

# THE Honors Program at Minnesota State University, Mankato HONORS BEACON



LEADERSHIP

RESEARCH

GLOBAL CITIZENSHIP



photography by Jaylynn Nash, '16  
(Art--Photography; Sioux Falls S.D.)

## by Rachael Igo, '16 (Creative Writing; Mendota Heights, Minn.)

Over this past summer the Honors Program, with the rest of the Minnesota State community, indulged in this year's common read, *Strength in What Remains* by Tracy Kidder. The work of non-fiction follows Deogratias (Deo) as he escapes the Burundian genocide from his home country in Africa, to New York in the United States. The successful medical student is uprooted from his family and familiar way of life. Although he finds safety in America, he is faced with many new hardships. Finding a place to sleep, a fair job, and food are his daily struggles. He also struggles with accepting the help he is of-

fered, a result of his Burundian culture. He eventually embraces this help and his life turns around. Kidder follows Deo's story as he finds a way to return to medical school and become successful once again.

On September 11th, Tracy Kidder visited the Minnesota State campus for a public lecture about his experience writing *Strength in What Remains*. Earlier that day, he joined honors students for a private discussion. It was really interesting to see how he let the students lead the direction of the discussion with their questions. He based the session on what the students wanted to know.

Students wanted to know

how Mr. Kidder became a writer, so he told his story. When he started college, he wanted to become a diplomat to save the world from Communism. Out of the blue, he took a creative writing course for fun and enjoyed using his imagination to create stories. He thought this was a wonderful way to meet and impress women, but unfortunately this approach did not work. He did, however get many opportunities as a writer. One of them was his acceptance into a writing class taught by a famous poet. Through this class, Mr. Kidder discovered that writing was his calling, and his career grew from there.

*continued on page 4...*

## Director’s Note — Dr. Chris Corley

What does it mean to be a global citizen? Some people believe global citizenship develops when one understands that our world includes multiple cultures. A deeper form of cultural competency emerges when we realize that aspects of society, such as family formation or communication strategies, are affected by culture. A solid grounding in knowledge about peoples and their cultures is necessary to develop global citizenship as well. Books like *Strength in What Remains* assist in our understanding of the experience of others. Academic fields as diverse as History, Sociology, Art, and Philosophy all contribute to our capacities as global citizens. Scholars also advocate for second-language acquisition as an essential component of global citizenship. Learning foreign languages provides a window into other cultural realities while allowing us opportunities to interact with people on a deeper level. All of these examples of classroom learning form a foundation for personal engagement with people from unfamiliar cultures. Combined, these learning experiences help us see the world through someone else’s perspective.

The articles in this issue of *The Honors Beacon* provide a detailed sense of what honors students believe global citizenship to be. For many, the highlight of their experience is a combination of study and travel. Readers should note that we have focused on travel as an element of global citizenship here in this issue. However, many students spend time in Mankato volunteering at the Lincoln Community Center, helping to teach English to new immigrants who now call Mankato home. Some students have successfully volunteered their time at Mankato’s Open Door Clinic, assisting patients with completing forms and understanding procedures.

Prospective employers are demanding that our graduates demonstrate effective global skills. We need culturally competent teachers, social workers, and accountants. The Honors Program helps high-ability students develop these much-needed skills.

## Editor’s Note — Rachael Igo, ‘16



Welcome to the fifth issue of *The Honors Beacon* Newsletter! It has been such a privilege to take on the responsibility of editor-in-chief this year. It was wonderful to see the theme of global citizenship develop over the summer, and even more exciting to see all the pieces come into place this fall. I am proud of the fact that I have expanded the size of the Beacon from twelve to sixteen pages. I want to thank all of my writers for their commitment and dedication to this issue. They are truly amazing and this issue would not exist without them. I also want to give a special thanks to Alyssa Filip who helped me transition into the editor position. I hope everyone enjoys reading this issue as much as I had fun creating it. Happy reading!

## Issue V, Winter 2013

### The Winter 2013 Beacon Team

#### Editor-in-Chief

Rachael Igo

#### Layout and Photo Copyeditors

Alyssa Filip

Rachael Igo

#### Writers

Rachael Igo

Alyssa Filip

Ali Oku Eastman

Dajana Berisavljevic

Ellen Ahlness

Adam Guss

Julia Hamman

Tatiana Soboleva

Michala Schramm

Ryan Colakovic

Mariah Haffield

### Table of Contents

<i>Tracy Kidder Discussion</i> .....	1
<i>Director’s and Editor’s notes</i> .....	2
<i>Welcome Ginny Walters</i> .....	3
<i>Kidder in the Classroom</i> .....	4
<i>Kidder Q&amp;A</i> .....	5
<i>Study Abroad</i> .....	6
<i>Student Bios</i> .....	7
<i>Destination: Nepal</i> .....	8
<i>French History, Court Cases</i> .....	10
<i>Interview with Keith Luebke</i> .....	11
<i>Honorable Mentions</i> .....	11
<i>The Amazing Race</i> .....	12
<i>Honors in Pictures</i> .....	13
<i>Dr. Deepa Oommen</i> .....	14
<i>Looking Forward to Dr. Oommen’s course</i> .....	15
<i>Spring 2013 Courses</i> .....	15
<i>Word Search</i> .....	16

## Welcome to the Minnesota State University, Mankato, Ginny by Alyssa Filip, '15 (Mass Media; Madelia, Minn.)



### Ginny Walters, Honors Program Assistant Director & University Fellowship Coordinator

Ginny Walters started her new position as Honors Program Assistant Director and University Fellowship Coordinator at Minnesota State University, Mankato (MSU) in August 2013.

