

UNIVERSITY OF MICHIGAN RESIDENTIAL COLLEGE

# rc in news



**"I HAVE COME FOR MY BRAINS,"  
REMARKED THE SCARECROW, A LITTLE UNEASILY.**

*THE WONDERFUL WIZARD OF OZ, BY L. FRANK BAUM*

**WE'RE OFF TO SEE THE WIZARD!**

**FALL 2010**

# Education is what makes life worth living



There's a story told about the Grand Canyon. The first European to look into the depths of the gorge was Garcia Lopes De Cardenas in 1540, and he freaked out. The sight and its implications horrified him (the earth split apart—a black hole straight through to hell), and he beat a hasty retreat from the southern rim. Three hundred

years later, in 1840, an expedition of the U.S. Army Corps of Topographical Engineers came upon the canyon, and its leader, Lt. Joseph Ives, recorded an “awe that was almost painful to behold”; the sketches he had done of the canyon were full of distortions—almost hysterical in their effect. Then, forty years later, John Wesley Powell’s expedition published *The Tertiary History of the Grand Canyon District* with detailed drawings and maps of the stratigraphy that indicated both an accurate study and a steady-eyed comprehension of this natural phenomenon. In short, the work of Charles Lyell’s geology and of Charles Darwin’s evolutionary biology had, in the space of a lifetime, opened up the vast extent of earthly time, as well as the concepts of uniform change that were necessary to see strata as time lines and their layering as maps of the past. Powell’s party had a conceptual framework for comprehending what the eye beheld.

I tell this story, not as a hymn to progress but as a metaphor for what education does. In the face of new and puzzling circumstances, we really have three choices: we can freak out, turning our backs on what we don’t understand and framing the new and untoward in old, fixed categories already known; we can become dizzy and disoriented by our encounters with novel or unexpected situations, even distorting what we see in our confusion; or we can bring what we know to bear upon what we don’t understand—asking questions, framing an analysis, reformulating our

conventions, and interrogating previous conclusions. An education provides the mind with the means to do that. It enables us not to freak out, but to make sense—to order, explain, and understand through inquiry. And since, in a lifetime, we see and experience a vast variety of things, the broader and more general the education the better. A specialist understands in small degrees; a generalist can take in the grand expanse.

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Education is a stance, an attitude and a practice; it is what remains when you have forgotten what you’ve learned.

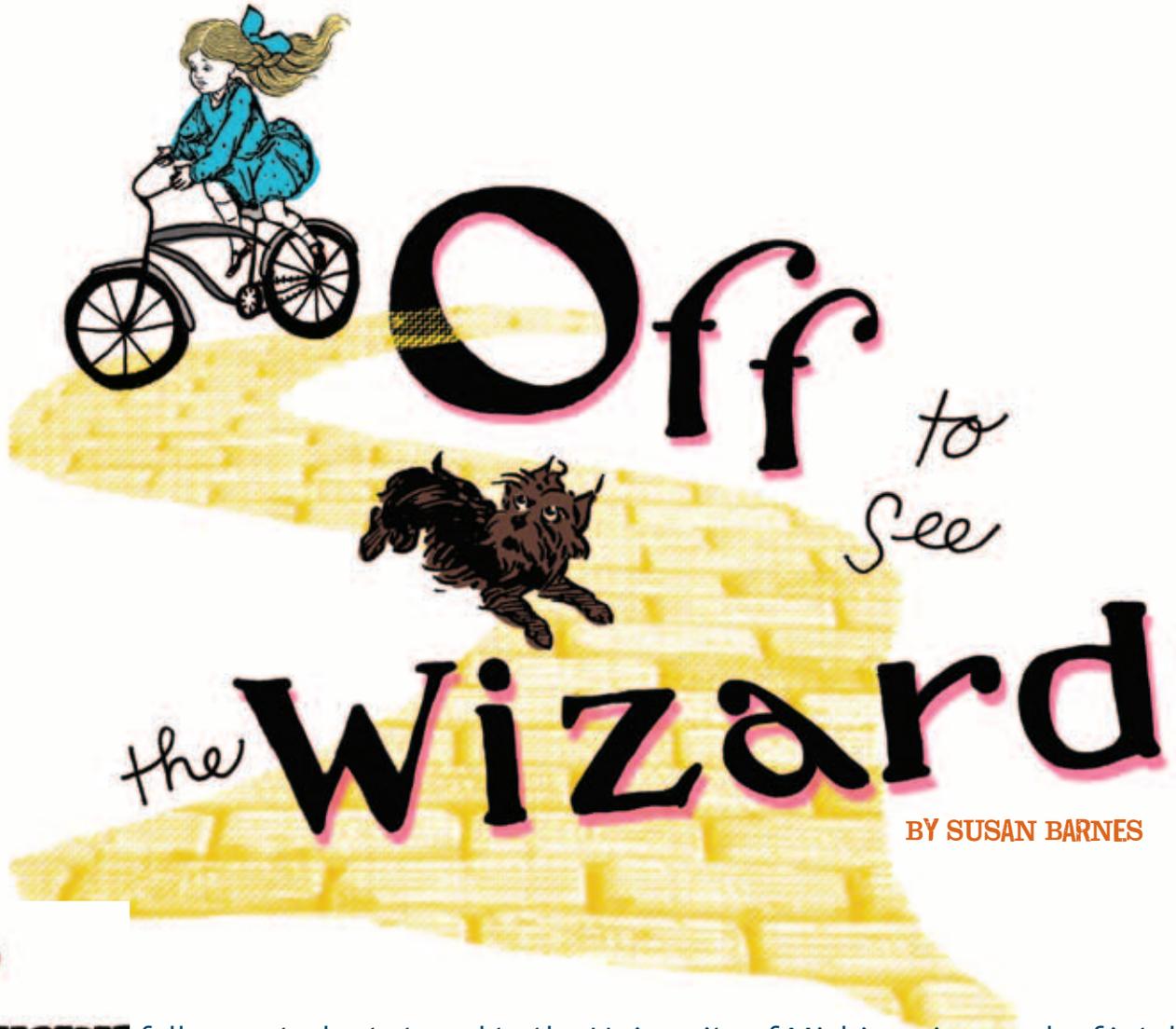
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For forty years, the Residential College has offered a liberal arts education grounded on the principle that self-reliance and adaptability in the face of circumstances requires a proactive stance in the world. By challenging our students to write well, speak a foreign language, grapple with the creative arts, engage the communities around them, and pursue interdisciplinary studies in the humanities and social sciences, the RC cultivates a four-year learning community within the larger University that asks one thing of every student: that you take control of your education, commit to it, own it, and shape it, individually and self-critically, toward meaningful goals. This cultivates self-reliance and enables our students to make the most of their college education. It gives RC graduates a capacity to be nimble in the face of what happens and to remain open to life-long shape-changing of all kinds. The line between the courses they took or the major they pursued as undergraduates and the careers they have lived is not always straight or predictable, but there is a self-determining logic to what they have done. Education is a stance, an attitude and a practice; it is what remains when you have forgotten what you’ve learned.

