

CENTRAL

BULLETIN SPRING '10



Bernadette Allen '78 A life of foreign service

The Interdependence of Global Health

by Mark Putnam, Central College president



Earlier this year, Tammy and I traveled to southern California for a conference. We boarded our second flight eager for a brief relief from the Iowa winter. About midway through, Tammy grabbed my arm and whispered, “I don’t feel well.” She was pale and her skin felt a bit clammy. As a preemptive move, we headed to the restroom. She appeared weak and in seconds fainted.

Immediately, those surrounding came to our aid. Some helped support her as I removed her coat; others opened air vents. Within a short time, she was alert and had sufficient strength to complete the short walk to the rear of the aircraft. All eyes turned to our direction. Most were expressions of understanding, but one elderly gentleman looked at us with a face of fear.

The chance to cool down and move through the cabin allowed Tammy to regain her strength. As we returned to our seats, we passed the elderly gentleman again. His face was now covered with a surgical mask.

The images of that flight have stayed with me. Each of these responses was understandable given the circumstances. We witnessed:

- Those nearby who assisted did so without any concern for themselves.
- Those at more of a distance remained so, but with a measure of empathy.
- If the elderly gentleman had a parachute, I think he would have used it.

Cholera was the first truly global disease. Containing the threat of cholera around the world came through scientific discovery, a commitment to change societal infrastructure in service of public health, and the need to change the lifestyles of average citizens.

As I sat on the plane reflecting on Tammy’s health, I wondered, “What if she actually had been carrying a highly contagious disease?” This flight came from one major metropolitan region heading to another. How many destinations in the world would these passengers reach within the next few hours?

In the wake of this, I gained a new appreciation for various roles in promoting global health. I admire the dedication of healthcare professionals, scientists and epidemiologists who work to prevent the spread of disease. Their surveillance, prevention and intervention manage health risk for a global population.

As an educator, I am aware of the need to develop the next generation of health advocates who will respond to the call of global health. We also need to promote the well-being of society by sharing information and ideas for healthy global citizenship. Ultimately, we need to reach out to those in need and realize that in the end, their health and well-being is our own.

For the full piece, go to www.central.edu/go/president

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EDITOR

Abby Gonzales '02

SPORTS EDITOR

Larry Happel '81

GRAPHIC DESIGNER

Brianna Blake

CONTRIBUTING WRITERS

Allison Fegley '08

Rhiley Huntington '13

Mark Putnam

Valerie Van Kooten

Loni Weston '11

EDITORIAL ASSISTANTS

Mary Benedict

Susan Canfield

Connie Aalbers Marlow '76

Lynne Petty

Kathy Cashen Thompson '87

Peggy Johnson Van Den Berg '83

DIRECTOR OF ALUMNI

RELATIONS

Ann Van Hemert '00

ASSISTANT DIRECTOR OF

ALUMNI RELATIONS

Trenton Blythe '08

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Photo courtesy of Vermeer Manufacturing

ON THE COVER

Bernadette Allen '78

Photo by Dan Vander Beek

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Spaur's love of international traveling guided him to work opportunities in Asia.

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One of the many hermit crabs that call Wee Wee Caye home.

Photo submitted by Rhiley Huntington '13



Senior guard Jordan Waddell established the school career 3-point goals mark with 120.

Photo by Dan Vander Beek

I N T H I S I S S U E

New VP for Academic Affairs hired



Photo by Joe Lencioni, shiftingpixel.com

Mary Strey will start duties as vice president for academic affairs and dean of the faculty July 1.

Mary E. Morton Strey will begin duties as vice president for academic affairs and dean of the faculty July 1.

Strey most recently served as professor of chemistry and biology, tenured in both departments, at Gustavus Adolphus College in St. Peter, Minn., where she also held the post of inaugural provost and vice president for academic affairs from 2007-09. Prior to that she was dean of the college of arts and sciences and professor

of biology at the University of Dayton and spent 13 years at the College of the Holy Cross as a faculty member, coordinator of science programs (1997-2000) and associate dean of the college (2000-04). Strey earned a bachelor's degree from Bowdoin College and a doctorate from Dartmouth College.

