While most students spent their December 2011 holidays taking a break from the busy academic year, Family and Human Services major Stephanie Mathe-son was 30 travel hours away from Eugene, focused on communicating a service message that resonated with village values in Pondicherry, India.

Winter Alternative Break, sponsored by the College of Education’s Service Learning program and the Holden Leadership Center, enables students to immerse themselves in new and different communities to learn their historical, sociological, cultural, and political backgrounds and use service-learning as a vehicle for community engagement. Fifteen students, along with staff, faculty, and COE alumna Jan Monti, engaged in daily conversations, lectures, and presentations with Sri Aurobindo Society members. The society is an intentional community grounded in a spiritual tradition, with a commitment to pursuing cutting-edge research and projects on sustainable farming, architecture, education, health and wellness, village development, media, and management.

“One of our workshops,” said Matheson, “was to [work with a community member to] create a cartoon/comic that was easy for children and everyone to understand that would convey an important message. Our cartoon was about a vegetarian lion cub named Dhairiyam, meaning courage in Malayalam, one of 22 official languages of India. Our story told how Dhairiyam became friends with an antelope: the story was about breaking stereotypes and embracing differences.”

“The instructors did not start slowly,” said Jan Monti. “Students began learning about awareness and consciousness right away. Then they would visit a project in the countryside—and then come back and debrief what they had experienced. This deepened student awareness and consciousness within the process of reflecting on their learning. It was, in my estimation as a former educator and as a management consultant, an elegant learning model.”

Examining behaviors and customs is the first step in discovering deeper meanings of community, family, and religion in culture, values, and perspectives that profoundly shape the ways a people views its primary needs and services for children and families. Students on Alternative Break quickly discover that the focus is not only on service but also on learning to understand others and to create human connections.

“I really don’t think one can just show up in a country where they don’t know much about the culture and ‘save’ them or ‘change the world’ so to speak,” said Matheson, who is from Klamath Falls, Oregon. “This was definitely more of a learning experience that I think will enable me, as well as others on the trip, to better and more efficiently serve those around us and make a positive difference. However, I think that it is by making those ‘small’ positive differences and touching the lives of those we come in contact with, that eventually the world will be changed for the better.

“There was much I learned that will help me in the FHS program, as well as in my future career; much of what we learned had to do with integral health, integral education, integral business. In India, they look at the whole person, much like the ecological model does. This really emphasized the importance of looking at the whole picture in order to better serve and help someone or a group completely.”*

*Read more about COE alumna Jan Monti’s account of the trip on pages 4–5: Find her blog and the India photo album at http://coe.uoregon.edu/india2011
Coming Up Roses

IT HAS BEEN AN EVENTFUL YEAR THUS FAR. The success of our football team winning the inaugural PAC-12 championship and then the Rose Bowl on a beautiful and glorious day highlighted fall term. I could not think of those young men on the football field, however, without also thinking about the many student athletes from different sports who are involved in the O-Hero program that supports individuals with various needs from the Eugene community: the field of competition presents only a small part of what our students do at the university.

The College of Education New Year’s Eve Party, where I was privileged to greet our alums and friends, also defined the Rose Bowl experience. Early on New Year’s Day the next morning, administrators from across our university participated in a service project with our friendly rivals from the University of Wisconsin, working at a Los Angeles area food bank to sort and pack foodstuffs. That selfless act on the part of both universities helps to keep our athletic contests in perspective.

The fall was not without controversy. In late November, the Oregon University System decided to terminate the contract of President Richard Lariviere. In my view, Richard was a visionary leader who had charted an incredible strategy for the university’s future success. I will miss him greatly.

We were fortunate that Dr. Robert Berdahl was chosen as Richard’s successor on an interim basis. Dr. Berdahl began his academic career at the University of Oregon, before going on to become provost at the University of Illinois, president at the University of Texas, and chancellor of the University of California-Berkeley. Most recently he served as president of the prestigious American Association of Universities before retiring back to Oregon. A search for a new president for your university has begun, and I am optimistic that we will hire someone of the quality of Richard and Robert.

Your college is doing well, exceptionally so. We are conducting five tenure-track searches to hire new faculty members; our building complex is full of students and the energy and questions they bring; and our faculty is as successful as ever in terms of external funding, professional notoriety, and service to Eugene, Oregon, our nation, and the world. This spring we are beginning an initiative to offer on-line academic certificates and programs across Oregon and the globe.

There is much to be proud of as Ducks and members of our far-flung community. Come by and see us; you may be surprised at all we do.

