

Western Kentucky University

TopSCHOLAR®

---

Arête: Honors College at WKU Newsletter

Mahurin Honors College

---

4-10-2007

## UA35/11 Arête April 2007

Honors College

Western Kentucky University, Arete@wku.edu

Follow this and additional works at: [https://digitalcommons.wku.edu/stu\\_hon\\_news](https://digitalcommons.wku.edu/stu_hon_news)



Part of the [Arts and Humanities Commons](#), [Education Commons](#), and the [Social and Behavioral Sciences Commons](#)

---

### Recommended Citation

College, Honors, "UA35/11 Arête April 2007" (2007). *Arête: Honors College at WKU Newsletter*. Paper 4. [https://digitalcommons.wku.edu/stu\\_hon\\_news/4](https://digitalcommons.wku.edu/stu_hon_news/4)

This News Article is brought to you for free and open access by TopSCHOLAR®. It has been accepted for inclusion in *Arête: Honors College at WKU Newsletter* by an authorized administrator of TopSCHOLAR®. For more information, please contact [topscholar@wku.edu](mailto:topscholar@wku.edu).

## Inside

HDB student  
column page 2

Students' plans  
for the summer  
page 3

Sigma Tau Delta  
page 3

37th Annual  
Research  
Conference  
page 4

HonorsToppers,  
Class of 2007  
page 4

Big Brothers,  
Big Sisters page 6

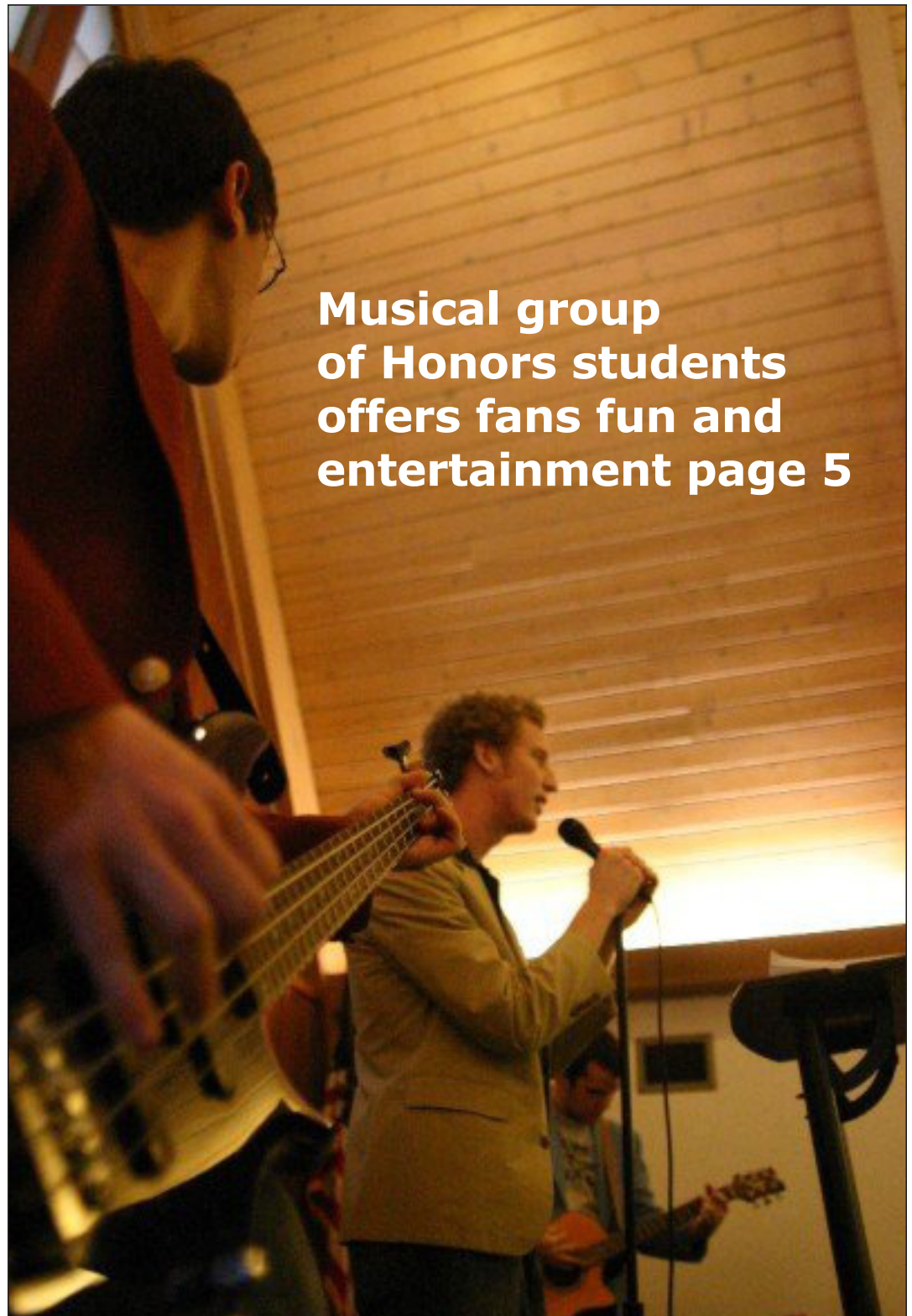
Honors students'  
awards  
and accolades  
page 6

