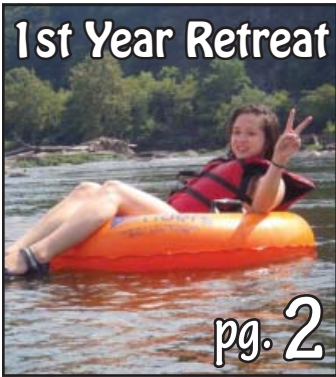




a look inside.. Leading the way with TOMS shoes



Mentorship Reception
Sophomores engage in roundtable talks looking for a mentor. pg. 4

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Melissa Chang
Publications Chair

Offering inspiring advice, Blake Mycoskie, founder and Chief Shoe Giver of TOMS shoes, spoke at an SPA Leadership Program co-sponsored event about his intriguing company, which gives a pair of shoes to a child in need for every pair of shoes sold.

"TOMS shoes is the type of project that our organization really admires because Blake is a true citizen-leader," said Anthony Miller, one of the program's deputy student directors. "It was good to have this as our first co-sponsored event this year because our freshmen are just beginning to experience the kind of work we do, and TOMS has the same elements of creativity and concern for humanity as our leadership projects."

With his trademark scruff, wild hair, a vague Texas accent, and a fistful of notes on weathered hotel stationery, Mycoskie is every bit the hipster with a cause – a true citizen-leader. Before TOMS shoes, Mycoskie had absolutely no knowledge of shoemaking; but thanks to his curious nature and his brilliant idea of giving "one for one," he became an instant mogul, quickly working with the likes of Ralph Lauren and Vogue's Anna Wintour.

Leadership Program students were thrilled to meet the renowned Mycoskie and to learn his exceptional secrets to success. "His enthusiasm



was inspiring," said 2013 Leadership student Sylvia Brookoff. "It challenged me to rethink where I want to be in ten years."

Freshman Danna Hailfinger commented on Mycoskie's unique rise to success and said, "as leaders we are always taught to take things by the reigns if we want something done; [Mycoskie] taught me that it's okay to sit back and let the world lead sometimes. Opportunities can present themselves in the oddest of places."

Indeed, Mycoskie hit the career jackpot by making a job out of his passion and encouraged students to not only search for interesting or high-paying jobs, but to strive for the satisfaction of "social entrepreneurship." It is this hybrid of business and philanthropy, he explained, that allows for the unique "one for one" model of TOMS shoes to be self-sustaining. "Of course, giving puts you on a high," Mycoskie explained, "but giving is also good for business

and for building your resume because your customers sell your shoes; people will come out of nowhere to help you when they see you doing good work."

Leadership students admired Mycoskie's uncanny ability to translate his natural convictions and goals into real work. "[Blake] is a true person who has maintained a certain humility that success sometimes blurs," said John Lisman, a first-year student in the SPA Leadership Program. "Even more, he has never lost his vision and that has allowed him to have a continuous success rate with his company."

The late September event sponsored by AU's Kennedy Political Union saw an excellent turnout. Co-hosting the successful event is part of the Leadership Program's effort to bring to American University great leaders to share their inspirational stories and successful leadership strategies for social change.

Freshmen make a splash braving rapids



Totally Tubin' - Leadership freshmen gather round after a long day of white water tubing with other leaders in the program. The students worked together to dodge rocks, dunk each other and brave the rapids. [Photos Courtesy of Leslie Kodet]

Kathryn Braisted
Staff Writer

The SPA Leadership Program's class of 2013 emerged from the 2009 retreat ready to begin the first of four years of Leadership after a weekend of playing countless getting-to-know-you games, eating — and burning — dozens of s'mores, debating Middle Eastern politics, and roughing it in air conditioned cabins.

On August 28, the freshmen class of leaders, along with their TAs and Program Director Margaret Marr, headed to the historic town of Harpers Ferry, West Virginia, where they would camp for

their weekend retreat.

