

Sabbatical Updates

Elaine Hove

*Lower School Blake campus librarian
Plank Challenge Grant*

For a few weeks in June I had the chance to explore Incan ruins, live with a Peruvian family, and visit the schools and museums of Peru. I went to deepen my understanding of Peru and South America in order to bring authenticity to my work with fourth graders who study the people and culture of these areas.



Elaine Hove visits the spectacular ruins of Ollantaytambo

My trip began in Lima, where I stayed with a friend teaching second grade there. I went to the PK–12 school where she works, talked to the students and teachers, and visited their surprisingly large library. My friend also took me to the market in downtown Lima where I sampled some of Peru’s incredible produce.

My next stop was Cusco and the Sacred Valley, the heart of the Incan civilization. The ruins of Pisac and Ollantaytambo are spectacular both in their setting and the history they hold. I also visited a village trading market, went to a bullfight, and spent four days hiking and camping on the Incan trail to Machu Picchu. The Urubamba River Valley was the highlight of the trip, surrounded by the spectacular snowcapped Andes, agricultural terracing clinging to the sides of mountains, women in colorful layers of skirts herding sheep along the roadside, unbelievable Incan stonework along Cusco alleyways, and fabulous soups made of quinoa or potato.

Next stop was Lake Titicaca. I traveled by boat to Taquile Island, where I stayed with a local family with eight children. There was no electricity or plumbing and, since it was winter in Peru and I was in the middle of the highest navigable lake in the world at almost 13,000 feet, it got quite cold at night. I slept under more than a dozen wool blankets. Late in the evening, the eldest son showed me the Southern Cross and explained some of the Peruvian constellations. In the morning, I was able to walk with the family’s children to school, a very different place than the schools I had seen in Lima and Cusco. There were two rooms, one teacher and about 30 children ages 7 to 15. The teacher prodded the older students to practice their English with me, and I spent most of the morning answering, “I’m fine. How are you?” The Plank grant gave me the opportunity to experience the foods, history, people and landscape of Peru. It was an unforgettable experience.

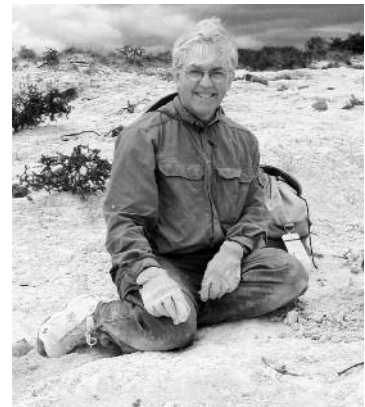
Bruce Jones

Middle School science, Plank Challenge Grant

This summer I got to live out a childhood dream. As far back as I can remember, I was a kid who collected rocks and fossils whenever I could. Among my many science-related dreams was to be a paleontologist, digging up fossils.

Thanks to a Plank grant, I got the chance to do that this summer as a volunteer with the Earthwatch Institute, helping to research the evolution of animals such as horses, dogs, camels and rabbits that migrated when a land bridge appeared between North and South America. This is part of a larger study seeking more clues to the effects of future climate change on modern ecosystems.

Each day our team of eight volunteers drove out to canyons and arroyos to look for fossils of 5 million-year-old horses, mastodons, camels, rhinoceroses and saber-toothed cats, among other things. Sometimes we prospected for old bones on the surface, and at other locations we dug in particular rock layers, hoping to expose the fossils for the first time in millions of years.



Bruce Jones lived out his childhood dream of being a paleontologist this summer as a volunteer with the Earthwatch Institute. Pictured, Jones working in the field.

The story of one of my discoveries illustrates the way science often works. We had been prepared to look for carnivore teeth at this site. When digging with a rock hammer and chisel, I found the end of a long, curved tooth imbedded in the rock and showed it to Dr. Castañeda, our leader. We were quite certain it was that of a saber-toothed cat until I dug further, and we found the root of the tooth was definitely not the broad, well-anchored root of a carnivore but the narrow one of a rodent. Learning not to jump to conclusions until lots of evidence is gathered was part of the day’s lesson.

