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Dr. Maureen Gillette, Dean, College of Education

www.neiu.edu/~team

for past issues of The Ripple Effect,
T.E.A.M. Conference 2010,
what's new!, and more

OR E-MAIL US AT:
team@neiu.edu

Dear Friends and Colleagues,

“Is your job your destiny, or is your destiny your job?” Bean Feasa’ na hEireann Margaret Connolly (Wise Woman of Knowledge) of Ireland, posed that question at the Sacred Peace Fire to members of our Peace Connection Committee, our T.E.A.M. Conference Planning Committee, and others on May 14, 2009. Margaret visited Northeastern Illinois University before traveling to speak at the United Nations General Assembly where over 2,000 delegates would listen to her words at the indigenous council meetings. Margaret was referring to the 09-09-09 World Peace Gathering that will be held at Northeastern. She said, “Northeastern has touched the world through the T.E.A.M. Conferences and the Peace Fires. People who come here feel something very special that goes beyond words. I believe it is part of their destiny to come here. My life and the destiny of Ireland were changed by me coming to this campus for the first time to present a session at the 2000 T.E.A.M. Conference.”

Our 32nd issue. Wow! How did that happen? One peace Fire, one class, one program, one teacher, one school, one coach, one team, one practice, one bag of tricks, one traverse wall, one climbing wall, one ropes course, one article, one newsletter, one workshop, one conference at a time. Like a pebble being dropped in a still pond, the first edition of the Ripple Effect newsletter was mailed out in Fall 1991, to a few interested educators. Today well over 100,000 copies of the Ripple Effect Newsletter have been used as inspiration, motivation, and guidance to transform the way education is delivered. Our articles are usually stories from students, teachers, or other people who have been transformed through their experiences using teambuilding, experiential, or adventure education. Many share their experiences at one of our workshops, conferences, or peace gatherings.

The ripples from this issue will touch the world: A World Peace Gathering will occur at Northeastern on 09-09-09 with the lighting, at sunrise, of our sacred peace Fire, go to www.peacefires.net. Mike Spiller, who presented at the T.E.A.M. 2009 Conference for the first time and has traveled the globe for the last thirty years to more than forty countries, felt as if he were at a family reunion. Dave Finkel and Roman Emano shared how they have been providing service-learning opportunities at Morton East High School by bringing their students – along with 100 computers – to Durango, Mexico, for the last ten years with the Youth Technology Corp (YTC).
(continued on page 2)

**Make sure you read about the
09-09-09 World Peace Gathering
and how YOU can participate!!**

OUR MISSION:

Teachers of Experiential and Adventure Methodology (T.E.A.M.) is an organization dedicated to promoting and supporting the process of experiential and adventure based learning. Through the sharing of a progression of ideas, skills, and curricula, T.E.A.M. provides individuals and organizations in the areas of education and community service with professional, cross-cultural, and personal growth opportunities.

Our mission is accomplished through an annual conference, The Ripple Effect newsletter, and our web site:

www.neiu.edu/~team

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Our newsletter also shares stories of people who embrace adventure and inspire others through their personal experiences. In this latest issue, we have four people who challenged what society thought could be done and proved the status quo wrong. In challenging times it seems important to look for role models who serve as a source of inspiration. For some it can be a never-accomplished trek; for others it could be scaling the world's highest peak; while for others it could be scaling a climbing wall. John Huston and Tyler Fish, featured in the Fall 2008 newsletter, were the first Americans to ski to the North Pole, unsupported and self-powered. Lori Schneider, a retired teacher with multiple sclerosis, just scaled Mt. Everest, and Nick Betsoleiman, a senior at Glenbrook South who has cerebral palsy, got out of his power chair and scaled the climbing wall at his high school.

Margaret Connolly, John Huston, Tyler Fish, Lori Schneider, Nick Betsoleiman, Mike Spiller, Dave Finkel, Roman Emano, the T.E.A.M. conference planning committee, and The Ripple Effect Newsletter publishing committee. Is their job their destiny or is their destiny their job? I feel it is a little bit of both – and that is the motivation, mystery, and magic that keeps us all going. Passion with purpose is contagious.

We welcome everyone to join us at one of our gatherings this year. There is something for everyone. The 15th Annual Wisdom of the Elders Gathering – “The Wisdom of Forgiveness” – takes place October 2-4, 2009. The 21st Annual T.E.A.M. Conference – “Planting Seeds of Hope for the Future” – will be held February 5 & 6, 2010. The insert has details on both gatherings. Take some time for yourself and you, too, may find a place where you feel at home. We know you will have a great experience.

Dan Creely, Jr
 Newsletter Committee

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Inspiration through Adventure By Dan Creely Jr

It always feels good when we are able to read about or meet people who have overcome obstacles, or accomplished tasks that seem insurmountable. Two articles in the Chicago Tribune, in May, 2009, reminded us that life is “lived through experience.” It does not matter if the stories involve the world's highest mountain or a climbing wall in a high school. The people, the events, and their stories are sources of inspiration.

