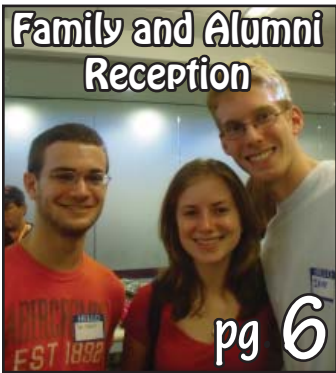




a look inside.. A message from the Program Director



Margaret Marr
Program Director

What a fantastic semester! A terrific recruiting summer netted a dramatic increase in applications and an extraordinary class of 2013. And the Steering Committee has worked hard under Stephen Laudone's direction to increase inter-year Program unity, to improve both the buddy and mentorship programs, and to enhance our publications as well as alumni and family relations. A lot of hard work has culminated in much to celebrate!

Perhaps the greatest accomplishment has been the revitalized sophomore curriculum. In contrast to the first year's focus on

group work, the sophomore year now emphasizes "The Power of One." Each second-year student has identified a social problem of deep concern to him or her, researched it, written a policy memo about it, proposed a project to address the problem, and written a grant proposal to fund the project.

The selected problems include eating disorders, prescription pill abuse, homelessness, youth disempowerment, medical marijuana, even



the danger to the earth from falling meteors. The project proposals include writing a

For more see "Program Director" pg. 3

A message from the Student Director

Stephen Laudone
Student Director

The phrase "over the hill" generally refers to individuals

who have reached the 40 year old mark – a milestone indicating wisdom gained, mistakes made, successes realized and memories had.

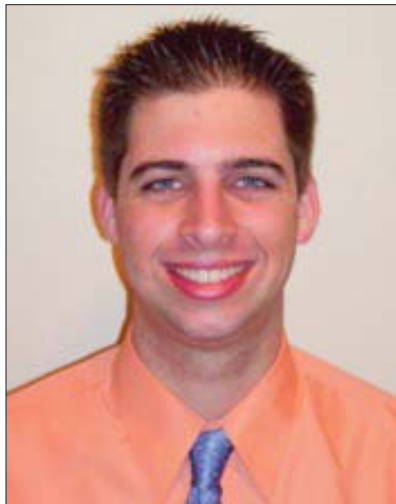
While I am certainly not at this point in life yet, my junior year (that milestone's equivalent in college) has produced similar feelings of nostalgia and appreciation for past experiences. Some of my fondest memories are from those weeks of freshmen year with my new Leadership friends.

Fortunately, I had the opportunity to relive those good times as an

honorary member of the freshmen class. The Steering Committee, TAs and Professor Marr put together a successful Welcome Week that included an ice cream social, scavenger hunt, classic monuments trip and Welcome Back BBQ and Capitol Steps combo – each more successful than last year.

The trip to Dupont Circle for ice cream is a favorite tradition. While the class of 2013 did not experience the ice cream version of Seinfeld's "Soup Nazi," they did develop an appreciation

For more see "Student Director" pg. 3



Leadership steers AU with involvement in Student Government

David Silberman
and Nancy Lavin
Staff Writers

SPA Leadership students of all years are taking initiative in American University's Student Government by applying their leadership training to improve and influence campus life. The Leadership upperclassmen have already enacted important changes to the university community through their roles in student government, and newly-elected student government members are eager to blaze their own trails in the organization.

Leadership upperclassmen have already passed reforms to help AUSG better serve AU's students. Stephanie Eichmann, sophomore class president, was particularly influential in including people in student government decisions. As she explains, "One of the problems was that class council, [a forum where members of each class may share their opinions with their representatives,] was not an organized group." To solve this problem, she created constitutional by-laws to improve the ways in

which members of her class can affect policy.

Sophomore Amanda Merkwae brought impressive leadership to her position as a senator last year as she wrote legislation on issues of sustainability and the student health center. She was able to utilize her role in student government to champion the cause of her freshman issue group project: recycling plastic bags on campus. After her remarkable freshman year, she earned the title of Speaker of the Senate for her sophomore year.

Though freshman leadership students in AUSG have only recently assumed their posts, they are eager and determined to excel. "I plan to try very hard to keep lines of communication open between the council, the students, and the senate," said freshman Hannah Murphy, who hopes to represent the freshman class as best as possible.