We went to a site where last year’s team found the remains of a Volkswagen-sized armadillo but found no signs of those armored creatures all day. That was a lesson in patience.

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Faculty Applause

Congratulations to boys' and girls' Alpine ski coach **Bob "Tess" Teslow** and boys' and girls' track and field coach **Jason Shantz** who were recently named Championship Coaches by the Minnesota State High School Coaches Association.

Kudos to Middle School choir director **Dan LeJeune**, who was recently invited to present a workshop, "Singing Sons: Nurturing Boys' Voices During Middle School/Junior High School," for music educators at the Wisconsin Music Educators Association convention.

Upper School art teacher **Bob Teslow's** work was

selected for the Extra Credit: Honoring Minnesota's High School Art Teachers exhibition at the Minneapolis College of Art and Design. The show acknowledged teachers' work in mentoring and developing young artists and gave teachers a premiere exhibition space to show their work to the creative community. A jury selected 23 pieces of the 81 entries for the final show.



Jason Shantz and Bob Teslow

Sabbatical Updates, continued

We always ate meals together, and our final lunch was a memorable meal of stir-fried cactus, chicken and onion, all cooked over a fire of mesquite wood and served with refried beans, avocado and tortillas. That reinforced one more lesson, one of teamwork and companionship.

I also visited two schools in San Miguel de Allende and met some sixth graders at a private school who are eager to have American pen pals, a fun connection for some of our students this year.

Paula Sadler

Middle School math, Plank Challenge Grant

This past July and August, I used a Plank grant to travel to Poland. My trip allowed me to fulfill two purposes: 1) to work with Global Volunteers teaching English at a summer camp for Polish children and 2) to visit historical sites throughout Poland, including the sites of Auschwitz and Birkenau.

My trip began at Reymontowka, a large manor house used as a camp for students studying English. The camp was located in Siedlce, a town located about 50 kilometers west of Warsaw. Four other American volunteers and I taught 50 students, ages 12 to 15, conversational and written English for five hours a day. Our lessons sometimes took interesting forms including listening to the Beatles or Green Day, reading Seventeen magazine and playing Capture the Flag. The remainder of the day was filled with normal camp activities, such as horseback riding, tennis, camp fashion shows and discos in the evening. My students were phenomenal. Not only did I teach them some English, they taught me to say very important Polish phrases such as "My name is Paula," "It is Friday," and "Would you like to go to the disco with me?" (There were a few cute Polish men at the camp!) We also had a chance to take several field trips during the 17-day camp including a trip to Warsaw to see the Warsaw Resistance Museum, a tribute to Warsaw's resistance to the Nazi invasion of Poland during World War II.

I would encourage anyone who is interested in international service to consider working with Global Volunteers.

As a non-religious, non-political organization, it provides vital services to developing areas of the world. Immediately upon arriving in Poland, I was welcomed into the small community and was able to participate fully in day-to-day life. By the end of my time at Reymontowka, even the baker in the town was proud of how much Polish I had learned, and the man who sold ice cream at the corner shop knew my regular flavor.

Following my time at Reymontowka, I traveled to the city of Krakow. Krakow is a beautiful and historical city that remained largely intact during World War II, while much of the rest of Poland was destroyed. From there, I spent two days in Oswiecim, the Polish town where Auschwitz and Birkenau are located. In a lucky twist of fate, this happened to be the hometown of one of my students from the camp, so I was able to spend some time with her family. The time at Auschwitz and Birkenau was an overwhelming and a very reflective one for me, both for personal reasons and considering the current state of the Middle East. I plan to share my experiences from these historic camps and the rest of Poland with Blake's eighth graders when they study World War II and the Holocaust in the spring.

Overall, this experience reminded me of two important philosophies in life. First, we should take the time to learn from history and try to think about perspectives that history can offer us in our present day lives. And second, people are very similar around the world. We can learn a lot from our differences, but the differences, in the end, turn out to be fairly unimportant. Even language barriers are not an obstacle to laughter and friendship.



