Mahabo: Madagascar commune conditions improved by students

Five students and one faculty member took part in a field study in Madagascar. They were headed to the remote Third World Madagascar community. The students interacted with children at Mahabo Commune in Madagascar.

Burson, Teresa Wallace, Kenneth A. Harrington, Yiping Chen and Russell Kohn interact with children at Mahabo Commune in Madagascar. (Back row from second to left) Christopher Kelley, Kate Burson, Teresa Wallace, Kenneth A. Harrington, Yiping Chen and Russell Kohn interact with children at Mahabo Commune in Madagascar.

Drugs for Parkinson’s may ease stroke-related disability

Scientists have untangled two familial disabilities that often afflict stroke patients, revealing that one may be treatable with drugs for Parkinson’s disease.

School of Medicine researchers showed that stroke damage in a brain region known as the putamen is strongly linked to motor neglect, a condition that makes patients slow to move toward the left side. Like stroke patients with motor neglect, Parkinson’s patients also are slow to initiate responses involving movement. Scientists attribute this deficit in Parkinson’s disease to loss of neurons that use the neurotransmitter dopamine to regulate activity in the putamen.

“Earlier attempts to treat stroke patients with dopamine-like compounds have produced mixed results,” said lead author Ayelit Sapir, Ph.D., postdoctoral researcher in neurology. “It’s possible, though, that those unfavorable outcomes resulted from an inability to identify the patients most likely to benefit from the intervention. Our data indicate that patients with damage to the putamen may respond differently to this treatment than patients who have neglect from stroke damage to other parts of brain.”

Sapir describes the research, which appears in The Journal of Neuroscience, as part of a broader effort to precisely design treatments for strokes by identifying which stroke patients have putamen damage, a condition that may be treatable with drugs for Parkinson’s disease.

Women’s Society honors Switzer for years of service

The Women’s Society of Washington University’s (WSWU) annual membership meeting took on added poignancy this year. Harriet K. Switzer, Ph.D., secretary to the Board of Trustees since 1980 and University coordinator of the society since 1986, has retied from the University June 30. She was recognized at the society’s April 11 meeting in the Ani W. Olinn Women’s Building formal lounge.

“For exactly half of our existence, Harriet has been our guide, mentor, advocate, colleague and friend,” said Kim Eberlein, president of the society, which was founded in 1965. “When Chancellor William J. Danforth asked her to assume this role in 1966, he could not have made a more astute choice. No doubt he recognized several essential qualifications, which have been invaluable to Harriet’s success and, in turn, to that of the Women’s Society.”

Eberlein continued, “Her interest in promoting the growth of women, her consummate scholarship and her exceptional leadership skills have each been critical to the evolution of the Women’s Society over the past two decades, a period in which the role of women in society has been in a continual state of flux.”

In recognition of Switzer’s legacy of leadership, the society honored her with an endowment campaign to add to the scholarship fund toward the goal of $2 million. See Switzer, Page 6

A&S adds 3 Udall, 3 Goldwater scholars

By GERRY EVERHARD

As Sciences undergraduates made another impressive showing in their annual quest for prestigious national scholarships and fellowships, including three students receiving the Barry M. Goldwater Scholarship and three receiving the Morris K. Udall Scholarship for the 2007-08 academic year. Recently, two students were named recipients of the Barry S. Truman Scholarship (see story in April 5 print Record and in April 2 Record Monday at record.wustl.edu).

WUSTL had two honorable mentions, one each in the Goldwater and Udall scholarship competitions. “Washington University’s combined success in the Truman, Udall and Goldwater scholarship competitions is very significant since these are the three major national scholarship competitions for non-seniors,” said Ian MacMullen, Ph.D., assistant dean in the College of Arts & Sciences.

“Being selected for two Trumans, three Udalls (plus one honorable mention), and three Goldwaters (plus one honorable mention) puts us right at the top of any ‘league table’ of American universities this year,” MacMullen added.

MacMullen also noted that the University is one of only four universities to win three Udall Scholarships this year. Udall Scholarship winners are Emily Dangre-veh, a junior majoring in political science and in environmental studies; and Spanish; Paul Mininni, a junior majoring in political science and in environmental studies; and A.J. Singletary, a junior majoring in earth and planetary sciences and minorin in environmental studies and ballet. Kelley Greenman, a sophomore majoring in environmental studies, received the Morris K. Udall Scholarship.