How Habitat for  
Humanity can help  
you page 7

Editor's column  
from Spain page 7

Student Profile  
page 8

A Part Of Japan  
page 8



# Count it: the numbers speak for themselves



by Kevin Smiley  
Freshman Representative -  
Honors Development Board

It's almost over, folks. The 2006-2007 school year is nearly at its end, and what do we have to show for it as a program? Well, a heck of a lot.

It's been a truly extraordinary year and it's been the Honors Development Board's pleasure to serve you. The issues we have worked with have been mostly resolved by the date the newsletter is published; therefore I think it appropriate to use the last student representative's column of this year to go by the numbers, look back on everything that has happened, and look forward to a

great next year.

The year in numbers:

88 – Number of Honors courses held in the past year.

28 – Percentage of students who participated in the first year of voting for the Honors Development Board student representatives. Comparably, the most recent Student Government Association elections had a turnout of about 8%.

30 – Number of students who are studying abroad in Harlaxton, England, next fall. Two others will be going this summer.

6,000-7,000 – Times that Dr. Cobane has signed his name on Honors Program material. Dr. Cobane always tries to sign "good news" types of letters, such as acceptance to the Honors Program or congratulations on varied accomplishments. Personal notes are included on many as well.

>1 – Number of average applications for prestigious scholarships received in previous years.

8 – Number of prestigious

scholarships Honors students have been awarded for the coming year.

42 – General Education offerings for next fall.

17 – Size of an average Honors class in the past year. Hurrah for smaller classes and better learning environments!

4 – Number of new employees starting in the Honors Program next fall. The new positions are Academic Advisor, Academic Recruiter, Informational Technology Specialist, and Office Associate. Dr. Cobane and Special Assistant Jeremy Phillips will also be back in action this fall.

264 – Initial number of applications for Honors housing.

27.32 – Average ACT score of the current freshman class.

22 – Number of WKU presenters at the Kentucky Honors Roundtable held at Western in March.

51 – People who love Simba (and saw the production of *The Lion King* in Nashville last fall).

20 – Students who ate s'mores in the Smoky Mountains as part of the Great Smoky Mountains Institute at Tremont Honors Retreat.

400+ – High schoolers who have been accepted into the Honors Program for next fall, the highest ever! They're not any less qualified either—their average ACT score is 27.8.

500 – Approximate number of students who were in the Honors Program this year. Turns out, all of them are pretty good people.

5 – Continents on which Honors students will be studying next fall. Australia and Antarctica are the only continents not covered by Honors students.

105 – Honors students in the Honors Club, or so says Facebook.

Thanks to everyone for a great year, and I hope you're looking forward to next year as much as I am. For the seniors leaving us, congratulations and good luck!

*Reach Kevin at kevin.smiley633@wku.edu.*

## Calendar Of Events

- **April 27**  
Honors Formal
- **May 7-11**  
Finals Week
- **May 8**  
Finals Week Cookout
- **May 11**  
Reception and Dinner for Honors Graduates and Award Recipients
- **May 12**  
Commencement

The *Arete* staff would like to apologize for the delay in the publication of last month's issue; this is not a normal occurrence and we hope to publish in a timely manner so as to benefit our readers. Thank you for your patience.

## Newsletter Staff

<p><b>Advisor</b> Dr. Angela Jones</p> <p><b>Editors</b> Ria Wallace Kat Wilson</p>	<p><b>Staffers</b></p> <p>Dana Adams Christina Billings Bobby Deignan Jennnifer Dooper George Eklund Reagan Gilley</p>	<p>Tedde Hardin Matthew Jenkins Brittany Kittleman Sam Micallef Mannie Webb Dunja Zdero</p>
---	--	---

**Questions? Comments? Got an idea for a story?**  
EMAIL US AT ARETE@WKU.EDU

## Students travel to Pittsburgh for English Honors Conference

by Bobby Deignan

Where can you find a bunch of people talking about Emily Dickinson, Shakespeare, and dead horses? Those may sound like the kind of bad conversations people force on a Singles Hotline, but these were actually only a handful of the subjects one could hear about at the annual Sigma Tau Delta convention.