Mike Bullis

Notable

DAVID CHARD, PhD, has been nominated by President Barack Obama for membership on the National Board for Education Sciences (NBES) which advises the director of the Institute of Education Sciences (IES) on policies, research priorities and other matters pertaining to IES operations. Chard, an alumnus and former faculty member in the College of Education is currently Leon Simmons Endowed Dean and a professor at the Southern Methodist University’s Annette Caldwell Simmons School of Education and Human Development since 2007.

David Chard served as the director of graduate studies for the Department of Special Education at the University of Oregon from 2003 to 2005. He also served as associate dean of the UO College of Education from 2005 to 2007 and director of middle-secondary education at the University of Oregon from 2000 to 2003. From 1986 to 1990, Chard was a classroom teacher for the U.S. Peace Corps in Lesotho, Africa. He has served on a number of boards supporting high quality educational opportunities for children, including as a member of the International Academy for Research in Learning Disabilities, member of the American Mathematical Association, and president for the Division for Research at the Council for Exceptional Children.

The 15 voting members of the NBES serve four-year terms and must be confirmed by the U.S. Senate. NBES duties include identifying research priorities as enumerated in the Education Sciences Reform Act and advising and making recommendations to the director on issues such as policies, funding, compliance with standards, advancement of minorities, and ways to enhance strategic partnerships and collaborative efforts among other federal and state research agencies.

See White House announcement of the NBES nominations: http://www.whitehouse.gov/the-press-office/2011/10/19/president-obama-announces-more-key-administration-posts
District Models Literacy Teamwork

**TEACHING A CHILD TO READ** provides learners with one of the most essential skills for success in life. Oregon school districts committed to providing every child with this skill are focusing resources on developing literacy support specialists.

~ COE Alumna Teresa Lewellen ’87, Springfield District Literacy Specialist

When Springfield school administrators decided to implement Response to Intervention (RTI) across their district, literacy specialist Teresa Lewellen (right above) and elementary education director Sara Ticer (left above) saw the need to have a district literacy team that would look at district-wide data. Ticer and Lewellen facilitated the creation of a collaborative team that consists of principals, Title One teachers, regular and special education (SPED) teachers, and literacy support teachers.

This team considered how other districts in the Northwest were implementing RTI. Many had received training from consultant Jennifer Ashlock. When the state brought in Ashlock to do a 12-day training for all K–5 teachers, Springfield district administrators jumped at the opportunity to send representatives. Those who attended became trainers of the Ashlock template and lesson map. They trained all regular education teachers, specialists, and instruction-related education assistants.

After the Ashlock training, a district team (Sara Ticer ’79, ’80, ’96; Teresa Lewellen; Diane Bova, ’68; Nicole Nakayama, ’2008, and Brian Megert, ’2010) wrote an RTI manual with all the decision rules. To implement RTI, school teams have to know how to conduct meetings designed to review student data.

The district then brought in representatives from the schools (including SPED teachers, title teachers, primary teachers, intermediate teachers, principals, and school psychologists) to model how to look at school-wide data as well as individual or small-group data. By looking at student data, specialists target areas of deficit and whether instruction needs to happen in whole groups, small groups, or by individual intervention.

Lewellen emphasizes that communication has to flow in all directions: from the district to schools; from literacy support teachers to principals to the district; and from the district literacy team both to the schools and to the district office.

Lewellen came to her current role after years of special education teaching in collaboration and consultation with regular educators to support students with special needs as they learned to read. She had acquired both an administrative license and experience working with many types of teachers. Her current position—in which she does a lot of facilitation, training, and data analysis—began to evolve five years ago, when she was district test coordinator.

Lewellen also supports individual schools, such as the award-winning Guy Lee Elementary School, one of two Oregon schools to receive a Closing the Achievement Gap award from the National Title One Association’s Distinguished Schools program. Ninety percent of Guy Lee Elementary students qualify for a free or reduced lunch and nearly 25 percent of students are English-language learners. The school has consistently met annual yearly progress benchmarks. Last year, students improved their math scores by 16.7 percent and their reading scores by 9.4 percent.

Teresa Lewellen understands the need for educators and administrators to align around meeting the needs of each child. In addition to district personnel addressing literacy issues, personnel with literacy specialization are also needed in the local schools, in roles such as Title One reading specialist or literacy support teacher. For example, every title school in Springfield has at least one Title One reading specialist, said Lewellen.

**COE DEPARTMENTS OFFER NEW READING ENDORSEMENT**

To address local district needs, the College of Education received Oregon Teacher Standards and Practices approval this year to offer a reading endorsement with a unique dual-track feature.