Goldwater Scholarship winners are Kevin M. Mercurio, a junior majoring in physics; Eric R. Wit-sey, a junior majoring in mathematics; and Dafang Zhang, a sophomore majoring in chemistry and in philosophy. The honorable mention is Aashish Man- glik, a junior majoring in biology. “Kevin, Eric, Dafang and Aashish fully deserve their success in the Goldwater Scholarship competition,” MacMullen said. “They are all deeply commit- ted to pursuing scholarly careers in science or mather- matics, and they evidently have the gifts to help shape the future relationships with local leaders that have helped to preserve the endangered littoral forest.”

Despite their success, women workers real- ized they needed economic growth for these gains to be sustained.

The first goal was to marry conservation aims with economic growth to improve the quality of life in Mahabo. The second was to get people to think that the possibilities that might be in one location might lead to replicable approaches that could be applied in other Malagasy villages with similar environmental and economic issues.

See Mahabo, Page 6

Grand entrance

Chris Knoxach of the Prairie Band Potawatomi Nation in Kansas joins the grand entrance of the 17th annual Pow Wow at the Athletic Complex April 14. The Pow Wow, sponsored by the Kathryn M. Butler Center for American Indian Studies, various University departments and groups from around St. Louis, capped off American Indian Awareness Week, which featured a presentation on American Indian mascots in sports and a traditional food tasting.

"Biggest and best": Symposium puts student research in spotlight

See Switzer, Page 6
Jeff Pike named first Hitzeman professor of art

Jeff Pike, dean of the College of Art and the Graduate School of Design at Washington University, has been named the first Jane Reuter Hitzeman and Herbert F. Hitzeman Jr. Professor of Art in the Sam Fox School of Design & Visual Arts, according to Carmon Colangelo, the E. Desmond Lee Professor for College of Arts and Sciences and dean of the Sam Fox School.

Herb Hitzeman served as chief academic officer of the Sam Fox School, which changed its name this year to the Sam Fox School of Design & Visual Arts. The Sam Fox School, which comprises the arts, arts management and art education programs, was founded in 1906.

The endowed chair is made possible by a gift from Jane Reuter Hitzeman and Herbert F. Hitzeman Jr., both of whom hold degrees from the University. The formal installation ceremony took place Feb. 27 in Whitaker Hall.

“I am delighted and honored that Jane and Herb Hitzeman have extended their generosity to include the gift of a professorship in the Sam Fox School,” Chancellor Mark S. Wrighton said. “In many ways, their strong support and dedication to the University throughout the years have touched every aspect of the University’s mission, from our commitment to our teaching and research mission, to the arts and to the arts management and arts education programs of the Sam Fox School. Their dedication has provided significant support for generations to come.

“This professorship is very special, indeed, and it is especially meaningful to the dean of the College and Graduate School. I am pleased that the incumbent is a person who is strongly connected to both the College and the University,” he added.

Jane and Herb Hitzeman have dedicated their lives to education, Colangelo said. “They have aided and influenced generations of St. Louis students and educators, from elementary and secondary schools all the way to the university. Their level of dedication and the service they provide is particularly praiseworthy as we celebrate this professorship in honor of one of our most distinguished alumni and colleagues.”

Hitzeman earned a master of arts in art education from the University in 1972 and a master of fine arts from the Kansas City Art Institute in 1976 and a master of fine arts from Syracuse University in 1978. Before coming to the University in 1983, he founded the advertising firm Hitzeman & Associates in St. Louis, which received $40,032,500 — that year’s record for a single American university campaign.

In 1990, he received a master of arts in arts management from the Graduate Institute of Management and Fine Arts at the University of Geneva in Switzerland.

In 2006, Hitzeman took a year off from his position as dean of the College of Architecture, Art and Design, for a sabbatical leave.

As dean since 1999, he has helped integrate digital media into all campus curricula while leading multidisciplinary initiatives, notably with an eye on the use of paper as a sculptural medium and producing two-dimensional designs for a variety of projects.