What exactly is this Sigma Tau Delta? Is it one of those crazy fraternities that toilet paper people's front yards, or one of those sororities that you see all wearing the same shirts? Actually, Sigma Tau Delta is the International English Honors Society, which meets once a year (this year's destination was Pittsburgh), and gives student members the opportunity to present their work.

Professor Walker Rutledge of the English Department, Brooke Shafar, Renee Davidson, and I made our expedition to the

Pittsburgh confluence on Thursday, March 29, leaving at about 5:30 a.m. and finally arriving sometime after 3:00 p.m. The next two and a half days would include, among other adventures, an evening at *Riverdance*, an afternoon at the Andy Warhol Museum, and a visit to the Carnegie Museum of Art and Natural History.

Over 170 institutions were represented at the Sigma Tau Delta convention. I was able to sit in on several of these panels and hear papers about everything from a scholarly analysis of Charles Dickens's *David Copperfield* to a story about the family horse getting its head stuck in a fence. This is what makes these conference experiences worthwhile—getting the chance to see what students from all over the United States (and some places outside the country) are working on. You can learn from their research and be inspired by their creativity.

Brooke read two papers at

the convention—one called “Man and Monster: The Question of Humanity in Mary Shelley's *Frankenstein*” and another about her unusual travel experience on a night train in Germany entitled “Sleeping My Way to Berlin.” Renee wowed a panel with her investigation of Ernest Hemingway's narrative structuring of *The Sun Also Rises* in “From Hell to Heaven and Back Again.” Finally, I read my story, “Momma's Boy,” on a Short Fiction panel.

One could say we spent the weekend rubbing elbows with some unique and powerful voices in both the American media and literature. On Thursday, David Rakoff from NPR stopped in and gave a presentation followed by a book signing. Acclaimed American poet Sharon Olds visited the convention and spoke to the group on Friday night. Olds read from her accomplished body of poetry, both regaling and inspiring us with deep thoughts about love

and life.

The Sigma Tau Delta convention is something of a paradox—it's a once-in-a-lifetime opportunity that happens every year. Annually, the group assembles to celebrate up-and-coming voices in English studies, yet one year just isn't the same as the next. This is true of conferences in any field. Students should seek out these experiences to read their work and listen to colleagues from across the nation. You never know who you might meet at a conference—possibly the next great American novelist or a future Poet Laureate. Nonetheless, these events are about your work—they are a celebration, nay, a commemoration of your hard work and determination as a student. Only a few things are as rewarding as presenting your paper for students and instructors alike, knowing your sweat and tears have paid off.

## What Are Your Plans for the Summer?



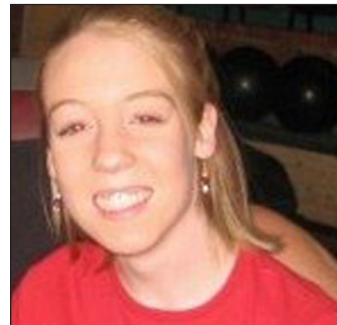
**Joey Marquardt**  
Sophomore - Memphis, TN

“I plan on getting a job and making visits up to the hill.”



**Katy Detoma**  
Freshman - Lexington, KY

“I am working at a 4-H camp at North Central in Carlyle, Kentucky. I am teaching archery to little kids.”



**Maggie Roe**  
Freshman - London, KY

“I am working at Scats/Vampy as a camp counselor.”



**CJ Pruitt**  
Freshman - Edmonson County, KY

“I am doing chemistry research with Professor Byrd, with an emphasis in Calorimetry.”

