

Alumni Newsletter November 2012



Shutting down Scammers and Protecting Consumers

After graduating from Connecticut College in 2009, PICA scholar Randy Fixman moved to Washington, DC to work at the Federal Trade Commission's Bureau of Consumer Protection (FTC). The FTC is the nation's foremost advocate for protecting consumers from deceptive, misleading, and fraudulent business practices. These include: advertising, online privacy, identity protection, work-at-home scams, telemarketing, and foreclosure modification schemes. The FTC has a unique Honors Paralegal program, which is geared towards recent undergraduates with interests in law, policy, and social justice. Paralegals in the program engage in substantive work that is often accomplished by entry-level attorneys, not paralegals, at law firms. The breadth of Randy's work entailed: conducting consumer interviews and preparing their statements; attending Congressional hearings; planning and coordinating conferences; and document analysis. In addition, Randy assisted in hiring other paralegals, including resume review, attending recruiting fairs, and coordinating, scheduling, and conducting applicant interviews.

Although he enjoyed his three years at the FTC, Randy decided to forego law school and attend the Bloustein School of Planning and Public Policy at Rutgers University in New Brunswick, New Jersey, where he is in his first year of a Master of City and Regional Planning program. Since a young age, Randy had an interest in the built environment and transportation issues. With a planning degree from Rutgers, Randy will be able to

spend his life improving the community and the way we live, work, and navigate. To learn more about the FTC or urban planning, feel free to contact Randy at rfixman@gmail.com.

Reflections on PICA and Teach for America

Brenner Green, PICA class of 2012 says his "involvement in the Holleran Center at Connecticut College really augmented my passion and enthusiasm for engaging in activism and policy reform." During his time at Connecticut College, Brenner interned at a school for students with behavioral and emotional challenges. This work inspired his interest in educational reform for this underserved and often misunderstood population of students. Brenner decided to apply to Teach for America, with the intention of being placed in special education. Nine months later he is currently the Serious Emotional Challenges (SEC) teacher at the Mojave High School in Las Vegas, NV. The Mojave High School has been on the bottom of the Clark County School District high schools in terms of overall student performance. Clark County School District, the fifth largest school district in the nation, is also the lowest achieving district in the nation. Brenner's classroom is made up of students with significant behavioral and emotional challenges, which comprise less than 1% of public school students in the country. Brenner is responsible for teaching these students every core subject, as well as a social skills and an independent living course.

"My job is perhaps one of the

toughest jobs out there, but I love being able to make transformational change in the education of my students." Brenner goes on to say, "Their progress already is exceptional, and several of my students have transitioned into general education classes since I started working with them." In addition to teaching, Brenner is the assistant coach for the school's cross-country team, the distance coach for the school's track and field team, and the advisor for the school's Gay Straight Alliance, which aligns with his PICA interest in the social development of sexual minority adolescents. "If it was not for my involvement in the PICA process, I might not be where I am today, engaging in impactful educational reform."



Brenner Green '12 pictured above is a Teach for America teacher at Mojave High School. In Las Vegas, NV

Upcoming Events!

November 15:
PICA application deadline

December 12
PICA End of Semester Celebration: Cookie Decorating, 3-5pm, Cro's Nest

February 11:
Nicholas Kristof, author of "Half the Sky" will speak at 4pm in Evans Hall

April 6
PICA Class of 2013 Conference and Banquet, College Center

April 18-20
GNCE Conference: Quest for Global Environmental Equity

May 18
PICA Certificate Ceremony, 1pm, Cro 1941 Room

This edition of the Alumni Newsletter was created by

Lucy Wallace '13

Empowerment Through Ice Cream

After graduating last spring Lora Romano '12 picked up where she left off working at Blue Marble Dreams, the organization where she completed her funded internship during the Summer of 2011. Blue Marble Dreams is a non-profit organization that seeks to empower women through the unlikely source of an ice cream shop. Women have the opportunity to earn a sustainable income through employment at Sweet Dreams, Rwanda's first ever ice cream shop. The store also holds empowerment workshops for women, and spearheads com-

munity building and development initiatives. Lora has taken on a new role with the organization and is currently working on fundraising initiatives based out of New York. Currently she is raising funds for a generator for the shop in Butare, which will help make the store stable and sustainable. She is also raising funds for women who participate in workshops at the store to come to the United States and share the skills they have learned. Once fundraising is complete, Lora will return to Rwanda to become the project manager of the store!

To find out more about Lora's interesting work contact her at: lromano12@gmail.com

To learn more about the organization and/or contribute to their mission visit their website at :

<http://www.indiegogo.com/bluemarbledreams>



Annie Bigwood '11, An Update on Life as a Volunteer in the Peace Corps

After a year long application and preparation process, Annie Bigwood '11, arrived in Senegal in March 2012 to serve for 2 years as a health volunteer in the Peace Corps. Following 2 months of language and skills training, Annie and approximately 50 volunteers were sworn in at the US Ambassador's house in Dakar and sent to live in towns and villages all over Senegal. Each trainee is assigned a local language, and Annie has been learning the minority language Serere. Annie says, "I am settling into my village of Forou Serere very nicely! We are told to focus on community integration for the first few months of our service, so since then, I have set up my hut in my host family's compound, kept up with language study, integrated into my small village of about 500 people, and started to get a feel for the community's needs so that I can

better serve them over my 2 years." Annie also worked with the local middle school on a girl's scholarship project for the month of June, and will be awarding the top 3 candidates from the initial pool when school starts again next month. Other than continuing to work with girl's education and empowerment, Annie plans to help her village repair the well that serves the health hut, primary school and half of the village population.

"We have a water shortage problem that would be remedied by access to a second well. Additionally, I hope to help get a local woman trained as a health worker so that she can attend to births and help get our small health hut up and running." The building has existed for about 10 years but it doesn't currently function as it should.

These projects, as well as latrine construction and group projects like Mangrove reforestation and girl's summer camp, will keep Annie busy until May 2014 when she completes her service. "When I consider how I ended up living in a small village in the middle of Senegal, there is no way I would be here without my PICA experience. PICA gave me incredible opportunities to work with communities and organizations from New London to Kigali, Rwanda." It was in Rwanda, where Annie completed her PICA internship with the Rwanda Women's Network. "That is where I started to realize that Peace Corps was the next step for me. I could not be happier with my decision! I am extremely grateful for the experiences that PICA allowed me and I feel lucky to continue to be part of the PICA community!"

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A worker at Blue Marble Dreams with Lora Romano '12 during her funded internship in the Summer 2011.

Holleran Center Staff

Jennifer Fredricks, Director and Associate Professor of Human Development

Tracee Reiser, Associate Director and Associate Dean for Community Learning

Rebecca McCue, Associate Director and Community Learning Seminar Instructor

Kiesha Henry, Staff Assistant for Holleran Center and OVCS

Sandy Grande, Faculty Fellow and Associate Professor of Education

Aracelis Vazquez Haye, PICA Junior Seminar Instructor

Diana Whitelaw, Community Learning Seminar Instructor



Annie with her host brother in Senegal. To learn more, visit Annie's blog at: www.annieenroute.wordpress.com