As fellows of the Williams Greenleaf Eliot Society, the Hitze- man Jr. Leadership Award, given annually to a resident of the HITZ Residential College.

As an illustrator, Pike has worked with major clients and agencies, including Advertising Age, The New York Times and the Minneapolis Star Tribune. He received Bell Yellow Pages to Monsanto Co., D’Arcy, Masius, Benton & Bowles, and other agencies; W.E.B. Du Bois Institute for African American Culture and History; and Johnson Wax.

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By Neil Schoenhein

The McDonnell Academy, Eisenhower Fellows partner in new program

The McDonnell Academy of Science, Mathematics and Humanities has partnered with Eisenhower Fellowships, a non-partisan, non-profit organization headquartered in Philadelphia, to launch a new international leadership program in St. Louis.

The St. Louis International Leadership Initiative will identify emerging local leaders and send them abroad to enhance their professional and personal growth. The selectees will return to the St. Louis community and serve as U.S. ambassadors.

The initiative will expand the number of international Eisenhower Fellows who regularly visit St. Louis.

The St. Louis International Leadership Initiative gives Washington University and the St. Louis community an important new international connection with the “international scene,” said James V. Wertzick, Ph.D., the McDonnell D. Snoeyink Professor of Arts & Sciences and director of the McDonnell Academy.

“By partnering with this group, we will be able to help students connect with St. Louis and send more St. Louisians to other regions of the world,” Wertzick said. “In a globalized world, if you’re finding new ways to work with partners in the United States and around the world as we build the McDonnell Academy, International Leadership Initiative and the McDonnell International Scholar endowment here at Washington University.

Carmon Colangelo, Mark S. Wrighton and John F. McDonnell, vice chairman of the Board of Trustees, will co-chair the initiative. Colangelo said the St. Louis International Leadership Initiative and sponsors created the McDonnell International Symposium on Energy and Environment May 4-7. For more information, visit mcdonnell.wustl.edu.
Schizophrenia patients’ siblings subject of study

BY JIM DETRE

Investigators at the Silvio Conte Center for the Neuroscience of Mental Disorders at Washington University in St. Louis are recruiting schizophrenia patients and their siblings subject of study to determine whether subtle differences in brain structure can predict who is at risk for developing the illness.

Led by Joseph C. Csernansky, M.D., Ph.D., the Conte Center is one of a national consortium of lead- ers in the study of schizophrenia and its causes.

"In the past, the limitations in our ability to analyze brain im- ages made it difficult for the car to be dated. Now, one can use an 'ex-fender before we could spot a dif- ference," he said. "We now have the ability to see scratches in the paint or hail damage — things that were once impossible to see."

Working with C. Robert Cloninger, a neuroscientist and professor of genetics, Csernansky and his team are studying pa- tients who have a sibling in the same age group with schizophrenia and their families. Taking advantage of advances in recent research, the Conte Center also has initiated the First Contact Project, which offers assess- ments and treatment planning to people who may be experiencing early signs of a psychiatric ill- ness, such as unusual perceptions, inability to concentrate, sleep dis- turbances, or chronic anxiety and irritability.

"Often, individuals with these symptoms also may have a family history of schizophrenia or other psychiatric disorders."

Participants in Conte Center research projects must be at least 16 years old. One person must have experienced psychiatric hospitalization and have a sibling in the same age range willing to participate. Study participants cannot be recovering users of drugs or alcohol and must be in general good health, with no past history of seizures or seri- ous head injury. They will be asked to provide a brief medical history and psychiatric and medical screening tests. All participants will receive free clinical and cogni- tive evaluations and MRA imaging.

For more information or to volunteer, call the Conte Center at 777-2162 or (888) 777-2162.

Dobbs develops treatment for foot deformity

BY BETTY MILLER

Children born with a foot deformity that causes them to have a rigid flatfoot once faced extensive surgery to fully correct the problem. A treatment developed by Matthew B. Dobbs, M.D., a pediatric orthopaedic surgeon at the School of Medicine, has shown early success in correcting congenital vertical talus (CVT), a foot condition that may result in feet that are painful and arthritic in later life. Left untreated, the patient would walk on the inside of the ankle rather than the bottom of the foot, resulting in prominent bony deformity. CVT afflicts both other- wise healthy children and family members with genetic birth defects and neuromuscular disorders.