# Honors Students Take on the 37th WKU Research Conference

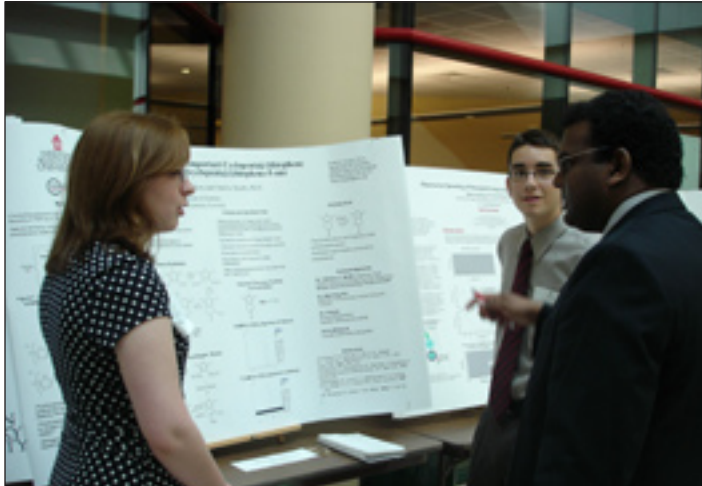
by Reagan Gilley and Mannie Webb

The 37<sup>th</sup> Annual Western Kentucky University Student Research Conference was held on March 31, 2007. At the conference there were a number of undergraduate presentations in the six various sessions: Engineering and Robotics; Chemistry and Geology; Biology; Psychology and Education; Religious Studies, Philosophy, and Anthropology; and English, History, and Art History.

Additionally, a number of posters were presented in the three separate undergraduate sections: Biology, Chemistry, Engineering, and Geography; Psychology, Recreation, and

Student Engagement; and Art and Graphic Design. A number of Honors students attended this annual conference, and several won awards for presenting their research. Award winners were: **Joanna Justine Miller**, Honorable Mention in English, History, and Art History, for "Synthesizing Gauguin: A Comparative Look at Cultural Texts and Gauguin's Tahitian Works."

**Brian D. Rogers**, First Place in the Biology, Chemistry, Engineering, and Geography



Poster Presentation, for "Tonotopic Representation in the Goldfish Saccule."

**Andrew Joseph Ebelhar**, Honorable Mention in the Biology, Chemistry, Engineering, and Geography Poster

Presentation, for "Constructing Singe-Copy Anti-Termination Reporter Gene Constructs by Recombineering."

**R. Reagan Gilley**, First Place in the Biology session, for "Testing the Linear Threshold Shift Hypothesis in Tone-Exposed Goldfish."

**Amanda Lynn Webb**, Honorable Mention in the Biology Session, for "Sound Production on Loricariid Catfish."

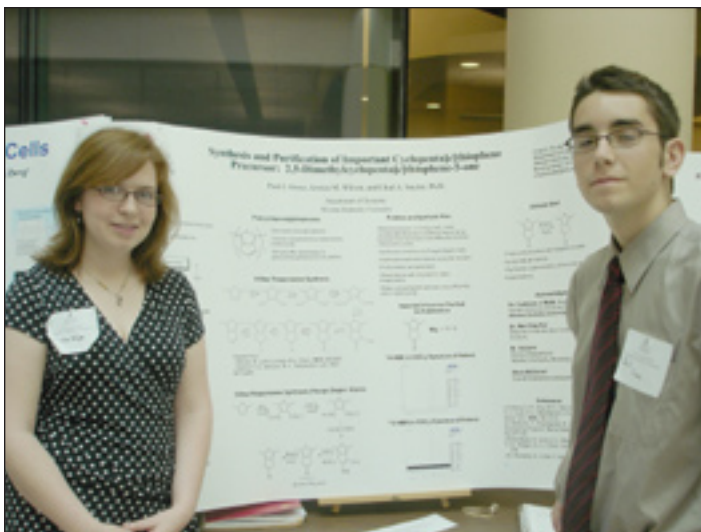
Congratulations to all who won, and best of luck to all who will present next year.

## HonorsToppers Class of 2007

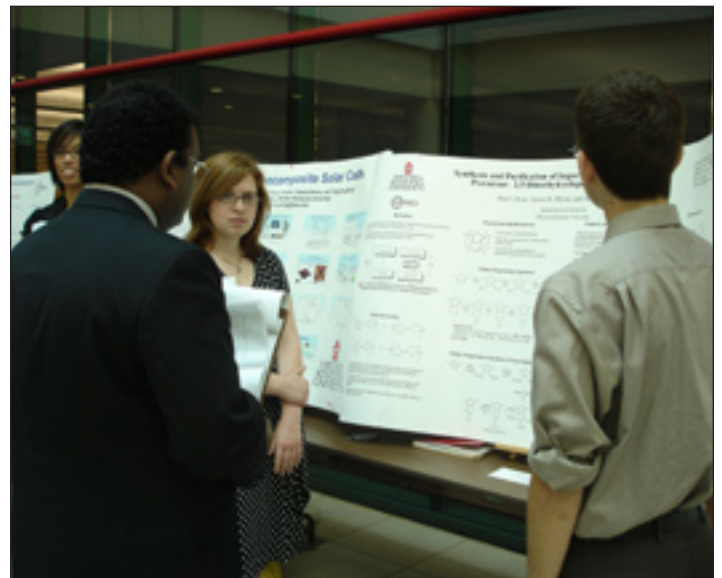
by George Eklund

I would like to announce the new class of HonorsToppers for the 2007-2008 school year. There were a total of 30 applicants and all were very qualified and would have represented the Honors Program well. I encourage everyone to apply next year so that we can continue to make the HonorsToppers the best organization possible. Congratulations to the 20 incoming HonorsToppers.