Freshman Class President Jose Morales strongly agrees with Murphy's sentiment on communication. "My goal is to increase student involve-



Hear me out - Leadership freshman and School of Public Affairs Senator Eric Reath debates the undergraduate senate on a controversial motion to a bill. [photo by Jose Morales]

ment in the student government by creating student-run committees." Jose has already proven to be an active president, passing constitutional by-laws within his first month in student government.

Not surprisingly, the work of those in student government is akin to that of the Leadership program students apply many of the skills to effective student government legislation. "I am always surprised by how often I find myself in the office reflecting on something I've learned in Leadership," said Student Government President Andy MacCracken, a junior in Leadership. He cites a recent meeting with administrators in which he was able to draw upon leadership skills. "When I thought back to our section in negotiation, I started to use the techniques learned and had a successful result from the meeting."

Sophomore senator Mark Bittner agrees, "I feel that SPA Leadership allowed me to find my place in the SG. If I ever had any questions, I have a big support network

of all the Leadership students - regardless of whether they are in AUSG or not." The clear link between the two organizations encourages Leadership students to help the school community while gaining valuable skills in cooperation and policy-making.

Leadership students often attribute their desire to run for student government to their experiences in the leadership program. "Leadership was definitely a factor in my decision to pursue the presidency," says former Student Government President Seth Cutter, now a senior in Leadership. "I quickly realized that my lessons from Leadership would receive real scrutiny. Knowing these things, it made my decision to run for president my junior year very compelling."

Leadership students are at the forefront of American University's Student Government, and in using the theories learned from the SPA Leadership Program, are making changes to make every student's experience at AU better.



Updates on a new front - Leadership sophomore and Director of Outreach Nate Bronstein updates the Undergraduate Senate on the new Winter Gala. [photo by Jose Morales]



buddies - Buddy Chair Sara Aucker and her freshman buddy Sarah Robinson, proof of the buddy program success, have grown into the best of friends. [courtesy photo]

Continuation of “Student Director”

and high tolerance for numerous name games while genuinely learning about each other.

Perhaps my favorite experience this semester was shadowing the freshmen retreat. I served in a support role for the TAs and Professor Marr and started friendships with members of the class of 2013. Watching team building activities, presentations and skits recalled great memories to mind while instilling in me a new appreciation for TAs. Watching Amanda, Jesse, Mitch, Nate, and Tom work hard to create an incredible experience was not only impressive but humbling, considering all the planning and execution it took. Kudos!

My appreciation for the extra-curricular Leadership experience continues to grow as I listen to my internship-classmates discuss the professional atmosphere of the workplace, graduate schools and potential career paths and how they “feel like

adults” for the first time. I find myself more grateful for the fun, exciting and educational experiences I had in my early Leadership days.

Why am I going on about the freshman experience? I want to encourage the freshmen and sophomores to savor each activity, person and opportunity. Your early college years are great when shared with the Leadership family and it helps set the tone for a successful and exciting four year experience. College is made special by the friendships made through Leadership, many of which will outlast your time at American University.

To the upperclassmen – in the midst of the chaos of internships, leadership roles in organizations, job searching, LSAT’s, GRE’s and grad applications – take time to give yourself a break and reflect on the aspects of college that did not occur in a classroom. Remember the Leadership retreats, Welcome Week events, buddy dinners, issue group meetings and other activities shared with L-ship friends on campus and in DC – I promise they will make you smile.

Continuation of “Program Director”

children’s book, creating social networking sites, and creating a performing arts production.

This alone is a heck of a lot of work for one academic credit! But our dedicated sophomores have done still more. In the classroom students have studied the Tao te Ching, and taken personality assessments including *Strength-Based Leadership* and Enneagrams.

To top it off, each second-year student also took on either a life-skill challenge or a cultural challenge. Those selecting the first challenge identified a life skill they were interested in becoming proficient at and took the necessary steps to do so. Many students wisely noted a critical need to learn to cook and undertook efforts to become more proficient cooks.

Other students identified a subculture they were interested in learning more about, attended gatherings of that subpopulation, collected the oral history of one of its members and presented to the class what they learned and its significance to the student’s leadership development. Several students are exploring religious cultures with which they are unfamiliar.

Learning from the value of having TAs for the first-year students, we also incorporated peer-teaching into the second year. Two senior Leadership students now serve as TAs to the sophomores. Alexis Nadin and Georgette Spanjich

have done outstanding work in coaching our sophomores through their social action project proposals and grant applications. Their work has been central to the success of the curriculum and I could not be more grateful.