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Charlie".

*The Residential College (RC) is a 4-year, interdisciplinary, living-learning community of 1,000 undergraduates established through the University of Michigan’s College of Literature, Science and the Arts (LSA) in 1967. The distinctive educational mission of the RC is to enable students to develop their intellectual interests and creative talents in an environment in which they can find their own voice and relate learning with doing. The RC faculty and staff challenge students to take the initiative in shaping their own education, to participate actively in classes and in extra-curricular programs, to think critically about what they are learning and reflectively about what they are doing, and to engage with the University community as well as the outside world. Learn more at: <http://www.rc.lsa.umich.edu>.*

{cover story}



**Every** fall new students travel to the University of Michigan in search of intellectual growth much like the Scarecrow in *The Wonderful Wizard of Oz* made his way to the Emerald City looking for a brain. This year Frank Baum's straw-stuffed man will help guide first-year Residential College students in their own journeys of growth.

Baum's classic children's tale is the RC's community book this year, assigned as summer reading to all incoming students as our way of participating in the College of Literature, Science and the Arts theme semester, "What Makes Life Worth Living?" For 20 years the LSA has explored big topics such as civil rights, death, comedy and the universe through course work, guest lecturers, special exhibits at libraries and museums, and shared readings. This was the first year the various learning communities had autonomy in choosing a text. So last spring Hank Greenspan, RC academic advisor and lecturer in social theory and practice, chaired a committee to come up with possible titles. First-year students were polled for ideas and faculty members proposed books.

There were a number of criteria that the chosen book had to meet: "It had to be good, and have the potential to engage a lot of different people from various backgrounds, ages, and disciplines," explains Greenspan. "There was also the notion that it would have a community bonding potential.

"Oz was really my idea," says Greenspan. He liked Oz's themes of searching for home and the perfection of self. Since 1900, when Baum published the book often cited as the first truly American fairy tale, some very astute thinkers have studied and written about it. Greenspan didn't know this at the time. "I was just going on the level of the film," he says. "Everyone knows it and I had some ideas how it could work." He also thought it could be fun.

After narrowing the choices down to four, the RC faculty voted at its annual retreat and *The Wonderful Wizard of Oz* won by a wide margin.

Why a children's book to introduce young people on the verge of adulthood to intellectual inquiry? "People think, 'What's to know?'" says Greenspan. "It turns out you go down a well with this thing. That, to me from an academic perspective, is the lesson to first-year students... It's not a surprise

that [James] Joyce is challenging. *The Wizard of Oz* seems simple, but it opens compelling ways of looking at American history and social issues."

