Service trumps sun and fun for Coe spring breakers

In addition to the traditional sun-and-fun Spring Break trips for which college students are known, many Coe students are opting for alternative adventures offering opportunities for community service.

For the second year in a row, Coe Chaplain Kristin Hutson led a group of students to Joplin, Mo., over Spring Break to participate in rebuilding that community still recovering from a Category 5 tornado that struck the city in 2011. Partnering with the First Presbyterian Church of Joplin, Presbyterian Disaster Assistance, and Rebuild Joplin, the crew of eight worked five days in one house where they installed drywall, painted and laid flooring.

"Thousands of people were displaced by the Joplin tornado and, while there has been much improvement since we were there last year, it is unbelievable how much still needs to be done," Hutson said. "I hope others will consider coming to Joplin and volunteering as well. Anyone, any church, any group would be welcome to help out. They still need us."

The Office of Service-Learning and Campus Engagement and the Iowa Campus Compact AmeriCorps Program teamed up to send 10 Coe students to Little Rock, Ark., during Spring Break to serve and reflect over issues of hunger and homelessness. Service projects included trips to soup kitchens and food distribution centers and helping out with children who are directly affected by homelessness and poverty. The students also participated in a poverty simulation at Heifer International.

"At the end of the service trip, students felt as if they had really made a difference in the Little Rock community and had seen what they could bring back with them to Coe to target homelessness and hunger in Cedar Rapids," said Eastly Johnson ’15.

In yet another alternative Spring Break, Marquita Wiggins ’14 and Colin Conway ’14 represented Intervarsity Christian Fellowship at City Lights. The Coe students joined forces with students from William Penn University, Kennesaw State University and Southern Illinois University at Edwardsville for spiritual growth and service projects in St. Louis.

Also, 10 students represented Coe in the Habitat for Humanity Collegiate Challenge. Traveling by van to Cookeville, Tenn., the Kohawks worked at an apartment complex for women recovering from substance addiction, at a Habitat ReStore and at a Habitat home.

“We started by putting the insulation down in the basement and we built the floor,” said Nina Johnson ’15. “This was an amazing experience for all of us.”

The rise in the alternative break movement is part of an overall shift in interest toward volunteering and civic engagement by young adults. Over the past several years, colleges around the country have been reporting steady increases in community service levels.
World’s cuisine featured at 39th International Club banquet

Always one of the top culinary events at Coe, the 39th annual International Club banquet did not disappoint hundreds of attendees on Feb. 24. Appetizers were served during a reception in the newly remodeled Jim and Linnie Phifer Commons in the upper lobby of Gage Memorial Union, followed by dinner featuring cuisine from around the world in Gage Dining Hall.

This year’s buffet-style banquet featured foods from various countries including Korea, China, Kenya, Japan, Nepal, France, Cambodia and Vietnam. Dishes such as oshiruko, sambusa, quinoa, bulgogi, chicken curry, grilled prawns, pork ribs, crepes, mango lassi and much more were served.

A brief program featuring the students followed dinner and the following officers were announced for 2013-14: Manish Khadka ’14, president; Shishir Bajracharya ’15, vice president; Marquita Wiggins ’14, secretary; Alex Brown ’16, treasurer; Thanh Bach ’15, cultural chair; and J.P. Haik ’16, social chair.

International Student Advisor and Dean of Student Retention Services Deanna Jobe noted that half of the officers and many active members of International Club are American. “Many of these same students will end up studying abroad on one of Coe’s off-campus programs during their four years at Coe,” she said. “Certainly one of the best ways to meld cultures is in the kitchen!”

This year’s event served as an unveiling of Phifer Commons, which was created over the winter with the remodeling of the upper lobby of Gage Memorial Union. Student Senate unanimously voted to designate $225,000 over a three-year period toward the project, using unspent funds returned by clubs and organizations. An additional $25,000 was contributed by Sodexo Dining Services.

The project resulted from brainstorming between Career Services, Admission and student groups in response to concerns about the lack of functional space for group use. The student-friendly environment features a fireplace, comfortable seating and tables, and computer stations and a printer. Dedicated in honor of retiring Coe President James Phifer and his wife, Linnie, the remodeling included flat screen televisions and a drop-down projector screen.

In keeping with long-standing tradition, Coe international students donned costumes and served from a buffet line reflecting their nationalities.

▲ Serving up tonjiru (Japanese miso soup) at the reception preceding the 39th annual International Club banquet were Yuki Akahane, Kazumasa Ikoma and Wataru Akiyama.

▲ Yasushi Inoue, Sayaka Kawaguchi and Ishii Rikako entertained the audience with a Japanese dance.

▲ In keeping with long-standing tradition, Coe international students donned costumes and served from a buffet line reflecting their nationalities.
Coe College has made substantial reductions in its carbon emissions in recent years, thanks to a new steam production plant constructed jointly with neighboring St. Luke’s Hospital and the implementation of energy conservation practices.

In 2006, Coe President James Phifer signed the American College and University Presidents’ Climate Commitment (ACUPCC). Comprised of colleges and universities from across the country, the group is committed to creating campuses that are environmentally friendly. As part of that commitment, Coe conducts an annual inventory of its energy usage and carbon emissions.

Coe Professor of Chemistry Marty St. Clair and student Kalais Kuhlmann ’13 tabulated data comparing the college’s fiscal 2012 energy bills with the initial measurements done for fiscal 2008. Included in the analysis were Coe’s electrical and natural gas costs, the cost of Coe’s share of the natural gas used by the new steam plant, estimates of commuting patterns, etc. The data was then input into the Clean Air-Cool Planet’s Campus Carbon Calculator.

