## EL OBSERVADOR

### Immersed in Mexico's Health Care

#### **OHSU** nursing students gain cultural skills with life experience

John Jessup, nursing instructor in the community health program at Oregon Health Sciences University, noticed his students were primarily Anglo, while 10 percent of the Oregon population is Hispanic. Meanwhile, scarcely one-half of 1 percent of Oregon's nurses personally reflect this Hispanic heritage, a critical problem of the nursing shortage. So Jessup determined to prepare students to work with Latino clients and patients more effectively.

Even if students were not Hispanic, they could certainly be culturally competent. In 1997 he began escorting ten OHSU undergraduate or four graduate nursing students at a time to La Paz, Baja California Sur, Mexico. There, the students are quickly immersed in a one-month total experience.

La Paz, which means 'The Peace,' is a Gulf Coast city of more than 200,000 people with sparkling beaches and warm blue skies. But OHSU students seldom see this side of the city. They immediately begin work within the Mexican medical system, acquire Spanish language skills, investigate the



Colleen Casey (center), a senior nursing student at Oregon Health Sciences University is pictured with her host family in Mexico.

national health structure and live with local families

Colleen Casey, a senior graduating this June, lived with a family of seven in a two-bedroom house of cinder block walls and a corrugated metal roof. She loved every minute. Chickens clucked throughout the house and roosters woke her every morning. Her host family lacked hot water, and Casey shared a room with two teenage girls.

"I adored my family and became

part of it," she said. "They're very Jessup said, explaining that stu-barrio clinics, a Red Cross urgency tight-knit. One of the daughters is a nursing student and the oldest son plays in a local band. Essentially, he's the family breadwinner. We all pitched in. If the gas tank for the stove needed changing, everyone got up early to go get it filled. When the mother sold tamales during a national holiday parade, we woke up at 5 a.m. to help her put them together."

survey the damage in Colima,

dents leave host families at 7 in the morning only to return at 8:30 or 9:00 p.m. each night. "Students learn what it's like to be a minority within the majority Mexican culture. They take public transportation, live in running water only a couple hours each day."

The students begin each morning with four or five hours in vari-

clinic or rural mobile clinics. They offer immunizations, dental help, or health education on preventive care, such as lactation or diabetes -all in Spanish. Followed by a 1 1/ 2-hour class on community and the barrio (ghetto), and often have cultural health issues with Jessup, students spend the last four hours of the day with a Spanish tutor.

If the schedule isn't daunting enough, the homework certainly is. "The month is so intense," ous clinical sites - hospital wards, Jessup requires 20 new vocabulary

words each day and a Spanish oral exam complete with clinical scenarios. Students also develop a friendship with a Mexican peer, conduct a complete assessment of both a local family and a health facility, write a hypothetical community health grant and, finally, assess, analyze and present the entire infrastructure of La Paz including health, public safety, economic, transportation and educational systems.

Casey muses about both the intensity and wonder of the experi-

"We were embraced as nurses," Casey said, explaining she and her colleagues wore white from head to toe each day, as do all Mexican nurses. "We became invested in the community in a way only those who live there can."

Now when she helps patients in Oregon, she has a completely new perspective.

"I try to meet them where they are. It's more than being able to speak Spanish or having a conversation about their health needs in their native tongue. It transcends that. I am beginning to understand where they come from, what their health system was like, and what their lives are," she said. "From now on, I'm open to expanding my horizons to considering health and illness completely out of the box. There's no. doubt about it, I'm just going to ? be a better nurse."

Jessup is awed by students who complete the immersion.



#### Relatives Mourn Mexico Quake Victims (AP) - Soldiers and sailors the hard-hit city of Tecoman, from his mother's flower-laden ripple like water beneath him.

teams search through the rubble in Colima, Mexico after a 7.8-

(AP photo)

killed 28 people and left about magnitude earthquake.

10,000 homeless. Many survivors were crowded Mexico City.

> People wandered, dazed and awed by the damage, past the

> > Madam Marion Peá

Nail & Foot Specialist

Avon Representative

Hove to do Feet!

W.W.J.D.

