

Creighton Students Tell Fr. Kolvenbach, S.J.

"What Jesuit Education at Creighton has meant to me."

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**KELLY ORBIK**

Hometown: Papillion, NE (suburb of Omaha, just 30 mins away)

Justice and Society Major, Spanish Co-major

I am interested in post grad volunteer work, especially with a community and faith based format such as JVI. Growing up doing basic service was a very good foundation to seek out service opportunities here at Creighton. Encouraged by a project from a Spanish class to engage the Hispanic community of South Omaha, I began volunteering once a week tutoring adults in an English as a Second Language program, at Omaha South High School. I am in my third year working with this program. I am motivated by the same love and care for others that I have learned from the many who have cared for me.

My freshman year, I went on a spring break immersion ten minutes away from campus, to South Omaha. This was the first time I had been cared for by a family other than my own. The first night of the trip, in pairs, our group spent the night with families of the community. In a way that was very clear, even with the little Spanish I knew, my host family shared their time, stories, recipes, and lives with me.

Motivated by the love I had found in South Omaha, I went on an immersion through the Center for Service and Justice to El Salvador. This immersion stretched my understanding of what it meant to care for others when a campesino family cared for me one week the past two summers. The Sibirian family gave faces, memories and a connection to the outside world. No longer can I read the accounts of the war in El Salvador, or war in any other region, without imagining my sisters and Salvadoran parents fleeing, or seeing their family members murdered.

I was blessed to have the opportunity through ILAC (Institute for Latin American Concern) to serve in a rural clinic in the Dominican Republic this summer for seven weeks. Once again, I was embraced by a family and cared for as one of their own people. While we provided basic medical care, we were served by families from "the third world." While accompanying the poor in their struggle, it is very true that I received more hope, love, and support than I was able to give.

These experiences taught me how to care, to give fully of myself to others. I now have the opportunity to care for 56 community members on the 5th floor of McGloin as a resident advisor to the Cortina Community (a living-learning community based on Community, Service, Faith and Justice where students participate in reflection groups, community service, and a common academic course, named for Fr. Jon Cortina, S.J. It is within the context of this floor that I challenge my community members to make changes in their lives which affect my families here in Omaha, and throughout the

world. With this, I take the challenge to form agents of change - of myself and of the 56 self selected members of our community.

In the little more than 2 years I have been at Creighton, I have gained a more intricate understanding of my own Omaha community- by learning more about South Omaha. I have gained a global perspective while traveling abroad and I have gained a passion for justice because I have been loved by families who have experienced the inequalities of the world 1st hand.

## **SEAN BURKE**

Hello, my name is Sean Burke and I am a senior here at Creighton, majoring in Theology and History with ambitions to become a teacher. I am originally from Denver and am part of a long family Creighton tradition that extends back all the way to my Granddad who was here when the trolley still ran down the mall. Currently I am joined by my cousin Joe and my aunt Eileen on Theology faculty.

I decided to come to Creighton out of desire to form a healthy faith life in the atmosphere of an open-minded education system. As a product of a healthy and diverse public school, I did not want a faith life empty and void of serious intellectual thought.

What I have found at Creighton is something far beyond my expectations of a personal growth in faith and intellectual endeavors. I have truly found a community, a community at its best when it has invited me to discern not what job I want, but who I want to become and who I want to serve with the opportunities I have been afforded. A community that has constantly called me to challenge my conceptions of what community can be.

One of my first experiences with this call occurred when I took my first long college road trip in a junky old van with 6 upper classmen, headed to the School of America's protest and Ignatian family Teach-in in Columbus Georgia. The energy, the passion, the community, and the striking symbolism acted as a catalyst in my personal search for self meaning and identity. At the teach-in, which is a gathering of 3,000 representatives from all Jesuits colleges and Universities and various other people connected to the Jesuits, I saw the extension of the Creighton spirit fully alive in an international gathering. I also had, for the first time, an intensely passionate experience of Church. It was manifest both in the unforgettable liturgy to end the event and the strength of a community struggling to represent to poor and suffering in the world through advocating for social Justice.

That trip, and my subsequent experiences to Georgia, on other service trips, and to the Sienna Francis homeless shelter just down the street have motivated me to reach out beyond my own world and discover how I can become a person living intentionally for and with others. They have acted as catalysts in my development as a human

being, trying my best to integrate my intellectual knowledge with my spiritual awareness.

However, I could never have truly grown from those experiences if it weren't for the invitation from the community here at Creighton to help me process those experiences of solidarity with the poor. It is from this invitation from the community that I feel called to give back that same challenge Creighton has offered me. As an outgoing senior, I have been blessed and charged with a clear task: to motivate those around me outside of this community. To challenge the students I will eventually teach to face the same expectations Creighton has placed upon me. I hope to teach them not to expect education to be mere preparation for a job and a career. Instead, it should continually be begging another question, namely: what kind of person am I becoming and is this person willing to face the challenges offered by a world where so many are in need?