"I didn't quite know what to expect when we left on Friday, and none of us knew what was in store," said Sarah Robinson. "You could tell from the atmosphere on the bus that we were all nonetheless excited after hearing how incredible an experience the weekend would be."

Characteristic of the Leadership Program, Friday night was marked by a handful of name games and ice-breaking activities. After a campfire and late-night Tarot card readings by Sarah Robinson, leaders headed to bed before a 7 a.m. wake-up on Saturday.

In the morning, River Riders, a Harpers Ferry outfitter, took the group to the For Love of Children facility near the

campground to go orienteering, a foot sport that requires groups to navigate through unfamiliar terrain with a map and compass to locate specific control points. Leaders were split up and released into the woods for an hour and a half to locate as many points as possible within the time limit.

John Lisman loved orienteering and said it made his retreat memorable. "Not only did we bond out there, but for many of us the outdoors component helped to enrich our experience," he said. "Some of us had a lot of camping experience, but some of us didn't. It was very character building."

Such activities also fostered great bonding time between the new students. Sylvia Brookoff said, "During retreat, I think my comfort level and my ability to communicate with others was greatly improved, and I think those are two key aspects for a good leadership foundation."

The remainder of Saturday afternoon was comprised of games and food, with a short

break in between for leaders to recharge with a nap or use the campground's recreational facilities. That evening, leaders also had their first of many issue group meetings. They began brainstorming about their yearlong service projects.

On Sunday, the freshmen enriched their study of the controversial abolitionist leader, John Brown, when they took a guided tour of Harpers Ferry, led by National Park Service Ranger Dan Fox. The two mile tour detailed John Brown's preparation, attack, capture and hanging.

Following the tour, the freshmen were joined by the program's upperclassmen at West Virginia's Greenbrier River to take a white-water tube trip for the rest of the afternoon.

"The best part of this trip was how much it really exceeded my expectations," said Eric Reath. "This group is comprised of 35 students. Thirty-five may seem like a large number, but I'm truly amazed as to how close I became with my classmates over a single weekend."



Your arm or mine?- Freshmen and TA's practice communication with the "human knot" activity.

Sophomores hit the farm to feed the hungry

Nancy Lavin
staff writer

This September, the sophomore class of the SPA Leadership Program traded their busy DC lifestyles for a weekend of picking green beans in the dirt, weeding through thorny plants, and stocking shelves – all a part of their volunteer project with Fauquier Community Food Bank.

The class of 2012 discarded the notions of “typical” leadership activities as they set off for Virginia for a weekend retreat and character building, manual labor. The plan? Harvest food from a local farm that would then be used at the food bank in the same town. The purpose? Examining new outlets for leadership through community service and team building.

As this year’s retreat began on the evening of September 11th, the sophomore leadership class took the opportunity to remember 9/11 as they engaged in a discussion of the event’s impact on them, not only as citizens, but as future leaders.

“We all recognize that we’re



smile! - After a weekend of feeding the hungry and bonding, the sophomores are ready to take their passion for thier service projects back to AU. [Photos Courtesy of Margaret Marr].

among the last generation to personally remember 9/11, and we all grew up with the War in Iraq,” said sophomore Melissa Chang. “Because this event is so embedded in our lives, I think it’s inevitable that we consider its implications for the future.” In the midst of a fun weekend, an appropriately somber tone was set as students eagerly engaged in discussion about their memories and experiences.

The next morning, the sophomores set off on the hour long drive to the Fauquier County Community Action Farm. They picked

vegetables, moved rocks, and stocked shelves. All the while, they remained inspired and motivated. They knew that the fruits of their labor, literally, would be supporting the local food bank and feeding the very community where they spent the weekend. As sophomore Olivia Stitilis explains, “It was a truly memorable experience, definitely something different from my typical weekend.”