Ginny double-majored in Secondary English Education and Journalism at the University of Cincinnati (UC) as a member of their Honors Program. She earned her Master of Education Degree in Curriculum & Instruction, and has a Master's certificate in Post-Secondary Literacy Instruction.

After reading the job description for Mankato she decided to apply because she felt the position was a "good marriage of honors and fellowship advising."

She liked the fact that Minnesota State Mankato's Honors Program has competencies, portfolio demonstrations, and an emphasis on reflection that had a strong impact on her as a learner. Our Honors Program is also more individualized than some, which is what she was looking for in a higher education program. "I decided to go into higher education because I like to work with students one-on-one, and I really felt like that could happen here," Walters said.

Assets to our program, like an involved Honors Student Council and a Graduate Assistant devoted to co-curricular planning make for an exciting program that she wanted to be a part of. As her responsibilities are new, she felt like many opportunities awaited her at MSU. She could "do new things" and "be creative" in her job. "You have a lot of energy in your first job, and a lot of ideas. You think about the ways you can build upon the successes that have already happened," Walters said.

Ginny says she's most excited to get to know honors students, as she has already begun to do during fall semester, while beginning to develop her job responsibilities. "I think that in a work environment, the greatest challenges are also the greatest opportunities and I felt like that was true here," Walters said.



Ginny is excited for the new opportunities Honors offers her. She looks forward to teaching a section of the *Honors First-Year Experience* course next year, while advising students inside and outside of the classroom.

Ginny meets with honors students at an Honors Pizza 'n' Prof event on September 19, 2013.

... continued from page 1

Mr. Kidder discovered Deo through Dr. Paul Farmer, a former subject of one of his books. When Deo told Kidder his story for the first time, there were tears running down his cheeks. The strong emotions Deo expressed surprised Kidder and made want to write about his story. He also explained that when he writes stories about people, he feels like he is invading their privacy, but he does this to dig down deep into the story. He discussed this with Deo and explained that it was necessary if he was going to tell his story well. He gave him multiple fair warnings and made sure it was okay for him to do this. Kidder asked him "Will you let me do it? If you don't want to do this, no hard feelings. I absolutely understand." It took Deo several months before he decided he wanted to embark on the project.

Together, the two took a trip to Burundi and Deo showed Kidder all the places of his past. Kidder shared how this was very hard for Deo, because it is part of the Burundian culture to not remember horrible memories of the past. Deo was reliving many of these which he had already tried so hard to forget. Kidder could tell he was in pain, so this was very hard for him to deal with since all he wanted to do was share Deo's story.

Kidder explained how it was hard for Deo to go public about his story, out of fear of the genocide oppressors. There was even one point, shortly before publication, where Deo wanted all the names and places changed in the book because he feared for his safety. Kid-

der went through and did this, but Deo decided to have them returned to their original format.

Kidder discussed how he was really able to see how badly Deo's experience affected him. He told the students: "Deo carries the burden of the past with him and he's made accommodations with it. He is [proactive] in the way that he could have made so much out of his life in spite of being so severely traumatized." Honors students found it remarkable how dedicated Deo was to making the best of his situation.

Students also wanted to know about Deo's family. Mr. Kidder said they are doing very well and shared a story about how he helped Deo's two younger brothers enroll in school in the United States. He contacted a prep school, Deerfield Academy (Mass.) After the oldest of the two passed the entrance exam, the academy gave him one free year of admission. Kidder stated that he "came without much English, and he excelled spectacularly well." That year, he asked the admissions office if his younger brother could attend. Things worked out for him as well, and they both ended up attending school in the United States. Kidder shared that they both graduate this year and the younger brother recently had an essay of his published in *The American Scholar*. It is about how he survived fourteen years of civil war growing up among disasters. He expresses how surprised he is that American children and teenagers play violent video games for entertainment.

## Kidder in the Classroom

by Ali Oku Eastman, '17

(Biomedical Science; Lagos, Nigeria)

Besides encouraging intellectual relationships among students, faculty and the community, another interesting feature of the Common Read is the way in which it is integrated into the classroom. Can it be true that professors in different courses use the same book in their classrooms? After talking to Dr. Chris Corley, the Director of the Honors Program at MSU, I learned that the books are used in FYEX 100 classes composed of new first-year students. In the honors FYEX seminar, students develop their awareness of what it means to be a good leader, researcher, and global citizen. Dr. Corley says *Strength in What Remains* can help the students achieve these skills. Since many of the common read books discuss culture in one country or another, students learn to be global citizens by reading and discussing the book. Dr. Corley also uses the books to facilitate class discussions and even discussions with people in the community. In October, Dr. Corley and Assistant Director Ginny Walters took students into the community to lead group discussions at senior centers, churches, and libraries. The students described the book discussions as a "wonderful experience," claiming that the discussion helped develop their public speaking skills.