### **SARAH GREVING**

My name is Sarah Greving and I am from Saint Paul, MN. I am majoring in Philosophy with a co-major in Justice and Peace Studies.

I am continually grateful to have had the opportunity to be a part of the Creighton community, an institution that met me where I was as a freshman and guided me, step by step, toward a desire to live more fully in our world.

As a freshman, I was both impressed, challenged and, at times overwhelmed with the new ideas and information my professors shared in their courses. When I wanted to volunteer my time, the Center for Service and Justice offered weekly opportunities of service within Omaha, such as at the Sienna Francis House.

As a sophomore, I wanted to further challenge the experiences of my freshman year. By participating in the Spring Break Service Trips, I traveled with other students to El Paso, TX, where we immersed ourselves in the community and began working on a Habitat for Humanity home. As a group we reflected on the work we were involved in and our trip began to surpass providing a service or fulfilling a need to wrestling with larger questions of justice and social responsibility.

When I was a junior my desire to lead was matched with the opportunity to be involved in the sophomore service and learning community, named for Fr. Jon Cortina. I learned more in this experience than anywhere else. It is here that the knowledge gained in the first two years were challenged. As a freshman and sophomore, values of community living, service to others, and contemplation on personal roles in working for justice were ideas I had a passing relationship with, ideas confined to classrooms, retreats and week long trips. With the Cortina community, however, I no longer only reflected on these principles, I also lived them. Everyday was a lesson in how to embody community living, in how to best serve others, in reflection and action.

Now as a senior, I am currently working with the Heartland Refugee Resettlement, an organization that resettles refugees from around the world. I realize where the past three years at Creighton have brought me. Beginning as a freshman, just getting my feet wet in new experiences, to working now in the city of Omaha, the Creighton community has instilled in me, as it has in so many of my classmates, a love for what is good and true, and compels me to see this made manifest in my community, which extends well beyond the Creighton campus, Omaha, and even El Paso. What I have been given at Creighton is a desire to be intimately involved in the circumstances of our world, in such a way that will fairly bear witness to the tremendous education I have received.

### **JASON BESTE**

My name is Jason Beste and I graduated from Creighton University in May of 2003 and am now back as a first year medical student at Creighton's School of Medicine. My decision to come back to Creighton was easy-I came back because of the Jesuit mission and philosophy that is so alive here at Creighton.

I tribute the ways of how I view the world, think, and pray to the Jesuit influences that exist at Creighton because they became the largest influences in my life during my four years of undergraduate studies. I received many gifts from the Creighton community in terms of personal development and spirituality. One gift that really enabled me to find God in all that I do was discernment. There were many people at Creighton who helped me in my daily discernment processes and through discernment I was opened up to new ideas and thoughts. My faith life changed from one of passive prayer to one that was full of action. Creighton gave me the tools to learn about social justice issues as well as finding God in everything, especially in the poor and discriminated. I began to truly understand the Jesuit notion of being "men and women for others." It was through discernment and direction that I learned to follow the Spirit wherever it was calling me to go-even if that meant to live counter-culturally or to challenge unjust systems. Creighton taught me to let go of my selfish desires and to instead open up to the desires that God has for me, no matter how difficult that road may be.

My early years at Creighton can be seen as a progression of a passive lifestyle to one of action. I started to volunteer consistently through Creighton's Center of Service and Justice and I soon realized I was yearning to learn more about social justice issues both on the local and international level. I wanted this knowledge and work to become a central part of my life-not just a weekly activity. For that moment on, the remaining days of my Creighton undergraduate years were filled with various service and learning projects, as well as retreats and other campus ministry events.

Academically, I began to see how my love for the sciences was linked to serving to the poor. I felt God calling me to be a physician not only to heal those who needed the most help-namely the under-privileged, but also to serve as an agent for change on

behalf of the poor. However, before I was to apply to medical school, I felt God calling me to do a year of post graduate volunteer work. After much discernment on where to volunteer, I left to volunteer on the Pine Ridge Indian Reservation at the Jesuit run Holy Rosary Mission. I felt that in order for myself to become the best physician I could be, I needed a year of living in a different culture where I would struggle and grow in ways that the classrooms cannot teach. As I stepped foot onto the reservation, I felt culture shock. The Lakota culture and way of life is very different than the mainstream United States culture. Learning how to be patient, to act respectfully while trying to gain people's trust, and living among a hundred plus years of structural violence are just the tip of the iceberg of the many struggles I encountered. My experiences at the reservation were challenging, frustrating, full of struggles, and more thought provoking and difficult than any class I ever took at Creighton. But the lessons I learned were priceless. I began to learn how to be respectful in another's culture and realized my own limitations and ignorances. I also saw God, Tankasila, work in ways that I have never previously experienced. Being open and learning about traditional Lakota spirituality allowed me to experience God in new ways.