Among other things, the story touches on issues of gender, race, sexual orientation, childhood, adulthood, history, literature, drama and, of course, "what makes life worth living." Because of the rich material in Baum's story, it has never been out of print and has inspired many related creations, including the 1939 MGM movie starring Judy Garland, but

also author Gregory McGuire's *Wicked: The Life and Times of the Wicked Witch of the West*; the musical, *Wicked*, based on McGuire's book; and the 1978 film *The Wiz* starring Diana Ross, Michael Jackson and Lena Horne.

According to Greenspan those are just the best-known examples. "The work has been recreated

in every medium imaginable (literature, television, several films, ballet, musical and nonmusical plays...)," he points out in the introduction to the Residential College Theme Semester Book sent to new students. We gave a copy of the book to every incoming student during summer orientation,

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**“AREN'T THEY BEAUTIFUL?”  
THE GIRL ASKED, AS SHE  
BREADED IN THE SPICY SCENT  
OF THE BRIGHT FLOWERS.  
“I SUPPOSE SO,” ANSWERED THE  
SCARECROW. “WHEN I HAVE  
BRAINS, I SHALL PROBABLY  
LIKE THEM BETTER.”  
“IF I ONLY HAD A HEART,  
I SHOULD LOVE THEM,” ADDED  
THE TIN WOODMAN.**

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along with an article by Salman Rushdie that examines the differences between Baum's book and the MGM movie, which was one of Rushdie's early inspirations.

So started, the fall semester will find first-year students examining Oz's place in social history, its artistic renditions and psychological influences, and more. They will encounter authors like Russel B. Nye, Pulitzer Prize-winning biographer and Michigan State University English professor, who wrote, along with mathematical games creator Martin Gardner, a critical analysis of Baum's book in 1957. Throughout the semester, the college will host a number of special programs which students can use as catalysts for reflection and discussion. A showing of the 1939 movie, along

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While individual teachers will use *The Wonderful Wizard of Oz* within their courses, the Residential College also hosts a series of programs exploring the text's many themes and related issues.

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with several earlier silent versions, including one Baum produced, are planned as well. Greenspan also notes that, since this is an RC initiative, "We anticipate that the final program will be theatrical."

Like the Scarecrow though, many first-year students land at college "a little uneasily." That's where the book's "community bonding potential" comes into play.

Reading the book during the summer was "a good transition into the new program," says Aerial Rowland, a first-year RC student from Dayton, Ohio. "It definitely helped me feel comfortable."

Neha Jain, from Rochester Hills, Mich., felt the same way about the idea of a community book. "I thought it was a good idea to have freshmen have something to connect with—everyone has something in common."

Rather than being put off by being asked to read a children's book as their first college assignment, the young women found that *Oz* confirmed their impressions of the RC as a place where learning is a joyous activity. Jain also mentions another reason she liked the book: "Having just turned 18, I feel like I don't want to be an adult yet. It's a relief and reassuring" to read *Oz* before, say, Nietzsche's *Thus Spoke Zarathustra*.



"*The Wonderful Wizard of Oz*" Greenspan says, "makes almost everybody sparkle." RC faculty members have embraced the book and looked for creative ways to use it in their courses.

"It was a good choice," says Rowland, who found inspiration in the book's themes of courage, heart, home and brains. "The story has brought more confidence to me. Even with all her disappointments and obstacles, Dorothy never gave up her determination [to get home]. And she was able to get to her goal." ■



THE WIZARD OF OZ: Five Thursdays. 7 pm. East Quad 126. All are invited.

**9/16/10 On the Road: Can Oz Help Us Think about What Makes Life Worth Living?**

Why *Oz*? Can a children's book really teach us something about living a meaningful life? What are the significant differences between the original book and the 1939 film? Is there really no place like home? Can we do without a bit of "humbug"? Where does humbug end and hope begin? What is the hope that *Oz* seems to promise over the 110 years the story has been revisited? Special guests include William Gosling, Former Director of the UM Libraries and Special Collections Library Curator, Children's Literature Collection, who will talk about the extraordinary publication history of the *Oz* books.

**9/30/10 Finding Oz in America: the Author and his Times**

Frank Baum lived at the center of a cyclone (pun intended) of events in his time—the campaign for the women's right to vote; the great agrarian crisis associated with Populism, the wars against the Plains Indians culminating in the massacre at Wounded Knee; the 1893 Columbian exposition in Chicago, where electric lights, the Ferris Wheel, Cracker Jacks and magnificent, but temporary architecture made the "White City" a

symbol of American progress for the new century. How did Baum's responses to these developments find their way into his story of *Oz*? How do the characters and episodes in the story—or the Emerald City itself—reflect the world in which he wrote? This session will get us inside Baum's life and the world from which his children's book came. Special guests include Professor Phil Deloria, the UM Dean for Undergraduate Education, and a specialist in Native American history and Professor Kristin Hass of American Culture (who has dusted the ruby slippers in the Smithsonian and even tried on the Scarecrow's costume).