## Q&A From Kidder's Meeting with Honors Students

by Dajana Berisavljevic, '14 (a visiting honors student from Sremska Mitrovica, Serbia studying World Literature and Communication Studies)

*Pulitzer Prize-winning author Tracy Kidder visited Minnesota State University during the second week of September. He discussed the true story found in his book, "Strength in What Remains," about a man who escapes war and hardship in Burundi to come to the United States. What follows are excerpts from the conversation.*

### **What exactly led you to write this book?**

I had written a book about Dr. Paul Farmer who was a notable fellow. Even before I took to writing about him, he was getting kind of famous. He had a group—Partners in Health—which was mostly working in Haiti, but had a pretty broad view. Of course he was very interested in Africa. I went to see him at his house at Harvard. And in his apartment, there was a guy there. I knew right away before he opened his mouth that he wasn't American, I can't quite explain that. His name was Deogratias. My wife had come with me. And I remember [Paul] saying: "Deo, talk to Franny, she's interested in refugees!" On the way home, she told me a bit of the story. I thought, this is amazing. I just sort of filed it away. I had another book to write, and I was already working on it. The biggest problem in my life as a writer is to try to figure out what to do next. And I spend a lot of time, in a kind of anxiety, which I tend to share with my family, over the years. My wife told me: "Why don't you see

that guy that was with Paul Farmer?" And I did.

### **What was the most striking thing to you when you went to Burundi?**

The whole thing was overwhelming. One time when we were going out to the hospital where his flight began. We get there and there it is. It was all fixed on the outside by some NGO (Non-Governmental Organization.) But the inside, it was terrible. It was full of bird s---, bees' nests, old pieces of equipment, they were all rusty. But it was the state he went into there. That was striking psychologically to me. I was quite sure there wasn't any physical danger, but I felt like I was inside one of his nightmares. Looking at the cause of the nightmare.

### **What was your first impression of Deo?**

My first impression of him. He was very open. And warm. And enthusiastic about everything, it seemed to me. That really never changed, although, I've learned a lot more about it and to some degree. I think the guy suffers there inside.

### **After the book was published, did Deo ever read it?**

I don't know. I think it's not for me to ask. If he'd like to talk to me, I'd be glad to. I've seen him lots of times after that, but he just doesn't talk about it. But he has signed a numerous copies of it.

### **What is it like to be an author? The cliché from the movies is that a writer is normally in a dark room, writing. What is a day in the life of the author like? How do you go through the process?**

There are no rules about it. Everybody does things differently. My work is divided in two parts: doing research and writing. Once I'm actually ready to write, I am pretty disciplined. I try to get up early in the morning, it's when my mind seems clearest, and I work 'till I can't stand it anymore. Then I try to get some exercise. I need to have a door I can close. I need to feel that nobody can look at me. I try to get completely un-subconscious. I think I usually say to myself: "I'm staying here for few hours." I turn off my email.

### **Is there anything you wish you could change about the book?**

I don't re-read the books that I write. I found over the years that only two things could happen, and neither is good. I read something and I think: "Did I used to write so well?" The other is: "Oh God how could I let this get into print?" There is one inaccuracy in the book I would like to change. It wasn't my thing. It is a small thing. I think I could have been a little more sophisticated about the history, but I didn't have access to something that I have now.

## Students Globalizing Their Education Through Study Abroad

by Ellen Ahlness, '15

(International Relations/Scandinavian Studies; White Bear Lake, Minn.)



### Marin Beck, '15

Elementary Education major, Scandinavian Studies minor

Over the past summer, Marin studied in Bergen, Norway for four weeks. She had been to Norway before, but this was her first time going independently. The summer program focused on language and culture. Each day after classes Beck attended a seminar focusing on different aspects of Norwegian society. "I got to experience culture like any other citizen. I felt like part of the community. The trip was far from a vacation—in fact, it was strikingly different—but the people were still super hospitable once you introduced yourself. Because people can be a little closed off if you're a stranger, it really forces you to get yourself out there."

### Katie Westermayer, '15

Psychology/Spanish majors

Katie studied in Ecuador for eight weeks this past summer. She took her time studying abroad to take 12 credits to advance her Spanish degree. During her time abroad, Westermayer stayed with a woman and her two children. "My school involved a lot of homework and a lot of tests. It was very comprehensive, and we had weekly oral presentations," Westermayer shares. "Definitely study abroad, at least once. It broadens your understanding, and really gives you a different perspective on life. So many things happen in a classroom, but once you see things happen in real life, you see just how important an experience is. A foreign town has so many cultural tidbits that you only learn by experiencing."



### Kristi Paulsen, '15

Psychology/French majors

Kristi spent six weeks in France over the summer. During her time studying abroad, Paulsen took mostly upper-level classes, where she spoke only French, learned about French culture, and analyzed the effectiveness of different cultures in different areas of society. "The number one thing I took away from this trip was that I love culture! I almost didn't want to come home!" Through her experience, Paulsen now has the ability to return to a country that she loves and the confidence to travel. "When you study abroad, you gain so much, especially feelings of independence. When you can orient yourself around another country in another language, you realize you're capable of so much more than you thought."

## Student Biographies

### by Adam Guss, '17 (Undeclared; Mankato, Minn.)

#### Ellen Ahlness, '15

International Relations/Scandinavian Studies Majors

Ellen plans on graduating in two years with the help of credits she earned during high school through the Post Secondary Enrollment Option (PSEO). She is planning on taking 18 credits each semester to finish all the classes she needs. "It's worth it though, because this plan allows me to follow two of my passions: Scandinavian Studies and research," she says. So far, her two-year plan involves one of those years being spent abroad in Norway. She plans on going to graduate school to study Political Science, eventually earning a Ph.D. She is considering enlisting in the Danish Home Guard (a Danish military branch for volunteers that accepts foreign nationals into its numbers) to further her experience.



