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COMMUNIQUE

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SASO sponsors Coming Out Week



Photo by Barbora Batokova

First-year Meg Padula and sophomore Sarah Mickel trace the bodies of first-years Gena Salorino and Chelsea Rumbaugh during the Chalking on the Quad on Oct. 8.

By Sasha Gonzalez
Staff Writer

One of Chatham's best known student organizations, SASO (Students against Sexual Oppression), is taking on larger and more exciting roles this year, starting with events during the National Coming Out Week from Oct. 11.

Beth Humphries, new president of SASO, has a lot of events in store this year. "I'm really excited because I feel this [SASO] is a perfect catalyst for activism around Pittsburgh," Humphries said.

With 40-50 Chatham women on SASO's member list, Humphries pointed out that only a few women have taken on

roles regarding SASO and their events.

"I'd say around 20 are coming to meetings, contributing ideas and helping out with projects", said Humphries. However, she said she is always looking for more members to get involved.

Expectations this year are positive and high, as Humphries would also like to have SASO become more connected with queer organizations at the University of Pittsburgh, Carnegie Mellon University, other schools and Pittsburgh area groups. In addition to that, Humphries plans on having a lot of guest speakers and musical performers come to campus.

SASO is the campus sponsor of National Coming Out Week

that kicked off with "The Red Party," a new SASO event held for the first time this year in Rea Coffeehouse. It was a fundraising/dance party where all proceeds benefit the Pittsburgh Aids Task Force (PATF). The event was successful and SASO raised \$100 for PATF. Humphries said that she wished she could have held it on a Thursday, rather than a Saturday, since more people would have showed up.

Chalking on the quad was another event to look forward to, where students drew and wrote messages ideas to express their individuality and support for the LGBT community.

"Almost everyone who walked by would ask questions about what we were doing," Humphries

said, "and later would chalk in their own little saying."

Messages included "Love is love no matter what," "Love comes in all forms," and "If it makes you happy, it can't be that bad." Others such as "Bisexuality immediately doubles your chances of a date on a Saturday night," "Homo sweet homo" and "Go gay or go home" were more controversial.

According to Kelly Moselle, assistant dean of student affairs, it was obvious that some messages had been tampered with, in hopes of erasing them. "It is vandalism because it is altering the work someone else has done. It is an attempt to quiet a portion of one population," Moselle said.

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Chatham joins global effort to eliminate lymphedema

By Barbora Batokova
Editor-in-Chief

This past summer, a group of Chatham students along with Mary Joe Geyer, assistant professor of health sciences, traveled to India to train healthcare professionals in lymphedema treatment. Geyer along with four second-year DPT (Doctor of Physical Therapy) students Juliet Baker, Matt Ditzler, Kristen Finsness and Adam Stadtlander, and senior Erin Spangler spent two and a half weeks from Aug. 22 to Sept. 8 at Christian Medical College (CMC) in Vellore, India. The trip was made possible through the Benter Initiative in Global Citizenship, an endowment of \$1 million that the University recently received.

The group stayed at the CMC campus that is the nation's leading medical institution with its level one trauma hospital with 2,000 beds. Geyer with the help of Baker, Ditzler, Finsness and Stadtlander trained healthcare professionals in both basic treatment and prevention of lymphedema as well as the advanced techniques of complex decongestive therapy, while Spangler documented the trip as part of her senior tutorial.

Lymphedema, a swelling caused by the improper functioning of the lymphatic system, is the result of lymphatic filariasis, a parasitic disease caused by microscopic, thread-like worms that enter the lymphatic system, leads to fluid build-up. Lymphedema is most common in tropical areas and is spread by mosquitoes.

According to Geyer and the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), lymphatic filariasis is the leading cause of disability worldwide and currently affects 160 million people. Forty million are disfigured by the disease and 120 million people are infected. However, lymphatic filariasis is on the CDC list of diseases that can be eliminated by prevention and education of the people in affected areas.

Geyer selected India for several reasons. First, 40 percent of those 120 million who are currently at risk of contracting lymphatic filariasis are in Southern India. Second reason was the large percentage of Muslims in Southern India has and the third was the fact that all health professionals in India speak English.

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Verizon and PCWPPP partner to research domestic violence

By April Govednik
Staff Writer

Domestic Violence Awareness Month is in full swing and marks a new journey for Chatham University's Pennsylvania Center for Women, Politics, and Public Policy (PCWPPP) and domestic violence victims nationwide.