Lori Schneider a retired teacher with multiple sclerosis has now climbed the tallest mountains on each of the seven continents. Alpine Ascents International reported Lori reached the 29,035-foot peak of Mt. Everest about 7:30 p.m. Central time Friday. It's the tallest point in the world. The 52-year old from northwestern Wisconsin climbed six of the other peaks – including Mt Kilimanjaro and Mt. McKinley – after being diagnosed with multiple sclerosis in 1999.

Schneider is reported to be the first woman afflicted with the neurological disease to reach the Everest summit and the first per-

son with MS to complete the Seven Summits.

Nick Betsoleiman was pouring sweat but wasn't about to quit. For an 18-year old with cerebral palsy who down hill skis and once flipped his power chair playing soccer the wall at Glenbrook South High School was one more step toward redefining what he is capable of. For years Betsoleiman had watched his classmates climb the wall today he would do it himself.

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Bring a World Peace Event to your Classroom on 09-09-09

By Michael Herman & Dan Creely Jr.

Would you like to be part of a world peace effort from your home, school, or community? Would you like to join like-minded people around the world in an effort to open a space for peace and help create a permanent record for future generations of the event? Would you like to connect to a ripple of peace that will travel around the world for 24 hours, at sunrise, through an ancient peace Fire?

It costs nothing; you need to go nowhere. The 09-09-09 Peace Day can serve as a catalyst for educators – of all grade levels and all curricula areas – to engage students in an ongoing dialogue for the entire school year. Students are excited about technology and, for the first time in history, all the technologies currently available can be used and posted into one site at

www.peacefires.net

You are invited to participate in a moment in history. Bean Feasa na hEireann Margaret Connolly, Women of the Nine Fold and the Indigenous Irish Community, Retrieve Foundation, Ireland www.retrieve.ie have been guided to light an ancient peace Fire at sunrise on the 9th day of the 9th month of 2009. The lighting of this fire is

to fulfill the ancient prophesies for peace and survival that will impact the next 19 generations.

Strike a Spark for Peace – People everywhere still gather around fires. In every country and culture – whether fueled by twigs or oil, sun or spirit – fire supports life. Fire ensures survival. Celebrate this worldwide occasion with your own fire. By yourself or in a group, wherever you are at sunrise, just light a candle, burn some incense, or build a small fire. Do whatever you can to take your place in this global circle.

Open a space to talk about peace – Name a place, call the people, set the circle or simply ask the question:

What are the Issues and Opportunities for Opening Space for Peace?

What can we do – as individuals, as students, as schools, and parents, as all kinds of teachers and leaders – to understand and contribute to a more peaceful way of life? A more peaceful human survival?

This is what we want to find out, both personally and globally. This is the question and conversation we want to spark in every time zone and culture. No one is in charge; yet everyone has a job. What is your personal and professional role in the service to life and peace?

Share your stories in one global record.

Take notes. Make art. Sing songs. Snap photos. Take video. Upload everything! Tweet and post and blog and tag it all on-line. Link your local ripples into a global tide for peace at:

www.peacefires.net

Listen to the voices of our children. This is an opportunity for our children to be heard; an opportunity for them to share what is in their hearts. We need to listen to our children – truly listen, without interrupting. Their insights are deep and their wisdom can be profound. We just need to listen. This website allows each person, from the youngest child to the oldest adult, to register and share what is important. It will become a connection for ongoing dialogue after the 09-09-09 day. Our vision is for people from around the world to continue their conversations about peace and the implications it can have on their future.

Why is this so important? A few years ago the United Nations invited young adults to attend some general sessions. After a few days of listening they were asked by the organizers what they thought of their experience. The response from the young adults stunned the organizers: “We hated it. You lectured to us for three days and never once asked for our opinions or feelings on anything.”

(continued on page 5)

Teambuilding Transformed our Honors Program!

By Kathleen Kardaras, Psy.D.,
Northeastern Illinois University,
Honors Program Coordinator

Though Honors Freshman Orientation was always a very special event, it seemed an experience from which some important element was missing. For years it had been an introduction for incoming honors students to the honors program and the campus, replacing the general orientation for all incoming students. Incoming honors freshmen spent a day on campus, usually in late June, engaged in events culminating in registration for their fall classes. There were additional activities, such as a campus tour, an introduction to the Dean, and group activities to help students become acquainted with one another.

Nevertheless, in the first weeks of the fall semester, when I expected to see the new freshmen at the planned honors events, there were few to be found. As the months passed, fewer and fewer were involved and dependably present for the formal monthly activities. Over time, though participation in the program's academic courses continued, attendance at the co-curricular activities was minimal. Eventually, the Honors Society, the co-curricular student organization of the UHP, held meetings only sporadically, due to lack of attendance, and it lost its student charter.

As coordinator, I had annually recruited current students to assist at Freshman Orientation with planned activities, such as “The Communication Juggle”, “The Jet Propulsion Experiment”, and ice breakers. I chose the activities, taught them to the volunteers, and then directed them

during the orientation with the assistance of the volunteers. Following the games in the morning was a picnic or pizza lunch, a campus tour, and registration for fall classes in the afternoon. The student volunteers who assisted were always eager, and were happy to share their own unique experiences of their first year on campus, their secrets of time management, their knowledge of the most “awesome” professors for the honors and general education courses, and their advice on which student organizations to join. The day ended with an evaluation, which was generally positive, but on debriefing with the volunteers, there remained the feeling that more could have been done to help the incoming freshmen develop a sense of belonging and the idea that their participation and service were desired.