#### Makenzie Petzel, '16

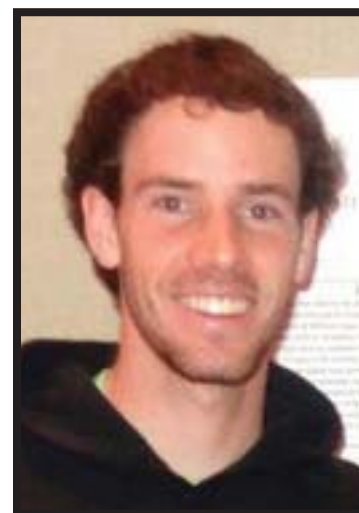
Social Work major, Spanish minor

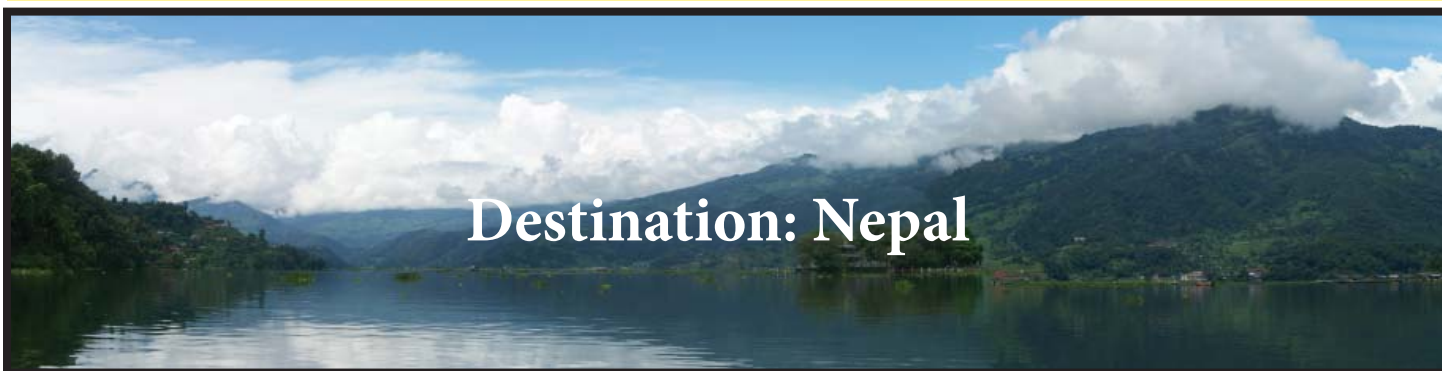
Makenzie is the current vice president of the Honors Student Council. The position of vice president entails meeting with Dr. Corley and other faculty members throughout the university who contribute to the Honors Program. In her position, Makenzie helps lead the monthly meetings held just for students and plans events, like the Echo Food Drive and networking opportunities for Honors. Makenzie is excited to be developing her group work and discussion skills through this position. Looking ahead to her future time in the position, Makenzie says "I am hopeful that this year will bring many new experiences for me and opportunities to really improve the program for the students and faculty."

#### Jacob Ball, '14

Biochemistry/Biology majors, Spanish minor

Jacob Ball recently passed his portfolio defense, and will be graduating with honors in the spring. He is currently applying to medical school to become a general practice physician. One of his most memorable experiences with Honors is fulfilling the global citizenship competency. Jacob studied abroad in Cuenca, Ecuador where his Spanish fluency increased exponentially. He was able to see many great places, and meet amazing people. Jacob's message to younger honors students is: "Be confident in your abilities because you are talented. Make sure to humbly use these abilities to connect with others and help them grow. Most of all, work hard and enjoy your time here. It goes by quickly."





## Destination: Nepal

by Julia Hamman, '16 (Biochemistry; Mankato, Minn.)

This summer I embarked on my first adventure abroad. My destination: Kathmandu, Nepal. Since this was my first international trip I was incredibly nervous about the idea of traveling alone. As it turned out I really had no reason to be worried. I was able to meet other people in transit and exchange stories of our travels. I also had the opportunity to meet fellow travelers throughout my exploration of Nepal. I really appreciated this part of traveling as not only did I get to learn about the country I was in through my eyes, but I got to learn about it from the perspective of others by talking about their life experiences, their native countries, and other places they have visited.

Upon arrival to Nepal I knew I was in for a crazy adventure. The trip from the airport to my Kathmandu home was intense. Because Nepal does not have a functioning government right now, the roads are in pretty rough condition. There are no traffic lights or signs, no road dividers, and no speed limits. People drive on all sides of the road and speed through any little break in traffic they think they can wedge themselves through. Everyone drives around in absolute cha-

os, at least from the perspective of the American. On top of all that it was raining, something I would become accustomed to in my three-week stay during monsoon season.

I was able to experience and learn so much about Nepal in a relatively short amount of time. I served as a volunteer in a local community hospital that provided low cost health care to the impoverished members of the community. You see a lot of clinics and other service providers catering to this community throughout Nepal as it is one of the poorest countries in the world with an average income of \$300 (USD) a year. Because I do not yet have any official medical certification, all I was able to do was observe. Although I was disappointed about this at first I came to appreciate all that I was able to learn. I looked at charts, got to sit in the radiology department (ultrasound room), and had the chance to observe several surgeries. I was so comfortable in the surgery room and intrigued by my discussions with the surgeons that I have been inspired to specialize in surgery in my career as Physician's Assistant.