Verizon Wireless and the Verizon Foundation officially made a \$25,000 pledge to support PCWPPP on Oct. 11 to conduct studies on domestic violence statewide. The research will be part of the center's annual "Ready to Matter" series that targets issues affecting women. Other topics have included politics and economic factors affecting women.

"This research would not have been possible

without the grant, as it allowed us to commission the study, print and disseminate the data and plan for and conduct outreach efforts. I do believe the grant is very beneficial for research," said Allyson Lowe, director of PCWPPP.

At the beginning of the 2007-08 academic year, Chatham University kicked off a campus-wide wireless phone collection program to benefit HopeLine. Collection bins have been placed all around campus. Used wireless phones, spare batteries, chargers, and head sets can be placed in the bins. HopeLine also accepts pagers.

HopeLine has been helping domestic violence victims since 1995 when Bell Atlantic Mobile introduced the program. Bell Atlantic turned into Verizon and the program has flourished.

HopeLine launched a national phone recycling and re-use program in 2001. According to the Verizon Wireless/HopeLine website, since the program's existence, Verizon Wireless has collected more than 4 million phones, awarded nearly \$4 million in grants to domestic violence agencies and organizations throughout the country, and has distributed more than 40,000 phone with airtime and features valued at more than \$10 million to be used by domestic violence victims.

HopeLine has also properly disposed of nearly 1 million no-longer-used wireless phones in an environmentally safe way and has kept more than 200 tons of electronic waste and batteries out of landfills.

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Chatham joins global effort to eliminate lymphedema

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Of the 24 second-year DPT students at Chatham, 15 applied for this trip, out of which four were selected. As a result of this trip, Baker, Ditzler, Finsness and Stadlander will receive a certification in complex decongestive therapy (CDT) upon graduation, since CDT certification is only available to licensed health care professionals. Also, Finsness said, that they were not able to complete all hours necessary for the certification while in India.

Complex decongestive therapy (CDT) is a physical therapy technique used to reduce the swelling of limbs and other affected parts with manual lymph drainage and bandaging.

According to Finsness, CDT certification is only offered by three U.S. institutions that travel around the nation to provide the training. She also said that the regular two-week long certification offered by these institutions may cost up to \$2,500. "It was very unique that we could do that as part of our clinical experience," said Finsness.

Geyer said that the Benter Initiative trip was also a unique opportunity because out of the approximately 210 physical therapy programs in the U.S., 40 percent have service learning projects, and only ten of those have an international component.

Out of the 210, only one, made possible with the Chatham University Benter Initiative, had the option of sending graduate DPT (Doctor of Physical Therapy) students abroad. Carnegie Mellon University and University of Pittsburgh also have Benter grants.

However, according to Geyer, Pitt's and CMU's programs are very specific, while Chatham's grant only has three requirements for a project to be funded by the Benter endowment. The first requires the project to focus on Muslim populations, the second requires the project to

be sustainable and the third demands multiple opportunities for the University to expand on it.

"I wanted to create a project that would have different phases to it. What is amazing is the timing – the confluence of problems, solutions and political circumstance that allowed us to do this," Geyer said.

The project that Geyer was able to implement is a part of a much larger action to eliminate lymphatic filariasis initiated by the World Health Organization (WHO) along with private sector companies, international foundations and research and academic institutions. In January 1998, two private pharmaceutical companies GlaxoSmithKline and Merck & Co., Inc., have pledged to donate all the drugs necessary to achieve elimination, which was the largest drug donation in history valued at \$1 billion, according to the Global Alliance to Eliminate Lymphatic Filariasis.

Geyer's project falls into the second stage of the two-stage elimination process. The first stage involves a massive administration of two drugs (Mectizan and Albendazole) once a year over a period of five years to kill the worms, prevent them from reproducing and reduce all the microfilaria in the blood that enable the mosquitoes to transmit the disease.

The second stage, in which Chatham University is involved, the prevention.

"I didn't want to practice medical tourism. I didn't want to do an intervention and get out of there. I wanted to be an educator," Geyer said.

For the first two weeks, Geyer with the students trained health care professionals at CMC, primarily focusing on basic prevention and treatment techniques, because according to Geyer, advanced techniques are not viable because the imported bandages are expensive and compression stockings are not



Submitted Photo

Mary Jo Geyer shows health care professionals in India how to treat lymphedema.

readily available.