Dobbs, associate professor of orthopaedic surgery, developed a treatment for CVT that in- volves gradually manipulating the foot and applying long leg casts weekly for four to six weeks to gradually correct the deformity. After the casting period, Dobbs and his colleagues take X-rays to determine the success of the correction.

"Much of the correction is achieved with casting alone," Dobbs said. "In the cases where we are not able to reach full correction with casting, we reach the rest of the correction with a minimally invasive surgery. This type of sur- gery is very small compared to the extensive re- lease surgery that has been done in the past."

In the minor surgical procedure, Dobbs inser- ts a small pin onto a joint in the foot where it meets the ankle to hold the correct position for about two months. After the casting treatments, or the surgical pinning, CVT patients wear a nighttime brace for several years to prevent re- currence.

Details about the treatment in 11 patients with CVT are in a total of 19 feet, is discussed in the March issue of The Journal of Bone and Joint Surgery.

His method has caught the attention of pedi- atric orthopaedic surgeons worldwide, and Dobbs has become the go-to surgeon for CVT patients treated successfully with the Ponseti method has done for clubfoot," Dobbs said.

"What has previously been lacking in any cast treatments for CVT is a lack of understanding of how the joints in the foot move and work together... Our ultimate goal is better outcomes for patients." MATTHEW DOBBS

Omega-3 fatty acids in fish oil studied for impact on Alzheimer’s disease progression

By Deshuke William

Nutrients long have offered fish as part of a heart- healthy diet, and, now some studies suggest that omega-3 fatty acids found in the oil of certain fish may also benefit the brain by lowering the risk of Alzheimer’s disease.

In order to test whether docosahexaenoic acid (DHA), an omega-3 fatty acid, can impact the progression of Alzheimer’s disease, researchers at the School of Medicine and Saint Louis Uni- versity School of Medicine (SLU) will evaluate DHA in a clinical trial sponsored by the National Institute on Aging (NIA)

The local effort is part of a nationwide consortium of lead- ing Alzheimer’s disease re-

School of Medicine Update

"What has previously been lacking in any cast treatments for CVT is a lack of understanding of how the joints in the foot move and work together... Our ultimate goal is better outcomes for patients." MATTHEW DOBBS

evaluating whether taking DHA for many months slows both cog- nitive and functional decline in people with mild to moderate Alzheimers. During the lit- erature search, investigators will measure the progress of the disease using standard tests for functional and cognitive change.

"Evidence to date in various research studies that have exam- ined the effect of omega-3 fatty acids on Alzheimer’s disease is further evaluation in a rigor- ous clinical trial," Dobbs said.

"Our hope is that we may find out that DHA plays a role in slowing the progression of this destructive disease."

The researchers will study whether people with the highest blood levels of DHA were about half as likely to develop dementia as those with lower levels.

"Study volunteers will be crit- ical to helping us find out if DHA can make an impact on the disease process," Grossberg said.

For the clinical trial, the Mar- tion Biocoresept Corp. of Colum- bia, Md., will donate a pure form of DHA made from algae devoid of fish-related contaminants. Par- ticipants will receive either two- grams of DHA per day or an in- active placebo pill. About 60 per- cent of participants will receive DHA, and 40 percent will get the placebo. Doctors and nurses at the 53 research clinic sites will monitor the participants in regu- lar visits throughout the trial. To ensure unbiased results, neither the researchers conducting the trial nor the participants will know who is getting DHA and who is receiving the placebo.

In addition to monitoring dis- ease progression through cog- nitive tests, researchers also will evaluate whether taking DHA supplemen ts has a positive effect on physical and biological mark- ers of Alzheimer’s, such as brain atrophy and proteins in blood and spinal fluid.

"We hope to learn the results of the study, call 286-2983 or 286-3385 at SLU."
**University Events**

**75 undergraduate research presentations doubles number past year**

By Neil Schoenherr

The spring 2007 Undergraduate Research Symposium, being billed as the University's largest undergraduate research event, will take place from 8:30 a.m.-5 p.m. April 20 in the Athletic Complex. There will be more than double the 30 presented last semester.