The 2007 class is Amanda Brown, Emily Burns, Nick Courtney, Jennifer Dooper, Drew Ecloy, Tedde Harden, Hannah Kington, Brittany Kittleman, Blair Lillybridge, Hannah Pennington, Ginny Prather, Helen Fay Pruitt, Maggie Roe, Mandy Simpson, Kevin Smiley, Jeff Sorce, Carmen Trimpe, Bethany Truax, Natasha Walker, and Dunja Zdero



Research photos by Mannie Webb



## Hot Minute offers good music and fun for fans

by Jennifer Dooper

When the Belgian priest Georges LeMaitre proposed the Big Bang theory in 1933, he probably wasn't thinking of a group of college freshmen who would be at Western over 70 years later.

But perhaps he should have considered them.

With less than a semester under their belts, this group of seven – or six, or five, or four, depending on their mood – has made its mark in the Honors community by sharing with others what Albert Schweitzer called “a refuge from the miseries of life.” They make music.

Smiley and the Hot Minute, as they call themselves, have hosted two concerts so far this school year. The band's name suggests two things: how fast it was formed, and how random it likes to be.

At first, the group – Kevin Smiley, Dave Vickery, Greg Capillo, Drew Eclov, Matt Jenkins, Matt Cooke, and Seth Peckham – came together as “sort of a joke,” Smiley said. A picture was snapped that the Puritans would have scoffed at, and they became official.

But the band needed more than a name and a picture of their shirtless torsos. They needed music, and they needed a gig. The solution came in early December, when several members of the group were playing videogames late into the night at the Wesley Foundation. Around one in the morning, Jenkins found a guitar and started playing.

In a matter of minutes, Smiley and Vickery were at the microphone and bass guitar, respectively, and the three of them performed six songs they all knew.

A few days later, Concerto Uno brought the band into the spotlight. Nearly 40 people came to watch, sing along, and dance to the music that Smiley described as “silly, fun cover music.”

Their Facebook group “Smiley and the Hot Minute Fan Club” is a testament to their impact. With over 400 members, their fan base extends far beyond Western's campus, with supporters in over twenty states, Ireland, and Germany.

Their strongest supporters, however, are those who live closer to home.

Greg Capillo, whom the band refers to as the “MegaFan,” said that the band's music is an “ear revolution.”

“Some would say that it's the next big thing,” Capillo said. “I would say that it's the only big thing.”

Others come to see the band for reasons other than the music.

“They're mildly musically talented,” Sarah Howell, a freshman and self-declared groupie, said. “But their shows are entertaining in many ways.”

Throughout the show, band members took their shirts off, threw them into the audience and played tambourines between their legs, for example.

“It's a good time,” Smiley said.

The band is known for its renditions of well-known songs. Among the artists it covers are Green Day, JET, The Killers, Ben Kweller, The Beatles, Van Morrison, Violent Femmes and Eagle Eye Cherry. “Brown-Eyed Girl” is one of their more popular tunes, Smiley said.

Full-time members include Jenkins, Vickery, Eclov, and Smiley. Jenkins is a guitarist

and Vickery mans the bass guitar. Eclov, who is also known as the “hit-stuff guy,” serves as the band's percussion artist. His sound-making tools include a tambourine, a bongo and disassembled tables. He also owns a didgeridoo, a traditional Australian Aboriginal instrument, but hasn't played it at either of the band's concerts.

“I've been hitting stuff since I kicked my mother's womb,” Eclov said.

Smiley, meanwhile, brings his vocal talent to the stage. Since he first sang Neil Diamond's “Coming to America” as a youngster, he knew that he was meant to sing for people so that they could have a good time.

“We look for songs that everyone knows, songs you can dance to,” Smiley said.

The band also had a concert on March 7, with an audience of about 30. Its next big gig is April 26 at the Wesley Foundation at 7:00 p.m. They plan to play worship music. The band would like to invite its fans to come out and support them.