Our sophomores also continue to enjoy the benefits of mentoring by area professionals throughout the year. One sophomore, Jon Fox, serves as the Mentorship Chair and has done great renovating work to more successfully pair students with mentors.

Outside the sophomore class, the Leadership Program has continued many of its valued traditions, including orientation week events and the first-year retreat made possible by another fantastic class of first year TAs, continuing a cherished tradition. This year, we have worked to include older students, alumni and families into more of these time-honored traditions.

Older students and the just graduated class of 2009 were invited to join the first-year students to go river tubing near Harper’s Ferry, the site of the first-year retreat this year. Alumni were invited to the orientation week BBQ and to serve as mentors. And the alumni and family reception, spearheaded by our Alumni Relations Chair Martha Hanna, was a smashing success.

On the whole, this semester has been overwhelmingly successful. I look forward to another great semester in the spring.

Freshman issue groups

Environmental Sustainability

The Environmental Sustainability issue group has been hard at work preparing to implement their upcoming project. They plan to introduce an environmental education and recycling program to a recreation center in northeast Washington DC.

This plan will include multiple experiential learning opportunities for elementary school students, including various science projects stressing the importance of their protecting the environment and organized trips allowing these children to see firsthand the natural beauty and importance of the outdoors.

The importance of their project, as stressed by Jeff Eyler, is “to show the next generation the benefits of being environmentally friendly. We must remember the youth is our future.” By changing the habits of young DC residents now, these Leadership students plan to make a lasting change in our community.

Inner City Problems and Solutions

The Inner City Problems and Solutions Issue Group is starting a debate team at a middle school to give the students their first extracurricular activity. The group is working with Cesaer Chavez Middle School in Columbia Heights, which is a public charter school that focuses on public policy.

They chose to create a debate team because every member in the group was a part of a debate team before coming to AU. They found the debate team was a significant part of their high school careers, and had read studies that extracurriculars are key in making well rounded individuals; thus, creating a debate team as a school’s first extracurricular was a natural solution to

the problem the group saw. The group members will act as facilitators and give guidance to help the middle school students foster skills such as critical thinking, public speaking and articulating an argument.

The Inner City Problems and Solutions Issue Group found a problem, and over the next semester will implement their solution and track the progress of the students that are involved with the debate team.

Human Rights

The Human Rights Issue Group is developing a project to combat veteran homelessness in the DC area.

The group consists of Erin Cady, Ashley Fleming, Danna Hailfinger, Caroline Miskovsky, José Morales, Mark Pigott and Michael Turchetti with the help of Teaching Assistant Tom Mcnutt.

The group plans to organize a resource fair for homeless veterans, providing them with information on healthcare, education, job opportunities and shelters. They plan to host the event in Mid-March of 2010.

The group has been working closely with the Veterans of Foreign Wars (VFW), American University’s Veterans’ Club, and other local organizations to meet this end.

The students hope to raise awareness about the issue of veterans’ homelessness and ensure that resource providers and veterans alike obtain the services that they need the most. As the fall semester comes to an end, the Human Rights issue group is eager to put their project to work in the upcoming semester.

Education

The freshman education issue group, comprised of Kathryn Braisted, Robert Helbig, Lauren Hickey, Phil Lasser, Max Looper, Kent Thomas and Tom Schad, has proposed social action project “Need to Read” that aims to impact childhood

literacy rates through increased parental involvement.

According to the group, they’ve done research that suggests a strong correlation between the amount of time a parent spends reading or participating in literary activities with her child and the child’s literacy rate. The freshmen plan to host educational events in places of worship in the northeast DC area after Sunday morning services. During each event, they will distribute books donated by Random House, Inc., encourage adult participants to spend time reading with their children, and engage children participants in activities and games that reinforce the necessity of reading.

The group hopes “Need to Read” will inspire and mobilize parents to sit down with their children and take a more active role in their education.

Youth Empowerment

The Youth Empowerment Issue Group spent the fall semester designing a mentorship program at a middle school in DC. They’re calling their program the Visions of Youth Community Empowerment, or VOYCE for short. These Leadership students plan to mentor the middle school students through artistic medias such as painting, photography, and creative writing.

The goal is to connect the students to their community while providing them with the confidence to articulate their ideas. VOYCE will culminate with a gallery show highlighting the students’ work. Group members Rachel White, Rachael Picard, Anysia Garcia, Ryan Hunter, Sarah Robinson, Ibraheem Sumaira, and Tim McBride are looking forward to beginning the project in the second semester.