The symposium, from 11 a.m.-4 p.m., is open to the public. It provides undergraduate research performed by students of all majors and disciplines and will provide more opportunity than ever for undergraduate students to briefly describe their research through posters and visual and oral presentations.

"I think several factors have contributed to the dramatic growth in the size of the symposium," said Henry Biggs, Ph.D., associate dean in Arts and Sciences and director of the Office of Undergraduate Research.

"Aline Holtz, who joined us recently as research grant specialist, has made it a central focus of her work, and she has proven tremendous at working with different disciplines, being flexible about presentation styles and welcoming to styles of research that are not traditional," Biggs added.

Biggs cited the presentation of a documentary film, a senior dance thesis and the first known presentation of cosmetology research as examples of all undergraduate symposiums will present work. More than 150 local high school students were invited to attend.

"There is no growth if the growth is not more but a coming together," Biggs said. "There has always been a great deal of undergraduate research being taken place, but it was scattered among many smaller symposia.

"Many of those disciplines have decided to join us and that means that research can be exposed to the tremendous research that is going on in their discipline," Biggs added.

Students will be presenting a wide variety of research projects.

Jacob Levits, a junior majoring in environmental studies and Arts & Sciences, architecture and business will present "Collaborating with the Environment: How to Plan a Sustainable Chocolate Factory".

To aid Kallar, an Ecuadorian co-op operative in the Amazon region, and to help save them money on design costs, eight UW-St. Louis students formed a multidisciplinary group to develop preliminary architecture and business design.

"The business plan will follow a traditional outline, including background, marketing, production and financial, and human resources," Levits said in the group's proposal. "The architecture plan will follow an agro-ecological foundation in the way of green building in the Amazon region."

The group hopes to stimulate the local economy and reduce poverty by making chocolate that is produced in the region.

"Mind Caster, a senior majoring in aerospace engineering, will present his 'High Efficiency Satellite Laser Power Transfer Prototype.'

"The project demonstrates the viability of high-efficiency power transfer between two satellites using a system of laser diodes and solar panels. This configuration allows the nano satellites to recharge from a host satellite while maintaining the beam," Biggs noted.

"A current trend in satellite development is the use of several small nano satellites that perform tasks similar to single complex satellites," Coxeter said.

"However, current power generation systems are too large for these nano satellites," Coxeter added. "Current technologies require too much mass and power to be delivered on board, which makes the system ineffective. While this system is very effective it does require that the square of the distance increases. A laser power transmission system would have less mass and a smaller distance restriction," Biggs said.

"It's very important for students to gain experience explaining and defending the research that they do," Biggs said, "so that they can reach across boundaries and disciplines and collaborate more effectively, seeing that the connections that were not available previously."

For more information, visit calendar.wustl.edu.
Godspell speaks for architectural series
Australian architect Sean Godsell combines spare aesthetics with environmental sensitivity and social engagement. At 6:30 p.m. April 23, Godsell will discuss his work for the Whitney R. Harris Institute: Design & Visual Arts spring Architecture Lecture Series. The talk, titled "Toward an Australian Architecture," is free and open to the public and takes place in Room 300 of the Laboratory Science Building.

Godsell, principal of Sean Godsell Architects in Melbourne, Australia, merges industrial and agricultural vernacular forms with Asian — particularly Japanese — views about space and layout. At the same time, projects such as his acclaimed Carter/Tucker House and the Harris Institute — both embedded in the sides of sand dunes in Victoria, Australia — take a holistic approach to environmental sustainability, combining an acute awareness of climate and the innovative use of recycled materials such as glass, steel and reclaimed wood.

Godsell is perhaps best known for a series of self-funded projects that inform his work on homelessness and refugee displacement. Future Shack, originally designed for a competition sponsored by the non-profit group Architecture for Humanity, is a self-contained emergency shelter built within a standard 20-foot shipping container.

Godsell’s proposed Park Bench House in Melbourne would transform public benches into wind- and sun-protective structures through the addition of a simple lift-up roof. Similarly, Bus Shelter House is a standard glass bus shelter that converts into emergency overnight housing, complete with an advertising board modified to dispense blankets, food and water.