Strey is charged with accomplishing institutional goals of raising the academic profile, reviewing the study abroad pro-

grams, connecting faculty across disciplines, developing the arts with greater emphasis on their contributions to the Central learning community, reworking undergraduate preparation in the health sciences and more.

ROSLIEN SCHOLARSHIP

Frank '91 and Stacey Profit Neu '92 initiated a scholarship drive in order to endow a scholarship in honor of John



John Roslien was presented with a scholarship plaque at Homecoming.

Roslien for his 25 years of service at Central College. Roslien, athletic training program director, was instrumental in getting Central College's athletic training program accredited. He is also responsible for moving the program into a successful curriculum-based program. To contribute to the scholarship fund, contact the development office at 800-447-0287.

MUSIC SCHOLARSHIP

Central College received \$200,000 from the Lora Grandia estate to use for the Lora Grandia Music Scholarship, which was endowed in 2000. Grandia, a 1943 graduate, passed away in December. Through this scholarship, Grandia was able to generously give the gift of supporting students as they explore the world of music that brought her joy throughout her lifetime.

MUSIC IN MERIDA

Members of the Central College Jazz Band and Symphonic Wind Ensemble (SWE) enjoyed 13 days in Mexico during winter break. Every four years, these music groups tour internationally. Forty-three students, along with ensemble directors Gabriel Espinosa and Mitch Lutch, performed concerts for audiences

in Cancun, Xcaret, Playa del Carmen, Tulum and Merida, while gaining an unforgettable cultural experience.

"These cultural, musical, educational and social experiences and connections between our Central College family and the fine people we met in Mexico are a shining example of the warmth of the human spirit," said Lutch.

Although performing was a large portion of their time abroad, the travelers, including alumni, families and friends, also enjoyed free time to experience the culture. They visited Chichen Itza and other Mayan ruins and went zip-lining and snorkeling in Isla Mujeres.

PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT SERIES BENEFITS STUDENTS

Over 15 years ago, faculty from the economics, accounting and management department, along with Career Center administrators, started Central's professional development series from an outgrowth of a discussion about the most important things students need to know as they begin their professional lives.

The series includes workshops that aid students in taking steps towards finding a job after graduation. Topics range from a job search overview and résumé/cover letter writing to interviewing strategies,

dressings for success and dining etiquette. The series is required for six majors, but juniors and seniors from all majors are encouraged to participate.

NEW GLOBAL SUSTAINABILITY MINOR ADDED

This fall, Central College will incorporate a new global sustainability minor into the curriculum.

This integrative program is designed to offer all students, regardless of major or career aspirations, a means of acquiring some of the tools and practical experience they will need when they enter the work force, assume leadership positions in their communities, and deal with complex, interconnected problems on a scale never before faced by humans.

According to the Association for the Advancement of Sustainability in Higher Education, there are approximately 30 schools nationwide that list such a program and Central is the lone school in Iowa to have global sustainability as an option for a minor.

In 2008, Central's faculty voted to add a global sustainability component to its newly restructured core curriculum. Few other schools in the nation have sustainability as part of its required curriculum. ■



Photo by FJ Gaylor

Students studying in Russ Benedict's environmental problems class this fall.

A love for traveling

by Allison Fegley '08



Photo submitted by Brian Fegley

Peter '11 with sister Allison '08 and parents Lori Humphrey Fegley '80 and Brian Fegley '80 in Mexico this winter.

For a family whose recent vacations consisted of an annual long weekend in St. Louis to take in a Cardinals baseball game or two, the thought of taking a weeklong trip to Merida, Mexico, was almost impossible to imagine. So when my mom (Lori Humphrey Fegley '80) suggested that we sign up for the Fiesta in Merida trip being put on by the alumni

office this winter, I sort of laughed to myself. My parents are huge supporters of Central College (being alumni themselves) but they are definitely not world travelers — my dad (Brian Fegley '80) had never been on an airplane and my mom had only flown once in her life. But the trip offered a much needed vacation for the three of us and an

unexpected chance to see my younger brother (Peter '11) perform with the music groups, so we decided to go.

