

# 28 students help instead of party

■ Spring break gives a group of students the chance to volunteer in the poor communities of Mexico

By Beata Mostafavi  
Oregon Daily Emerald

Sophomore Stacie Long watched some of her friends chat excitedly about their expensive spring break ventures and newly purchased clothes, and it hurt her to listen to some of their vacation story-swapping.

Long spent her own break in Mexico, but not to find cheap bargains or sip margaritas on the beach. Instead, she and other students volunteered their time to help one of the country's poor communities.

After spending time with orphans who did not have shoes or hot meals, who went to school where they sat on tarps instead of desks, and who had deformities in their backs from pesticides in the country's crops, Long's "broke" college life suddenly seemed luxurious and her consumer habits appeared excessive, she said.

Seven students from the Interservice Christian Fellowship, and 21 from the St. Thomas More Newman Center, shared Long's experience when they traveled to the city of Vicente Guerrero over break for separate mission services to the poverty-stricken community.

Some students took care of young, sick children and distributed food. Others dug ditches to bring electricity to an orphanage's surgery room and helped build part of the city's multi-purpose community center.

Members from both campus organizations said they couldn't think of a better way to spend their vacation time.

An education major who went to Mexico with ICF, Long came back from her trip with a new way to see her surroundings. In the football team's equipment room where she works, Long opened boxes of new shoes shipped to the players. She instantly thought back to the Mexican children who had to dig

through garbage cans to find food scraps.

After seeing how content the children were with how little they had, she said it was difficult to come back to a world where many people are driven by money and take their fortunes for granted.

She added that people need to travel to other places to put their lives into perspective.

"I don't blame anyone because they aren't aware," she said. "But everyone should go to a Third World country and see how other people live."

Shelley Ryan-Kelzenberg, coordinator of ICF's Mexico mission, said that like Long, most students come back from the trip with a new view of their own life.

"Students are prone to complain about things like how bad the food is in Carson [Hall]," she said. "They gain a new perception on what is an acceptable standard of living."

Amy Merriman, a sophomore history major who also traveled with the ICF group, said the trip brought more meaning to her religious faith.

It was as she held a baby girl who had been found in a trash bin, Merriman said, that she truly understood the Bible passage that says people can comfort themselves by comforting the poor.

"You think you're going there to serve people, but instead you're served," she said.

Justin Zuiker, a sophomore business major who went on the Newman Center mission, said his trip's purpose was to teach him more about himself — and how he can help resolve some of the extreme disparities in the world by living a more simple lifestyle.

"I went there because I was missing something in my life," he said. "The trip helped me realize that I take everything for granted ... I learned how little some people have and how much I have, and it made me want to solve some of the problem. I figure I should start with myself in the way I live and the things I do."

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## Calendar

Monday, April 9

• **Exhibition:** Visual design by Nancy Fields, painting and drawing by Nicky Kriara and a silk-screen exhibition organized by Tallmadge Doyle. 10 a.m.-4 p.m. LaVerne Krause Gallery, Lawrence Hall. Free. Through Friday. For information, call 346-2057. Reception from 7-9 p.m.

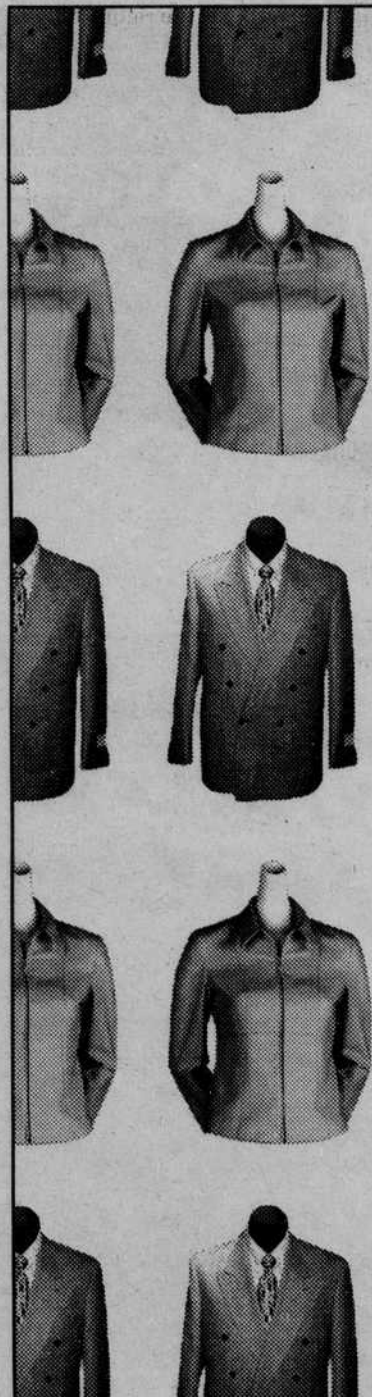
• **Environmental Studies Lecture:** George Roderick, a researcher from the University of California at Berkeley, will discuss spider populations and species invasion in Hawaii in his speech, "Insect Invasions of the Pacific Rim: Host Plants, Genetics and Origins," from 4-5 p.m. in Room 110, Willamette Hall. Free. For information, call 346-5003. Reception at 3:40 p.m. in the Paul Olum Atrium of Willamette Hall.

• **O'Fallon Lecture:** Law Professor Frank Michelman, Harvard University, delivers the Colin Ruagh Thomas O'Fallon Memorial Lecture in Law and American Culture, "Machiavelli in Robes? The Court in the Election." 7:30 p.m. Room 175, Knight Law Center. Free. For information, call 346-3934. Reception follows.

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