The endorsement serves two different kinds of teachers: those who wish to develop expertise in multilingual/multicultural literacy instruction and those who wish to develop, evaluate, and implement data-driven literacy systems. Both tracks provide access to a state-of-the-art reading clinic established by the Center on Teaching and Learning in the College of Education.

The two endorsement emphases not only allow the college to take advantage of different areas of faculty expertise and different thematic emphases within its departments, they allow broader access for ranges of distinct district and school needs, in the service of promoting better literacy education in Oregon.

The college’s Department of Education Studies offers the endorsement to students who choose to specialize in the multilingual and multicultural contexts of literacy to work collaboratively with Title One, migrant education, and bilingual education professionals in their schools and districts to promote literacy achievement for all students.

The Department of Educational Methodology, Policy, and Leadership will prepare students who specialize in literacy leadership to lead literacy development at the building and district level and also in state agencies that involve oversight of state and federal reading initiatives.

Additional coursework in the leadership emphasis provides students with in-depth training on the six components of Oregon’s K–12 literacy framework. The framework, which was adopted by the State Board in December 2009, was developed as a resource for all Oregon districts and schools to ensure that all Oregon students learn to read well. Students completing the literacy leadership emphasis can return to their schools and districts with the expertise to lead implementation of the framework.

Find out more: [http://education.uoregon.edu/reading](http://education.uoregon.edu/reading)
FROM THE ROAD

COE Alumna Jan Monti Observes Students’ Travel to Awareness

It was a long-held dream of alumna Jan Monti’s to visit an ashram. But busy, dedicated lives can absorb a professional’s attention. Monti holds a BA in psychology and an MA in counseling from the University of Oregon. She is an active member of her Seattle, Washington, community, where she has served on several non-profit boards. She is a long-standing member of the King County Junior Achievement Board of Directors. Monti is also a trustee of the University of Oregon Foundation and a past director of the UO Alumni Association. Past recipient of the UOAA Alumnus of the Year award, Monti is also an avid Duck athletics fan.

In 2011, colleagues alerted her to an unusual opportunity to join her passions for community service with her skills in mentoring current Ducks: The 2011 UO India trip was headed to Pondicherry, India, home of the Sri Aurobindo Ashram. Students selected for the trip were preparing to study firsthand the Sri Aurobindo Rural and Village Action and Movement (SARVAM). Because more than two-thirds of India’s population lives in rural communities, bridging the gap between 21st century innovations and developing communities through ecologically and human-centered development is paramount. SARVAM serves UO programs as a progressive model village community that offers students an encounter with locally designed reforms in public health, education, after-school care, organic farming, vocational training, housing, community leadership structure, women, and culture with expanded work in seven villages.

UO faculty asked Monti to consider participating. By December, she and 15 UO students were experiencing firsthand how university classwork, especially College of Education classwork, relates to the realities of India.

Excerpts from Jan Monti’s blog:

The ride to and from the project was an adventure of another kind. Whizzing through this traffic is like an E Ticket ride in Disneyland. Scooters, trucks, buses, tuktuks, cars all zooming in and out of one another’s path and pulling back to their side just inches before contact. As a passenger, it is best to just look out the side and not ahead—unless you want the full experience of anticipating hundreds of potential human errors within a few feet of one another at all times. But somehow we have not witnessed any serious accidents—the sense of space and order here is on a different dimension. Somehow it works—for them! The road is a snapshot of Indian life: small shops of all kinds mixed in with fruit stands, people walking, dogs rummaging for food, school children in uniform, beggars, and women with children all mingle in a kind of dance. It offers a great snapshot of what life is like in rural India.

Learning about the society’s work is a big part of our educational purpose here. Shivkumar—who is with the India Council for Integral Education—gave the afternoon lecture on The Meaning of Integral Education, part 1. He began by speaking of the genius that is in every one of us—and that we just need to let it out. That the discovery we make in our lives depends on the discovery we make in ourselves. He challenged the students, asking them, Why do we need education? Is education really necessary? He used an analogy: if you put a seed in the ground, do you need to educate it to grow? If a much inferior form of life knows how to produce and bloom, what does that show us? That essential knowledge and wisdom is inside us and, therefore, we at the top of evolution should also have this knowledge. That same genius that is inside the plant is inside us. He described the task of the teacher as putting students in touch with the genius inside them. There are three parts we need to educate—body, mind, and emotions. To help the body, emotions, and mind grow healthy, one needs to feed oneself good food, positive emotions, and positive thoughts. If these three parts are trained in isolation, it is a disaster. True education takes place when we integrate our body, emotions, and mind with our inner genius, and this is what is called integral education. With this you become an integrated person.