**10/14/10 Fearless Girls, Other Worlds: Oz in the Land of Children's Literature**

More than a century after its first publication, *The Wonderful Wizard of Oz* continues to inspire contemporary children's fiction writers to create distinctly American heroes on travels of self-discovery in fantastical, but very real, lands. Come join our discussion as we examine *Oz*'s ongoing influence on the landscape of children's fiction. Special guests include Jack Zipes, Professor Emeritus of German at the University of Minnesota, an acclaimed translator and scholar of

children's literature and culture; Jennifer Allison, author of the *Gilda Joyce: Psychic Investigator* series for young adults; and Ellen Handler Spitz, Honors College Professor of Visual Arts at the University of Maryland, a journalist and international lecturer on children's literature and culture.

**10/28/10 Friends of Dorothy: Oz's Legacy to the LGBT Community**

Judy Garland's portrayal of Dorothy Gale helped make her a gay icon and "Somewhere Over the Rainbow" became the gay anthem—a yearning for a home far away from the small-town provincialism of a black-and-white existence. Audience members will join panelists in discussing the historical and ongoing legacy of the *Oz* books and movies for the shaping of the LGBT psyche. Special guests include Professors David Halperin, W.H. Auden Collegiate Professor of the History and Theory of Sexuality, and Nadine Hubbs, Undergraduate Director of Women's Studies.

**11/11/10 Showtime! Acting Oz**

An extravaganza of scenes, improvisations, and who knows what else. Be prepared for surprises....and participation (as comfort allows). ■

# what makes life worth living?

The question asked by the LSA theme semester seems almost meaningless: so large as to be naïve; so vague as to be absurd, and many seem tempted to blow it off with a pointless answer: What makes life worth living? Facebook, or popcorn, or compost, or.... But like so much that at first appears facile—platitudes, fables, stories that your elders told you—it ripens with reflection.

If the unexamined life is not worth living, what makes it worthwhile upon examination? What makes it satisfying, righteous? What makes it true? Upon reflection, the theme semester may be asking a meaningful question.

We put the question to several RC alumni and faculty, and here is what they answered. We will ask the question as we study and discover *The Wonderful Wizard of Oz* and will find more answers together.

But what do you think? We would be happy to know your answers too. Send us an email or a letter. Write a poem. Take a photo. Make some music. The question, addressed by a community of individuals, will undoubtedly lead to more reflection: a “yellow brick road” that will take us to....

## *Deadlines!*

WILL HATHAWAY, RC '83

As a kid, whenever I complained about a chore, my grandfather had a favorite saying in response, “Life’s hard all over.” He would toss out this bit of wisdom with a twinkle in his eye—so as to remove the sting. But his folksy brush-off still annoyed me (he was an English professor so the folksiness was part of the fun for him).

Now I think my grandfather was on to an important truth. Life is hard. It is challenging. We don’t all face the same challenges. Most of us privileged to attend and/or work at the University of Michigan have easier day-to-day lives than the vast majority of the world’s population. We all appreciate the rewards of life because of the adversity we must overcome. Unlike the Scarecrow, we know that knowledge isn’t poured into our heads like a mix of bran and straw—you have to work at it. Meeting deadlines is part of education.

Of course, the ultimate deadline is death. But our mortality makes life worth living. If life just dragged on forever it wouldn’t matter so much what we did with it. It would be like “Groundhog Day” repeating endlessly past the vanishing point. No worries. Life does not go on forever. There are many rewarding ways to spend our limited lifetimes. Our most important assignment is to love and to be loved. Don’t get caught asking for an “incomplete.” ■

## *Finding Deep Connections*

CATHERINE BADGLEY, ASSISTANT PROFESSOR, RC AND ECOLOGY AND EVOLUTIONARY BIOLOGY

The tomatoes and eggplant grew in my garden and their taste was as satisfying as their appearance. What are the connections between these fruits of the garden and the swallows circling endlessly overhead, the sky, and the gentle hills of the farm where I live? The hills are deposits from a glacier that once covered all of Michigan and provided the high-quality soils that support Michigan's remarkable agricultural diversity today. The sky yields rain, sun, and wind in combinations that produce great tomatoes in most years. The swallows are aerial feeders, eating insects that would otherwise be after me or my garden. That incredible sensation of taste and warmth as a cherry tomato explodes in my mouth comes from the garden, the bees, the swallows, the glaciers, and the sky.