“We’re so thrilled to work with DC middle school students,” said group member Rachel White “and give them a voice in their community through creative means.”

Juniors pull out the formal wear to explore potential in DC

Leslie Kodet
Publications Chair

Over the semester the internship class has been spending approximately 20 hours a week at their internships, and two hours a week in class discussing the theories behind organizational behavior.

“The readings for class help me understand the dynamics of my workplace,” said Kathryn Baxter, when commenting on the third year class.

Baxter works at DC Women’s Agenda, a non-profit organization that advocates for solutions to issues that affect low-income women and girls in the District of

Columbia.

“The conversations on motivation struck me the most,” she continued, “because everyone in my office thoroughly believes in solving these problems. I never could have imagined a different atmosphere until we talked about it in class.”

Students with previous experience working as interns on Capitol Hill enjoy the change of pace within their current offices. Jenny Leland spent multiple semesters working in former Sen. Kennedy’s (D-Mass.) office, but was never doing as substantive work as she is working at the American Foundation for the Blind.

“Hill internships are unique in the way that the office is structured. Working at AFB has given me a chance to work in and analyze an office that is more comparable to offices and studies of organizational behavior across the nation.”

Students are still interning with the federal government, even though they’re not on Capitol Hill. The three students that intern for the federal government agree that the readings for class don’t apply to their work environments as much as they do for Leland and Baxter.

Discussions in class have not focused why this is, but they’ve danced around the idea that the nonprofits

Baxter and Leland work for are doing g valuable work, but not as necessary as the work the federal government does.

The question then becomes if governmental offices are going to be around as long as the government is around, how do those offices not have the best working conditions (which according to studies read for the class) show take time to develop, when relatively young organizations such as DCI Group which was founded in 1996 already has work teams instead of managerial groups? This is a mystery for the class to figure out as they continue to analyze their work environments throughout their lives.

Sophomores work through second year slump

Students work on projects, life skills and cultural skills all in one semester

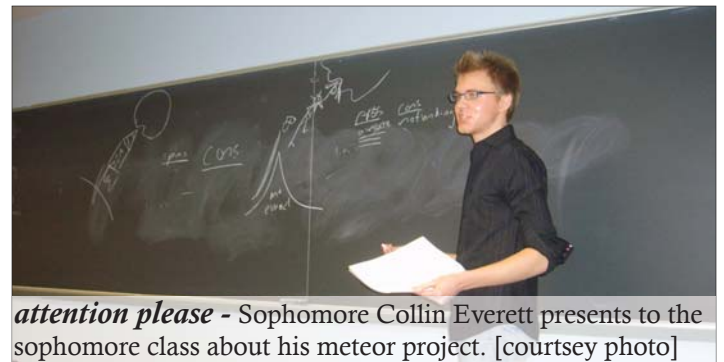
Melissa Chang
Publications Chair

Whereas the freshman year is all about issue groups and bonding, the second year of Leadership is much more a journey of self-discovery as students tackle individual ventures of their own design in addition to personal development projects. Each sophomore is creating a project that involves the community, an expert or scholar in the field of their work, and the grant application process to fund the project. This year, they have the opportunity to select their own cause.

Projects range from writing

children’s books to finding a meteor shield for our Earth. Sara Aucker is creating a self defense course for female victims of domestic violence in partnership with a local non-profit organization called “Becky’s Fund,” where she will also be interning during the spring. And while Jennifer Jones dispels myths about the purity of bottled water and champions the environmentally friendly practice of drinking from reusable bottles, Jon Fox organizes a panel addressing gentrification versus urban development in DC.

Sophomores also have a life skill challenge and a cultural project to complete. While many students learned the vital skill of cooking, others



attention please - Sophomore Collin Everett presents to the sophomore class about his meteor project. [courtesy photo]

learned how to play musical instruments or how to ride a bike in an urban area. For the cultural project, the students attend several events of a certain subculture – such as the Filipino student group or the GLBTA community, and then gather the personal life story of a member of that group – all part of an immersion that can lead to

new perspectives for a leader. In addition, the sophomores engage in self-exploration as they take a series of personality assessments to determine their leadership strengths and weaknesses.

A major departure from the first year, the sophomore Leadership curriculum is all about independence and personal growth.

Alumni reconnect with program at reception

Jose Morales
and Rachel Picard
Staff Writers

SPA Leadership alumni mingled with current Leadership students and their families at Leadership's hallmark event of family weekend: the Alumni and Family Reception on October 24, 2009.