(continued on page 9)

30 Years of Peace Ceremonies in Chicago by Jennifer Kim, The Peace School

The City of Chicago has made a name for itself as a global pioneer in urban peacebuilding. How so, you ask? For thirty years and counting, Chicago has officially celebrated Peace Day. First proclaimed by Chicago's Mayor on September 7, 1978, Peace Day was born from the vision of MyungSu Y.S. Kim (1927-1999) founder of The Peace School. It began with an idea: to set aside one day each year for people of all backgrounds, faiths, cultures and ages to join in focusing their wishes, thoughts or prayers toward peace for the entire planet. Four years after Peace Day in Chicago was established, the United Nations designated September 21 the International Day of Peace and Chicago began celebrating Peace Days from September 7 - 21. Themes include Make a Minute for Peace Every Day and Let's Make Every Day Peace Day.

Join us at noon in Daley Center Plaza on Friday September 18, 2009! Chicago's Peace Day Celebration is a free, public event and always includes One Minute of Silence for World Peace, cultural performances of music and dance to celebrate the diversity of our city and world, and brief remarks by some of Chicago's prominent peacebuilders. The celebration features the Call to Peace and World Peace Flag Ceremony. Flags of world form a colorful procession, world music plays, and as each country is named one by one, its flag is respectfully presented on stage. Everyone joins in sending heartfelt wishes, thoughts or prayers for peace to each country equally by saying together, "Peace in [each nation, from Afghanistan to Zimbabwe]!" Flags are carried by members of the Chicago Consular Corps, representatives of ethnic and cultural institutions, students and volunteers.

The Call to Peace is an inspiring and deeply touching experience. Many are moved to tears. Others open their minds to the world and marvel at the number of countries in existence. "This is so important to the world that I wanted to be there myself, and to carry my country's flag personally," said the Honorable Lesly Conde, Haiti's Consul General in Chicago. "We don't realize how many people in other countries are praying for peace like we are," remarked a Chicagoan who lent her voice to the Call to Peace.

Last year the Chicago Build the Peace Committee (CBTPC) was formed to expand Peace Day activities in honor of the event's 30th anniversary. The Committee meets monthly at The Peace School and is working to make the 2009 celebration Chicago's most successful Peace Day yet. In addition to the September 18th Celebration in Daley Plaza, the CBTPC is working with Chicago Public Schools in commemorating Peace Day through a variety of peacebuilding activities. The Music for Peace Festival is also in the works. The long term goal of the CBTPC is to mainstream a Culture of Peace in the City of Chicago, thereby creating a Model City of Peace.

Mayor Richard M. Daley is Honorary Chairperson of the Chicago Build the Peace Committee, and Honorary Co-Chairs include After School Matters Founder Maggie Daley, Chicago Public Schools CEO Ron Huberman, Chicago Commission on Human Relations Chairman Dana Starks, Chicago 2016 President Lori

Healey, Consular Corps of Chicago Dean Patricia Maza-Pittsford, and many others.

The Peace School is a non-profit, educational organization located in Chicago's Lakeview community since 1972. The School is independent and has no political or religious affiliations. Our mission is to help people of all ages practice peace in everyday life and to build world peace, one person at a time. We believe that every individual has the ability and the responsibility to contribute to a more peaceful world, and that individual peace and world peace are interdependent. The Peace School teaches a unique blend of meditation, exercise and peace breathing which help children, teens, adults, seniors and nursing home residents release stress and live more peacefully. We offer ongoing programs at our Lakeview center and can conduct workshops at schools, businesses, clubs and organizations. Call 773.248.7959 for more details.

Volunteers are needed! To volunteer for Peace Day or learn more or join the Chicago Build the Peace Committee visit www.buildthepeace.org or write to info@buildthepeace.org.

Celebrate the International Day of Peace in your school! On September 21, plan a peacebuilding activity with your students such as art projects, poetry, quotes of peacemakers, or any activity of your choice. Find ideas at www.buildthepeace.org.

Learn to bring peace into your daily life! Check out classes at The Peace School and at suburban park districts - visit www.peaceschool.org or write to info@peaceschool.org.

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3121 North Lincoln Avenue, Chicago IL 60657-3111
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Happiness is like a butterfly which, when pursued, is always beyond our grasp, but, if you will sit down quietly, may alight upon you.

— Nathaniel Hawthorne

The 2009 TEAM Conference — My First Experience by Mike Spiller, Games of the World

Let me take a moment to introduce myself to you the readers. My name is Mike Spiller and I'm the creator and owner of Games of the World in Houston, Texas. For the last 30 years, it has been my desire and my task to travel the globe documenting social-recreational games, activities and life-styles of the various cultural groups that I have had the privilege to work and live with. This journey has taken me to more than forty countries. I have worked in tiny Alaskan villages in sub-zero cold to even smaller, remote villages in the Namaqualand of South Africa. I taught in the Favelas of Rio and shared my experiences with the schools built on the dumps in Belize. It is a wonderful calling and I have been blessed to have met so many delightful people around the world.