As a farmer, ecologist and paleontologist, finding deep connections is a primary research subject as well as an aesthetic experience. In my research, the overarching goal is to discover how species of mammals that live together in natural associations are dependent on each other and on particular properties of their environments. Some of these interdependencies are strong, whereas others are weak. I study both modern ecosystems and ecosystems in the deep time of the fossil record. Working with fossils adds the evolutionary dimension to ecological connections. It is a thrill to find an interesting fossil and ponder how closely that animal is connected to me through evolutionary relationship. In Pakistan, where I have conducted a lot of fieldwork, I have unearthed ape fossils that represent a fairly close evolutionary relationship—essentially distant cousins rather than immediate ancestors. The turtles and crocodiles from

the same fossil localities are much more distant relatives. The many crocodiles of these ancient flooded forests must have provided a strong incentive for the ape cousins to remain in the trees.

Studying the fossil record, it comes naturally to think about the evolutionary transformations in the human lineage and the environmental context of these changes. Our upright posture, dextrous hands, and large brains are the outcome of countless generations of interactions with other species that our ancestors wanted to eat, as well as with species that wanted to eat them. Our history connects us to all of them, and many connections were a matter of life and death.

In my travels to collect fossils and study ancient environments, I have spent many months living in tent camps close to the rural poor of developing countries. These experiences have caused me to ponder the various connections between myself and them. On one occasion, an Afghan family that we met while fossil prospecting invited our group of five to lunch. In their humble camp, they served us omelettes and fresh round flatbreads, fragrant with spices. The context for this pleasant experience was that this family was displaced from their home in Afghanistan and resented by the local residents, because of a long war that the US has been augmenting for decades. This Afghan family's dilemmas were partly the consequence of my country's foreign policy.

The deep connections are entrancing and awe-inspiring, as well as disturbing and provocative. They are occasions for reflection, reverence, discovery, questioning, and motivation to alter the current configuration to a fairer and more sustainable set of connections across the world. ■

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PHOTOS BY CATHERINE BADGLEY



## *A Central Part of Your Life*

NAOMI ANDRE, PROFESSOR, RC AND WOMEN'S STUDIES

When I was in college, I had no idea what I wanted to do. A devoted music lover in high school, I knew I wanted to study music (history and theory) in addition to continuing as a performer (voice and piano). So, in college I majored in music and I did a lot of performing.

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I found opera, and realized that all of life was there: love, honor, beauty, jealousy, pride anger.

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My desire to continue in music led me to the imminently unpractical idea of graduate school in musicology. What could I do with a PhD in musicology besides become a music professor? And what did I know about being a professor? Really not a whole lot.

Matters were further complicated when I hated graduate school. I found the atmosphere to be pompous, the people excessively needy, and it seemed that no matter how much you learned, you never knew quite enough. But I still loved learning about music, so I stayed.

After I began my dissertation I finally started to ask my own questions about research directions. I found opera, and realized that all of life was there: love, honor, beauty, jealousy, pride anger. It was a stylized way of expressing raw emotion.

It was blind luck that led me to feel that I would be OK if I pursued something that I cared about.

I think this is what makes life good: finding something you are passionate about, that you are willing to work hard for, and that keeps challenging you to do your best work. Once you find this, make it a central part of your life. ■

## *Six Things*

JAKE LONDON, RC '85

1. Loving and feeling loved
2. A robust community of friends and family
3. The sound of music
4. Intellectual engagement
5. A good meal
6. Contributing to the greater good

The RC played a big part in teaching me the value and importance of having these things in my life (especially #2 and #4). Twenty-five years after graduation, I'm still in regular contact with many folks from that time (indeed, I just received an e-mail from my Freshman roommate 5 minutes ago). I marvel at what exceptional people they are, and I feel blessed that they continue to be a part of my community.

When I arrived at the RC in 1981, I expected to be intellectually challenged, and I was not disappointed in that regard. But at that moment, I could not have predicted (or comprehended really) just how much the RC Community would ultimately contribute to my quality of life over the long-term. ■

*For me what makes life worth living is being in a city like DC, I am surrounded every day by folks who find meaning in their life according to their social stature, status within their respective political party, how much money they make, what kind of car they drive, what Ivy league school they went to, and so on. For me what makes life living is that knowing within such an...interesting culture...is that I have been able to find opportunities to make the world a better place, in little ways, and to use the gifts God gave me to help someone have a better day. And most importantly the chance to love and be loved in return.*

—BETH BOVAIR, RC '05

{engaged learning}



# A WAY TO LIVE LIFE

PHOTO BY LEISA THOMPSON

## COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT SHAPES RESIDENTIAL COLLEGE STUDENTS AND THE WORLD IN WHICH THEY LIVE.