Other major projects include the Woodleigh Art School (1999) and the Woodleigh School Science Building (2003), both of which — like Carter/Tucker House, Future Shack and Peninsula House — are awards from the Royal Australian Institute of Architects.

His work has been published in the world’s leading journals, including Architectural Review, Australian Architectural Record, Domus, Casabella and Architectural Review. In 2005, Phaidon Press released the monograph "Sean Godsell: Architecture of Protections.

For more information, call 935-9500 or visit www.arch.wustl.edu.
Scholars

FROM PAGE 1

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The Goldwater Foundation.

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Goldwater Scholars

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Drugs

FROM PAGE 1

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Lima wins Bruno Zevi Prize for architecture writing

By BY AMY CLENDINN

The jury for the Bruno Zevi Prize consisted of five renowned architects and architectural historians: Jean-Louis Cohen of the Ecole des Hautes Etudes in Paris and New York University; Zaha Hadid, Berlin architect and author; Alessandra Muntoni, director of Metamorfosi Magazine and the Saggi di Università di Roma La Sapienza; and Dennis Sharp, chair of the International Committee of Architectural Critics in London. Running up for the prize were Evena Lisa Pekkonen of Yale University, Daniela Salvi of the University of Rome and Joseph Cerry of the Israel Institute of Technology.

Big Read program shows impressive final returns

By BETTY MILLER

The George Warren Brown School of Social Work honored six distinguished individuals for outstanding service to social work at its annual Alumni Awards Dinner April 17 at the Coronado Ballroom.

He received the award for his extended essay "Towards Simple Lives: The lives of four Italian Social and Organic architects and their contributions to the application of the theory and practice of design, with special attention to the idea of a total system of buildings." Lima is preparing a book about Bo Bardi’s life and work. In particular, the jury focused on her relationship to modernity, relevant to the current experimental situation in Italy and her experiences after immigrating to the United States in 1946. The Bruno Zevi Prize is awarded annually for a historical-critical analysis of an original architectural work or theme, the context of its past or present. The competition is open to holders of Ph.D. or equivalent degrees in architectural history, theory and criticism. Lima’s winning entry will be published in the Quaderni of the Bruno Zevi Foundation. He also will spend an academic year focusing on her research.

Lima has focused his life on developing the theory and practice of design, is an active researcher and critic of 20th-century modern architecture and urbanism, and is currently involved in the United States with World War II studies and the University under the direction of Walter Gropius. While in the United States, Zevi also discovered the work of Frank Lloyd Wright, which helped shape his conception of the social and organic architecture.

Math is fun, you know. It is the foundation of how we reason about the world and how we make decisions. It is also the foundation of how we understand and design our physical environment. It is the foundation of how we create art and music. It is the foundation of how we communicate and interact with each other. It is the foundation of how we think about the future and how we plan for it. It is the foundation of how we create and evaluate new ideas. It is the foundation of how we understand and improve the world around us. It is the foundation of how we communicate and share our ideas with others.

Social work presents alumni, other awards

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BY JESSICA MARTIN

The George Warren Brown School of Social Work honored six distinguished individuals for outstanding service to social work during its annual Alumni Awards Dinner April 17 at the Coronado Ballroom.

He received the award for his extended essay "Towards Simple Lives: The lives of four Italian Social and Organic architects and their contributions to the application of the theory and practice of design, with special attention to the idea of a total system of buildings." Lima is preparing a book about Bo Bardi’s life and work. In particular, the jury focused on her relationship to modernity, relevant to the current experimental situation in Italy and her experiences after immigrating to the United States in 1946. The Bruno Zevi Prize is awarded annually for a historical-critical analysis of an original architectural work or theme, the context of its past or present. The competition is open to holders of Ph.D. or equivalent degrees in architectural history, theory and criticism. Lima’s winning entry will be published in the Quaderni of the Bruno Zevi Foundation. He also will spend an academic year focusing on her research.

Lima has focused his life on developing the theory and practice of design, is an active researcher and critic of 20th-century modern architecture and urbanism, and is currently involved in the United States with World War II studies and the University under the direction of Walter Gropius. While in the United States, Zevi also discovered the work of Frank Lloyd Wright, which helped shape his conception of the social and organic architecture.