However, the work itself took a backseat to the conversation and team-building that developed from such hard labor. The class was already close after the first year issue group projects. Thus, the sophomore retreat was better described as a weekend gathering of friends to do community service. “It rekindled the connections that started last year and built upon them,” noted Phil Cardarella.

Jennifer Jones agreed, explaining that the sophomore retreat differed dramatically from the freshman retreat, yet there was still no lack of rewarding experiences. It was “very different, a lot less academic and more action-

oriented.” On this unique departure from the classroom, the sophomore leaders embraced more hands-on lessons on the importance of local sustainability and community agriculture.

After a long day of difficult labor, the students left the farm and returned to the campsite for a night of card games, Frisbee playing, and eating together. Even such low-key activities provided an opportune atmosphere for meaningful conversations and bonding. Josh Dubensky said the “free time spent at the cabin with other friends in leadership” was his favorite memory of the retreat.

Sunday morning, the retreat drew to a close, and the group headed back to AU’s campus. with renewed bonds and a sense of communtiy; in the classroom, the sophomores won’t only think of political leaders anymore. No longer will their idea of leadership always be in the realm of politics, but it will include the community leaders that are donating their lives to save their community.



working hard - Sophomores Anthony Miller (right) and Nathan Bronstein (left) weed tomato plants on the farm.

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Leaders look for a guiding light by engaging DC professionals with annual Mentorship reception

The SPA Leadership sophomore class engaged in the rare opportunity to meet a variety of successful D.C. professionals who will serve as mentors to the students as they develop their career paths. This flash mentorship event, coordinated by Mentorship Committee Chair Jon Fox, was similar to a speed dating exercise: the 13 mentors were each seated at a table around the room, and students spent eight minutes each with six professionals from the field in which they are interested.

"Previously, students weren't taking advantage of having a mentor," Fox said. Past mentorship programs only had about a 50 percent success rate because pairings were based solely on surveys students handed in at the end of freshman year and biographies sent in by the mentors. Moreover, there was no way to accurately determine whether or not the students and professionals would click.

"The purpose of the event was to provide an opportunity for students and mentors to forge some type of relationship, and to give students the chance to use their networking skills with professionals," Fox said, adding that students will further benefit from having someone with whom they can discuss their potential career paths.

He also hopes students can shadow their respective professionals, understand day



Questions? - Sophomores Tess Van den Dolder (left) and Rhia Bakshi (right) sit down to interview mentors looking for a good matchup. [Photo Courtesy of Leslie Kodet].

to day life, and receive insight into the professional world.

Mentors included Michael Long, the Head Staff Assistant for Speaker of the House Nancy Pelosi, and Kathryn Alessi from the World Bank, with whom Rhia Bakshi said she connected most.

"She works towards making business corporations and other organizations more sustainable by identifying specific cases of corruption and inconsistencies. Her work extends to organizations overseas, which is interesting, because she can probably help me a lot with my interest in international development," Bakshi said. "I also switched to [the School of International Service] this semester and am now majoring in International Relations... I basically see myself at an organization like the World Bank and have been looking for a way to incorporate both international relations and business into my career - she seems to have been rather successful in doing that, so it fits."

Yet sophomores shouldn't worry if they didn't connect with a mentor or couldn't

make it to the event, Fox said. In addition to the mentors who came to the event, there is a pool of handful absent professionals with whom Fox will match students, according to results from surveys that all sophomores took, in coordination with mentor info.

Sam Sabol, who is interested in journalism, said she benefitted most from her eight minutes talking with Marc Rosenberg, manager of *The Washington Post's* corporate, public policy and advocacy advertising sales team. "Even for that brief meeting, learning a little more about someone in that field was helpful," said Sabol. "All of the potential mentors shared insight about networking, goal setting, and the real world of leadership."

"I think Jon and the mentorship committee did an exemplary job of finding competent and professional mentors who seem like they are really interested in advising Leadership students. The event was definitely beneficial to us."