Exploring Opportunities, Ignoring Boundaries:

VCU Red Cross in Guatemala

The power behind having a vision is often underestimated among groups of all ages. But student leaders at Virginia Commonwealth University have realized that “a vision is not just a picture of what could be; it is an appeal to our better selves, a call to become something more” (Rosabeth Moss Kanter). Such a vision to establish a student chapter of the American Red Cross at Virginia Commonwealth University was ironically conceived during a time when most students turn off any remnants of constructive thought in order to enjoy the warmth and sunlight of their summer days. Robin Kuriakose and Akash Patel, both sophomores at VCU, however, kept their minds open as they enjoyed their summer with family and friends. By the end of the summer, these two students had determined to initiate a novel organization at VCU.

After countless meetings and planning sessions, the organization was finally launched with the purpose of providing Red Cross services to the local community and VCU students. The goal was to help people prevent, prepare for, and respond to emergencies while advocating lifesaving skills and actions. But how could they stop there when the idea of having a vision to become something more, was an innate quality instilled within each and every one of their members? It was this appeal to better themselves that inevitably led to the organization’s partnership with The Highland Support Project. This partnership would facilitate participation in a spring break study abroad opportunity to the Highlands of Guatemala in order to learn about the potential needs of another population.

The Highland Support Project operates with a mission to create transformational development models that foster agency with Highland Indigenous Communities of the Americas to address critical environmental, social, and economic issues. It specializes in creating synergistic programming initiatives that develop partnerships between indigenous communities and service organizations. The travel team

(Continued on Page 2)
this year consisted of eight members of the American Red Cross Student Organization at VCU, and six other VCU students. Aruna Anbazhagan, team leader and International Relations Chair for the American Red Cross at VCU, had specifically hoped to plan this year’s trip around objectives regarding a holistic approach to healthcare and global medicine. Students built stoves for indigenous families to prevent the onset of respiratory infections, organized basic health checkups to screen for risk of high blood pressure and/or diabetes, and educated the indigenous communities about various skin problems which remain prevalent in their areas. Most importantly, however, students became aware of the significance of sustainable programming, which serves to empower communities and cultivate agency in the long run. “Agency is the ability to act rather then being acted upon—the capability of imposing ones own vision on reality,” explains Ben Blevins, the founder of Highland Support Project. Dependency fostering programs rob a community of agency and that is why the Highland Support Project works to empower the indigenous communities of Guatemala.

Additionally, with the help of Highland Support Project, a visit to the local Guatemala Red Cross was planned in an attempt to foster an international relationship between the Red Cross in Guatemala and the student chapter at VCU. On arrival, Cruz Roja Guatemalteca not only welcomed and invited the group of VCU students to a tour of their facilities but also encouraged conversation and dialogue despite the language barrier. As Bianka Patel recalls “They willingly went out of their way to answer any questions we had and were very thorough with their explanations. They even brought out Raulito, their only practice mannequin, for us to see!”

As both groups exchanged ideas and current needs for their organizations, a mutual understanding and cooperation emerged, as well as an agreement to keep in contact and to plan future endeavors in tandem. With the help and partnership of Highland Support Project, both Red Cross organizations will have the capability and resources to work together and reach out to the high-lands of Guatemala into indigenous communities that remain in dire need of aid and relief. In fact, the Highland Support Project is currently working on an emergency preparedness initiative in hopes of fostering such relationships. “We’re now friends with Cruz Roja Guatemalteca on Facebook,” says Basil Mathews excitedly, treasurer for the VCU student organization, “it’s international relations at its finest.”

Still, these students seek to develop their vision even further and will pursue it wherever potential lies. Ultimately, the partnership of both organizations is based on the shared ideal of humanity—something which transcends all boundaries.
Preserve Your Brain: Learn a Language!