For me, the travel bug hit me in college, and I took advantage of Central's fantastic study abroad program and spent a semester in London during my junior year. While in Europe, I visited seven countries and learned more about myself

than I ever could have imagined. I came back from that experience a different person, and I know my family and friends noticed I was much more independent and confident than when I had left four months earlier.

The trip to Merida was, in a small way, my opportunity to share my study abroad experience with my parents who were unable to visit me while I was in London. I was able to show them the ease with which I navigate myself through airports, demonstrate my knowledge of the Spanish language that came back to me relatively easily as I communicated with the locals, and most importantly, share my love for traveling and investigating other cultures which I developed during my time overseas. When I came back from my study abroad semester, I often felt like my family didn't totally comprehend all I had experienced while studying abroad, but after our trip to Merida, I feel like my family has a little more insight into those elements from my time abroad that have become so much a part of me.

ALUMNI ASSIST INAUGURATION OF IOWA GOVERNOR

by Sherill Whisenand '78

Jan. 14 dawned bright and sunny for the inauguration and return of Iowa's Governor Terry E. Branstad and Lt. Governor Kim Reynolds.

While the public activities swirled throughout the day and with the culmination of a stunning inaugural ball, few knew how many Central College alums had a hand in the day's events.

Gov. Branstad's campaign chairperson was former Iowa Republican Party executive director Jeffrey Boeyink '85. He has been with Branstad from the beginning of the campaign. Boeyink now holds the prestigious position as Iowa Governor's Chief of Staff.

Mary Whisenand '86 and Sherill Whisenand '78, served as the co-chairs of the inaugural committee activities held

at the state capitol open to all Iowans for a day of celebratory music and festivities.

Daryl Sherman '76, superintendent of the Lake Mills Community School District, brought the 110-member elementary school choir to perform on the capitol steps. Gov. Branstad grew up in Lake Mills, Iowa, and specifically requested their appearance.

Other Central College connections included Kitte Dormady Noble '91, executive director of the Rotary Club of Des Moines, where Gov. Branstad and Sherill Whisenand are also members. Noble helped coordinate Rotarians who willingly gave of their time and resources to make the day at the capitol such a success.

Additionally, Sarah Kuhn Henderson '96 was integral in the day's festivities. And former political science faculty member Don Racheter remains involved in the political process of Iowans. ■

CENTRAL COLLEGE TRIVIA

1. Who is the new Vice President of Academic Affairs?
2. Who was the 1968 Homecoming Queen?
3. In what year did construction begin on the first Central Student Union?
4. When was the Pella Community/CUI Mud Wrestling Exhibition held?
5. Who was the Student Activities Coordinator in 1998?

CENTRAL TRIVIA ANSWERS:
1. Dr. Mary Morton Strey
2. Joan Hutchinson 3. 1954
4. 1983 5. Curt Kenoyer

ALUMNI PROFILES

COLLEEN KELCH JANSSEN '72



Has been an elementary and preschool teacher, home daycare provider, mentor to mothers who had been sexually abused, was a

sexual abuse prevention educator and is a certified postpartum doula; lives in Glen Rock, N. J.

The last two years I have had the delightful pleasure to take care of my two grandchildren, ages 4 years and 17 months.

Central memories: Pranks in Graham Hall, skating on the pond, students sliding over the bridge (it did not have steps back then), West Market Park picnics, Dubit's pizza, playing pool and football games.

JENNIFER BURGESS WEIDMAN '94



Social worker for Washington County Public Health in Washington, Iowa.

Works with children and families in the area

to provide resource and referral for services in the community.