“It's not us who makes the band, it's them,” Eclov said.



Cover photo by Lauren Davis, others by Matt Jenkins

## Honors Students receive prestigious awards, internships and scholarships

by Dunja Zdero

Honors students are at it again. Some are sweeping up prestigious awards and scholarships, while others are earning spots in graduate schools and government internships. *Areté* would like to give a special kudos to these students.

**Paul Love** of Hendersonville, Tenn., was selected as the recipient of the Fulbright Scholarship. This scholarship supports one year of graduate study or research in a foreign country in any discipline. It is given to 800 outstanding post-baccalaureate students or faculty per year throughout the country, stated the Fulbright Scholar Program's web site. Love is headed to Cairo, Egypt. His area of study is early and medieval Islamic history, which is his reason for studying Arabic at the Arabic Language Institute. Love will also be continuing his thesis study work as a visiting researcher at the American University in Cairo. Love's thesis discusses a castle siege in downtown Cairo, so he hopes to visit the area frequently. The Fulbright Scholar Program is sponsored by the United States Department of State, Bureau of Educational and Cultural Affairs.

**Mark Sandefur** of Calhoun, Ky., and **Joseph Chavarria-Smith** of Elkton, Ky., received the Barry M. Goldwater scholarships. The scholarships are awarded to students on basis of academic

merit in mathematics, science and engineering fields, states Western Kentucky University's news release. The \$7,500-per-year scholarship covers the cost of tuition, fees, books, and room and board for two years. Sandefur is a biology/chemistry double major, and Smith is a recombinant gene technology/chemistry double major. The scholarship was established in 1986 by Congress to promote excellence in mathematics and science studies, stated the news release. Sandefur and Smith are two of 317 students chosen nationally for the 2007-08 scholarships.

**Reagan Gilley** of Pineville, Ky., a biology/chemistry double major, received an honorable mention for the Goldwater Scholarship.

**Stephanie Wade** of Indianapolis, Ind., won the Outstanding Senior in Political Science award. **Ena Viteskic** of Bowling Green, Ky., won the Outstanding Junior in Political Science award. **Paul Love** received the Richard L. Troutman Award. These students were recognized at the Student Awards Ceremony on April 15. Every year the Potter College of Arts and Letters presents awards to students who have excelled academically and who have demonstrated exceptional leadership or service, stated WKU's news release.

**Sam Micallef** of Lexington, Ky., received the Pi Mu Epsilon Award. The award is given to an

outstanding sophomore mathematics major through Ogden College. Micallef is a mathematics and psychology double major.

**Tim Thornberry** of Lawrenceburg Ky., was recently accepted into Auburn University graduate school. He plans to study clinical psychology. After finishing his doctorate, he would like to obtain a faculty position in a research university or a hospital. Thornberry would like to provide therapeutic services to parents and children to improve their relationships and optimize parenting strategies to prevent psychological disorders. He also wants to contribute original research to the field of parent-child interactions.

**Kevin Smiley** of Danville, Ky., was selected as a summer intern for Senator Jim Bunning. He will be staying in Washington D.C. from July 2 to August 10. During the 40-hour weeks his daily tasks will include conducting legislative research, giving tours of the Capitol, and writing constituent letters. Smiley will also get a chance to sit in on committee meetings and weekly press calls and visit the Senate floor and the White House.

"As a political enthusiast, this sort of work is a dream realized," Smiley said. "I thank Dr. Cobane and the Honors Program for helping inform me of this chance and helping me get there as well. I am pumped!"

## Students Volunteer for Big Brothers Big Sisters

by Tedde Hardin

Several students from the Honors Program have decided to go out into the community of Bowling Green and work to make a difference.

These civically minded undergraduates now volunteer with Big Brothers Big Sisters of South Central Kentucky. Students have said that this experience has been very rewarding and one of the best things they have done in their lives. The BBBS program works to bring underprivileged youths together with older mentors in order to give the youngsters strong role models.

This year the students volunteering their time have not only been excellent examples for their "Littles," as the young matches are called, but also their peers. They have shown others that it can be both fun and rewarding to go out into the community and give of their time and energy.

Since the first two students began going to volunteer, the number of Honors students to join the program has grown. Currently more than five Honors students have made the commitment to take on a Little.

The BBBS program is one which does a great service to the community, and the students who have volunteered their time should be congratulated for their selfless devotion to making a difference in this world.

If you are interested, please feel free to ask anyone involved in the program how you can help; it will be a life-changing experience and you will feel wonderful for volunteering your time to such a worthy cause.