Tolu Omojokun
CO-EDITOR-IN-CHIEF

As the diversity of the United States population continues to increase and innovations in modern travel allow the farthest regions of the world to be accessible, the exterior benefits of learning foreign languages are becoming more and more apparent. Being multilingual can serve as a great résumé booster or facilitate navigation and communication during a vacation abroad. While these advantages could be motivation enough to go out and buy yourself a new foreign language dictionary, recent studies have shown that learning new languages can also delay the onset of neurodegenerative disorders such as Alzheimer’s disease. Like the rest of the parts of the body, the brain can suffer from atrophy caused by periods of inactivity or aging. By keeping the brain active and constantly challenged, however, this atrophy and the dementia and other symptoms that stem from it can be deferred by several years. Gaining fluency in a foreign language has been shown to be just the mind stimulator needed to prevent brain degeneration and the conditions associated with it. One study exemplifying this fact showed that, compared to monolingual individuals of otherwise equal cognitive ability, bilingual individuals were able to function without signs of Alzheimer’s for about four years longer. Age-related disorders may seem to belong in the distant future, but prevention can start today. It would be nice if we could just download new languages into our brains—Matrix-style—but unfortunately, it takes some work. There is a great variety of foreign language courses and international clubs here at VCU, however, that would give you an opportunity to start learning. Language programs such as Rosetta Stone are also available to purchase, and there are plenty of free online resources out there if you’re willing to do a little Googling. So, buena suerte, veel succes, bonne chance, and good luck!

Ellen Chyn
FEATURES EDITOR

Are you looking for dental treatment at a minimal cost? Well, look no further! You have the opportunity to receive FREE dental treatment at the VCU School of Dentistry. Every year the current graduating class of dental students at the VCU School of Dentistry has to prepare for the clinical portion of their licensure examinations in April. For their clinical exams, many dental students are looking for patients that are reliable and will show up at the dental school on the test dates of April 27 and 28. They are specifically in search of patients who suffer from cavities, for whom treatment would be rendered free of charge on the testing dates. All those who participate qualify for a free clinical exam and x-rays. The first step is to schedule an appointment at the VCU School of Dentistry at (804) 277-9362. At the appointment, dental students will do a free dental screening to see if you qualify as a patient for the clinical examination. If you cannot be a board’s patient, have no fear! VCU School of Dentistry has another offer just for college students: Student 2 Student Dental Plan. Under this treatment plan, a yearly fee of $350.00 is required. The services that are covered by the plan include oral exams, cleanings, scaling, fluoride treatments, x-rays, routine fillings, and emergency exams. As an added bonus, custom teeth whitening trays are offered at only the cost of the whitening material. This means that whitening trays are offered at a discount of over 80% off! If interested, make an appointment at the VCU School of Dentistry register for the Student 2 Student program or call (804) 828-9190 for more information. This program is offered only to college students, and students must bring their student IDs in order to verify themselves on the appointment day. The VCU School of Dentistry is located at 520 North 12th Street on the MCV Campus. The Campus Connector, Bus 84, provides free transportation for students from the Monroe Park Campus to the MCV Campus Barnes & Noble Bookstore.
If you’re anything like me, you love music – but don’t want to do it as a career. VCU offers a minor in music for those who want to study it as a part of their curriculum, but many other options exist for those who simply want an extracurricular outlet for their musical side. One of these options is R.A.M.ifications of VCU, a co-ed a cappella group that performs popular songs around Richmond. If you’ve ever seen the TV show The Sing-Off, you’ll understand what they’re all about: They replicate the sounds of instruments with their voices. Perhaps you’ve seen their short ‘teaser’ performances in the Compass, singing songs such as CeeLo Green’s “F--- You” or AWOLnation’s “Sail”. The group started in 2009 as the Compass Singers, but quickly changed their name to reflect more of their core values. Their members come from a variety of majors; only two of their sixteen members are majoring in music here at VCU. Their mission is to reflect VCU’s diversity and they accomplish this by representing all parts of the school. For example, their student leader, DeeVa Payne, is a broadcast journalism major. Each member has a distinct personality and is passionate and fun. They are bound together by a love of singing and a dedication to excellence.