Central memories: Intramural tournaments and Saturday football games

PAUL LAMBERT '86



Married to Jennifer Houck-Lambert '87; children Ethan and Edan.

Manager of demand planning for Wells'

Enterprises, the largest family-owned and operated ice cream manufacturer in the United States, located in the northwest Iowa community of Le Mars.

Central memories: Meeting my wife of 22 years, skiing in Colorado with Gators Ski Club, and eating George's pizza.

Two national champs in record-breaking indoor track campaign



Photos by Dan Vander Beek

Kurtis Brondyke was national champion in the pentathlon. Ethan Miller won the high jump at the indoor national meet.

Three athletes aren't even enough for a relay, but they were just one point away from giving Central a national team indoor track championship.

Fueled by multi-event superstars Kurtis Brondyke, a senior from Clinton, Iowa, and junior Ethan Miller of Seymour, Iowa, Central brought home a best-ever

second-place trophy from the NCAA Division III indoor men's track meet at Columbus, Ohio, March 11-12. With a performance that exceeded nearly all expectations, Central racked up 44 points, just one less than champion North Central (Ill.). Miller scored 26 by himself, placing second in the long jump, scoring

a surprise victory in the high jump with a career-best leap of 6-feet-11, then finishing behind Brondyke as the duo went one-two in the pentathlon, which Brondyke won with a personal-best 3,827 points. The two individual crowns raise Central's NCAA individual championship total to 25. Senior Matt Graber of Newton, Iowa,

the last athlete to make the national field in the shot put, pulled off a surprising second-place finish.

Miller was tabbed as Division III's field event athlete of the year and Central's Guy Mosher was named national assistant of the year.

“Every single performance was special,” coach Joe Dunham said. “All three men had to dig deep and find a way to win. It was a great national meet.”

Central claimed its second straight Iowa Conference indoor crown at H.S. Kuyper Fieldhouse. Miller was the league field events athlete of the year, while Dunham was coach of the year.

The Dutch women were a strong second at the league meet. Senior Jill Ziskovsky of Dallas Center, Iowa, placed fifth in the NCAA pentathlon and helped Central earn all-America honors in the 4x400-meter relay along with senior Emily Teas of Indianola, Iowa; sophomore Felicia Coleman of Houston, Texas; and sophomore Rachel Purdy of Ankeny, Iowa.

INEXPERIENCED MEN'S SQUAD ENJOYS SURPRISING YEAR

Despite a championship season in 2009-10, few expected the Central men's basketball team to contend this year after losing all five starters to graduation.

Injuries to several key players raised the hurdle even higher, yet coach Mike Boschee had his squad in the thick of the league race once again, before it all caught up to them down the stretch, when the Dutch dropped five of the final six games to close at 12-13. Yet, they still tied for fourth place after being picked for sixth.



Photo by Dan Vander Beek

Guard Demarco Turner was an all-Iowa Conference pick.

Senior guard Demarco Turner of Des Moines, Iowa, was among the surprises. He blossomed in his first year as a starter, averaging 16.3 points a game and earning first-team all-conference honors. Junior forward Jack Bruns of Story City, Iowa, received honorable mention and the Dutch also got 9.6 points and a team-high 6.3 rebounds from senior forward James Chapline of Ogden, Iowa.

GREINER EARNS NCAA WRESTLING BERTH

Wrestling in March was the goal and preseason mantra of the Central wrestling team.

Freshman Kalen Greiner of Keota, Iowa, got the Dutch there as coach Eric Van Kley continues to have his rebuilding program on the fast track. Greiner earned a spot at 125 pounds, stunning two nationally ranked wrestlers in back-to-back overtime wins en route to a fourth-place finish at the Iowa Conference meet.

Central was seventh in the league standings, increasing their team point total from 49 to 83.5. The Dutch, 10-10 in dual action, placed wrestlers in all 10 weights at the league meet for the first time since 1996.

Greiner failed to place at the national meet but closed at 17-11 while junior Tommy Van Renterghem of Oskaloosa, Iowa, posted a team-best 26-13 mark. The Dutch were without a senior in their starting lineup.