## Volunteer Opportunities

# Habitat For Humanity helps students make a difference

by Dana Adams

The Honors Program has been tremendously supportive of the Habitat Campus Chapter Activities. Here are some ways that the campus chapter can benefit you.

1. *Expand your social life (everyone needs more friends).*

The campus chapter provides many fun ways to meet people of all varieties of majors, ages, groups, and nationalities. Everyone is invited and welcome on workdays.

2. *Explore the world.*

Habitat for Humanity provides winter and spring break trips across the United States. A small fee of \$75 covers transportation, food, accommodations, and fun activities. Another option we have available (if you're looking for international experience) is to participate on a Habitat for Humanity global village team. WKU Habitat members have been sent to Honduras and Bulgaria. (Look for the article about the summer 2007 trip in next semester's issue!)

3. *Accumulate service hours (don't wait until the last minute!).*

Volunteering is such a big part of the Western spirit that many classes and organizations require a certain

number of service hours. Habitat for Humanity has many events at various times and dates that will give you the opportunity to get these hours completed. Work days are flexible; if you can't stay from 8-4, find a friend and split up into two shifts. Rides are also provided to off-campus events. At each activity there are forms that can be signed by an executive board member to provide a receipt for your efforts.

4. *Fulfill course requirements (need help doing your homework?).*

Need a paper or speech topic? Habitat can provide you with information or links to information about the history of Habitat, as well as the current issue of substandard housing. We also have Habitat lesson plans available for a multitude of ages.

5. *Make a difference (and get that warm fuzzy feeling inside).*

The mission of Habitat for Humanity is to help a family obtain a home. The families are hard-working, but need a small helping hand and some motivation. By working on a build site, raising money, or promoting awareness, you have the ability to aid people in helping themselves. In return, you receive the priceless satisfaction of changing the world.

## Editor's Column

# Abroad Experiences challenging and costly but 'worth the jump'

by Kat Wilson

Studying abroad sucks. You're far from your family and friends, you're surrounded by strangers, and even the simplest things are a thousand times harder in a foreign language and culture.

But at the same time, studying abroad is impossibly cool – being away from things you love makes you appreciate them that much more, being surrounded by strangers means no one who matters sees you if you trip and fall, and even the simplest things give you an enormous sense of accomplishment.

Your professors will tell you that studying abroad is a good way to get a leg up on other students - a fairly small percentage of students actually get up the guts/cash to do it, so it puts you in a pretty special little group. But when you're actually abroad it's more of an equalizer, which means it's easier to make friends than you think.

Every other study abroad student is just as confused and awkward as you, and awkwardness is the world's best icebreaker. If you can laugh at the absurdity of your situation, they'll laugh with you, and then you can spend long hours talking about how weird your homestay is (a bidet in every bathroom, and most of the shows on TV are American ones that have been very badly

dubbed), or how strange the regular people around you seem (the local teenagers think McDonald's is the hot place to hang out, and EVERYONE has a tiny dog).

The best part of studying abroad, at least for me, is that I'm not just seeing one country, I'm visiting as many as I can. If you study somewhere in Europe, traveling to other countries while you're there is cheaper than you'd think. So far this semester I've been to England, Scotland, and Morocco, and Portugal and France are coming up soon. Individually, any one of those trips would have been several thousand dollars, and I might never have gotten to take them, but since I had already come this far, they were easily within reach.

So yes, studying abroad is weird and scary and frequently gross. (Toilet paper is a hotter commodity than you ever thought possible... especially in Morocco.) It's a big step to make, and a huge commitment in terms of both time and money. And in all honesty, it's probably not for everyone – you have to be self-determined, willing to try new things, and excited about learning. But those are the same characteristics that you need to be an Honors student, so it's not as big of a leap as you might think, and I guarantee you, it's worth the jump.



## The Change He Wishes To See In The World

by Sam Micallef

Temple University was the school junior Jeff Sorce had his mind set on attending. However, his dad asked him to take a quick look at Western Kentucky University before leaving. While touring campus, an art professor approached Sorce and said, "I just want to welcome you to Western." With those simple words, Jeff Sorce was sold—he would instead transfer to WKU.

Sorce moved to the Hill last August. Already he has made such a difference at Western, especially in the University Honors Program. He is the junior representative of the Honors Development Board, an active member in the Honors Club, co-leader for the Honors Formal Committee, and an excellent Resident Assistant in McLean Hall. Not to mention that in one year Sorce has all the Honors credit hours he needs to graduate, including upper level Honors. How does he do it? Hard work and dedication—he really cares about the program and the Honors students involved. His necessary motivation comes from his favorite Gandhi quote: "Be the change you wish to see in the world."

