the Town of Breckenridge. During one week in March, she received visits from three separate occasions from friends and family from a Central connection. They included Tom Ninga ’92 of the Denver League City, Texas; her brother Dave Dykstra ’90, along with his son Kyle Dykstra ’06; and James Eagleson ’92 of Greeley, Colo.; and Kevin Malley ’92 of Cedar Rapids, who joined her on the slopes after a 30-year hiatus from the Gator Ski Club.

Elizabeth Dowlow Allsop ’97 is vice president of human resources at Electrical Engineering and Equipment in Windsor Heights, Iowa. Elizabeth and husband Steve live in St. Charles.

Deborah Craig ’93 leads internal and external communications for Nestle USA’s pizza division. Deborah lives in Chicago with husband David and their son.

THE '00S

Earl Caton ’77 is a doctoral advisor for the school of advanced studies at the University of Phoenix, where he is a doctoral candidate writing a dissertation on the efficacy of storytelling. Earl and wife Erma live in Glendale, Ariz.; her Jo Hansen Robach ’77 retired after 35 years teaching in the Ottumwa Community School District. Jo and husband Steve Robach ’77 live in Ottumwa, Iowa. Steve teaches math and coaches track and basketball at Pekin High School in Pekawood.

Sharron Poley ’77 of Pleasant Hill, Mo., retired June 2010 from her position as an associate attorney at Duncan, Green, Brown & Langemo, P.C. in Des Moines, where she lives with husband Stephen. Their daughter Anna Sarcone is a junior at Central College.

For information about Michelle Heiselman Thomas ’93, see the ‘90s.

THE '10S

Lois Schaner Renne ’90 is head of treasury operations at FBI Financial in West Des Moines. Lori and husband Mark live in Pella; they are the parents of two sets of twins.

Tobbes Robbins ’91 has accepted a position as the executive director of the University of Dubuque’s Performing Arts and Campus Center, currently under construction and slated to open in 2013. Tom began his employment in his hometown of Dubuque, Iowa, in August. Tom and wife Barbara are the parents of one son.

Craig Dirks ’90 and former classmate Kevin Lake ’90 and Gregory Thomas ’90 chered on their sons as they participated in a three-on-three basketball tournament in Hubbard, Iowa. It was the first time their boys had played basketball together, and they claimed third place. Craig and wife Kimberley Hadden Dirks ’91 live in Wyoming, Iowa, with their two children. Craig is a firefighter captain for the City of Cedar Rapids, and Kimberley is self-employed as a medical transcriptionist. Kevin and wife Lorelene Bateman Lake ’91 live in Dubuque with their four children. Kevin is a microbiologist at USDA Veterinary Services in Ames, and Lorelene teaches third and fourth grade at Hubbard-Radcliffe. Greg and wife Michelle Heiselman Thomas ’89 live in Humboldt. Greg is a football coach at Humboldt High School, and Michelle is an administrative assistant with Humboldt Community Schools. Pictured (left to right): Kevin Lake ’90, Quinton Lake, Craig Dirks ’90, Grant Dirks, Thomas Gregory ’89 and Drew Thomas.

James Booko ’77 was gifted with license plates from daughters Rachel Booko ’09 and Renae Booko ’06. James and his wife Lisa Van Haughton Booko ’77 live in Cedar Rapids, Iowa, where James is a systems analyst at Cedar Rapids Community School District and Lisa is a database administrator at the Johnson County Community College Foundation. Front row (left to right): Lisa Van Haughton Booko ’77 and James Booko ’77. Second row: Renae Booko ’06 and Rachel Booko ’09.
Where are they now?

Kathy Pilling '04 and Marty Hagewood '04 of Clive were married April 2, 2011. Kathy is a loan administration manager at Wells Fargo in Des Moines, and Marty is a programmer analyst at EMC Insurance Company.

Joseph Vande Kieft '99 is CEO at Catchwind in Johnston, Iowa, and his wife Tara is a registered dietitian. Joe and wife Sarah live in Urbandale with their daughter. Sandy and husband Paul live in Grimes with their daughter. Sarah is a high school athletic trainer at Peak Athletic Training Agency in Des Moines.

Sunny Sorensen Osverson '99 is a senior audit leader at Wells Fargo in Des Moines. Heather and husband Paul live in Grimes with their son. Jessica is a sign language interpreter in the lighting group of Musco Sports Lighting in Oskaloosa, Iowa, where he lives with wife Katie and their son.

Shane Pilkington '04 is an associate development director at the University of Iowa Foundation in Iowa City. Shane and wife Megan Schatz Wilson '03 live in North Liberty with their daughter.

Amanda Leomon Nuzum '02 is the planned giving coordinator at Easter Seal Iowa in Des Moines, where she lives with husband Aaron and their three sons.