During my solo exploration of the country I gained one of the most humbling experiences of my

life. I had the opportunity to learn more about the country's spirituality by visiting several temples, monasteries, and stupas, and by attending free meditation classes while in Kathmandu. These experiences were all wonderfully eye-opening, but I could not be truly satisfied until I went to Lumbini, the birthplace of Shakyamuni Buddha (Siddhartha Gautama). The chance to visit such a spiritually significant place was one of the reasons I had been drawn to Nepal in the first place, but I had nearly given up on going once I found out that it would be a ten hour journey by bus through switchback mountains just to get there. I eventually decided that I could not give up on the journey and knew I would regret it if I did not take the opportunity to go.

I spontaneously purchased a bus ticket and was on my way at six thirty in the morning the next day. An hour into the trip we got into an accident and I immediately began to question my decision, but I calmed myself with meditation and didn't let it worry me too much. I eventually made it to Lumbini safely after a very long and trying journey. This was such a great lesson for me;

*continued . . .*



... continued

if I push through the difficulties I will reach my goal in the end. The place was more beautiful than I ever would have imagined. The town is only about three kilometers away from the site, so I was able to find a hotel quickly and head straight to the Sacred Garden, the exact spot Buddha was born. I meditated by the pool in which Myadevi (his mother) bathed just before giving birth and had talks about life with monks who barely spoke English, but we found a way to successfully communicate none the less. I was the last to leave.

The next day I rode a bike around to ten monasteries built by a myriad of countries as well as Peace Pagoda. I really appreciated this time to myself, just days before I was scheduled to leave the country, to really contemplate my experiences there and reflect on what they mean to me and the course of my future. I also thought about greater aspects of life in general and really reached a sense of peace with who I am and the path I am on. On my way back I stopped by a bus stop that was lined with little shops for tourists to buy trinkets and refreshments. I wanted to see if I could get some help tightening my loose seat that kept titling back at an awkward angle. It turns out that I had also been riding on a flat tire, working much harder than necessary in the 100 plus degree heat! The locals around the shop I stopped at were very kind in fixing my seat and replacing my tire. The man who owned the shop could see that I was clearly discomfited from the heat so he invited me in. His shop was about 7 by 13 feet and

when I walked in I realized it was also his home. The store front took up about half of the building and most of the rest was taken up by a bed. There was only about a 2.5 by 7 foot free space with a stool which he gave up for me. He moved to the bed which was also occupied by his wife, 13 month old and 2 year old. They spoke little English, but we were able to converse with what they knew and the little Nepali I knew. He was completely unashamed by his lack of abundance—as Americans are taught to be—and it seemed that he couldn't appear to be happier with his family. When the time came to leave I asked him for change for 100 Rupee (equal to about one U.S. dollar) as the men who fixed the bike only asked for 50. He went to his cash drawer and did not even have change for a dollar. I wasn't too worried and gave the men each 100 Rupee instead, but the shop owner would not let me. He took the money from the men

and gave it back to me, promising to cover the charge himself when he had the money. Even though he had nothing by U.S. standards, he was still so generous. This man taught me so much in this moment. I could not thank him enough for the lesson his actions reinforced; happiness does not lie in material comforts, but rather in the kindness we are able to share with others.

There are so many more meaningful life experiences I could share in relation to my adventure to Nepal. The people I met and the experiences I had taught me not only about Nepal and other parts of the world, but my adventure also revealed to me many unexplored aspects of my "self." Traveling gave me a wonderful chance to reflect and reassess. I have come back a more confident, inspired, and spiritual person because of my experiences. I cannot wait to see what I will learn from future adventures around the world.



Julia at the ancient city of Bhaktapur

## French History From the Inside of Court Cases

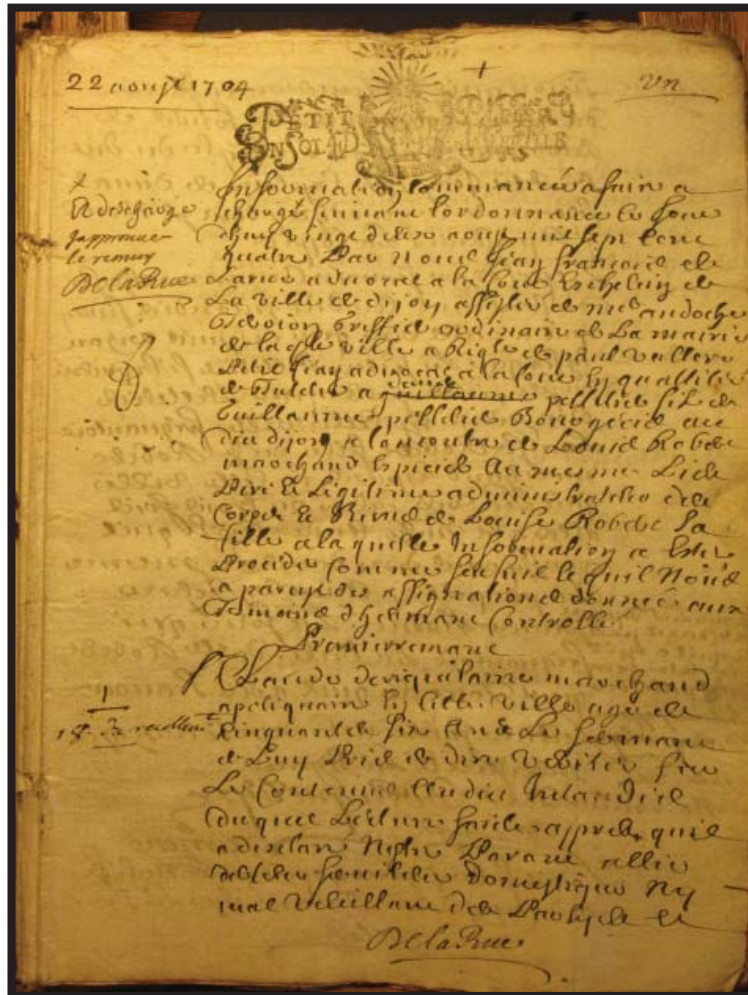
by Tatiana Soboleva, '15 (Biochemistry; Chisinau, Republic of Moldova)

History is what we believe after studying information in history books; however, how much can we trust the authors of the books? That was one of my questions during my grade school years when I had a mandatory class of European history. I was always skeptical of the conclusions authors highlighted for one historical event or another.