At the conclusion of my year of volunteering, I felt God calling me back to Creighton. I picked Creighton's School of Medicine because I believe it is a testament to what a Jesuit medical school should be. There is a strong focus on service to others, especially to the under-privileged people who live in Omaha. What am I doing now to keep my actions of working for the under-privileged alive? I am on the board of Project C.U.R.E., which is student run organization of first year medical students whose purpose is to provide health education for the under-served and minority populations of Omaha and eastern Nebraska. My job is to coordinate the local weekly service sites for our class to participate in. Some of our sites include working with the influx of the Sudanese population through Project Welcome, working at the One World clinic, a free health clinic for those who do not have health insurance, boys and girls club of Omaha, Kids Cafe, Project SUDS, and Siena Francis House. This summer I plan on traveling to India to volunteer for 6 weeks in various places such as orphanages, nursing homes, and make shift clinics. As for my future, my dream is to use my gifts and talents to help bring health, justice, and dignity to those who live in Latin America, South America, Haiti, and Africa.

All of these thoughts, actions, and experiences can be traced back to the people at Creighton who helped me become the person I am today.

## **DHARMA ORIACH**

Buenos Dias.

Mi nombre es Dharma Oriach, soy de la Republica Dominicana, y estudio en Creighton, como beneficiaria de su programa de becas, la carrera de Fine Arts. Carrera con la que siempre había soñado y que en mi país no se ofrece en ninguna universidad.

La Universidad de Creighton me ha impresionado muy favorablemente desde mi primer contacto con ella porque en ella se hace énfasis tanto en la calidad académica de sus programas como en la parte formativa de los estudiantes. Aquí, el crecimiento del ser humano en su interior, su búsqueda espiritual, personal, y la búsqueda del bienestar colectivo, de la convivencia armoniosa, cuentan tanto como el progreso en la sólida formación académica del futuro profesional, cosa que pienso que es sumamente importante en la vida. Las oportunidades que se nos brindan a través de programas de convivencia, de adaptación y de contacto con la naturaleza; de retiros espirituales; de reuniones entre los habitantes de cada piso y de un mismo edificio; el contacto con los asesores en sus diferentes modalidades; y en mi caso el seguimiento de la Oficina de Estudiantes Internacionales; hacen sentir al estudiantado en general escuchado y tomado en cuenta en los diferentes aspectos de su desenvolvimiento.

También admiro lo que entiendo que es uno de los objetivos de los Sacerdotes Jesuitas en sus instituciones educativas: el desarrollo intelectual de alto nivel, logrando que los estudiantes creen conciencia de la importancia de la búsqueda de la excelencia a través del máximo desempeño personal, es decir, de que los estudiantes den el máximo; así como la amplitud de visión y actitud de apertura con relación al buen uso de los recursos, de la tecnología y del progreso en todas sus vertientes positivas.

Good Morning.....

My name is Dharma Oriach, I am from the Dominican Republic, and I am a sophomore here at Creighton, a beneficiary of a Creighton scholarship. I am working toward a Bachelor in Fine Arts, of which I have always dreamed of and that in my country is not offered at any university.

Creighton has impressed me from the start with its emphasis both on high intellectual and academic achievement as well as personal formation of students. Here tremendous attention is paid to the growth of the human person, their spiritual, personal search, as well as the search for the common good, of learning ways to live in harmony in the world. We are offered countless opportunities for orientation, community building, contact with nature and spiritual development. I think of the many floor meetings in our halls, retreats, contact faculty advisors and in my case the support of the Office of International Students. In all these circumstances I have felt listened to, respected and challenged to grow.

Lastly I want to say that I admire the Jesuit emphasis on the importance of striving for excellence in order to best serve in the world. We are challenged to develop ourselves fully, to stretch our vision, open our minds, and develop good stewardship of resources and technology for the sake of progress in all areas.

**David Black**

President, Creighton University Student Union

Good morning Father Schlegel, students, and most importantly, Fr. Kolvenbach. On behalf of the students here today and all students of Creighton University, I welcome you to our campus.

Father Kolvenbach, this morning you heard many students speak about the gifts they have received during their time at Creighton. All these gifts were made possible because of the strong Jesuit spirit and tradition at our school. When someone receives a gift, it is customary around the world for the recipient to express some form of gratitude. In the Midwest area of our country, this is especially true. I would like to close our session today with several points of gratitude spoken on behalf of the students at Creighton University.

First, thank you for supporting and fostering an educational philosophy that doesn't just teach students information, it teaches us to questions that information. It is very evident in the classrooms of our school that faculty challenge students to truly understand information. This is accomplished not in simply memorizing the material, but in questioning the reasoning behind it.

Secondly, thank you for pushing the Jesuit order around the world to be as contemporary as possible, while still rooted in a rich historical tradition. Students at Creighton understand that our institution is founded around a solid, timeless approach to education, but you will still find our school leading many other schools through the new millennium.

Finally, thank you for leading by example. The way you live your life provides a wonderful illustration of the Jesuit values. Students notice the humble, but powerful way that you serve as a man for and with others.

I'd like to thank the students for attending on this early morning. Father Schlegel, thank you for hosting this reception. Father Kolvenbach, I'd like to again welcome you to Creighton and thank you for everything you have done and continue to do. Please have an enjoyable stay in Omaha.