She said that 95 percent of all the people at risk in are in need of basic intervention. Nevertheless, Geyer and the students provided instruction to the CMC doctors on advanced techniques as well.

In the first session on the first Thursday, Geyer and students trained 20 patients and nurses that the following Thursday trained the next group of people.

The basic intervention consisted

of teaching people about the disease, teaching them how to prevent mosquito bites and how to wash legs properly. Also, the patients and nurses were taught how to elevate the affected legs properly and how to manage when an acute attack of bacterial infection occurs. Finally, the groups were educated on how to exercise properly to prevent disability and about the need of wearing shoes to prevent blisters.

The rest of the time Geyer and

students devoted to the low cost effective unit, where they taught patients and informal caregivers how to treat and prevent lymphedema.

Geyer said she was thrilled with the results; however, she also said that even though the training was successful, the poverty in Southern India is so prevalent that some patients cannot use the techniques they learned.

She told a story of an older woman, who couldn't properly elevate her leg while sleeping, because she slept on a concrete slab and didn't own anything that she could prop her leg up with. "A bar of soap costs 50 cents, and for a woman with no means of income, that is very expensive," Geyer continued. "The students were in tears and so frustrated."

"That is the value of international education I could never explain that to them [students]," said Geyer. She said that she wanted the students to have the knowledge of the culture's health system at different levels and have the opportunity to interact with patients and understand what it means to train locally, not only with health care professionals.

"Just the interaction with health professionals in India was amazing. We got to know them on a very personal level," said Finsness.

According to Geyer, the trip was largely successful and the project has sustainability. "The students are going to make posters with the basic information to be sent over and translated into Tamil and Hindu," said Geyer. Geyer also developed contacts with local health care professionals and will be able to go back and continue with the project.

"Her vision is so huge...It's really inspiring to us as students and I want to help her as much as I can," said Finsness.

"It changed my life. You realize that it's doable. It's a question of basic science. I want to do this for the rest of my life," Geyer said.

Undergrad travels to India to make a project documentary



Submitted Photo

Mary Jo Geyer, assistant professor of health sciences, speaks into a microphone as senior Erin Spangler gets the footage to make a 20-minute trip documentary.

By Barbara Batokova
Editor-in-Chief

Senior Erin Spangler, who is majoring in art history and is interested in film, accompanied Mary Jo Geyer, assistant professor of health sciences, and the four second-year DPT students on the Benter Initiative trip to the Christian Medical College (CMC) in Vellore, India to document the service learning project.

Spangler was recommended to Geyer by Prajna Parasher, associate professor of film, who knew Spangler had a particular interest in documentary.

"I was the director, editor and sound person. It was a learning experience for me. I was capturing the interaction between patients and the doctor, students and patients, and students and doctors. We wanted to let people know what we did," Spangler said.

Spangler is currently editing the 15 hours of acquired footage into a 20-minute documentary film that is also a part of her senior tutorial project. Spangler also prepared a five-minute snippet of the film that was shown to the board of trustees on Oct. 19, as part of the entire Benter Initiative project presentation.

"My favorite part was sitting with the doctors, students, and patients and just talking to them. As much as it was an exchange of knowledge, it was an exchange of culture," Spangler said, adding she didn't have much trouble shooting the film. "I wasn't allowed on the men's side of the curtain to film, but that's their culture, and we're not necessarily used to that, but that's okay," Spangler said.

The final 20-minute will be sent to CMC for everyone to see. "I wish I could be there to see their reaction," Spangler said.

Verizon and Chatham partner

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In 2006 alone, more than 16,000 phones were in service across the country, totaling more than \$5 million in service and phone equipment.

In October 2002, Verizon Wireless launched #HOPE. Verizon Wireless users can dial that to reach the National Domestic Violence Hotline (1-800-799-SAFE). If called from a Verizon Wireless phone, the call is free, providing access to professional support and confidentiality.

Domestic violence affects thousands every year. In 2006, 127 deaths were recorded due to domestic violence in Pennsylvania. Nearly 2,500 adults and children sought services from domestic violence agencies statewide in a single day in 2006. Furthermore, one in every three American women report being abused at some point in their lifetime.

Chatham students are chipping in and helping domestic violence victims.

"I'm glad that Chatham has collection bins all around campus. I feel it's important to help victims of domestic violence," said sophomore Sara Bacvinskas.