Math is fun, you know. It is the foundation of how we reason about the world and how we make decisions. It is also the foundation of how we understand and design our physical environment. It is the foundation of how we create art and music. It is the foundation of how we communicate and interact with each other. It is the foundation of how we think about the future and how we plan for it. It is the foundation of how we create and evaluate new ideas. It is the foundation of how we understand and improve the world around us. It is the foundation of how we communicate and share our ideas with others.
A dialogue in faith

Biblical scholar Pamela Barmash leads Jewish, Islamic and Near Eastern Studies

Pamela Barmash (right) recently led 11 students to Jerusalem as part of a senior capstone course.

As a scholar of ancient Near Eastern cultures and author of a book on homiletics in the Biblical world, Pamela Barmash, Ph.D., professor of English, Bible and Biblical Hebrew in Arts & Sciences, has visited Jerusalem many times.

However, as director of the Jewish, Islamic and Near Eastern Studies (JINES) program in Arts & Sciences, one of her more recent visits came just months ago as she led 11 students there as part of a senior capstone course on Jerusalem in three traditions: Jewish, Islamic and Christian.

"The municipal officials and community leaders whom our students met were just astounding to meet a group in which Jewish, Christian and Muslim students are all working together and studying together," she says. "That's something unprecedented!"

Barmash's seminar with the student trip to Israel and other broadly conceived capstone courses are the highpoint of the innovative, dual-track JINES curriculum. While students specialize in either Jewish or Islamic studies, they are required to take introductory and advanced courses in the other field. This integrated approach to studying worlds that are often at odds promotes in-depth analyses and various perspectives.

The plan seems to be working. Rich Hillisheim, a Muslim student from Chicago who made the Jerusalem trip with Barmash in 2005-06, describes it as a wonderful, life-enriching experience, in part because the students become so tightknit and so willing to look not just for one another.

"A couple of us around suspicion after Israeli security checked our passports and noticed that we were Muslims. But several Jewish students and Professor Barmash came to our aid and talked them into letting us pass," recalls Hillisheim.

A 2005 JINES graduate.

"Later, when our group was walking through a Palestinian neighborhood, some residents began to shout Jewish students in our group, shouting, 'Welcome to our nation.' Those of us who spoke Arabic told them these are our friends and we are all here together."

In 2002, Barmash and a group of students launched the Muslim-Jewish Dialogue Group. Members now facilitate similar dialogue groups for Jewish and Muslim students in community high schools.

Helping bridge people gaps between religions and cultures has been a part of Barmash's life since she became interested in religious studies as a child in New York. As a teenager, she got her hands on a critical study of the Bible and saw it for the first time as more than a monolith, more than one voice "singing a single solitary note" from cover to cover, she says.

"To come across the critical study of the Bible in which you hear an entire symphony of voices — sometimes harmonious, sometimes cacophonous — made what I do as a rabbi is to act as a sort of a public or community interface, as a public teacher," she explains. "It's not enough to do scholarship for the sake of writing a book that sits on a shelf. The way I do teaching is to enable students and empower students. So going into the rabbinate was very much part and parcel of the whole thing. In many ways, what I do as a rabbi is to act as sort of a public or community interface, as a public teacher."

As a biblical scholar who is equally at home in Near Eastern archaeology, ancient history, Jewish studies and rabbinic literature, she says Hillie J. Kieval, Ph.D.

she was most interested in learning languages as a tool to help us grasp the major issues that face Islamic civilization and Jewish civilization," she says.

Barmash's credentials include some level of fluency in nearly a dozen languages, including Hebrew, Arabic, Syriac, Akkadian, Arabic, Greek, Ugaritic, French and German.

She has worked with North-West Semitic inscriptions, including those of Phoenician, Punic, Moabite, Edomite and Ammonite origin.

Hillel J. Kieval, Ph.D., the Goldstein Professor of Jewish History in Arts & Sciences, describes her work as a Washington University treasure.

"She is that rare example of a biblical scholar who is equally at home in Near Eastern archaeology, ancient history, Jewish studies and rabbinic literature, she says. "It lets students get beyond the superficial to understand the complexities and nuances that actually occur on the ground.""