During my visits, I observe, play, and teach multicultural games that I have learned during my travels. Many of the action-packed, fun-filled activities are taught to me by the children in these different lands. What I have found during these play sessions is that people are at peace and they are enjoying life to its fullest. People gather to sing and dance or to just play the traditional social games of their culture.

Some of the areas of Africa and South America that I visited were in desperate situations as far as medical attention, food shortage, water shortage, power shortage and the quality of life was so different from what most of us know here in America. Life is stressful there, but one thing I do know for sure is that a person can't hang on to stress while playing a game. The game or activity will take them to another,

less desperate, more peaceful place in their mind. They need this escape to deal with daily life there.

This is something I strive for in my life. I'm always looking for a place where I feel at home and for a people that I feel a strong bond with. Globally, I find this everywhere I go.

When I heard about T.E.A.M. many years ago, I thought to myself, this sounds like a group of individuals and organizations dedicated to making a difference to the quality of life around the world. It took me several years to get to Chicago and the conference, but when I did make it there this past February, I found myself surrounded by an energy source I have seldom felt before. Acceptance and love was in the air, just like oxygen, it filled every room, hallway, gymnasium, office and each open space. The entire Northeastern University campus seemed to transform into a "Winter Garden of Peace." The training sessions were fantastic and the presenters were world class. The organization of the event was far superior to any I have been to in a long time and it felt as if I were at a family reunion - everyone was so friendly and helpful. It seemed everyone there was seeking what I was there for and that was a better understanding of myself and the world around us.

I went to TEAM as a presenter, but soon found myself the hungry student wanting the knowledge and spiritual wisdom of the people around me. While I was in one of the sessions, I had a vision. I have never had a vision before! My eyes were closed as I held a small stone. I was instructed to feel it, smell it, taste it, listen to it, but not look at it. This I did for a few moments in silence. After a short time, much to my surprise, a face of a Native Indian Elder appeared as if right in front of me. All I could see was his

face and it was a strong, weathered face. I felt this was someone that knew me. The vision said nothing to me, but I knew that I had made a connection to mother-earth and to my past ancestors.

This would not have happened if I had been back in Houston in 5 o'clock traffic or running to catch a tube on the underground of London. This conference gave me the opportunity to slow myself down and to re-connect with the reason we are here on earth. That reason being to be in harmony with everything around us. The reality that I was led to was that we as humans must realize that everything has a purpose and if we are to survive on this earth, we must seek peace and harmony with others. We are just one strand of wool in this beautifully woven blanket we call life, but without that strand the blanket would not be complete. So, I am reminded that I am important and I have a purpose. With a new-found peace in my heart, I will continue my journey learning and I will continue to serve others to the best of my abilities.

Thanks to the organizers of the T.E.A.M. conference for opening my eyes, my mind, and my heart to many new and wonderful opportunities. As a result of my time with T.E.A.M., I will focus on the world and my future travels differently. I'd like to invite you to do the same. Next year, come to Chicago, Northeastern University, and to this heart-warming, eye-opening conference if you need to slow-down, re-connect with life in a peaceful way, and enjoy the fellowship of other Wisdom Seekers.

Wa do (Cherokee for Thanks),
Mike (ma gi) Spiller
Owner / Games of the World
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(Bring a World Peace Event to Your Classroom on 09-09-09 from page 3)

The purpose of the 09-09-09 gatherings is to have an Open Space Format and allow circles of interest and dialogue to form naturally. It provides a platform for everyone to participate at his or her own level; a way to be heard. Our hope is that, once people post to the www.peacefires.net website, it will

become a catalyst for ongoing dialogue.

This event will occur at Northeastern Illinois University in Chicago, Illinois. The Peace Connection Committee - a volunteer group of faculty, staff, administrators, and interested community members - is planning a three-day gathering on campus. Everyone is invited to attend. There is no

cost or registration fee.

For full details on the three-day event at Northeastern go to:

www.neiupaceconnection.com
or
www.neiu.edu/~team

Next Stop—The North Pole ... “We Made It!”

By Dan Creely, Jr.

How would you feel if you completed something no one else in the world had accomplished? In 2007 Richard Weber, veteran of six successful North Pole ski expeditions, called it “the toughest trek on the planet”. On April 25, 2009, John Huston, 32, of Chicago and Tyler Fish, 35, of Ely, Minn., completed their 475-mile trek to the North Pole from Canada’s Ellesmere Island. They are believed to be the first Americans to ski to the North Pole, unsupported and self-powered.

“It was very dream-like to arrive at the North Pole after sleeping only three hours of the last 66 (hours),” Huston said by phone to Chicago Tribune reporter Lauren R. Harrison. The two veteran Arctic travelers braved fierce winds, subzero temperatures, and deteriorating sea conditions toward the end of the 54-day journey. The pair received no additional food, fuel, or support once the expedition started. Each lugging 300 pounds of food, fuel, and a sled, they hustled the last three days to catch the last flight out of the region, courtesy of a Russian polar logistics company.