Auditions are held at the beginning of every semester, assuming there are spots which need to be filled. Hopeful singers show up on audition day with 45 seconds of a song prepared which demonstrates their vocal ability. Can’t think of a good song? Happy Birthday to You usually suffices. After everyone auditions, the group sits down and comes to a decision together on who should become a new RAM. Similarly, choosing new repertoire is a group process. Each member is allowed to suggest two songs, and after rounds of voting, the final set list is created and the student leader contacts arrangers and purchases arrangements. The R.A.M.ifications’ final concert for the semester is being held on Friday, April 27th, 2012; keep an eye out around campus for details on when and what time. If you can’t catch them this semester, stay tuned for the Fall – or visit their Facebook page for videos, pictures, and announcements. In the words of student leader DeeVa Payne, “We truly are a family of 16 unique voices and point of views. We learn so much from each other and we create such a loving and open environment for each other. My life would not be nearly as great if I wasn’t a part of R.A.M.ifications of VCU.”
Qasim Kazmi, a rising senior at VCU, is one individual you definitely want to meet during your time here. Kazmi, a student in the Honors College, was recently accepted to the Preferred Applicant Track for VCU’s Guaranteed Admission Program in Medicine, and he aspires to be a physician involved in public health and health education as well. Apart from his impressive academic achievements, Kazmi has strived to contribute to campus life. As a sophomore, he co-founded Emerging Healthcare Leaders (EHL), an organization that works to connect students interested in various fields of healthcare as they spread awareness about current issues. This semester, Kazmi played a pivotal role in helping EHL raise almost $5,000 at a charity auction, on behalf of the non-profit organization Partners in Health. Above all, though, Kazmi is just trying to make the most of life, one day at a time. Read on to find out a bit more about things he’s experienced, his quirks and his approach to the world.

Le Monde: What’s the most interesting place you’ve visited?

Qasim Kazmi: Cove Creek! It’s a camping site in North Carolina—one of those hidden beauties. I went backpacking there and saw the most magnificent view of the stars that night.

LM: If you could travel into the future, how far would you go? What would you want to see?

QK: I would only go a few days ahead, just in time to see my exams before I actually take them! Other than that I wouldn’t want to travel into the future. It would take away from the spontaneity and surprise factor of life. What would be the point if we knew the future? It would all just be predictable.

LM: What’s the best compliment you’ve received?

QK: My parents telling me that they’re proud of me. I’m very close with my parents. They’re my inspiration in life, so making them proud is simply the best feeling.

LM: What scares you?

QK: I actually cannot watch scary movies. I just get way too...scared! The last scary movie I saw was the original Grudge, which all my friends thought was bordering humorous, but for me it was bordering wet my pants status.

LM: Your worst quality?

QK: As pre-medical students, we worry about the future far too. We stress over exams, grades, admissions, and then as medical students we worry about exams, boards, residency and on and on... There is always something to worry about if we allow ourselves to. We worry about tomorrow so much that we don’t enjoy today and consequently fail to live in the moment. I do my best to not stress too much and fall into this cycle, but I certainly do at times. It’s something I’m working on—I have to stop sometimes and remind myself that academics is just a journey in life and that’s it. I even put “hakuna” on my license plate to remind myself that in essence, there are no worries. Life always moves on and it works out in the end.

LM: If given the chance to meet anyone, living or dead, whom would you meet?

QK: Nelson Mandela! He is an inspiration for me to always stand up for what’s right even in the face of tremendous adversity. He stood up against apartheid, went to jail, was released after almost 30 years and then went on to become the president of South Africa.

LM: Something you’ve always wanted but are still looking for?

QK: My soul mate. Still accepting applications. Just kidding. This is a really deep question honestly. I guess I’m still looking for a state of being in which I am not too attached to anything material. Everything material comes and goes. I want to be stronger so that I’m never deterred from my course in life because of a failure or losing anything material.

Qasim Kazmi (Photo courtesy of Qasim Kazmi)
How to Ace Your Final Exams

Ellen Chyn
FEATURES EDITOR

Can’t stop thinking about how you did on that exam? Worried you may have bombed the most important question? Calm your nerves and take a short break! Read over this funny collection of student answers found on tests taken in the

1. Math professors always ask for the most obvious answers!

2. Math 101: Always simplify by the most common variable.

Solve this equation:

\[ \frac{1}{n} \sin x = ? \]

3. When in doubt in Chemistry, refer to debonair movie characters.

(b) Sea salt is commercially obtained from sea water by the process of evaporation and crystallization. The main component of sea salt is sodium chloride.