NIKKEL RETIRES AS WOMEN'S BASKETBALL COACH

Seven years after retirement turned into full-time college coaching, Jerry Nikkel officially gave up the reins as Central's women's basketball coach. He served as head coach for the past three seasons following four years as assistant.

Hindered by a lack of size and experience, Central endured a 5-20 campaign. Junior guard Sarah Paulson of Ottumwa, Iowa, returned mid-season after a knee injury last year and a semester of study in Europe through Central College Abroad and received all-Iowa Conference honorable mention. Junior forward Haley Brillhart of Pella also joined the team late following the volleyball season and averaged a team-high 9.4 points and 6.2 rebounds. Senior guard Jordan Waddell of Guthrie Center, Iowa, established the school career 3-point goal mark with 120. ■

BERNADETTE ALLEN

Devoted lifetime of public service

by Valerie Van Kooten



A bulletin board piqued Bernadette Allen's interest in Central College as a high schooler.

A bulletin board in her high school in the Washington, D.C. area got Bernadette Allen to Central College.

"They used to have these business boards where you tore off cards, and this card asked if you wanted to study abroad at Central College," Allen said. "I had studied French and Spanish in high school, so I filled it out, Central sent a representative to meet with me, and I enrolled."

Thus began an odyssey that has propelled Allen through a lifetime of public service abroad.

Majoring in French and linguistics, Allen spent a summer and a full year on the Paris program and loved it. Even so, she hadn't

envisioned herself working overseas.

"I wanted to work with refugees and immigrants coming into the U.S., helping them get re-settled," she said.

After graduating from Central in 1978, Allen took advantage of a Central partnership with schools in France where participants teach ESL classes at a French high school. While there, she met officials at the U.S. Consulate who knew her uncle — an employee of the U.S. State Department — and who urged her to look at a life of foreign service.

"At the same time, I'm teaching classes as the first American assigned to this school

in Marseilles,” Allen said. “Most of these kids had never seen a black person. I knew I needed to educate them about the melting pot in the United States.”

Her contacts at the Consulate continued to persuade her that foreign service needed more

“I looked at the world differently after my junior year,” she said. “I came home with a different lens.”

women, more minorities. Allen took the written test, passed it and was then called to take the oral examination.

“Before I knew it, I was headed to my first assignment in Africa,” she said.

Over the years, Allen’s work led her to the U.S. Embassy in Burundi, as a Foreign Service Officer in the Philippines, positions with the U.S. Department of State in China and as U.S. Ambassador to Niger. Her knowledge of French helped her immensely.

“All of my Africa assignments were in Francophile countries, and I could go immediately into my assignments without months of French language training.”

She also speaks Mandarin Chinese, for which she attended a language school.

Although her path was not typical for foreign service since she didn’t study political science, she stayed within the State Department.

“As for being an ambassador to Niger — I didn’t envision that happening,” she admitted.

Allen believes Central students and alumni who go abroad will see that the world is a lot smaller than they think.

“We used to be able to be isolated, but it’s impossible to live only with a domestic eye anymore,” Allen said. “We need an international perspective to make it in the future. All of these companies are going global and now our financial situation is so interlinked with the world market.”

What students learn about their own country

while abroad is equally as important as what they learn about the country where they’re staying, she said.

“After 9/11, people tend to look at the negative side and think there are so many people around the world who dislike what’s going on in the U.S.,” she said. “But more people want to get here so they can taste a part of democracy. So many young people are dying to get into U.S. universities so they can carry home what they learned abroad here.”

Allen is now retired and spending time catching up with her family in the States. But she considers the beginning of her international adventures her time at Central on an exchange program to France.

“I looked at the world differently after my junior year,” she said. “I came home with a different lens.”