Engagement—or engaged learning—has long been a mantra around the Residential College. The word appears in about a quarter of the course descriptions of the RC Fall 2010 Guide. It is part of a pedagogical philosophy that is broadly embraced by RC faculty—that the best learning is done through activity and reflection upon activity.

Anna Cicone, a 2009 graduate, put it this way: “RC class work is more communal. Professors discuss rather than impart knowledge, and in order for that to work everyone has to be engaged.” Doing intensive foreign languages requires plunging in and taking risks; creative arts projects demand that students get their hands dirty, their feet in motion, and their heads out of a their comfort zones. And not

surprisingly, the RC has been taking a lead in engaging the communities around us, enabling students to ground their academic learning in course-related, direct experiences outside the classroom.

Many of these community based learning projects are grounded in the foreign language programs. (See page 14.)

Other projects aim at fostering an expanded set of skills in community organizing and social change. For example, Semester in Detroit is a new cross-campus collaboration anchored in the RC and modeled on a semester abroad that has 25 students living in Detroit, taking UM classes taught by our faculty in the city, and doing internship placements for 16 hours a week with two dozen social and cultural

## {engaged learning}

organizations across the city. This is a kind of immersion program that has been transformative for some students, several of whom have stayed on in Detroit after graduation.

Similarly, the “Telling It” program takes students through an academic course that teaches skills in the use of creative arts to improve scholastic performance and reduce dropout rates among children and youth, and then places teams of university students with community agencies working with kids who are homeless, runaways, or at risk of failure in school. The course, “Empowering Communities through Creative Expression” is taught each term by Deb Gordon-Gurfinkel, in collaboration with Kate Mendeloff of the RC Drama program and Richard Tolman, from the School of Social Work.

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...what the UM students encounter in this work brings to a head their own experiences with death, abuse, or even homelessness, and the process of working with children and youth in the community opens new questions and deepens insights about self.

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It aims to create a collaborative learning experience where students explore community based art, or art ‘of, by and for the people’ which has emerged in the past 20 years and rocked the fields of both art and activism by calling into question traditional notions of ‘community’, ‘participation,’

PHOTO BY LEISA THOMPSON



‘spectatorship,’ and ‘leadership’. This description caught the attention of Sahib Singh, a 2010 graduate: “I chose that class because...the idea of using arts as a conduit for activism was new to me. I’d never really experienced that, and didn’t understand how the arts can empower.”

In the class, Gordon-Gurfinkel mixes undergraduates with graduate students from the School of Social Work, who often serve as mentors, but more often, as co-learners with younger students. “My students get rigorous training. We pre-brief and debrief extensively.” As they learn, students form teams that are then placed with various community agencies to practice what they learn. Singh and Cicone choose to work at COPE (the Center for Occupational and Personal Education) which helps Washtenaw middle and high school students having difficulty in school, serving some 120 students a year. Some of these participated in daily “Telling It” sessions, where facilitators, visiting local actors, artists, and musicians, student interns, and children practice various creative interactions that open up feelings and ways of expressing these feelings in a safe environment.

Sometimes the results were dramatic. Cicone tells of one boy she met at COPE through the program. “He was a Blood in South Central LA. His family moved him to Ypsilanti basically to save his life. But he joined the Bloods in Ypsilanti.” At first, with “Telling It”, she reports, “he never talked, never wrote. Then he would dictate what he wanted to write, wouldn’t pick up his pen...I would talk with him about his involvement with gangs. Over time he came around and wrote an amazing piece about how he wanted to be done with gangs. Now he’s out of them. He went back to school and he’s one of the most enthusiastic “Telling It” participants.” So is Cicone, who took the course three times and spent two-and-a-half years working with COPE. Now she plans to “do something similar in L.A. I want to start my own nonprofit,” she says. “Deb is my mentor...she is a great educator.”

Students who work as interns find new ways of being and new meaning or direction in their lives. Gordon-Gurfinkel often finds that what the UM students encounter in this work brings to a head their own experiences with death, abuse, or even homelessness, and the process of working with children and youth in the community opens new questions and deepens insights about self.

From this one example it is clear that a couple of key principles are involved in all these initiatives. In putting students in the world, we believe it is crucial that their experiences outside the classroom be grounded in academic work—in careful preparation, in the cultivation of perspectives and contexts for their experience, and in debriefing and

## {engaged learning}

reflection afterwards. Integrating community engagement with classroom work is mutually reinforcing. With this goes a second principle: working with community partners must always produce mutual benefit. In crafting collaborations, it is crucial that the community organizations find benefit in their work from the participation of UM students and the students, in working with community partners, find themselves doing substantive work that stimulates learning and deepens or alters perspectives. Volunteerism for 'feel-good' effects has little more educational benefit than doing scut

work in a community organization's office. Creating this mutuality of benefit requires careful planning, close and continuous monitoring, and honest reflection if it is to be successful. And such partnerships must have duration and become sustainable over time. This is the most serious challenge the RC initiatives face in these hard economic times. Our resources are limited (and shrinking); those of our community partners even more so. What is educationally effective and socially useful is no guarantee that it will be sustainable. ■

*East Quad Chef "Buzz" talks with RC Sustainification forum about locally produced vegetables.*

PHOTO BY LEISA THOMPSON





{engaged learning}

Members of the EQBC demonstrate the fundamentals of bicycle maintenance.