Paula Sadler taught English to Polish children at a summer camp near Warsaw. Pictured, Sadler with some of her campers.

Plank Summer Institute at Blake: Pushing the Envelope

In 1979, Raymond Plank '40, CEO of the Apache Oil Co., presented Blake with an endowment that established the Plank Summer Institute, an opportunity for teachers in the greater Twin Cities to discover his worlds of business and economics. For 27 years, the Plank Institute has provided teachers with a summer learning experience focusing on unique aspects of business and economics in Minnesota.

The 2006 Plank Summer Institute theme, "Going Global: Social Responsibility," probed controversial and complex topics such as societal changes resulting from our burgeoning, worldwide interconnectedness, the juxtaposition of opportunities and hardships, globalization's environmental impact and the reconciliation of economic globalization and environmental sustainability. Ten Blake faculty members and 33 other Twin Cities-area teachers explored thought-provoking concepts through dynamic, interactive learning experiences including: a point-counterpoint discussion between Mark Mullin of the Institute for International Agriculture & Trade Policy and Rob Johnson, senior vice president, Cargill, Inc; book discussions of Thomas Friedman's "The World is Flat," facilitated by several stake holders in the global marketplace; and the de rigueur panel discussion, moderated by Select Comfort CEO Bill McLaughlin '74. The panelists included IT professional Ashish Gadnis; Blake parent Juliana Chugg, senior vice president, General Mills/Pillsbury Division;

Blake parent Hussein Samatar, executive director, African Development Center; former Graco Inc. CEO David Koch; and Karen Utt of Xcel Energy. Each panelist presented her or his perspective on social responsibility in a flat world. The final hour was spent in open discussion with the Plank participants. Participants and panelists were encouraged to "push the envelope" with questions, comments and solutions. The three-day seminar concluded with an informative and tasty study of the global wine trade, which illustrated benefits and consequences of doing business in a flat world. Wine expert Phil Lusardi presented some lesser-known wine regions of the world that have benefited from a global marketplace and contrasted them with the long-standing viticultural regions of France.

No Plank Institute experience is complete without the daily lunch excursions to local restaurants that exemplify the intellectual subject matter. This year, Plank participants sampled the global cuisine of Yummy Chinese Restaurant, the Midtown Global Market, and Harry Singh's Caribbean Restaurant.

The mission of the Plank Summer Institute is to "create a business-professional atmosphere that will refresh its participants intellectually, physically, and emotionally." It is an experience crafted uniquely each year for the teachers. The participants consistently describe it as restorative, affirming, thought-provoking and well worth the sacrifice of a few days of their precious summer vacation.

Upper School Teacher John McKeand Retires ... Again

For the past seven years, students and colleagues of Upper School social studies teacher John McKeand have felt the many benefits of working with this talented, knowledgeable teacher and kind-hearted man. And so, when McKeand's retirement at the end of fall semester was announced, a number of those students and colleagues offered up their thoughts on his contributions both to Blake and to them personally.

From a colleague: "I'm not sure that I've ever seen anybody that kids connect with better than him. He always seems to have kids enjoying learning. He makes the classroom a fun place to be."

From a student: "He has the ability to take material that you don't necessarily want to learn and present it in a way that makes you want to learn it."

From a colleague: "He's always interested and always upbeat. On a personal level, he makes you happy to see him. Even if you're not happy at that moment, after you talk to him, you are, without even realizing it."

From a student: "He acts more like a family member to you than a teacher. We think of him as a teacher-uncle."

From a colleague: "He's the nicest guy in the school."

McKeand's tenure at Blake followed his retirement from

Wayzata High School, where he had taught for the previous 33 years. After 40 years of superlative teaching, McKeand will be enjoying more time with his wife, children and grandchildren, but his impact as an inspirational colleague and teacher will extend well beyond his four decades of work in the classroom. Thank you, Mr. McKeand!



John McKeand (with colleague Jan Woolman) celebrated his return to retirement at a party held in his honor this January.