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Outside the Classroom

Jay Wackerly, assistant professor of chemistry

What goes in the middle of a molecular donut? The correct answer: A molecular donut hole, of course.

Jay Wackerly, assistant professor of chemistry, is working to design that donut. He recently awarded $50,000 in funding from the American Chemical Society. The award will assist his research into the synthesis of oxacalixarenes—large, circular molecules that may be able to bind other small molecules inside them.

Wackerly will use the money to fund five student research assistants, which means Central students will get paid while gaining valuable research experience.

Most of the students’ time will be spent synthesizing and analyzing these new oxacalixarenes. Wackerly has ideas for a few applications for his research, but he is keeping an open mind about exploring new possibilities.

Read more about Wackerly’s hard-to-pronounce molecules at news.central.edu.

THE ‘10S

For information about Anna Lavelle Groenendyk ’10, see the ‘10s.

Emily Andersen ’10 and Keith Walker of Forest City, Iowa, were married March 24. Emily teaches elementary music in the Forest City Community School District.

Kristi Davis ’10 of Omaha, Neb., is a credit analyst associate at Pella Middle School in Pella. Meghan Burt ’11 and Blake Smith ’10 of Ankeny were married June 16, 2011. Meghan is a direct support associate at Mosaic in Des Moines, and Blake is an account manager at At Home Robinson Worldwide.

Amanda Whitley ’10 and Jackson Drost of New Sharon were married Nov. 26. Amanda is a clinic scheduler at Pella Regional Health Center.

In Ankeny, Justin Celen ’11 of Tulsa, Okla., is in student ministries at Assembly United Methodist Church.

Melissa Dunlap ’11 of Pella is the Perkins and institutional loan officer in the controller’s office at Central College.

Matthew Graner ’11 of Des Moines is a loan servicing specialist at Wells Fargo Home Mortgage in Des Moines.

Austin Hill ’11 is a technical recruiter at TEKsystems in West Des Moines.

Jesse Jessen ’11 of West Des Moines is the deputy communications director in the Office of Governor Terry E. Branstad.

Molly Von Holten ’11 has joined

Danielle Delhaan ’11 and Brad Schippers of Otley were married Nov. 11, 2011. Danielle is a customer service representative at Precision Pukey and Idler in Pella.

Front row (left to right): Matt Duuy ’11, Brad Schippers, Danielle Delhaan Schippers ’11, Janelle Stevens ’11, Liz Arentsen ’10, and Kurtis Brownely ’11.

Second row: Kari Shuller ’11, Ashley Sroderer ’11, Natalie Googer ’12, Sadie Siehken ’11, Michelle Rosenberg ’11, Brynn Moore ’10, Ashley Reish ’10, Dana Petersen ’10, and Cassie Dav ’11.

Kyle Johnson DeHaan ’85, back row: Rob Fadig ’10, Kristin Schell ’10, LaBonna Hanson Van Wolkema ’16, Heather Borrgman Reineke ’11, Bryce Stoebelekn ’08.


Ashley Vogt ’07 of平原field, Ill., is the head girls’ soccer coach at Joeliet West High School in Joliet.

Leah Applegate ’08 of Marshalltown is a loan document specialist at Wells Fargo Home Mortgage in West Des Moines.

Zech Bailey ’08 is a lance corporal in the U.S. Marine Corps stationed in Twentynine Palms, Calif.

Nathan Craft ’08 of Des Moines is an underwriter at the Principal Financial Group.

Laura Elgin ’08 of Burlington, Iowa, is a human resources representative at Case/New Holland America, LLC.

Scott Paja ’08 and Brittany Hackforth of Ankeny were married June 11, 2011. Scott is working toward a doctorate in higher education administration from Iowa State University.

Amy Tao ’08 and Blaine Pilling ’08 of Alpharetta were married June 9. Amy is the lead exercise physiologist at the Medical College of Georgia in Augusta.

Kane Van Arkel ’08 and Jonathan Shinkle of Jefferson City, Mo., were married July 9, 2011. Kane teaches third grade at Thorpe Gordon Elementary School.

Derek Groenendyk ’09 and Jamie Feddersen ’08 of Fort Dodge, Iowa, were married Dec. 18, 2010. Karine teaches third grade for Giddlen-Ralston Schools in Giddlen, and Jared teaches social studies for Humboldt Community Schools in Humboldt.

Aubrey Yennahan ’09 and Mitch Hoffman of Coon Rapids, Minn., is a manager at Menards.

Groenendyk ’10.

Tucson, where he lives with wife

is a trade and industry analyst at the Bureau

assurance position with RSM International, 

with the National Association of Collegiate 

of Georgia in Augusta.