This past summer, I had the opportunity to become an early modern French history “archeologist” while assisting in a research project with Dr. Corley. The project was supported by a generous Undergraduate Research Foundation grant. Due to my advanced competency in French, I was chosen to work on one of the most challenging types of research that Dr. Corley was leading. My responsibilities were to read, collect and analyze data from 18th century archi-

val court documents from Dijon, France. With a biochemistry major one might ask me “why did you apply for this research opportunity?” A few questions piqued my interest. First of all, these court documents were not random court cases about crime; they were paternity suits. I never thought that young women in

the 18th century were suing men for monetary compensation due to their pregnancies. Keep in mind that at that time there were no DNA tests. Despite this lack of science, women frequently won their cases. How did these women win their court cases? was challenging to adapt to the calligraphy of the documents, and the archaisms of the eighteenth-century French language. Secondly, history research is a distinct realm, with its own methods and rules of analysis. In fact, I think that the combination of a social science advisor and a natural science student created a productive tandem in the interpretation of the court cases. It is not enough to work with primary documents and it is not enough to broadly know the history to accomplish this research project. Knowing this, we are continuing to work on collecting secondary sources about young people in the pre-industrial world. The Roman philosopher Cicero once said “*historia vitae magistra*” which means “history is the mistress of life.” With this research, we are trying to develop an accurate social picture of early modern France, and perhaps gain



some insights into the development of the modern world in the process.

How did young women choose witnesses for the court? These and many other questions arose in my mind throughout this complex research. One might think that by just reading these manuscripts I was able to give answers to the questions above, but that does not detail the extent of this research project. First of all, it

Written depositions from a paternity suit, dated 22 August, 1704. Archives départementales de la Côte-d'Or (Dijon, France), B2 360/151

Written depositions from a paternity suit, dated 22 August, 1704. Archives départementales de la Côte-d'Or (Dijon, France), B2 360/151

## An Interview with Professor Keith Luebke by Tatiana Soboleva, '15

**Editor's Note:** *Previously, Tatiana interviewed Professor Luebke for the December 2012 issue of "The Honors Beacon" about his Honors course, "Introduction to Visual Culture," in Spring 2013. Below is an excerpt from a follow-up interview about his thoughts on the course.*

**After reviewing the reflection papers that the honors students submitted in class, what interesting observation can you make about having students from different disciplines analyze works of art?**

I was particularly interested in the differences and similarities between those destined for the sciences and those headed into the humanities. I'm looking for differences in how people approach and utilize visual culture in their daily lives, and how academic life shapes those relationships. We need to get better at building a variety of literacies—reading and writing is only the tip of the iceberg, and visual literacy is particularly important in the 21st century.

**What changes would you introduce in the course if you reorganize it for another semester with honors students?**

I'll spend even more time building around the work of Martha Nussbaum (a philosopher from the University of Chicago and recent guest lecturer co-sponsored by the Honors Program) and others sympathetic to the cause of collectively cultivating our humanity. Primarily, according to Nussbaum, that involves the ability to "think what it might be like to be in the shoes of a person different from oneself, and ability to see ourselves not simply as citizens of some local region or group but also as human beings bound to all other human beings by ties of recognition and concern." Fortunately, her writings and the logic of the undergraduate curriculum overlap.



### Honorable Mentions



The Honors Program collected 1,076 pounds of food in the annual ECHO Food Drive this year. Thank you to everyone for your involvement and donations!

Congratulations to the following seniors for defending their portfolios: Alexander Mozey, Brooklyn Vetter, Jacob Ball, Ina Pae, Lindsey Lancette, Erika Magnusson, Erika Koenig.

Congratulations to Makenzie Petzel, third place recipient of the Social Welfare Scholars Award from the Social Work Department. Makenzie won based on a research paper she wrote on home care services for the elderly.

Rachael Igo was admitted into the Chi Iota chapter of the International English Honor Society, Sigma Tau Delta.

Best of luck to the following honors students who were awarded 2013 Fall Grant Recipients through the Undergraduate Research Center: Lauren Bach, Jacob Ball, Jeremy Balster, Shelby Flegel, Andrew Nicholson, Kristi Paulsen, Carter Person, Andrew Pfeffer, Tatiana Soboleva, Emma Stong, Katie Westermayer, and Abrar Zawed.

## The Amazing Race

by Michala Schramm, '17 (Accounting; Whitewater, Wis.)

**Editor's Note:** *While the MSU community expressed their Maverick pride during Homecoming week, the honors community had a little welcoming event of their own. The honors mentors planned an activity and a cookout at Wheeler Park. The activity aimed to integrate the incoming class with the rest of the honors students. This year's event was named The Amazing Race. Below is a reflection by first-year student Michala Schramm on her experience at this fall's event.*

As we all clambered inside the Honors Lounge, we divided ourselves into groups of threes and fours. I have to admit, I thought this was going to be like every other “fun” team-building activity, but I was wrong! Every moment was an adrenaline rush with a race against time and challenging tasks that had everyone working together and using their strengths. I can't wait to go again next year and share my excitement with the new incoming first-year students!