Huston said he was motivated by thoughts of loved ones and family support, as well as a charity partner – Caring Bridge, a Minnesota-based organization for people facing serious medical problems – for which Huston and Fish are laboring to raise \$100,000. Huston said he and Fish plan to write a book about their experience and speak publicly.

“Our mission is to use ambitious wilderness expeditions as a captivating vehicle to inspire people to approach the challenges

of life with optimism, humility, and responsibility.” John has been featured on the History Channel, BBC, and on the front page of the Chicago Tribune. John speaks on a number of different topics/themes: polar exploration, history and geography, climate change, leadership, teamwork, mental and physical training, and following one’s dream. Rudi Hargesheimer described John’s keynote presentation at the Midwest Mountaineering’s Fall Expo: “An amazingly well-prepared revisit of polar exploration history and a remarkable look into the modern mindset that keeps explorers and environmental preservationists pushing the polar travel agenda as a means of educating the world about climate change.”

John provided an article for the Fall 2008 issue #31 of the Ripple Effect before they began this journey.

John’s Last Blog:

April 25th, Day 55 of the Victorinox North Pole '09 Expedition. Position: the North Pole. Miles to the North Pole: zero. At exactly 5:30pm Central Time, the Victorinox North Pole '09 Expedition reached its destination by stepping on the North Pole itself. The last four days have been an absolute blur for Tyler and I. We slept a total of 3 hours and pushed our bodies and minds to the limit, in order to overcome seemingly insurmountable odds of sea ice drift and inclement weather. We are exhausted; we are so tired we don't know how tired we are. And we are enjoying our last meal in the tent together and having special dessert treats, a tiny bit of scotch and munching on a little bit of chocolate that is left over from lunch. We have a fantastic feeling of satisfaction and of freedom from our powerful routines that propelled us to the North Pole and through some very challenging circumstances. And that freedom comes in

the form of that now we can relax and not just move onto the next step all the time. It is a really good feeling to step outside of the structure of the expedition.

We'll have some more reflection in the coming days. Tyler and I will be picked up by a Russian helicopter tomorrow at 10am Norwegian time. Then we fly to the archipelago of Svalbard, 78 degrees North or so, that is owned by Norway. Then we fly to Oslo the next day where our friends, families and loved ones are waiting for us to celebrate.

We'd like to thank our major sponsors, Victorinox Swiss Army, Bergans of Norway, our official performance outerwear sponsor, and Delorme, maker of the PN40 GPS which located the North Pole for us today at 5:30pm and CaringBridge, our charity partner. We would like to remind everybody to go to www.CaringBridge.org or to click on the CaringBridge link at our website www.northpole09.com to support our effort to raise funds and awareness for CaringBridge, an absolutely wonderful charity that can benefit anyone in life. They provide free personalized website for individuals and families in health crisis, treatment or recovery.

Whoa, that was a hard trip. We're going to bed and are very, very, very happy to do so.

John is an inspiring speaker for adults and students alike. To schedule a presentation or to request more information, contact John Huston at john@forwardexpedition-ins.com, or 218-349-2066.

Excerpts from: Skier's Next Stop: The Cell by Lauren R. Harrison, Chicago Tribune, April, 28, 2009, Section 1, page 3.

**No tree becomes rooted and sturdy unless many a wind assails it.
For by its very tossing it tightens its grip and plants its roots more
securely; the fragile trees are those that have grown in a sunny valley.**

— Seneca the Younger

Tiger Talks: The Formation of a Nucleus by Sandra Keim-Merrill and Scott Klene

In August 2008, as a part of the preparation for the upcoming school year two elementary school principals, Scott Klene and Sandra Merrill, collaboratively reflected upon the needs of their staff and their students to determine their first staff-member institute day. Yearly, the institute day is utilized for inspiration and dissemination of practical information at the start of the school year. Ultimately, these two building principals determined they would introduce their staff to well-known and highly recommended, Dan Creely Jr.

In education we are faced with the responsibility of character education and character building within our schools. As educators we must promote such positive character in our students and in our own manners. Also in education, educators are transitioning from working independently to working in collaborative teams. In our district, for example, staff members participate in learning teams where educators work in teams to collaboratively score students' work, evaluate the students' needs, and create lessons and activities based on such needs and interests. Creating a positive culture is essential to ensure a positive learning and work environment for staff and students alike. Making such a cultural shift in our learning environment was, and continues to be, a goal for each of the building principals.

Dan Creely's enthusiasm is contagious! During our institute day Dan had our staff participate in team building activities. Inspired by his words and his activities, school-wide initiatives were fully imple-

mented by the time students arrived, promoting a positive learning and working environment. Back-to-School activities were conducted within the classrooms and facilitated by classroom teachers. Getting to know each other, including name games, were used as ice-breakers. In addition, a school-wide kick-off assembly, put on by the administrative team, was held for the students the first week of school to promote such an environment. Students were exposed to the slogans which described the expectations for creating a positive learning environment. Posters that represent these expectations now grace our walls as a continual reminder to students and staff alike. In addition, the teachers give their students high fives to symbolize their commitment having a positive culture and class discussions (known as "Tiger Talks") are held when, for example, the environment is thrown a curve ball.