Ankeny were married June 11, 2011. Katee teaches third grade at Thorpe 

education administration from Iowa State 

and Mitch Hoffman 

of Burlington, Iowa, is a 

of Des Moines is an 

Zach Bailey ’08 

is a lance corporal in the 

of Rocky River, Ohio, 

completed his assistantship in strength and 

conditioning at the University of Minnesota 

in May and accepted an internship position 

with the National Association of Collegiate 

Directors of Athletics in Cleveland.

Matthew Sigmond ’09 of Washington, D.C. is a trade and industry analyst at the Bureau of Industry and Security, U.S. Department of Commerce.

Stephanie Utte ’09 has taken a senior assurance position with RSM International.
sons Ryker Lee and Brecen Vincent and daughter Brooklyn Faith, Feb. 18.


Jessica ‘01 and Jordan Weitzel ‘00, son Sciros Brian, May 29.


Jay and Harold Miller, May 1.

JAY VERMEER

Jeannette Lankelma Vermeer ‘46 of Pella passed away June 26 at the age of 88. Jay, as she was known, served as alumni director at Central for 19 years, from 1963 to 1982, and helped organize many alumni activities and tours.

Jay met her husband Elmer H. (Dutch) Vermeer in 1946 after he returned from serving in WWII, and they settled on a farm west of Pella. They were great supporters of the art, music, international studies and athletic programs at Central. The couple attended Second Reformed Church and always participated in the annual Tulip Time Festival.

Jay is survived by her children and their spouses. Tom ’70 and Sharran Lange Vermeer ’71 of Asheville, N.C., Richard ’72 and Susan Vermeer of Bettendorf, Iowa, Bill and Alice Vermeer of Longmont, Colo., Jim ’77 and Kim Miller Vermeer ’78 of Cedar Rapids, Iowa, Ann Vermeer ’80 of Coralville, Iowa; eight grandchildren and nine great-grandchildren; a sister, Ione Piche of Elmhurst, Ill.; and a brother, William Lankelma ’49 of Plano, Texas.

IN MEMORIAM


Willis Van der Koot ‘34 of Broomfield, Colo., June 28.


Arie Breed ‘43 of Ottumwa, Iowa, April 9

Angelina Dantel Harding ‘43 of Knevel, Iowa, July 1.

Joyce De Brun Dunhan ‘50 of Pella, May 29.

Jackson Murphy ‘50 of Oak Ridge, Tenn., April 21.

Norman Roorda ‘50 of Madrid, Iowa, May 27.


Howard Taglialatine ‘51 of Rutherford, N.J., April 8.

Adrian Van Wyk ‘50 of Apple Valley, Calif., April 17.

Patrick Rooney ‘53 of Franklin, Tenn., Feb. 9.

Susan Carpenner Miller ‘75 of Papillion, Neb., April 19.


Ashley and Keith Wirch ‘07, son Bayden Keith, July 5, 2010 and daughter Charlotte Ann, April 5.

Jeff ‘07 and Natalie Rudy Foast ‘08, son Kingston Leon, April 12.

Jerod ‘06 and Aimee Gripen Wells ‘08, son Durhan Lee, May 29.

Dan and Lori Ruby Steffensmeier ‘09, daughter Ruby Ann, May 3.

Nicole and McKinley Nye ‘09, son Gavin Russell, Sept. 2.

Kevin ‘10 and Amanda Williams Yeoman ’08, daughter Elaina Coriney, Jan. 5.

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Kevin ‘10 and Amanda Williams Yeoman ’08, daughter Elaina Coriney, Jan. 5.

IN MEMORIAM


Willis Van der Koot ‘34 of Broomfield, Colo., June 28.


Arie Breed ‘43 of Ottumwa, Iowa, April 9

Angelina Dantel Harding ‘43 of Knevel, Iowa, July 1.

Joyce De Brun Dunhan ‘50 of Pella, May 29.

Jackson Murphy ‘50 of Oak Ridge, Tenn., April 21.

Norman Roorda ‘50 of Madrid, Iowa, May 27.


Howard Taglialatine ‘51 of Rutherford, N.J., April 8.

Adrian Van Wyk ‘50 of Apple Valley, Calif., April 17.

Patrick Rooney ‘53 of Franklin, Tenn., Feb. 9.

Susan Carpenner Miller ‘75 of Papillion, Neb., April 19.


Ashley and Keith Wirch ‘07, son Bayden Keith, July 5, 2010 and daughter Charlotte Ann, April 5.

Jeff ‘07 and Natalie Rudy Foast ‘08, son Kingston Leon, April 12.

Jerod ‘06 and Aimee Gripen Wells ‘08, son Durhan Lee, May 29.

Dan and Lori Ruby Steffensmeier ‘09, daughter Ruby Ann, May 3.