PHOTO BY LEISA THOMPSON

## WHEELS TO THE PEOPLE: FORUM BRINGS THE JOY OF BICYCLE TRANSPORTATION TO THE COMMUNITY AT LARGE

BY SUSAN BARNES

Engagement comes in many flavors at the Residential College, and it doesn't always have roots in the classroom. Sometimes what starts in self-interest evolves to benefit the wider community.

In 2006 Rob Linn (RC '09) and fellow cycling enthusiast Kostya Bakhurin (RC '09) needed space to repair their bikes. "We purloined an open room and started fixing our bikes in the basement," Linn says. "Other students heard about it and brought their bikes for us to fix."

By 2007 Linn and Bakhurin were co-founders of the East Quad Bicycle Cooperative, a formal, student-run organization dedicated to bicycle maintenance, cycling and sustainable transportation. The co-op gives volunteers the chance "to share our skills and love of cycling," Linn says. "I feel like the RC does a really good job helping students to grow intellectually. This helps them grow physical skills."

According to Linn, the EQBC has repaired bikes for about a thousand people so far, most of them RC students, although any University of Michigan student with bike troubles can seek aid. The group has evolved beyond fixing derailleurs, however. Bike in good repair? The EQBC offers organized rides. No bike at all? Take the co-op's RC Forum, where a fellow student teaches neophytes how to build a bike from the ground up.

Outside of the university, the EQBC has worked with Ann Arbor's homeless community, donating refurbished wheels, and it hosts an annual, community-wide Spring Fix-Up where folks can donate unwanted bikes and parts or find or fix a new set of wheels.

As often as engagement influences the community, it influences the engager. That's true for Linn, who says that his work with the co-op helped guide his decision to work on a Masters in urban planning from the U-M, where he's focusing on transportation issues.

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"We purloined an open room and started fixing our bikes in the basement. Other students heard about it and brought their bikes for us to fix."

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"I'm attracted to alternative transportation including bikes, light rail and green cars," he says. Linn hopes to return to his hometown of Detroit because "there are incredible opportunities there, including an extensive, outdated road system that could be turned to bike paths." ■

*East Quad Bicycle Cooperative – for more information on the co-op's hours and fall events visit the group's website, [eqbc.org](http://eqbc.org), or look up the "East Quad Bike Co-op" on Facebook.*

# GET CONNECTED: A GUIDE FOR RC STUDENTS

BY SUSAN BARNES

*Residential College students have many academic options for exploring community engagement, depending on their talents and interests. Many of these programs offer noncredit opportunities as well.*

**FRENCH AT FREEDOM HOUSE IN DETROIT:** Freedom House offers shelter and legal aid to French-speaking asylum seekers, many from West Africa. In class, students study the history, politics and cultures of the residents' countries of origin. On-site, they work with residents on English skills, school assignments and preparation for citizenship exams.

**MIGRANT WORKER SUMMER PROJECT:** This program begins with a Spring-term class covering "the educational, legal, and health issues facing migrant farm workers and their families" and trains them in basic ESL teaching theories and strategies. During a summer term course, students go to migrant worker camps in Lenawee County to teach English, work as translators in mobile medical clinics and provide required Department of Agriculture pesticide training in Spanish.

**PALMA** (Proyecto Avance: Latino Mentoring Association)/"Tutoring Bilingual Children: Working with the Latino Community in Ann Arbor": Taught in Spanish, "Tutoring Bilingual Children" teaches RC students how to run PALMA, which sends out more than 80 tutors a term to work with Washtenaw County's Latino youth and adults.

**THE RUSLAN PROJECT** (Russian Service Learning in Action Network)/"Russian People, Language, and Culture in the US": This course allows students to improve their Russian language skills and knowledge of Russian culture through collaborations with St. Vladimir Russian Orthodox Church, Jewish Family Services, local school districts, and agencies serving families with children adopted from Russia. Students offer language tutoring, preparation help for the citizenship exam, cultural translation and more.

**SPANISH LANGUAGE INTERNSHIP PROGRAM:** SLIP links language students with various partner organizations in Ann Arbor and southwest Detroit where they can learn about issues facing the Latino community while honing Spanish skills. RC-ers can choose between volunteering or registering for 1 to 3 LSA academic credits. Options include teaching Spanish to adults, assisting with translations of medical terminology for Spanish-speaking patients, conducting needs-assessment interviews with restaurant workers and more.

