

grew up around horses as well, so we had a fun conversation. A few weeks later, I texted her and said, 'I have a good feeling about you being interested in something like this' and asked her about [going to India]. Her 'yes' was almost immediate."

Doing something different

Stirn said he has always felt drawn to studying abroad, but he felt a need to do something no Elon student has done before. He just wasn't initially sure what that would be.

"I was looking at all the adventures the Adventurists [a group run by U.K.-based company The League of Adventurists International Ltd.] offer and looking for the one I would have the most success with," Stirn said. "I thought to myself, 'The Rickshaw Run is possible, but I should not do this.' Then a few months went by and I was like, 'I should probably be doing this, or at least asking someone if they want to do this with me.'"

Each member of the group agreed to participate in their own time, but everyone agreed with his sentiments about studying abroad.

"[Studying abroad] is just a really enriching experience for anybody who wants to mix it up and go to a different country or see a different way of life," Donahue said.

But Nulsen said their trip to India will be different from any typical study abroad experience.

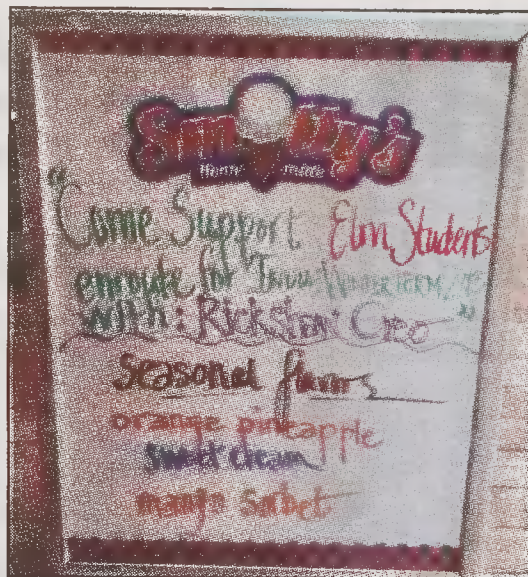
"What we're doing is throwing ourselves into the mercy of this country," she said. "We're not taking a train to different parts of Europe and staying in nice hotels."

Halligan agreed, relaying the impression he's gotten from other Elon students about studying abroad.

"You find a lot of commonalities between the way students describe their study abroad trips," he said. "No matter where they go, they're like, 'Oh yeah, I went skydiving here, I [partied here] and it was awesome.' They have a lot of fun but they don't really learn too much — in my opinion. This is a unique trip because it's an experience that no one at this school has had. We're going to suffer and be in the struggle."

Castine said the best part of the trip will be experiencing the challenges the team will face together.

"This is going to be a bigger challenge than anything we've ever done before and we get to give back to the country that's going to give us this great experience," Castine said. "Instead of



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Smitty's is sponsoring Team Elon Tuk Tuk by offering a new flavor called "Rickshaw Run Oreo." The team will receive proceeds from the sale of the flavor.

going and doing and leaving, we get to experience [being abroad] in its best form and then give them something."

By "give them something," Castine is referencing the charities involved in the Adventurists' projects and specifically the Rickshaw Run.

Making preparations

After Stirn assembled his rickshaw crew, he began wading through technical details.

As part of the rickshaw program, each team is required to raise \$4,000 by the end of the run. They've chosen the Frank Waters Project as their central charity.

"The Frank Waters Project was started by a girl who went to India on a class trip and got sick from drinking the unclean water," Nulsen said. "When she got back, she decided to start this charity which sells purified water. The proceeds go to resolve the water pumps in rural India. It's cool because now we're going to do the same thing while we're in India and understand what it's like to not have direct access to clean drinking water."

The Adventurists has a general charity attached to the event called Cool Earth that seeks to slow climate change by mitigating deforestation in the Amazon rainforest.

Locally, Team Tuk Tuk has sought out sponsorship in ice cream.

Some Elon students may have noticed a new flavor at Smitty's called "Rickshaw Run Oreo." The name represents Smitty's sponsorship of the team, and Team Elon Tuk Tuk will receive proceeds for every carton consumed by Elon ice cream eaters.



PHOTO COURTESY OF MCT CAMPUS
Mohammad Siddiqi has pulled a rickshaw through the streets of Kolkata, India for more than 50 years. Team Elon Tuk Tuk will have to pull rickshaws similar to this for more than 1,800 miles from Jaisalmer to Kochi.

"It also means we have an excuse to habitually eat ice cream, which is good," Donahue said.

In addition to Smitty's, the team has gained sponsorship from an outdoor apparel company and a local coffee shop in Stirn's hometown.

The team has set up a group email, WordPress blog, phone number and Facebook page where parties interested in making donations or researching the Rickshaw Run can do so.

In the months leading up to the trip, the team will be exploring every nook and cranny of Elon's study abroad system to make their trip smooth, safe and productive for their own purposes and also for the proper representa-

tion of Elon.

They've done research, made a list of potential liabilities and hazards and even outlined a syllabus for an independent study abroad course. They hope this will not only pave their way across India but also guide future students who seek to study the road less traveled and create an abroad experience all their own.

"What I've found is that I'm combining every possible passion I have ever had and now finding I can put everything I know into this," Stirn said.

His teammates agreed.

"Will has put blood, sweat and tears into this," Nulsen said. "We can't wait to see where this journey takes us." §