It has been a whirlwind ride for the Applied Global Business Program at Marquette. As we have increased our contacts through the Jesuit and Catholic communities, we have found new ways to host projects while reducing our internal costs. Unfortunately, at the same time airfares have sky-rocketed. We have been forced to double the cost of the program to the students. As a result I am constantly searching for new ways to provide funds to needy participants in the program.

Our trips are changing the lives of our students. Many are seeking ways to continue to help developing country entrepreneurs in their future careers. Sustainable entrepreneurship is becoming an increasingly discussed topic in business, and our students witness it firsthand. For those of you who have supported us so generously in the past, we extend our deepest thanks and ask that you please consider helping us again. For new and existing donors, we are now offering a chance to sponsor a student directly. He or she will promise to keep you posted on the activities and the project as well as updates in-country. Student sponsorships begin at $500.

Please help us to provide the world with socially responsible, empathetic leaders who are empowered to serve the world.

Reflections on Guatemala, Serving by Erin Barth

For nine days, I traveled with a group of eight students from Marquette University, lead by Sr. Jan Gregorcich, SSND, to the cities of Quiche del Santa Cruz and Antigua in the small country of Guatemala to work on two separate projects. Each project was vastly different from the other; we analyzed the benefits of a rural village implementing a water system in Quiche and developed a more focused business plan for a macadamia nut farm in the bustling tourist city of Antigua.

We began our journey in the rural village of Quiche. Our team split into five groups and interviewed the families about how their lives had changed and improved over the last four years.

The village had implemented a system that would carry drinkable water up to their homes so they would no longer have to walk the nine kilometers to the small pond nearby. We learned about their modest living conditions, sporadic work opportunities, and waterborne illnesses. We also learned how much hope we could inspire, how many resources we had, and how often we take our opportunities and blessings for granted.

Ultimately, we prepared a report documenting the changes this community experienced after receiving their water system in an effort to create a tool that could be used to encourage other villages to adopt their own water system. It had been about a month’s worth of work crammed into three days, and we were only half way done with our journey.

The remainder of the trip was spent on a macadamia nut farm in Antigua Guatemala. The non-profit farm, owned by Lorenzo Gottschamer and managed by his son Ricardo, strives to be as “green” and self-sufficient as possible.
Lorenzo uses no pesticides or fertilizers to grow the tastiest nuts possible. Lorenzo’s mission for us: spread the word. Inform others about how beneficial macadamia trees are for our planet and encourage others to visit the farm. We spent hours taking pictures and video footage, creating flyers, and constructing a donation box to encourage participation from both locals and tourists in promoting this mission. Not only were we able to use our academic background, but we were able to pass on our knowledge to Lorenzo and Ricardo before we left so they could continue to improve their farm. Being in such a tourist town created an experience quite different than our first in rural Quiche. We were surrounded by locals and foreigners alike, but the stands and kiosks manned by whole families that lined the street proved that we were still miles from home.

I learned more in these nine days than I would have thought possible. Our team learned to work in unfamiliar territory, in groups, and in a foreign language. We learned that different situations require different solutions. Perhaps most importantly, we grew to be more informed, more experienced, more spiritual, more open-minded, and more aware of the world we live in. While my friends were laying on a beach in Florida for spring break, I was truly having the experience of a lifetime. I left for Guatemala expecting to impart knowledge on others, but instead, I had an experience that taught me so much more in

As a Jesuit institution, we at Marquette place a large emphasis on the education of the whole person. This means not only expanding our knowledge inside the classroom, but also using our abilities to grow and help others in the ‘real world’. It is with these principles in mind that Marquette students are able to develop into the type of leaders that are prepared to face the difficult issues and challenging circumstances they are presented with upon graduation.

This is why as MU continues to foster these principles, we see that Marquette grads are able to lead the way in finding innovative, real-world solutions in an ever-changing environment. AGBL is on the frontier of providing the kind of necessary and creative environment that cultivates our future business leaders.

My AGBL trip to Ahmedabad, India was one of the most impactful experiences I had during my four years at Marquette. We had an opportunity to take an in-depth look at an entire, student-run biotechnology business. We were able to discuss every aspect of the company with all of the employees, from the CEO to the lab technicians. We discussed some of the problems they faced and some of the goals they had for the future of their company. By the end of our time there we presented our solutions to the entire company. This was also documented in an extensive business analysis detailing how we believed our solutions could be carried out. Overall, all the stakeholders involved benefited from the experience. While we provided valuable input and creative solutions, we also gained tremendous insight into how varying global perspectives can influence how business is conducted within different cultures. The experience was eye-opening and extremely beneficial. I learned how business can provide thoughtful outcomes for the entire community while still producing exceptional results. By continuing programs such as AGBL at Marquette we are truly educating our future leaders for the global environment of tomorrow, while making a real impact today.
Upcoming Trips:

Marketing, Expanding Medicinal Plant Production

This year’s group to India is likely going to be learning a lot about the market for organic herbs and medicines in Western India. The project, although not finalized at the time of publication, will be to work with a coop of 52 families growing products using the growing techniques created by our host, St. Xavier’s University in Ahmedabad, India. The coop is already producing herbs and has won recognition for some of their products, but they have not done any marketing or research to determine if they could sell beyond their small rural community. Our students will be talking with larger merchants and stores to find placement for their products and create a marketing plan for the group. We will also be helping to identify ways the firm could run more efficiently. We will also be following up with the student run company, Xplant, at St. Xavier’s to see how last year’s recommendations are working and help ensure that their organization is getting back on track.

Does sponsoring a child really make a difference?

This January our students will be walking around Quiche, Guatemala interviewing recipients of Catholic charity sponsorships dating back to the 1980’s. Our mission will be to determine the significance of the economic impact to these individuals from the sponsorship. Was Sally Struthers right all along? We will meet the recipients, community members, and former teachers when possible to understand how these moneys changed the life of the child. We will also be following up with our friends at the Macadamia nut farm. This horticulturalist has created a strain of tree best suited to the region and has donated thousands of trees to communities. His hope is to someday create a coop for these communities to bring their nuts to market. (These trees take many years to mature.) We have helped him with his business plan in the past and attracting tourists to learn about his projects, so we are anxious to learn the ways that we have made a difference for him.

Where we go from here:

AGBL will formally be offered for credit starting in the Spring of 2011. Students will be able to earn three credits for their efforts. This will likely attract more students to our programs and the need for more scholarships for students.

Currently student scholarships provide half of the money the students need. We have no full scholarships available. With your help, we could expand those offerings and allow more students a chance at a one of a kind experience.

To donate contact Charles Ries, University Advancement, 414-288-7212 or send a check directly to AGBL at Marquette University, P. O. Box 1881, Zilber Hall, Suite 321, Milwaukee, WI 53201