**SEMESTER IN DETROIT:** Students live on Wayne State University's Detroit campus and take U-M classes on the city's history, urban planning, literature, etc. While in the city, students intern, depending on their interests, with community organizations, for example, Data Driven Detroit, which uses new technologies and rich data to help Detroit's organizations better understand their city. ■

## RC FORUMS

*The forum program began in 2007 when a few RC seniors realized they didn't know any underclassmen. Forums give students, staff, faculty and alumni a chance to connect over common interests. RC students can receive up to one credit per term for participating in one of the forums.*

**ART:** Explore visual arts in all media, music—even kating. This forum hosts gallery showings, art sales and an annual "Splat Bash" in the courtyard.

**BOOK CO-OP:** Celebrate the written word through activities such as working on the reopening of the Benzinger Library, field trips to Detroit's John King Books and hosting an annual spelling bee.

**FILM:** Come together to watch films and discuss film culture and its place in society. Past themes have included Hayao Miyazaki's animation, social documentaries, women's rights and Oscar nominees.

**HEALTH & WELLNESS:** Seek out health and wellness on personal, local and global levels.

**SEXUAL HEALTH:** This forum on sexual health and well being offers a comfortable and fun place to ask all those questions you've always wanted answered.

**SUSTAINIFICATION** (Sustainability + Beautification): Focus on sustainable lifestyle choices such as recycling, energy and water conservation and limiting environmental hazards, while working to make the world more beautiful.

**URBAN:** Explore topics such as urban farming, design and public art. Activities include planting trees in Detroit, community cleanups, exploring Detroit's neighborhoods, screening films and bringing speakers to campus. ■



PHOTO BY LEISA THOMPSON

## Your support makes wonderful things happen.

Last winter we were delighted that, thanks to your generous donations, we were able to purchase a grand piano for the RC's newly renovated Keene Theater and dedicate it to Jane Heirich, the long-time head of the Music Program.

In addition, during FY2010, we raised over \$34,000 for the RC's general fund. Your contributions, many of them in small amounts which together made a HUGE difference, and allowed faculty to take students to performances, supported students doing field work off campus, brought guest speakers and performers to East Quad, and ensured that our intensive language programs would continue their lunchtime and afternoon conversation sessions.

We raised another \$10,000 for the Don and June Brown Endowment to Put Students in the World. This endowment continues to provide a strong base for the scholarships of students with financial need to study abroad or work in communities around us.

We continue to raise money for the renovation of the art studios in the RC. We have recently learned that the University will take East Quad 'off-line' in 2013-14 for major renovations, and the construction fund we are building will ensure that the RC can renovate the art studios. When this project is complete, our art studios will be state-of-the-art (and maybe out of the basement).

We continue to be grateful for the generosity that RC alumni and parents have shown us through the years. ■

### RC STAFF UPDATES



Congratulations to Cynthia Burton, who many of you know from her eight years in the Academic Services office, on her promotion to the Outreach and Communications Coordinator position.

She is the point of contact for alumni and fundraising matters, as well as public relations and events. Contact her at [caburton@umich.edu](mailto:caburton@umich.edu).

Congratulations also to Melanie Karner, who has accepted a position in Academic Services. Melanie brings eighteen years of experience in the "administrative wing" of the RC,

and is looking forward to more direct contact with students.

We thank current RC Director Charlie Bright for his service, which will end in June 2011. Under Charlie's leadership, the RC has raised its profile, brought in new faculty across many subject areas, renovated various portions of East Quad, and launched the RC's next forty years of challenging liberal arts education.

Angela Dillard, Professor in the RC and Center for Afroamerican and African Studies, will assume the position of RC Director in July 2011. Angela has served the RC in countless ways since she joined us in Fall 2006 and we are thrilled to welcome her.

The RC remains in good hands! ■

University of Michigan  
701 East University  
Ann Arbor, MI 48109-1245

Phone: (734) 763-0176  
Fax: (734) 763-7712  
www.rc.lsa.umich.edu

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**Director:** Charlie Bright

**Associate Director,  
Director of Academic Services:**  
Jennifer Myers

**Department Manager:** Patti Kardia

**Editors:** Ann Brennan, Cynthia Burton

**Writing:** Susan Barnes

**Design:** Invisible Engines  
linette@invisibleengines.com

The RC News is distributed to 6,000 alumni, friends, current students and parents of current students in the RC. Please submit any changes, corrections, letters, and/or suggestions to the editor, Cynthia Burton at [caburton@umich.edu](mailto:caburton@umich.edu).

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**Nondiscrimination Policy Statement**

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