

# Summer Jobs Provide Perspective

by Steffan Hambricht

Summer for many Salem students was a time for relaxation and rest, but for three young women, summer brought opportunities for self-awareness, growth, and new experiences.

Michelle Swank, a junior, spent her summer working at Paradise Village, a mental health hospital located in Medina, Ohio. Despite the hospital's pleasant name, it certainly was not a place for the faint-hearted student. Michelle worked as a developmental aide. She was excited to have this opportunity because, as a psychology major, she is interested in human behavior. She had done an internship at Paradise Village during her sophomore January Term and knew she would be challenged as well as educated.

Michelle's job included working with different patients (or clients) in various programs. These programs taught clients sign language, how to use utensils, how to use their hands, as well as other skills. The clients were all adults, ranging from the severely retarded to mildly retarded.

Michelle's job also included participating in hospital field trips. She says she enjoyed being with the patients; however, there was always danger present. She says: "The whole time you had to be on the lookout for these people because they had different behaviors. Sometimes, for no reason, they would hit, kick or bite you, maybe try to pull your hair out." She points to a brownish blue mark on her arm and says; "This will be with me for the rest of my life. It is a bite mark from a thirty-five year old woman. She bit me for no reason, and the amazing thing about it was if you said something to her about it three minutes after it happened, she would have no idea of what you were talking about." After this incident Michelle thought seriously about quitting. Even though she had previous training, she was not sure she could handle the clients' violent mood swings. She continued working, however, and gained personal satisfaction from the experience. She explains: "It's worth it when you see the people improving. Each person was

on an Individual Habilitation Plan. There were different goals that each person was supposed to meet within a certain time period. An example of a goal might be for someone to lift his hand up; the next goal might be for someone to lift the hand and hold a spoon. Eventually, this client would be able to feed himself. That kind of progress is amazing to see." Michelle is not sure whether she will return to Paradise Village next summer. She is considering finding a job in the Winston-Salem area.

Catherine Davis, a junior, spent her summer in a place quite different from her small hometown of Belmont, North Carolina. She lived in Manhattan for three months working at Fidelity Investments on Park Avenue. Catherine met her employer through a temporary employment agency. After working for the investment firm three days, her manager asked her to stay the entire summer. Her job title was "administrative assistant." Catherine posted daily cash receipts, funded money market accounts, helped maintain new accounts, kept statistics on monthly revenue contests and sent in weekly results in the form of wires through the company computer system. By working with the company's computers, she learned the company's computer functions and was almost fluent in Fidelity's computer system. She also generated leads for the top sales representative for Fidelity nationally. Working in a high-pressure firm and living in the excitement of New York City has produced changes in Catherine. "I've become a lot more confident," she says. "I've always thought business was a big puzzle, but it's really no big deal. Everyone has a niche in it. I didn't think I could get into it, but I realized I could easily. This experience has given me the opportunity to see how administrators work and how to make managers as well as clients happy." Catherine says she would love to go back to New York and work in the future.

Melissia Kirk, a senior, spent her summer working in Uganda, East

Africa. She received an Aldridge Fellowship from Salem College. The Fellowship is designed for students to study abroad for the causes of world peace and world hunger. It is classified as an internship and is associated with Global Outreach, a non-denominational Christian organization that promotes self-sufficiency in developing countries.

Melissia stayed with Lillian Kalemira, director of the child sponsorship program of Global Outreach in Uganda. Melissia assisted Ms. Kalemira with different women's clubs throughout tiny villages deep in the African bush. In the clubs, the women learned agricultural techniques, nutritional practices, and domestic skills to improve their child's health and well-being. "The women learned to raise their entire standard of living," Melissia says. Melissia found the clubs

interesting but said: "It was unusual because in the bush, very few people speak English. I learned some of their language, but not a great deal. Basically, I observed what was happening in the clubs." She found great pleasure in working with the children of the mothers who came to the clubs. She was well-prepared, having brought seventy pounds of candy, crayons, and coloring books with her from America. "I taught a lot of children how to chew gum," she laughs. "They had no idea of what it was. I really enjoyed that."

Melissia said the experience really made her appreciate how lucky she was and made her realize how luxuriously Americans live. "We have no idea of how fortunate we are. The experience really gave me a concept of what's necessary in life and what we don't need." Melissia says she will definitely return to Africa in the future.

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