MADAM'S

Owner

fanned out to help residents and where an estimated 30 percent of coffin, hardly seeing residents homes were damaged or de-Mexico after a Jan. 21 earthquake stroyed.

Shopkeepers in Tecoman began sweeping up shattered glass from storefronts in what had bein shelters or beginning to clean come a ghostly downtown, as rubble from their shattered homes Mexican navy sailors worked to Maria Rodriguez Macia. in Colima state, 300 miles west of clear chunks of concrete that had tumbled into the street from nearby buildings.

In Colima, the state capital,

madamsalon@yahoo.com

**SUBURBAN** 

Ph (503) 288-1053

scurry past wearing dust masks.

"I did what I could to save her but it was useless," he said as friends and relatives embraced him and paid their respects at an

Rodriguez, 53, was at neighbor's home Tuesday night ising to help rebuild the houses roped-off streets and shops of Vicente Rodriguez sat several feet power and causing the earth to future quakes.

Like thousands of others, he ran outside, stumbling several blocks down the darkened streets to find both his mother and sister trapped beneath a mountain of earth, metal and stone that had outdoor memorial for 83-year-old been their humble adobe house.

President Vicente Fox toured devastated neighborhoods, promwhen the 7.8-magnitude earthquake from newer, stronger materials struck, shaking the walls, cutting that would withstand the force of

# BUSINESS directory



OFF.: (503) 286-1103 FAX: (503) 286-1146 STATE FARM

DOUBLE J TIRE CENTER

**NEW • USED • NEW CAPS** Taxes, Mounting & Balancing Included FULLY GUARANTEED

"NOW WITH 2 LOCATIONS"

6841 N.E. M.L.K. JR. BLVD. 4510 S.E. 52ND & HOLGATE

HOURS - MON. THRU FRI. 9 TO 6 - SAT. 9 TO 4

INSURANCE COMPANIES

HOME OFFICES:BLOOMINGTON. ILLINOIS

ERNEST J. HILL, JR. Agent

6527 NE MLK, Jr. Boulevard Suite A Portland, OR 97217

PORTLAND, OREGON 97211

(503) 283-9437



"MISSIONARY GOSPEL SINGER"

ROSE E. FRANKS

**Booking Information** 503-335-0701 Email: rosegospel@yahoo.com Title of New CD: One Sweet Day

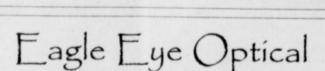
Northwest Angels For All Your Musical Needs Call DAN FRANKS or



1631 NE Alberta

P.O. Box 11962

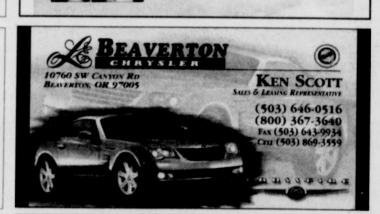
Portland, OR 97211



SALON

2808 NE MLK Jr Blvd, Suite C 503.335.7173

**PRESCRIPTION EYEWEAR LICENSED** & CERTIFIED OPTICIAN



MAACEUTTE FAILLA, D.C.

Chiropractic Clinic

425 N.W. 18th Avenue, Suite 3 Portland, OR 97209

Phone: (503) 228-6140

Mona's Ethnic Fabric & Fashion

If It's Ethnic it's Mona's wing , Quitting, Craft classes Alterations

Phone: 503-282-3068 Fax: 503-282-3096 Email: md@ethnicfabric.com www.ethnicfabric.com



Phone: (503) 256-3335

PORTLAND, OR 97206

(503) 771-1834



10010 NE Sandy Blvd. Portland, Oregon 97220

Open Mon. - Sat.: 8AM - 8PM Sunday: 10AM - 5PM



204 N Killingsworth (Vancouver St.) Portland, OR 97211 bandbtshirts@earthlink.net photo gifts while you wait!

CUSTOM PRINTED GARMENTS MOUSE PADS PUZZLES EMBROIDERY SILK SCREEN NUMBERS QUICK GIFTS

503-284-1810 phone 503-284-1910 fax



8238 N Denver Avenue, Portland, Or. 97217 Phone: (503) 289-5418