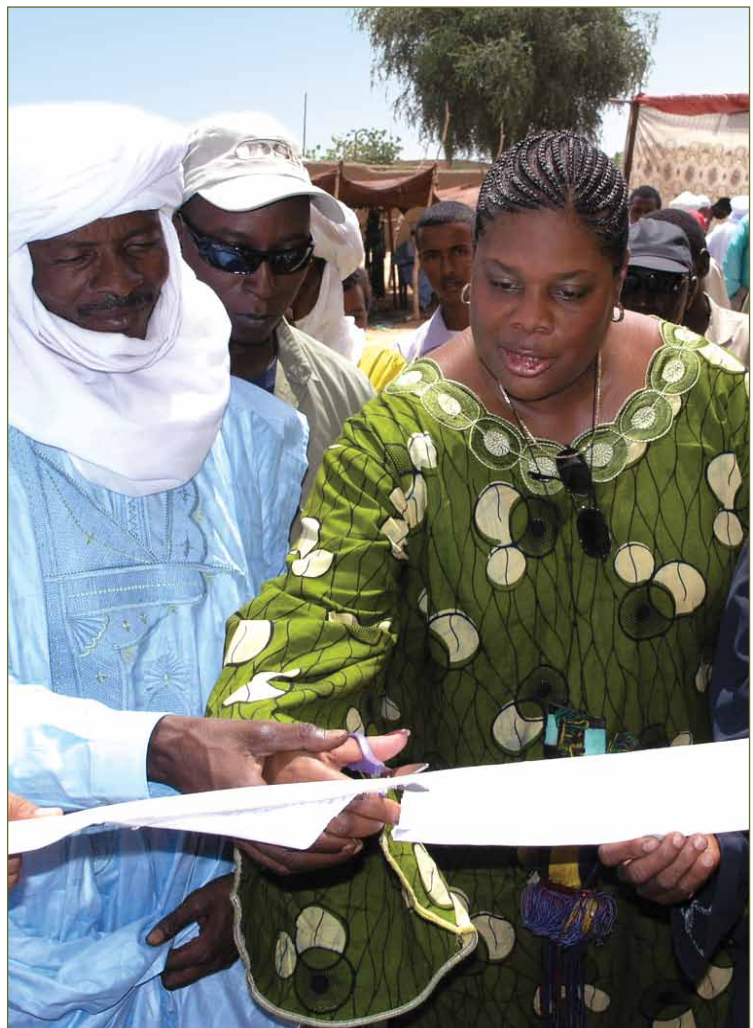


Photo submitted by Bernadette Allen

Bernadette Allen '78 served as U.S. Ambassador to Niger.

MIKE SPAUR:

Following a global business path

by Valerie Van Kooten



Photo submitted by Mike Spaur

Mike Spaur '94, his wife, Rasanan, and their daughter, Cherry, live in Singapore.

Even as he sat in a high school classroom in Newton, Iowa, Mike Spaur '94 always knew he'd be involved in international life. His mom, after all, had led the way, studying in Mexico in college — a pretty unusual thing to do at that time.

Spaur started Central in the fall of 1990. After spending a semester his sophomore year in Merida, Mexico, and his entire junior year in Granada, Spain, a friend told him about the Japan Exchange Teaching (JET) program. Following graduation in 1994, he taught in Japan for three years.

"I taught American and English culture, but then I wanted to come back to the States and get a master's degree," he said.

Spaur received an M.A. from Thunderbird University in Arizona and then started a job at Vermeer Corporation in Pella in international finance, progressing through finance, logistics and operations. "During this time I had the opportunity to travel quite extensively for Vermeer through Europe, Latin America and the Asian Pacific," he said. "I also got to spend nine months in Australia for the company."

In 2008, Spaur accepted a position with Vermeer as regional sales and support officer, based in Singapore. Today he spends a great deal of his time in India, as well.

His best advice to students and alumni who want to live and work overseas? Develop core competencies in your field, he said.

"I learned that companies aren't going to send you overseas just because you speak the language and know the culture," he said. "You need to know the product and the company and develop hard skills — engineering, accounting, sales and management, for example. Otherwise, you're just a translator."