The results reveal that over the four-year period, Coe has reduced its net emissions of carbon equivalent by 19.6 percent, from 12,044 metric tons to 9,685 metric tons. Likewise, the net emissions per student have decreased by 29.8 percent, from 10.4 metric tons to 7.3 metric tons. Finally, the net carbon emission per 1,000 square feet of building space has decreased 17.9 percent, or 2.5 metric tons, over the four-year period.

“What we’ve seen is that the total amount of carbon emitted has decreased rather substantially,” said St. Clair. “This is due primarily to the switch from getting steam from the former coal-fired Alliant steam plant to the new steam plant powered by natural gas, which burns much cleaner.”

In addition, electricity usage has decreased on the Coe campus over the four-year period, which has helped to reduce costs and the overall carbon footprint. “Coe has implemented a number of electrical efficiency measures such as new lights in Clark Racquet Center, which have resulted in significant savings,” St. Clair said.

Following the 2008 flood and the subsequent shutdown of the Alliant Energy steam system, St. Luke’s and Coe College formed a partnership to find a permanent, cost-effective, high-efficiency, reliable and environmentally superior solution for hot water and heating needs. As a result of working together, the two institutions developed a solution for essential steam production, ultimately benefiting the constituencies of both organizations.

The new steam production plant became operational in August of 2010. The $4.65 million project was funded by a grant from the U.S. Department of Commerce’s Economic Development Administration (EDA) funds provided to help the city recover from the 2008 flood. Approximately two-thirds of the steam from the plant is used by St. Luke’s, with one-third used by Coe. While primarily powered by natural gas, the new plant is able to run on diesel fuel as a backup to provide redundancy. The new joint steam facility helps to ensure that both St. Luke's and Coe have an affordable source of energy to keep long-term costs as low as possible.

The facility is a USGBC or “LEED” project, which means it’s registered with the U.S. Green Building Council. LEED projects encourage and accelerate global adoption of sustainable green building and development practices.

**MENGESHA RECEIVES GILMAN INTERNATIONAL SCHOLARSHIP TO STUDY ABROAD**

Coe junior Yafet Mengesha ’14 has been awarded a prestigious Benjamin A. Gilman International Scholarship for study abroad during the spring term. He is the first student in Coe history to receive this competitive national award, which will provide him with $5,000 in financial support.

Mengesha, who majors in business administration and Asian studies at Coe, is spending this semester studying at Sookmyung Women’s University in Seoul, South Korea. He is “ecstatic” about the learning experience offered by this opportunity. During the application process, Mengesha received guidance from Associate Professor of German John Chaimov, who also coordinates Coe’s study abroad programs.

A native of Eritrea whose family now lives in Denver, Mengesha is the son of Rahel Tsegaye.

Nationally, more than 1,000 outstanding undergraduate students from nearly 400 colleges and universities were offered the Gilman International Scholarship to participate in a study abroad program during the spring term.

The Gilman Scholarship Program aims to diversify the kinds of students who study abroad and the countries and regions where they go. The program is sponsored by the U.S. Department of State Bureau of Educational and Cultural Affairs, and administered by the Institute of International Education (IIE) in Houston.

Since the establishment of the Gilman International Scholarship Program by the International Academic Opportunity Act of 2000, over 13,000 students nationwide have received this coveted award. The scholarship is named after Congressman Benjamin Gilman of New York, who retired in 2002 after serving in the House of Representatives for 30 years and chairing the House Foreign Relations Committee.

Recipients of the scholarship have the opportunity to gain a better understanding of other cultures, countries, languages and economies - making them better prepared to assume leadership roles within government and the private sector. According to IIE President Allan Goodman, “International education is one of the best tools for developing mutual understanding and building connections between people from different countries. It is critical to the success of American diplomacy and business, and the lasting ties that Americans make during their international studies are important to our country in times of conflict as well as times of peace.”
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Coe College
View From Campus

Essential Calendar

Spring Term
Student Research Symposium (no day classes) .......... April 18
Classes end.............................................................. May 2
Final Exams............................................................. May 4, 6-8
Baccalaureate......................................................... May 11
Commencement....................................................... May 12

Fall Term
Classes begin .......................................................... Aug. 26
Labor Day (no classes).............................................. Sept. 2
Family Weekend..................................................... Sept. 20-22
Fall Break............................................................... Oct. 7-8
Homecoming.......................................................... Oct. 19
Thanksgiving Break begins (after last class) .......... Nov. 26
Classes resume....................................................... Dec. 2
Classes end............................................................. Dec. 9
Final Exams ............................................................ Dec. 11–14

May Term
Classes begin .......................................................... May 15
Memorial Day (no classes) ...................................... May 27
Classes end............................................................. June 7

Note: For the most complete and updated campus calendar, select “Calendar” on Coe’s website (www.coe.edu).

Sir Salman Rushdie signs autographs for students following his Feb. 12 appearance at Coe’s Contemporary Issues Forum. Established by the late K. Raymond Clark ’30, the forum presents the views of distinguished leaders whose work has received national or international recognition. Rushdie was the 10th Contemporary Issues Forum speaker. Previous speakers include former U.S. President George H.W. Bush, former Poland President Lech Walesa, deep-sea oceanographer Robert Ballard, civil rights activist Myrlie Evers-Williams, former Israeli Prime Minister Ehud Barak, Doonesbury cartoonist Garry Trudeau, ecological expert Jared Diamond, award-winning documentary filmmaker Ken Burns, and Pulitzer Prize-winning columnist Leonard Pitts. These speakers, as well as others hosted each year by various departments, add breadth and depth to Coe educational opportunities.