

Use National Volunteer Week to make difference

LISA WILSON
Staff Writer

What can you do to get involved in your community? Work for Habitat for Humanity, clean up a polluted creek or help an older person do yard work are just some options that are available for Meredith students. The Office of Volunteer Services has been busy planning exciting upcoming events.

This week, continuing through Saturday, Apr. 28, is National Volunteer Week, which, in the Raleigh area, is sponsored by Triangle United Way. This Celebration of Caring 2001 has many opportunities for everyone to help out around the community, and the Office of Volunteer Services has a list of ways students can lend a hand in this area.

Activities for individuals as

well as groups are available. Several Meredith students have already committed to service projects for the week.

Lynne Wheatley, director of Volunteer Services, pointed out that there "are lots of different opportunities—everything from Meals on Wheels to child care."

Volunteer Services is also planning a Volunteer Service Fair to occur in the fall of 2001. The first ever Service Fair was held this past fall and was such a huge success that it is being done again. Sixty community service representatives will have booths set up to let students know about opportunities with their organizations.

Wheatley says they are "excited about making activities available to Meredith Col-

lege faculty, students and staff to meet the needs in our local community."

Another exciting adventure coming up for the Office of Volunteer Services is a trip to the Czech Republic. The trip will begin with helping to rebuild an old farmhouse, some gardens and a playhouse for handicapped children. The team will be there for 2 to 3 days and then will be moving on to Navarov.

There, the group plans to sponsor a creative arts camp for deaf children. Their stay will end with activities, events and even a performance for the children. The trip will last from May 26 - June 5. The office is "ecstatic" about taking this trip to become volunteers around the world.

Meredith senior discovers love of Arabic language

LINDSEY MCADAMS
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Plans change. Just ask anyone you see, including graduating seniors, whose original plans never seem to turn out quite like they'd planned—and they're the better for it.

A student just like that is senior Dana Turnage. She originally planned to go to graduate school in religion but that all changed when she was accepted into Vermont's Middlebury College's prestigious foreign language program in Arabic.

According to Turnage the program will be a "complete submergence in the language." She will only be allowed to speak Arabic during this undergraduate program and has to

pledge that she will do so.

In August she will return to Raleigh, but soon after returning, she plans to join the Peace Corps so that she can learn more about the Middle East. She will be trained for three months and then assigned to an area of the world. She is hoping to be assigned to a country on the Middle Eastern continent, such as Jordan or Tunisia.

She feels that there is a good chance that she will receive her assignment in the Middle East because not many people outside the Middle East speak Arabic.

She hopes to eventually get her master's degree in International Relations and work for the government or a non-profit organization.

But Turnage did not begin learning Arabic at an early age. Instead, she took a course in the fall called the History of the Modern Middle East with Dr. Akram Khater, a professor of N.C. State.

When time came to sign up for spring classes, Turnage said, "I had free time and needed a foreign language. Dr. Novak, my adviser, suggested Arabic, and now I love it."

Her Arabic professor, Jodi Khater, noted that Turnage had no other experience with the language but was willing to try something new, saying, "Dana came to Arabic with no prior experience in the language; she has no familial ties to the Middle East and she is not Muslim. She was determined to speak out in class, accepting the fact that she would make errors and learn from them."

Turnage is involved in promoting awareness about the Middle East. Currently, she is doing her senior thesis on women's issues in the Middle East. She recently formed the Arabic Language and Culture Club.

At this year's Academic Awards Day, Turnage won a prize for outstanding student of Arabic.

Symposium relates science, religion

LEESHA AUSTIN
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The connection between science and religion, arguably one of the most interesting topics of our day, brought students, faculty and staff, and visitors from the surrounding community to Meredith's 10 a.m. worship service in Jones Chapel on Wednesday, Apr. 18.

Speaker Dr. Anthony J. Martin, professor of environmental science at Emory University in Atlanta, Ga., shared his research and findings in his message entitled "Spirituality and Tracking of Indigenous Peoples."

Dr. John Mechem, head of the department of Biology and Health Sciences, introduced Martin, who has a Ph.D. in Geology and whose primary identity is the study of life traces.

"Tracking is the oldest science," explained Martin. He continued by asking, "Did spirituality come from tracking?" He elaborated that he views tracking as both a scientific and spiritual process.

Martin provided examples of indigenous peoples and showed that in viewing the cul-

tures of these peoples, it is difficult to distinguish science from spirituality or religion.

According to Martin, tracking is "a way of connecting" a person with nature.

He outlined and developed several points to support his theory using observations of the tracking practices of several different groups of indigenous peoples.

He explained that trackers don't actually observe the animal making the tracks, so "a leap of faith is involved" because they must imagine what the animal that made the tracks looks like.

Martin next explained that while analyzing the tracks, a tracker must "use a visualization process that involves an absorption close to prayer or meditation."

He related that the trackers' awareness of astronomical concepts such as the moon, stars, wind and rain is important as they pay attention to how it affects the tracks. He added, "These astronomical concepts are also inspirational motifs in many religions."

Martin shared that while there are "tangible rewards for

a correct interpretation," values which are commonly associated with spirituality such as humility, lack of ego, and delayed gratification until the tracking process is completed.

He pointed out that dance originally came from the imitation of animals' movements, and that these forms of group celebration have been used in group spiritual practices.

He closed by saying, "Science and spirituality may become indistinguishable in tracking."

Senior Becca Smith said, "As a biology major I thought that it was interesting how he made several points that scientific study can be connected to religion."

Junior biology major Julie Rasmussen added, "I think that the idea that science and religion comes from the same source is one that scientists don't often consider."

"I had never thought of [religion] as an aspect of science before," commented sophomore English major Hassie Hughes.

Susan Squires, a reference librarian at Meredith, explained that she was initially

intrigued by Martin's topic because she has a deep interest for Native American studies, and she teaches an Honors colloquia with John Kincheloe, media services specialist, entitled Native American History and Cultures.

"In chapel I wish he would have explained his points further, although I realize that he was probably under time constraints." She added, "I went to his afternoon lecture, and he did elaborate further."

However, Squires explained that she was concerned that his approach was more along the physical aspect of tracking than the spiritual.

"I felt that he was missing an important part of Native American culture because he did not deal with the fact that the Native Americans pray a great deal before they hunt," she explained.

Although she had concerns that he missed an important aspect of Native American culture, Squires added, "I love it when we get people like that to come to campus because it generates thoughtful discussion."