As a follow-up to our fall school-wide initiative, school leaders attended the 2009 T.E.A.M. Conference. Since leadership has been cultivated within our schools, having school leaders participate in the conference has enabled us to take activities and information learned and facilitate such activities within our school. In addition, the administration was inspired to conduct team building activities with the staff and students on an on-going basis. Inexpensive materials such as Play-dough, puzzles, and dominoes are used during such activities. As a part of each activity, staff and students are encouraged to participate in reflective and metaphoric discussions which are held to promote a sense of a team within the classroom. Students also learn more about their role as a team member and gain respect for themselves and others. As a form of reflection, students journal their thoughts about their group and the impact they have on the class and school environ-

ment. Such writing prompts include:

Did anyone emerge as a leader in your group?

What role did you play in the group?

How were decisions made in this activity?

What did you like about how the group made decisions? Explain.

Did you see any positive changes in the group or did anybody do something that stands out in your mind?

Did you learn anything new about yourself?

Did you learn anything new about someone else?

Is it easy for you to work with others?

It is our hopes that such activities will help to further create a collaborative culture within our schools. End of the year mementos will serve as a culminating event for our students. Students will walk away with both their memories and a symbol of the team building experience. Mementos can include a collage of pictures taken during each of the experiences, a scrapbook, or a reflection journal.

As the school year winds down the two building principal collaboratively reflect on the past school year. Informal observations of how our transformed environment has impacted our students and staff include: a decrease in student bullying, a decrease in excluding others, and an increase in camaraderie. As we prepare for the upcoming school year, we continue to reflect on how we, as leaders, can further facilitate such a positive environment. Team building activities will continue to be a part of our

The Power of Adventure Challenge Education (A.C.E.) by John Huffaker

I came to Northeastern Illinois University as an experienced teacher hoping to expand my credentials. I taught U.S. History and World Geography and coached

Football, Basketball and Track for three years in Texas. I had the honor of working with a State Championship Football team. I also prepared 100% of my students to pass the state exam in History my final year. Although I always loved Social Studies, and certainly loved teaching it, I often considered that my coaching gave me the greatest opportunity to teach the life skills

that young adults need to succeed in life. The ideals of teamwork, responsibility, and hard work often seemed to fit better into a football practice than they did into a History lesson. This understanding led me to my decision to pursue a Physical Education endorsement, hoping that I could teach these life skills full-time.

(continued on page 10)

Teambuilding in Mexico by Dave Finkel

The Youth Technology Corps has been taking groups of Chicago area high school students and teachers to Durango, Mexico for ten years. These groups of roughly twenty students and ten adults generally come from six or more high schools and other YTC Chicago area partners. These trips last one week and students and staff have projects according to their YTC program from computer technology to documentary filmmaking to science projects that have ranged from safe water to international bird population study.

YTC has established a partnership with the schools and officials of Durango. Our group lives and works with their Durango hosts. This means that inner city youth who only speak English spend five nights with a Durango high school student and their family where they speak no English only Spanish.

The potential for problems is huge. Consider twenty teens in a group who have not worked with each other and then put them in another country living at homes with a language barrier and spread across a large town. Some would even say this is foolhardy. Each year we learn of different ways teens have found to break the rules. One student in our second year left the group to travel back to a city to be with her boyfriend while another was injured driving an all terrain vehicle. Thank goodness we have a medical officer on every trip.

Starting in 2003, Roman Emano, a T.E.A.M. committee member for 15 years and an experienced teambuilding leader as well as a science teacher at Morton East high school began to use teambuilding techniques with the group prior to leaving. At first, teambuilding exercises were held on an afternoon. Each year, as the results of teambuilding became more evident, the length of the pre-trip teambuilding was extended until for the past few years teambuilding has evolved into a weekend, two-night process.

As founder and president of YTC, I can only say that the results of our teambuilding have been extraordinary. At the teambuilding weekend, Roman takes the entire group through a series of activities starting with "ice breakers" like name games and activity by activity takes the group through a series of trust activities each one harder than the last. After each activity a discussion follows explaining the relevance to being a team and relevance to the coming trip to Durango. Upon arrival in Durango the group has a two hour session setting out individual and group expectations. At the end of the trip on the last night, Roman holds a debriefing session where each member gets a chance to voice their experiences both good and bad and what they have learned from their experience.

The results of these efforts year over year are remarkable. Now, because of these efforts, each group transforms itself into a cohesive, connected group looking out for each other. Listening in at these final

sessions always brings tears to my eyes as I listen to young people express experiences that are changing their lives. These teambuilding sessions provide these youth with structures they are able to use to explain feelings they are only now being introduced to. In 2008, one of the students on the trip from Chicago's south side learned that her cousin had been shot and killed. The entire group of students rallied to her side for the remainder of the trip. Before she left for home she told us she was worried because she knew she would not get the same support when she arrived home.