We went through a variety of different events where we had to draw, act, bowl, find things, take pictures, and solve riddles for different events—all in a race

against time. Four teams competed against each other to be the fastest team to solve the riddles and complete the challenges.

After everyone had finished, we all celebrated at a nearby park with a cookout. Each team bonded with their individual teammates, as well as the mentors, at the picnic. We sat at a well-used picnic table and joyfully exchanged stories of the race, as well as our funny life experiences. Overall the feeling was light and exhilarating. I certainly didn't expect to be relying on all of our teammates to get through different challenges. It was a fun and effective teambuilding opportunity—which, in my experience, is a rare combination.

In the process, I realized that different students had different strengths. One of my teammates knew all of the riddles while another was good at the acting/charades. I handled the bowling and scouting ahead to find our destination, while another teammate kept us motivated and on track. We instantly knew how to play to people's strengths and that helped us win the Amazing Race. Because of our observations of focusing on each other's strengths, rather than their weaknesses, we were able to do each event quickly and easily.

I would recommend honors events to anyone. Experiencing the Amazing Race certainly changed my mind on how I view teambuilding exercises. I learned how to improve being a helpful team leader while allowing people to do what they do best. The event was just as fun as the picnic. We were talking and laughing with friends we just met, but it seemed like we knew them for years. I can't wait until next year!



Michala and her team “jumping” into the fountain as an event in the Amazing Race

# Honors In Pictures



Students at the Wheeler Park cookout and Amazing Race honors event. (left and right)



Julia in Nepal



Minnesota State Senator Kathy Sheran speaking to Glen Peterson's Sensitivity to Disability class.



Honors students at the first Honors Student Council meeting of the year



Dr. Agnes Odinga (History), Abdi Sabrie, and Abdi-kadir Mohamed speaking at African Voices of New Americans.



by Rachael Igo, '16



## Interview with Dr. Deepa Oommen

by Ryan Colakovic, '16 (Biochemistry/Biomedical Sciences; Mankato, Minn.)

Dr. Deepa Oommen is Assistant Professor of Communication Studies at MSU. She will be teaching *HONR 401: Public Communication Strategies* for the 2013 spring semester.



### What is your educational background?

I am originally from India. I got my undergraduate degree and master's degree in Economics there before coming to America for graduate school. I got my Ph.D. in 2010 at Bowling Green State University, Ohio. I also received my Master's in Communication in the United States

### How do you like Mankato?

I came to Mankato in 2010 and I like being here at MSU. The students are smart and engaging. A professor from Bowling Green State University told me that Minnesota prepares their students well for college and is one of the best states for K-12 education. I see that in the students. Also, the people in Minnesota are nice.

### What interested you in Communication Studies?

I worked in India where I taught business communication, and it sparked my interest. I taught based on experiences and had no formal education. I wanted to pursue a formal education. I wasn't planning to continue after getting my Master's but the more I got into the field the more fascinating it became. I also like the American way of teaching students. It is interactive and engaging. It made me want to be a teacher. Within my field, I am interested in organizational and intercultural communication.

### How will this class relate to the honors competencies?

For research, there will be background research about social issues, and data collection. To understand the mindset of the audience in regards to the issues, students will collect data using surveys through questionnaires or interviews. They will then develop campaign strategies based on psychological and behavioral theories, learn how to evaluate the impact of the campaign, and plan the implementation.

The leadership competency will be developed as students reflect on the dynamics that make up teams. Teams will be composed of a group of three people or less and they will

develop a social campaign. When students explore issues, they become more familiar and interested in taking leadership roles.

For global citizenship, students will become more aware of what's going on outside their comfort zone and will learn how to communicate with people from diverse backgrounds. They can see others' perspectives and how to think of diversity as an asset.

### How do you imagine the class will develop through the semester?

Students can come up with an issue to develop a social campaign. I have taught this class previously at undergraduate and graduate levels with the graduate class being more theoretically oriented. It started out as a special topics course for undergraduates and then it was brought up to graduate level. Reducing sodium consumption, eating healthier, preventing cyber bullying, and donating to Planned Parenthood were topics that for the graduate class. At the undergraduate level, the groups developed a campaign targeting local businesses to hire people with disabilities. We worked with Life Works, an organization that provides job placement services for people with disabilities. A lot of

continued...

...continued

background research is needed to find out why an issue is a social issue, why it needs a campaign, and who are being affected. Furthermore, the campaign strategies need to be theoretically grounded. A variety of psychological and behavioral theories would be introduced to students. Students will also make plans for implementing the strategies and will also create budgets. Further, they will also learn how to assess the impact of the campaign because it is essential to know whether the campaign has had an impact or not.

### What do you want honors students to take from the class?

There are many things I would like them to take out of the class. The main thing I would like students to learn would be how to develop a campaign for a social issue. Further I would like them to recognize the importance of social issues, and develop teamwork skills.

### What is a skill that you think is critical for any student to have?

I believe it is important for all students to have a focus. They need to focus on what to do, their goals, and where they want to take their career. There are places on campus like the Career Development Center that can help students.

**Editor's Note:** *What follows is a reflection by sophomore Mariah Haffield who will participate in Dr. Oommen's course.*

## Why I Look Forward to Dr. Oommen's Course

by Mariah Haffield, '16  
(Management; Worthington, Minn.)