In addition to speaking Spanish fluently, Spaur is conversant in Japanese, has basic French skills, and is learning Thai.

"Knowing Chinese would definitely be a benefit, but most business can be done here in English or through a translator," he said.

Students at Central today have expanded opportunities to go abroad and need to take advantage of them, Spaur said, adding that they'll get the most out of the experience if they break out of their group of friends and expand their networks.

"There's a tendency to want to hang out with people in your program, and a certain amount of that is necessary," he said. "But I connected and made strong friendships with locals, got out of the international student environment, and keep up with those friends today."

The biggest advantage to studying and working abroad, Spaur said, is starting to see more similarities than differences.

"You learn to appreciate the differences in cultures, but ultimately you realize people are

more the same than they are different," he said.

For now, Spaur doesn't have plans to move back to the United States. His wife, Rasanan, is Thai, and they have a 7-year-old daughter.

"You learn to appreciate the differences in cultures, but ultimately you realize people are more the same than they are different," he said.

"We're closer to my wife's home here, and the climate is similar," he said. "She has never lived through an Iowa winter, and I don't think she'd want to!"



Mike Spaur '94, (standing behind trustee Bob Vermeer,) has made his home in Asia working for Vermeer Corporation.

Photo courtesy of Vermeer Manufacturing

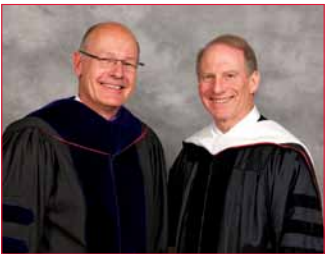
HORIZONS OF Opportunity

the inaugural year

SPRING HIGHLIGHTS

An Evening with Richard Haass as interviewed by Harry Smith '73

Central College, Pella Corporation and Vermeer Corporation presented "An Evening with Richard Haass as interviewed by Harry Smith '73" on campus March 28 as part of the Inaugural Year celebration. Central presented Haass with an honorary degree.



Harry Smith '73 and Richard Haass

Haass, president of the Council on Foreign Relations since 2003, was interviewed by CBS senior news correspondent and Central trustee **Harry Smith '73**. Haass has been U.S. coordinator for the Future of Afghanistan. From 1989-93, he was special assistant to United States President George Bush and National Security Council Senior Director for Near East and South Asian Affairs.

Haass also spoke at Vermeer Corporation and Pella Corporation, presenting a business-centric dialogue with business leaders from those companies. At Central, Smith talked about his recent travels to Egypt, Libya and Japan and what it's like to be a news correspondent.



Squonk Opera

Also during Pella's Global Reach Week, Central's dining services highlighted food from countries where Pella Corporation and Vermeer Corporation have facilities. Central faculty, students and employees from Vermeer Corporation presented on various topics during lunch. Other events included an international dinner, Combos concert, guest speakers and poster presentations. In addition, Central College Abroad hosted its cooperative school representatives and directors for its annual meeting.

Squonk Opera presents Central College: The Opera

Ever wonder what the Central College community looks like from the outside? Squonk Opera presented *Central College: The Opera* April 15-16 to showcase just that. The show was part of Squonk's unique site-specific opera series that adapts the host community's hometown documentation with Squonk's aural and visual trickery. Squonk Opera visited campus Jan. 25-28 to learn about the college's history by interviewing alumni, employees and students.

The project was supported in part by a grant from the Iowa Arts Council, a division of the Iowa Department of Cultural Affairs, and an award from the National Endowment for the Arts.



Terry Tempest Williams

Writers Reading with Terry Tempest Williams

Author Terry Tempest Williams was the featured author for Writers Reading April 7. Central received a special grant from Humanities Iowa, the state affiliate of the National Endowment for the Humanities, to help support the event. Williams is best known for her impassioned and lyrical prose. Her best-known work, *Refuge: An Unnatural History of Family and Place*, is an environmental literature classic.