I have worked with teens for more than forty years. The problems involving teen motivation and performance are well known. There is great difficulty in finding processes and activities that actually work. Teambuilding works. I have watched different groups of teens transform into a team looking out for one another and helping each other raise their performance. Teambuilding can be added to any activity where it's important for each member of a group to reach to a higher level.

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When others will go only a mile, I will go two.

When others look for excuses to quit, I look for reasons to continue.

When others stop to rest, I will continue unencumbered.

When others complain of life's obstacles,

I will rejoice in life's opportunities.

Thus, at the end of my journey,

when others look to see how far they've come,

I will look to see how far I must go.

— Unknown author

(Teambuilding Transformed our NEIU Honors Program continued from page 3)

At the same time, I began to research leadership styles, and found the Servant Leadership model a perfect “fit” with the ideas I had on enhancing the Freshman Orientation with service leadership training. The idea of a Freshman Leadership Institute, to replace the orientation, began to take shape.

For some time, I had been interested in the use of service learning as a tool to encourage increased student interest, engagement, and retention. A recent study I had conducted with over one hundred honors programs nationally, confirmed that almost none of the programs designed coursework to include service learning experiences, though all programs expected honors students to provide service to the campus.

Many survey respondents noted that the campus clubs and student organizations promoted service learning, and that all students were expected to provide service hours; yet few identified any training or other means by which students would consider service as a life-long value. All of the research I could find on the subject convinced me that service learning opportunities would result in greater student involvement, better retention, and a greater likelihood of a more positive college experience reported by current students and alumni.

On a campus level, they organized a committee to promote and develop a two day Creativity Conference featuring Phil Cousineau, a biographer of Joseph Campbell, who produced *Hero of a Thousand Faces*, the PBS series featuring the mythopoet. Within the local community, another group provided regular weekly mentor/tutors to Northtown Academy, a charter high school just north of NEIU. We had participated in the WTTW pledge drive with a handful of students in the previous March; now, with the increased interest

in such activities, twenty students, almost four times as many as before, participated in the December pledge drive, collecting over \$20,000.00 in pledges.

On a national scope, the environmental committee began work on a joint project to increase bicycle usage and low-cost bicycle availability on campus, as well as awareness of the importance of fossil fuel emissions’ impact on the environment. Finally, globally, we began a dialogue with an education ambassador from Kurdistan to provide mentoring to a group of Kurdish school children online.

I found a number of examples of leadership throughout the ages, including the parable of the cave, Shakespeare’s King Henry speech at Agincourt rousing knights under his command, Ghandi’s and Martin Luther King’s writings on courage in the face of danger, and Simon Bolivar’s and others’ noted addresses to audiences stirring commitment, dedication, and courage. I sent a list of these citations with URLs to the freshmen early in June, and encouraged them to read and be prepared to discuss the ideas when they came to the Leadership Institute. I provided the excerpts to student volunteers, whose job it would be to lead a discussion on leadership styles with the incoming freshmen.

What happened as a result of the changes from Honors Freshman Orientation to Honors Freshman Leadership Institute was as dramatic a transformation as one might only have imagined possible! To begin with, several students immediately undertook the redesign and reinstitution of the University Honors Society, revising and renewing the charter for the group. They met weekly, chose temporary officers, held elections, and began to focus on committees that would impact each of the spheres of influence that I had envisioned.

To a person, students identify the service leadership training and team building provided by Dan Creely as the single most

profoundly impacting activity in the Leadership Institute. They have individually, as well as collectively, expressed a sense of belonging in the program, and a commitment to providing service to one another, the university, their community, and the world as a result of their team activities. Each is involved, eager, and ready for the challenges that the second semester holds for them! While it is still too early to predict the lasting impact of the team building experience on the students, it appears that, to a person, each is eager to share their time and efforts by being volunteers for the next Honors Freshman Institute.

Each of the participants has, to date, attended several of the regular planned activities, and most have joined other clubs and organizations, or become involved with church, community, or civic organizations on and off campus. With the potential for having all of these students experience the team building activities once again, as leaders next time, I can only be optimistic about the level of service leadership that these students will continue to demonstrate well into their senior year, and beyond, as alumni!

As before, I planned for ice breaker games, but this time allowed the students to suggest games and experiences, and to take responsibility for running them. I also did something I had wanted to do for some time, but had been unable to do because of schedule conflicts. I prevailed upon Dan Creely to provide a team building experience. Under Dan’s guidance, student volunteers, as well as the incoming freshmen, spent a morning together learning about one another, their gifts and talents, and the expectations that the UHP had for their commitment to program, the university, their communities, the nation, and the world. The Honors Freshman Leadership Institute had clearly defined the scope of service expectation in all of those spheres of influence, and Dan’s team building instilled a sense of trust and belonging in each of the participants.

**Learn as though you would never be able to master it;
hold it as though you would be in fear of losing it.**

— Confucius, Chinese Philosopher

(Inspiration through Adventure continued from page 2)

“Wow... I didn’t think there would be a lot of people here. Just looking at that wall scares me a bit. I want to send a clear message that anyone can do it if they have the will power.”