Persuasion is a skill that is beneficial to many, especially those who practice criminal law. Because attending law school and practicing law are my future career goals, I try to develop any skills that will help me become a successful reader, writer, listener, and arguer. This is, however, not the only reason why I decided to take *Public Communication Strategies*.

In addition to learning about the theoretical aspects of persuasion in the course, I will be able to apply what I learn to a social issue that interests me. I love to argue with people about social issues, such as global warming and the environment, and in this class I will have the opportunity develop a campaign strategy to persuade the target audience.

I have always enjoyed developing campaigns (just ask me about MavGuard, a student safety campaign I am working on through MSSA!) Not only would I be doing something that I love, but I would be able to develop skills that would benefit me in the future. I attended the Pizza 'n' Prof. night with Dr. Oommen which only further excited me about the class! I cannot wait to take the course and am excited to work with other honors students on a campaign strategy.

## Spring 2014 Courses

### Human Relations in a Multicultural Society, Elizabeth Sandell

"This course involves the study of interpersonal skills, motivation and group skills applied to diverse groups in professional settings."

### Global Perspectives on Women and Change, Laura Harrison

This course "...gives students the opportunity to investigate the conditions, cultures and changing status of women around the world."

### Public Communication Strategies, Deepa Oommen

"This course focuses on both theoretical and applied aspects of persuasion," and "...to apply theories and research findings in the area of persuasion to the development of social campaigns."

### Leadership in Context, Chris Corley

"...the ability to identify, compare, contrast and assess different leadership models in historical contexts will help us in our own journey toward identifying personal values, in making effective decisions and in working in teams."

### Growing the Leader in You, Cynthia Bemis Abrams

"By the end of this class, students will grasp these (leadership) principles, hold insights into how to incorporate them into daily living and recognize the nuances of cultural context."

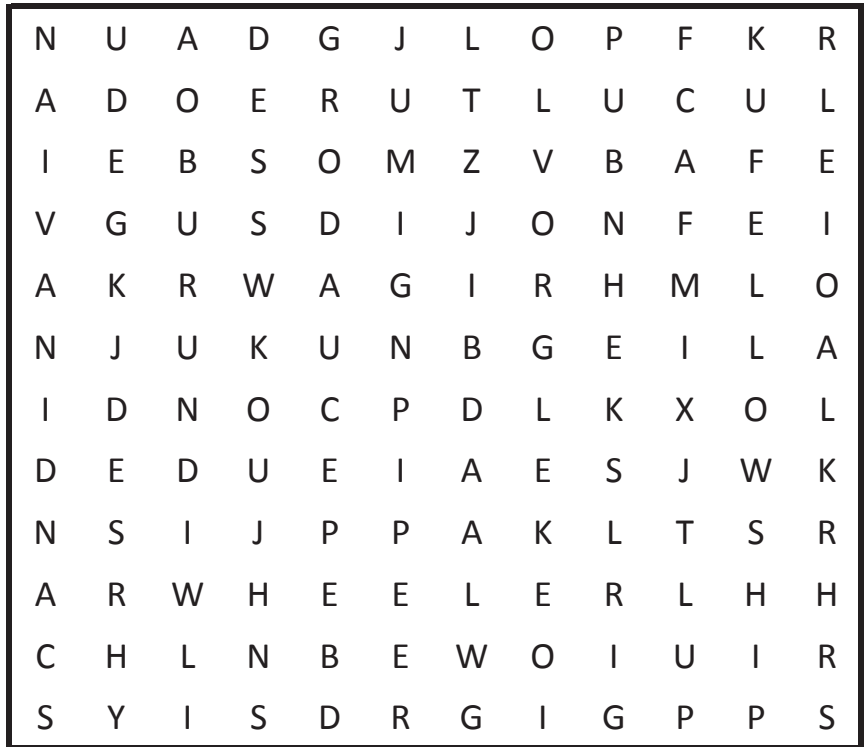
Full course descriptions can be found at <http://www.mnsu.edu/honors/currentstudents/courses13.html>

## Honors Fun Corner: Word Search

by Alyssa Filip, '15 and Rachael Igo, '16

### Clues:

1. Ginny Walters has been named Honors Program Assistant Director and University \_\_\_\_\_ Coordinator.
2. This year's Honors Homecoming Cookout was held at \_\_\_\_\_ Park.
3. Tatiana and Dr. Corley analyzed 18th century court documents collected from \_\_\_\_\_, France.
4. Dr. Deepa Oommen earned her Ph.D. at Bowling Green State University in \_\_\_\_\_.
5. Julia spent time volunteering abroad in \_\_\_\_\_.
6. One of Ellen's majors is \_\_\_\_\_ studies.
7. Katie studied abroad in Cuenca, \_\_\_\_\_.
8. Marin's summer program in Norway focused on language and \_\_\_\_\_.
9. Tracy Kidder wrote *Strength in What Remains* about Deogratias, a native of \_\_\_\_\_.
10. The spring course *Human Relations in a Multicultural Society* will be taught by Elizabeth \_\_\_\_\_.



Answers from last issue: Internment Camp, Parent Aware, Foundation, Abroad, Remains, Community, Heights, Chicago



A member of the Minnesota State Colleges and Universities System  
Minnesota State University, Mankato is an Affirmative Action/Equal Opportunity University.  
This document is available in alternative format to individuals with disabilities by calling the Office of Disability Services at 507-389-2825 (V/TTD), 800-627-3529 or 711 (MRS/TTD)