"It was a great opportunity to meet former students in the program and discover what incredible things they are doing now," said sophomore Amanda Merkwae.

Sophomore Mitchell Duncombe thought it was an excellent occasion to "meet my peer's families, introduce myself to alumni, and effectively network."

Alumni and current students highlighted Leadership's current curriculum, projects and opportunities. Leadership Director Margaret Marr and School of Public Affairs Dean Meg Weekes also applauded the program's work.

Sophomore Nate Bronstein, one of the TAs for the first year class, spoke at length about the first year experience, including the process of developing a social action project. Other speakers included sophomore Tess Van

den Dolder, who noted some interesting sophomore projects including the creation of a program to teach Spanish-speakers how to use computers and a project to write a children's book that embraces multiculturalism.

Junior Kelsey Stefanik-Sidener spoke about how her mentor from her sophomore year helped her gain an internship at the American Diabetes Association. She included that the internship is an integral component of the junior year curriculum, and is considered extremely valuable to the program. Class of 2009 graduate Bill Debaun spoke about the senior year component of the program, as it is a spring semester course, and thus no current seniors could describe the experience.

Student Director of the Leadership program, junior Stephen Laudone, introduced the members of the Steering Committee who described their roles in organizing events for leadership, fundraising, and networking with alumni. The series of speeches offered families a better sense of how the Leadership class advances the activities run by the Leadership program and what it means to graduate as a Lead-



reconnecting - Deputy Student Director Alli Gold, alumnus James Lynch, alumnus Bill Debaun, and senior Seth Cutter gather together to recall memories. [photo by Rachel Picard]

ership student.

"My parents were really impressed with how well spoken the alumni were," commented freshman Rachel White.

Matt Mullock, class of 2004, also returned to American for the reception, crediting Leadership with developing his abilities to "negotiate, build and learn from others"-giving him hands-on experiences that were invaluable when he founded his non-profit organization which helps developing countries in Africa and Asia.

"SPA Leadership taught me about the importance of people," said Jenna Briggs, class of 2007, who is now a Special Olympics research and evaluation specialist.

Nick Tiernan, class of 2007, who is now a legislative assistant in the U.S. State Department, learned through Leadership that "everyone has a different leadership style" - an idea that has become an integral part of his approach to being an effective manager.

Alumni weren't the only people involved at the reception. The event took place

during parents' weekend, and the parents were extremely impressed.

The reception was "the best event of parents' weekend," said Tom Murphy, father of freshman Hannah Murphy, who appreciated the program's care in taking the time to understand people.

The reception successfully brought together current students, their families, alumni, and faculty with plenty of food and pleasant conversation, setting a high watermark for all Family Weekend events.

It was a perfect opportunity to see all the facets of SPA Leadership in one room; everyone walked away with a deeper sense of appreciation of the Program's ability to mold high-achieving students.

Freshman Anysia Garcia said, "My family gained a deeper understanding of the opportunities that Leadership will afford me throughout the four years of the program."



all smiles - Program Director Margaret Marr, Deputy Student Director Anthony Miller and Teaching Assistant Nate Bronstein pause for a photo. [photo by Rachel Picard]

Sophomores put on aprons in the kitchen

To fulfill their life skill requirement, leaders crowd around the kitchen learning to cook from chef Soto

Melissa Chang
Publications Chair

Just in time for the holidays, the second year Leadership students enjoyed the unique opportunity to take a free cooking lesson with American University's Executive Chef, Mary Soto. As many sophomores expressed an interest in learning the art and necessity of cooking as their life skill project for the year, the Leadership Program worked with Associate Dean of Students Sara Waldron to arrange for the special class.

More than a dozen sophomore SPALeaders braved the bright and early Saturday morning to learn how to make a few delicious dishes from Chef Soto, who believes good food can be healthy, low budget, and can require few props. No one left disappointed. The students not only toured the kitchens of

American University, getting a real insider's look at how to keep American University's campus well fed, but they also learned a few tricks of the trade on the way.

For example, students learned how to safely and efficiently cut food with a knife: hold the knife's handle firmly and do a sort of forward rocking motion to chop up the food without lifting the blade off the cutting board; with the other hand, hold the food with the fingers curled to keep from getting hurt.