Central College

Homecoming/Family Weekend

Schedule Preview

FRIDAY, SEPTEMBER 30, 2011

8 a.m. – 4 p.m.	Central's faculty open up their classrooms
10 a.m.	Heritage Day reception
11 a.m.	Heritage Day worship
12 p.m.	Heritage Day luncheon, invitation only
6 p.m.	Lemming Race, a Central tradition since 1977, Peace Mall
6 – 8:30 p.m.	Alumni and family barbecue, pep rally, coronation, street party
8:30 p.m.	Bonfire on Peace Mall

SATURDAY, OCTOBER 1, 2011

8 – 10 a.m.	Pancake breakfast, Maytag patio
9 and 10 a.m.	Pella tours, departs from Central Hall parking lot
9:30 – 10:20 a.m.	Lifelong learning classes
9:30 – 10:30 a.m.	Central College Abroad information session
10 - 11:30 a.m.	Family carnival, Graham Conference Center
10:30 – 11:20 a.m.	Lifelong learning classes
11 a.m.	Tailgate under the big tent
1 p.m.	Football — Central vs. Coe
TBA	Class reunion pictures
5:45 p.m.	Alumni Homecoming dinner
7:30 p.m.	Class reunion gatherings

SUNDAY, OCTOBER 2, 2011

11 a.m.	Sunday brunch, Central Market
1 p.m.	Annual Flying Pans Alumni Steel Band Concert, Douwstra Auditorium

Snorkeling with a passion

by Rhiley Huntington '13



Senior Jessica Williams with a mouse opossum at Palo Verde National Park.



As ready as I am to turn 20 and begin the final leg of my journey into the mysterious world of “grown-ups,” I’ve started to realize the importance of the magic of being a child. Growing up, Steve Irwin and Jeff Corwin were greater household names than Spongebob Squarepants or the Powerpuff Girls and nature walks were a weekly occurrence for me. On rainy days, I could be found running frantically about the blacktop trying to save worms from the stomping feet of other squealing girls. “They’re important, too!” I’d cry, flinging wriggling palms full into the nearby grass. I wasn’t exactly the typical first grade girl.

So, when I came to Central College, it was no surprise I became an eager biology major and that, when the opportunity presented itself this last fall, I joined Russ Benedict’s Tropical Ecology course. Fifteen students are selected to take this class each year and learn about rainforest and coral reef ecology, culminating with

a two-week trip to Costa Rica and Belize over winter break. Needless to say, when I found out I was accepted, I leaped with excitement — much to the confusion of the patrons of the local Pizza Ranch!

The semester flew by, peppered with warnings about scorpions, fire corals and poisonous snakes, and somehow, four days after a very white Christmas, I found myself sitting in the sun on the dock at Wee Wee Caye Field Station, pulling on flippers to snorkel in the ocean for the very first time. From that first day to many more that followed, I was not only actively learning, but also discovering a new, even more adventurous side of myself — thoroughly enjoying a night dive with octopi and eels, going on a three-and-a-half hour hike through the rainforest on trails six inches deep in mud and waking up for 6 a.m. bird watching after late nights of bat netting. It was the first time in my life I can honestly say I was driven purely by passion.

And who couldn’t be? We began in Belize, snorkeling on coral reefs teeming with life at the Wee Wee Caye Field Station, then proceeded to Costa Rica where we visited three different rainforest ecosystems, as well as the active Volcano Arenal, the 330-foot tall San Luis Waterfall, and saw toucans, monkeys, sloths and bats, along with many others.

When it came down to it, magical was the word that permeated my journals while in Costa Rica and Belize along with awestruck, excited and incredible. As Central College helps prepare me to become a true “grown-up,” I am constantly reminded of the importance of rediscovering magic, whether while snorkeling between mangrove roots encased in rainbows of sponges or saving worms from their imminent demise — for it is this magic that creates passion, and passion that truly allows you to go farther than you’ve ever dreamed. ■

Photos submitted by Rhiley Huntington '13



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