What type of attractive force or bond holds the sodium ions and chloride ions together in a crystal of sodium chloride?

James 6/20.
During the weekend of March 25-26, 2012, Club Softball at VCU traveled to UVA for a two-day tournament. Originally, VCU was scheduled to play three games on Saturday and one on Sunday. Our ladies won their first game against American University with a score of 7-0. Their second game was supposed to start at 8:30 PM, but due to rain delays, the game was pushed back to 10:00 PM and eventually cancelled. All of the extra time led to some unplanned, but very welcomed, team-bonding. Play resumed on Sunday morning at 8:00 AM, where VCU lost in extra innings to George Washington in the winners’ bracket by a score of 7-5. Club Softball only got to play two games instead of the expected four, but it was still a fun experience for everyone involved.

Tryouts for the 2012-2013 academic year will be held next fall, so be on the lookout for flyers and announcements mentioning the date. If you or anyone you know would be interested in trying out, feel free to contact Melanie Eckberg (eckbergmn@vcu.edu) or Joanna Kettlewell (kettlewelljm@vcu.edu). Club Softball also has a Facebook group – Club Softball at VCU.

4. In physics, if you can’t answer a test question correctly, then you should just change the problem to match your answer.

2. A 3-kg object is released from rest at a height of 5m on a curved frictionless ramp. At the foot of the ramp is a spring of force constant k ~ 100 N/m. The object slides down the ramp and into the spring, compressing it a distance x before coming to rest.

10
5
(a) Find x.
(b) Does the object continue to move after it comes to rest? If yes, how high will it go up the slope before it comes to rest?

5. For human anatomy, remember terminology by using root words.

What is a fibula?
A little lie

6. If you can’t get the answer to a question, it is never because you didn’t study enough. The big elephant in the test is your friend!
Sports

NBA Superstar Jeremy Lin

Abdulwahid Nur
SPORTS EDITOR

Something very exciting is happening in the world of professional basketball. Analysts and journalists alike are as puzzled by it as they are enthralled. Of course, I am referring to the NBA’s newest superstar, Jeremy Lin. Lin is a Taiwanese-American who now plays for the legendary New York Knicks. However, unlike most, Lin was drafted to the NBA out of a school that you may have heard of… Harvard. Yes, Harvard. After graduating with a degree in economics, Lin jumped around to different states, working for a slew of teams in hopes of earning a spot. After persevering for many years, a young Lin ended up with the Golden State Warriors. Lin had finally realized his dream, but with one misfortune – he never got to play. Once Lin was traded to the New York Knicks, he endured more of the same struggles -- that is, until Carmelo Anthony, the Knicks’ newest franchise player, got injured. Jeremy Lin finally got his chance to play. Immediately after coming off the bench, Lin lit up the scoreboard. He dazzled the crowd with his surgically-precise passes, aggressive driving, and amazing shooting ability. Ever since, the New York Knicks franchise has been booming. The city of New York looks and feels the same as it did during the days of John Starks and Patrick Ewing. To think, all of this stemmed from the show put on by a player who once was a lowly back-up guard who saw more bench than hardwood. Not only has this fueled the league, but it is extending the reach of the NBA overseas. Not since Yao Ming has the NBA made a notable impact in China’s gargantuan market. Since the exposition of what basketball fans affectionately refer to as “Lin-sanity”, merchandise sales in China have soared, and viewership has increased exponentially. The recent buzz around Jeremy Lin has revived a league that was on the cusp of a total meltdown. Since the lockout that plagued fans and players at the beginning of the season, there has been an air of disappointment in the NBA. Nobody was really satisfied with the play or intensity that normally surrounds the game – that is, until Jeremy showed up for work. From the ivy swathed grounds of Harvard to the electric arena that is Madison Square Garden, Mr. Lin has made a notable and rough transition. This modern day Renaissance man is taking advantage of his opportunity and, by the looks of it, he isn’t stopping any time soon. There is a moral in this story for all of us, put best by Latin poet Horace: Carpe diem.

Like Jeremy Lin, we must all take advantage of our opportunities, whether they are in basketball or school, and seize the day.