



PPPM student's internship 'emotionally taxing,' provides on-going lessons

By Emily Wilson | March 14, 2011

An undergraduate student who interned in India came home with “a new reason to keep on learning” after spending five months working with organizations dedicated to preventing second-generation sex trafficking and HIV/AIDS.

Ashleigh Zosel-Harper, a planning, public policy and management (PPPM) and nonprofit administration undergraduate, presented her study, “Rural HIV/AIDS and Urban Sex Trafficking,” to a team of judges and fellow study- and internship-abroad participants in Eugene. The February event, the annual International Projects Fair, provides UO students who have interned or studied abroad an opportunity to showcase their overseas experiences.



Zosel-Harper's work focused on two difficult topics: second-generation sex trafficking and HIV/AIDS.

“It was very emotionally taxing work,” Zosel-Harper says of her work with women and children in Maharashtra, “but I'm happy to share what I learned abroad with other students. It's important to see what opportunities are out there for students.”

Zosel-Harper says her international experience has helped her to appreciate the importance of policy programs that implement healthy, safe and effective means of helping women and children around the globe.

Her five-month stay in India was split between the small town of Malavli and the mega-city of Mumbai, both in the state of Maharashtra. In Malavli she worked with Community Aid and Sponsorship Program (CASP), an organization involved with helping children infected or otherwise affected by HIV/AIDS. In Mumbai, she worked with Prerana Mumbai, a nongovernmental organization (NGO) dedicated to stopping second-generation prostitution.

In Malavli, Zosel-Harper evaluated the performance of micro-financing endeavors by families afflicted by the HIV/AIDS epidemic. By the end of her session, she had completed the program report and done “countless interviews” with those affected by HIV/AIDS. In Mumbai, the world's largest red light district, her efforts dealt largely with learning how to support the children of commercial sex workers through Prerana, an NGO seeking to end sexual exploitation and trafficking. With Prerana, Zosel-Harper helped reorganize an induction orientation manual, do on-site brothel visits, and engage in various activities with the children Prerana supported.

"I feel like I'm still learning what I learned," Zosel-Harper says. "I now see the importance of program evaluations in aid organizations and I feel like I have this new reason to keep on learning. Working with the actual people afflicted by AIDS/HIV and sex trafficking put a face to what I was trying to stop. It made everything so much more real."

The International Projects Fair is part of the UO Study Abroad Program. This year's event showcased 15 students who completed academic or experiential projects abroad. The work is reviewed by faculty judges, who select four entrants' work to receive cash prizes. The International Projects Fair helps to encourage student returnees from study abroad, internship abroad or service learning abroad to share their experiences and for the public to learn about opportunities available to UO students.

"It's a great way for students to share what they did abroad," International Projects Fair coordinator Nick Fleury says. "It's like a continuing education where students can return home and have an outlet where their work is recognized and showcased."