Nicole and McKinley Nye ‘09, son Gavin Russell, Sept. 2.

Kevin ‘10 and Amanda Williams Yeoman ’08, daughter Elaina Coriney, Jan. 5.
Support from our alumni and friends is essential to providing access to quality education for students who, without financial assistance, could not afford to attend college. The Journey Scholarship Fund provides an opportunity to do just that... help a future Central alumnus. Every gift received between July 1, 2012 and June 30, 2013 will go to a current or new Central College student in the form of a scholarship. No gift is too small.

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Life and Death in Sierra Leone

Jen Diers, assistant professor of education, took students to West Africa to teach and learn in an orphanage.

When she arrived in the children’s hospital in Sierra Leone this May, junior Hanna Wilson immediately felt that she needed to go to the back of the room. She walked past children that were literally skin and bones, weak from by fathers or watched over by mothers who didn’t know they were dying. “When I thought it couldn’t get any harder, I turned around and saw her, lying on the bed, alone,” says Wilson.

Baby Zainab had been born prematurely, was five months old and had tuberculosis. She was the tiniest infant Wilson had ever seen. When she picked up the baby, Zainab didn’t seem to be breathing, but the nurse found a faint pulse. Wilson looked up at her professor, Jen Diers, for strength. The two held Zainab and prayed until it was time to leave. Her mother had still not shown up. “This was quite possibly the single hardest thing I have done,” says Wilson, “leaving her there knowing she was inches from death.”

This was Wilson’s second time in Sierra Leone with Diers, who organized the trip for students and recent alumni. She is involved with the nonprofit The Raining Season, which runs an orphanage in the West African country. The trip was filled with momentous, sometimes heartbreaking, and sometimes hopeful moments. Joel Winters ’10 remembers meeting the husband of an orphanage employee who had recently died. Unable to access a vehicle when his wife started having severe stomach pains, he carried her on his own back all the way to the hospital before she passed. But Winters also remembers meeting the 18-year-old Joseph, a Muslim, and talking with him on the beach about God, Jesus and Christianity.

The first moment the students arrived in Sierra Leone, they felt the shock of extreme wealth disparity. Winters says it felt like a movie scene, with people living in tiny sheds of branches and tin. Diers recalls the children she saw picking through trash for food. Wilson had a similar experience: “I feel like my main statement in regard to Sierra Leone is: ‘You have got to be kidding me!’ This is what I thought when I first saw the poverty.”

The task of the small group of students and alumni, most of them education majors, was to play with the orphans and develop educational activities for them. Diers says this provided practice creating lessons and problem-solving on the spot. As a specialist in education and child development, Diers trained the orphanage’s teachers on proper educational techniques in a country whose literacy rate is only 36 percent. The Raining Season’s next project is an orphan village with a school, medical facility, church, community center and sustainable agriculture.

Despite all the powerful moments Diers has experienced during her four trips with The Raining Season, her mind keeps going back to that scene in the children’s hospital. “To think, in that moment, that a Central student was there to hold that baby,” Diers says with both pride and sadness. “Hanna was there in the last moments of that baby’s life to give her warmth and love. It was a special moment for us as professor and student to be part of together.”

“I believe that these trips are part of God’s plan for us and the people of Sierra Leone,” says Wilson. Diers and Wilson, here with Baby Zainab.

In Sierra Leone, Jen Diers acquired a medical visa for an orphaned child with disabilities. Lucy is now being treated at Pella Regional Health Center and lives with the Diers family. Read more about Lucy at civitas.central.edu.
Growing up with a “restless and adventurous heart,” Crippen always knew she had a deep connection with the earth. After graduation, the political science and Spanish major was off to Alaska to work on her uncle’s seining boat (“the Siren”) to fish for salmon. Since she had spent the previous four seasons aboard, she was designated “deck boss,” on top of mending nets, hauling gear and directing fish (up to 65,000 pounds) into the hold.

In January, Crippen traveled to Tanzania with a friend to work at an orphanage for teenage girls and explore the heart-rending landscape of eastern Africa. Next, she trained for and ran an ultra-marathon of 45 miles in New Mexico (what a thing to gloss over!) and then moved to the intentional Christian community of Jubilee Farms in Comer, Georgia. The group of 30 people live and work on the sustainable farm and serve a refugee population in need. Crippen will stay at Jubilee until December and then decide on the next phase of her life. Who knows what or where that could be?

Crippen says the past year has given her time to prioritize her life and reflect on the way “dirtiness” can purify the soul. “There were so many instances when I was dirty, hungry, tired, lost or sore from hiking—but I loved every part of it because it was an adventure and a challenge,” she says. “And isn’t that what life is really supposed to be about? Putting yourself through the crucible to see who you really are in the thick of it?”