There were two main educational events today—the first with Harvinder Kaur on Independence and Interdependence. She arrived last year to develop integral education curriculum for mainstream schools. Sessions always begin with a short meditation during which time music is played. Then there is the opening question—today it was ‘Why are you here?’ Followed by ‘How do people experience another culture?’ Followed by sharing of thoughts and the next question: ‘How important is the individual in your eyes?’ The conversation led to our notion of individualism in the West versus the Indian notion of the family and community having a big say in the choices of your life. ‘Why do people behave differently?’ Looking at behaviors and customs is the surface of understanding the deeper meaning of culture, community, family, and religion. She left them with a question to consider for the duration of their stay: ‘Because we are interdependent, does it mean that we are not individuals?’ The power of these questions was a bit startling for the students at first, but they are becoming more comfortable venturing into new uncharted territory. The faculty are so compelling and committed. The highlight was the guided meditation she led. For many it was their first.
The morning session with Shivakumar was Integral Education Part 2, the Power of Concentration. He offered a three-part model—By paying attention to things, we increase our awareness. Once you become aware, to learn it thoroughly, you need to focus on concentration. The more you focus on concentration, the more you will learn. Attention + Awareness + Concentration = Consciousness. To be successful in life, one has to remain focused. He led the students through a series of exercises to demonstrate the power of concentration. They really got into it and got so much out of it—this may have been the highlight so far for them in understanding their own power to use attention, increase awareness, fully concentrate and drop into the zone of true consciousness.

Q: What did you find difficult about the experience?
A: I knew there was poverty—and there is. But as hard as it is to see women and children and the infirm begging—they too had dignity . . . . As many poor come to beg in Pondicherry as there are tourists—and there are begging “promoters” who send kids out—especially in the larger cities. I found it difficult not to give them all rupees . . . .

Q: What did you find difficult about the experience?
A: I participated in every part of it—and watched the students’ reactions. The first week, many of them had to take final exams that were proctored by Leslie Steeves, a professor from the School of Journalism. Students had exams in very difficult topics, such as biochemistry and architectural design. Until that was over, many of them were stressed and distracted, and understandably so. Once that was over, they visibly relaxed and engaged much more. One of my “bellwether” students was Tracy—she is outspoken, and I knew would tell me what she was really thinking. I asked her a few days into the experience what she thought about it so far. She told me it was going well but that she was a bit disappointed. When I asked her why, she said she thought there would be projects for them to do, hands-on things like building houses or teaching kids. But that it was going ok. I asked her the same question about 10 days into the trip: “So Tracy, how is it going now?” Her response was “I get it . . . . I’m the project!” I think that says it all.

Q: How were the students combining their education into the experience?
A: For many of them, it began as a cognitive experience—they were still on “school” mentality. They were waiting for the experience. Once they let go of that separateness and began to become part of the experience by engaging with the people and with their own experiential learning, things moved to a different level. Most of them did not know each other before this trip. That did not last long. They became close and learned a lot from one another’s experience of this very special time.

Q: Did the trip meet your expectations?
A: No—it exceeded them. On every level. I now know and count as friends a group of people I cannot imagine not having known:

• Leslie Steeves, School of Journalism and Communication
• Surrendra Subriami, College of Education
• Peter Walker, Department of Geography
• Director of the Holden Leadership Center, John Duncan, whose presence supported student leaders, faculty, society representatives (and me!)
• Last year’s UO student body president, Amelie Rousseau, who planned the trip on the ground in Pondi and whose leadership and grace touched every aspect of the trip
• The Sri Aurobindo Society leadership who demonstrated the principles of human dignity in every interaction
• And, most of all, the 15 students who welcomed me as number 16—and I look forward to staying connected to

There was not a day I was not grateful to be part of this inaugural trip to India. I made friends, memories; grew personally and professionally; and most of all, gained a perspective that will help me advance the vision of the University of Oregon.

“I really don’t think one can just show up in a country and ‘save’ them or ‘change the world.’ However, I think making … ‘small’ positive differences and touching the lives of those we come in contact with, that eventually the world will be changed for the better.”

Stephanie Matheson

Day 9: COE student Stephanie Matheson’s cartoon project with a local community member (see page 1) focused on breaking stereotypes and embracing differences

Trip photo album at www.facebook.com/uoeducation
Emerging Researcher Takes the Long View

The research of Special Education doctoral candidate Yen Pham examines part of a larger study funded by the Institute of Education Sciences. The study revises a curriculum originally designed for kids with disabilities and tailors it for teaching social skills and career readiness to previously adjudicated youth seeking employment. Pham’s presentation won special recognition at a national conference on career development and transition.