The sophomores also learned how to make a basic soup from scratch – a surprisingly easy and warming meal that can be made in huge quantities and stored. They learned that a simple combination of carrots, celery, and onions, also known as mirepoix or "the Holy Trinity," is a versatile base that can be used



teamwork - Sophomores Jessie Schwab, Olivia Stililis, and Stephanie Eikmann work together to complete their life skill of cooking here on AU campus. [courtesy photo]

for a variety of soups.

"Cooking does have basic guidelines, but they're just that, guidelines," said sophomore Stephanie Eichmann echoing the Chef's sentiments. "It's more about finding what works together and making what you want to eat instead of buying Easy Mac."

The second-year students also whipped up a great couscous salad with feta cheese, spinach, artichokes, sundried tomatoes, fresh grape tomatoes, and a light dressing. For many of the students, this was their first time eating couscous, let alone preparing it, so the experience was particularly intriguing.

Then finally, while indulging in their creations together with Chef Soto, the SPALeaders spoke with the chef about how she manages a staff of just under 200 people to feed a school of

several thousand. Students learned valuable leadership lessons from the chef's motto, "you do what you gotta do." to fill the coffers of TDR on time with the foods students enjoy most.

The sophomores also discussed and learned how dietary choices can affect the environment. "We serve our students and faculty fresh, organic, locally grown foods because we want to teach them the importance of living an environmentally friendly lifestyle," she said.

Chef Soto gave generously of her time, giving up her day off to offer two fun, four-hour cooking classes. The sophomore SPALeaders walked away from their lesson with newfound cooking skills, a greater appreciation of the university's food services, and even some of Chef Soto's leadership lessons.



what's cookin' - Sophomores Mark Bittner and Melissa Chang use a special technique of squeezing lemons face up making sure seeds don't get in the pot. [courtesy photo]

Our Staff

SPA leadershipvisions

Publication's Staff

Publication's Co-Chair

Leslie Kodet

Melissa Chang

Staff Writers

Kathryn Braisted

Sylvia Brookoff

Erin Cady

Ashley Fleming

Ryan Hunter

Nancy Lavin

Jose Morales

Rachel Picard

Tom Schad

David Silberman

SPA Leadership

Program Director

Margaret Marr

Student Director

Stephen Laudone

Deputy Directors

Alli Gold

Anthony Miller

Leadership

Steering Committee

Publications Committee

Leslie Kodet

Melissa Chang

Events Committee

Kathryn Baxter

Mentorship Committee

Jon Fox

Fundraising Committee

Phil Cardarella

Treasurer

Carol Foster

Alumni Relations

Martha Hanna

Speakers Bureau

Sami Green

Buddy Chair

Sara Aucker



SPA Leaders shoot for team work with laser tag

Sylvia Brookoff

Staff Writer

Game faces on, students from all four years of the Leadership Program jumped into a fun and competitive Saturday afternoon of laser tag on November 7th.

The fun and intense gaming taught the players important leadership lessons. Communication was critical as teams decided how they would go about moving through the game. Quick decision-making and delegation skills were practiced as the teams were required to rapidly determine who would stand guard, who would run and attack, and who would back up whom. Cheers filled the air as teams quickly developed a sense of camaraderie, reminding students of the importance in teamwork of remaining motivated and keeping the task fun.

The blue team won the first fast-paced game. The green team, after its loss, huddled together to assess the group's strengths and weaknesses and reevaluate its tactics. Exercising their problem-solving skills, they developed a better, more efficient course

of action in the next round.

Come game two, the green team overcame the challenges of darkness and disorderly teamwork and successfully conquered the bases of the other teams. "The green team exhibited phenomenal teamwork in the second game, and came through with an impressive win," exclaimed Amanda Merkwae, a sophomore and leading member of the green team.

After the two rounds, smiles lined the faces of the students as they talked and laughed about how much fun they had had. "The best thing was we got to do things together," said Adam Daniel-Wayman, a freshman in the Program.

"It was a much different atmosphere than our retreat at the beginning of the year and even the other times most of the program got together. Playing on a team with upperclassmen I hadn't really had the chance to talk to before

gave me a chance to make a connection," commented freshman Jose Morales, "I'm eager to meet everyone in the program and I feel that you get to know someone better when you're working together as part of a team."

Leadership skills can be used in many different environments. The events of the day gave students an opportunity to exercise these skills with their fellow SPALeaders in an unconventional venue. Thanks to great organization of the trip by unior Kathryn Baxter and enthusiastic participants, laser tag presented a successful afternoon of fun and friends, enabling students to apply their classroom skills to a fast action situation.