Adventure education teacher Tom Monahan used a full body harness for Nick instead of one that attached to the hips. “As long as you do not want to quit we’ll get you to the top Nick.” Monahan and other teachers wanted to make it a senior experience, a culmination of his four years at Glenbrook South. The climb Tuesday was the second time Betsoleiman tried to

tackle an indoor wall. He made his first attempt in elementary school and ended up flipping over in his harness.

At the summit teachers, teachers had taped an envelope with his name. Three teachers, all veteran climbers, supported his weight and guided his movement throughout the ascent, Betsoleiman insisted on grabbing the envelope himself. He extended his right hand but failed twice to reach it. Determined he tried once more. Inside was a note that read: “Nick, congratulations. Keep reaching higher.”

About 15 minutes after he left the floor he was on his way down pouring sweat. “How do you guys like that?” he called to the crowd that roared in reply. Nick set-

tled back in his power chair and thanked his “climbing crew” members. One of them Andrew Underwood, is a junior in the adventure education class. “Nick has that aura about him. When he does these amazing feats you get crowds to see him do it because he proves a point.

As students filed out of the field house Betsoleiman followed scooting his power chair toward the corridor after the bell rang. He needed to edit a segment for his television production class. “I can’t believe it still, he called over his shoulder. “It’s always been a dream to do that.”

Excerpts from: Tara Malone, Chicago Tribune, Section 1, Wednesday, May 13, 2009, p. 8. Chicago

(The Power of Adventure Challenge Education continued from page 7)

I always felt that I was a good teacher, especially when it came to teaching my students my content area. I also felt that I was a good coach who was organized and taught my athletes the knowledge and skills they needed well. However, I also felt that my biggest struggle as a teacher was to find that delicate balance between having high standards and expectations for my students and athletes and not being too harsh with them. I often felt like I was preaching values to them. Was there a way to incorporate values into the curriculum in a more encompassing way?

My Teambuilding and Adventure Challenge Education (ACE) class was a powerful experience for me. By the end of the first day, I knew most of my peer’s first names in addition to a food that started with the same letter. Not long after, we were cramming ten people onto small wooden planks, jumping around holding each other’s feet, and rolling marbles down PVC pipes. Soon we were leading each other through blind obstacle courses and telling each other about very personal

struggles. I began to notice what a positive, comfortable atmosphere the class had. All the students in the class were supportive and involved. The pinnacle came when we began the climbing wall and high ropes courses. I remember very clearly how nervous I was going across the balance beams with my partner. With some positive reinforcement from Mr. Creely and our peers, we got through it. I remember how I felt that I had accomplished something great in spite of my inhibitions. It was a very empowering experience.

The methods I learned in ACE will allow me to pursue my goal of giving young adults the life skills they need to succeed on a full-time basis. Teamwork is an essential component of Adventure Challenge Education. Students must work together to accomplish certain tasks. Through the accomplishment of these tasks, students gain confidence in the ability of themselves and their peers to solve problems. As the Adventure Challenge curriculum progresses, students also learn to trust their peers by accomplishing goals that require them to depend on and trust in each other. Throughout the curriculum, students are required to step out of their comfort zone,

both in teambuilding activities and in challenge activities. By doing so, students are empowered and gain a greater confidence in their ability to handle adversity. Overall, I believe that the process used in ACE (Adventure Challenge Education) has the potential to motivate students to achieve their maximum potential, to encourage them to solve problems on their own and in teams, to help them develop a sense of respect and empathy towards others, and to persevere in the face of the challenges they will encounter in life.

My dream is to find a teaching job where I can pursue Adventure Challenge Education on a full-time basis. However, I know that no matter what subject I end up teaching, the methods I learned will be extremely beneficial to me. I can still use the Teambuilding activities I learned to create the positive, enthusiastic, independent and team-oriented classroom I desire whether I am teaching Physical Education, Health, Science, or Social Studies. I strongly recommend training in Adventure Challenge Education to any teacher hoping to improve their abilities.

**The best way to cheer yourself up
is to try to cheer somebody else up.**

— Mark Twain

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- Laurie Frank: A nationally recognized dynamic facilitator and winner of the 1997 Michael E. Stratton Practitioner's Award from the Association of Experiential Education (A.E.E.).
- Lem Joyner: This 81 year old youngster, in 2000, was awarded the Reverend Lauck Alumni Award from the University of Notre Dame. His seminars are life changing and restore spiritual well being.
- Ray Piagentini: 2007- 2008 Illinois School Counselor of the Year and Coordinator of the RIPPLE Project (Reaching Inside Providing Positive Leadership in Education) at Barrington High School, Barrington, Illinois. Ray's specialty is transforming student's lives through service.
- Mike Spiller: "Games of the World." Mike will be here the entire weekend sharing his amazing array of ancient games from around the world. Mike makes Indiana Jones look like a choir boy.

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If your life works, you influence your family. If your family works, your family influences the community. If your community works, your community influences the nation.

If your nation works, your nation influences the world. If your world works, the ripple effect spreads throughout the cosmos.

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