Pham’s outlook has been tempered by a rigorous course of study: a doctoral program in special education is not for the faint of heart, according to Pham. But cultivating the long view—imagine the arc of a future career in special education research—keeps her focused.

“This is an endeavor that requires persistence and effort, and I’m only beginning the process,” said Pham, who will defend her doctoral dissertation in the fall of 2013. “At the College of Education I’ve met many established researchers who have spent entire careers seeking to improve the quality of life for individuals with disabilities, and for all students. I’m very thankful for the highly talented colleagues and faculty in my program who not only share the experience of the research process, they help us persist daily in our doctoral studies and keep driving home the ultimate purpose we all want to serve, that of benefitting our students,” said Pham.

“We all are so committed to doing this work, and the ultimate value is the extent to which it improves the lives of our students,” said Pham. “But my colleagues also remind me to keep a life balance of work and play, so that we stay fresh for the long haul!”

SKILLED, REFLECTIVE EDUCATORS

“Sometimes I feel removed from the kids and issues that got me here in the first place, and that’s challenging,” said Pham, who discovered a passion for research with special education populations through teaching inner-city disadvantaged youths in New York City for five years. Her students ranged from 14 to 21 years of age, with the majority labeled with learning or emotional disabilities.

“These students commuted from Harlem, the Bronx, Brooklyn, and Queens; in these areas in 2008–9, 86 percent of students qualified for free and reduced lunch; and in 2010–11, 71 to 80 percent received public assistance. The student population was approximately 35 percent black and 59 percent Latino.

“Once I had a chance to work with kids with special needs, I became focused on the ways we can utilize research data to make improvements for greater numbers of students,” said Pham, who was not always certain as a teacher how to address the complexities of learning difficulties. “I have always had
interests in educational policy, but I didn’t want to be a policy maker without understanding more deeply what the field of special education is really about,” said Pham, who began searching for the best graduate training in special education she could find to address her own sense of responsible action.

“Smart and privileged kids can learn even with poor teaching, but kids with special needs or from disadvantaged backgrounds cannot afford to have bad teaching at all; they require teachers who are highly skilled, self critical, and reflective,” said Pham. “I recognized in myself that I might need additional strategies and tools to address all the problems I was seeing. I felt the kids deserved the best of me, and if I had to go to graduate school to learn how to be more effective, that’s what I would do.”

“In my experience,” said Pham, “the hardest kids to reach were those who’d had these labels for a number of years and any who also had history of involvement with the juvenile justice system. I lost more than one student to that system. It deeply affected my sense of what we as teachers are facing when we seek to teach in the midst of social environments that offer no support for struggling students. Other kids who made it through and were successful—I could see that they had had at least one advocate to help them overcome the challenges. The social environments where most of my students came from were extremely bleak.”

WAYS TO GIVE BACK
Pham understands the important role of mentor figures: she had had her own challenges to overcome as a young student. Her family emigrated when she was 12 years old from Phu Yen, Vietnam, to the United States by way of three years in a refugee camp in Palawan, Philippines, after Vietnam came under communist rule. Her later junior high and high school experiences were in Oakland, California. Faculty members, counselors, the director and peers at Upward Bound—the federal TRIO program that provides enrichment activities for students from disadvantaged backgrounds—are among those whom Pham credits as fundamental to helping her to find her voice as a scientist.

“Public school in Oakland was terrible: I had no science teacher for two years, and my 10th grade social studies teacher showed movies every week. If not for Upward Bound, I would not have had the necessary skills or confidence to take advantage of the opportunity to attend Swarthmore,” said Pham, whose undergraduate study was funded by a perceptive donor who saw scholarly potential in spite of—or perhaps, because of—the many challenges Pham had mastered. “The confidence and generosity of the man who paid for my college education inspired me to live more progressively and to give back in any way that I can,” said Pham.

“These are just a few of the reasons that I want to spend the rest of my life trying to address remedies of inequality. Kids with special needs or kids who don’t have resources need those of us who have achieved something to give back, to give them the tools to get out of generational poverty or away from a harmful environment.

“The best way to do that, for me,” said Pham, “is to continue the work that the dedicated educators who helped me have been doing—assisting students from disadvantaged backgrounds.”

Yen Pham (r) discusses her award-winning research with her faculty mentor Deanne Unruh (l)
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Know Anyone in this Photo?
We see Dick Schmuck—so don’t tell us that! But please do let us know if you see yourself or anyone else you recognize. Also feel free to contact us if you have any good stories associated with this time.

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