Jeff Sorce is originally from Illinois. He graduated from Rolling Meadows High School in Rolling Meadows, Illinois. He then attended William Rainey Harper College in Palatine, Illinois, where he earned a liberal arts associates degree. His major is history education, focusing in Colonial America. His goal is to teach history in secondary schools. As far back as Sorce can remember, he has always wanted to be a teacher. Colonial America fascinates him and he loves teaching, so putting the two together is a perfect match. If Sorce could travel back into time to meet any of the people living during

Colonial America, he would pick the third president, Thomas Jefferson, simply because he thinks it would be interesting to hang out with Jefferson and see how he ran a country.

This very dedicated student isn't all about work, however. In his spare time he enjoys camping, cooking, participating with Big Brothers Big Sisters, running, random crafts, and of course, hanging out with friends. Hall director Kourtney Barrett says, "All you have to do is look at Jeff to know that he's not boring." Sorce is very personable and loves getting to know new people. He is always coming up with fun activities for the residents of McLean Hall to partake in, such as a chocolate fondue party.

Sorce is also completely fluent in sign language, is extremely fond of the color orange, likes eagles, loves Italian food (especially lasagna) and can't handle to be separated from his car—Jasper the gold Honda CRV. "My car is like my child," Sorce says. Being the extremely organized person that he is, Sorce has his entire future planned out. Even down to his wedding, which according to his good friend Ashley Belcher will be held at Disney World.

Pet peeves? Jeff Sorce can't handle people who get off task by going off on tangents or people who think that they know everything. Although, Sorce admits that from time to time he fits into these categories too, eventually annoying himself. Phobias? Sorce can't stand spiders and snakes. Especially snakes. "I will squeal like a little girl if I see a snake," he said. Another interesting fact about Sorce is that he was adopted. Because he was originally born in Indiana and then adopted in Illinois, Sorce actually celebrates two birthdays. His original birthday is on August 2, and then he celebrates his "Driveway Day," or adoption day, on August 21.

Bottom line, when the Honors Program needs something done, Jeff Sorce is one of the first people to volunteer. As sophomore Kendrick Bryan put it, "Jeff is a very reliable and dedicated member of the Honors community. He is a true friend of Western, and I'm sure he will think of more ways to improve an already impressive program." Jeff Sorce is Superman.

## A Part of Japan

by Christy Kibodeaux

May is approaching, my last month to be in Japan. I enjoy traveling, and I enjoy learning about new cultures. Upon embarking on this journey, I never thought it would make me appreciate America like it has. Having the opportunity to travel abroad and experience a new culture other than America's has been a dream of mine. I think I used to feel America needed a lot of work, but what I realize is we all need a lot of work. Every culture has its good points and its bad, and I really have found myself missing America and the little things that I took for granted, like oatmeal and beef sausage!

Japan is a wonderful country with a rich history. It has many great things to offer and experience that cannot be found in America. I love going to castles and seeing the way people here appreciate aesthetics and nature. There are many festivals and activities celebrating nature and most Japanese people participate in them. There is something here known as *hanami*, which means "flower viewing." It is wonderful to see Japanese people come together to appreciate nature. People have picnics and sit under the *sakura* trees for hours, enjoying

the brief life of a *sakura*. Some people chase the life of the *sakura* and travel north as the trees' blooms die in the south. On the television films of just *sakura* can be found. And *sakura*—well it is just a cherry tree, something we have in America—and yet here its blooming is found to be a beautiful, enchanting event. This is just one example of something we do not to any degree appreciate like the Japanese.

I love Japan. It has these little things that make me feel at peace and appreciate life. At the same time, it has these little things that drive me insane, but that is my point. There is no ideal culture. Sometimes people get wrapped up in ethnocentric thinking and feel that their culture is superior to everyone else's. Sometimes people hate their own culture and seek a relief by becoming infatuated with another culture and assuming their life would be better off there (and sometimes it would be). I have heard stories of people coming to America expecting a better life and finding it. I have also heard the opposite side of the story: people coming to America expecting to have a better life but finding it actually becomes worse. The point is we are all human and we all have a common bond because of that. We all have our flaws mixed in with our accomplishments and cultural treasures. I think we need to appreciate our own culture to appreciate others, and at the same time we need to appreciate other cultures to appreciate our own. I love Japan, and I love America. I will always be an America, and I will always be a part of Japan.

For now, I am intertwined in both and will continue to travel between the two, both physically and mentally.

