Chester Youth Visit Washington, D.C.

Configurer
By Cynthia Jetter '74, Director for Community Partnerships and Planning

On April 9, 2016 a group of 50 young people and adult chaperones from Chester City and Swarthmore College, Pennsylvania, traveled to Washington, D.C. for a tour of the White House. The purpose of this trip was to provide children and adults an opportunity for personal enrichment at an historic moment in American history. President Barack Obama campaigned in Chester in his first presidential run on October 28, 2008.

During this trip, Chester's young people and guests enjoyed a tour of the White House, viewed the Martin Luther King, Jr. memorial, and were thrilled to see the pandas at the Smithsonian National Zoological Park. This trip was sponsored by Chester Eastside Inc. and God's House of Glory and Haven of Peace, two of Chester's faith–based community organizations and community partners with Swarthmore College. These organizations participate in the Swarthmore College, Dare to Soar after school tutoring program. Students of Professor Mark Wallace's community–based learning class volunteer at the two sites. Logistical support was provided by the Lang Center for Civic and Social Responsibility at Swarthmore College.

Q&A about SwatDoulas with Hana Lehmann
Configurer
by Therese Ton ’19
Therese: SwatDoulas is a group of Swarthmore students educating themselves and others on childbirth practices like doualing, advocating for women’s childbirth and reproductive rights, and providing opportunities for Swarthmore students to be trained as doulas. How did you get involved with Swat Doulas and what got you initially interested in learning about childbirth practices?

Hana: I initially got involved my senior year of college when my friend Sonja Spoo (Lang Scholar) started the Swatdoula group. This group provided birth doula trainings through DONA International.

Therese: What was the most interesting thing you’ve learned from being a member of Swatdoulas and from practicing as a doula yourself?

Hana: This is so hard to answer! I think that one of the most interesting facets of the work is learning about how the culture and policy practices of labor and birth have developed so differently in the United States than in the rest of the world. We have a cesarean rate that is much higher than suggested by the World Health Organization. The impetus of this comes from many structural “mal-incentives.” These include, but aren’t limited to the nature of malpractice liability, the "business of being born," the OB/GYN curriculum, the cultural shift to seeing labor as a disease, and the use of practices that value convenience for the health providers as opposed to evidenced-based practices for patients. I am absolutely thankful for the option of a cesarean in this day and age – it’s a life saver! – but, the research shows that there are more “unnecessary cuts” made in the US than any other nation. I enjoy being a small part of pressing against these harmful trends and working towards a more safe and “gentle” option for parenting people.

The other thing that I’m constantly reminded of is that women are POWERFUL and can labor with unimaginable strength and stamina. I’m blessed to be a part of this work and have shared in their stories.

Therese: After graduating, did you use your skills and knowledge for doula-ing and how?

Hana: I worked for a few years as a full-time birth and postpartum doula in the Greater Philadelphia Area. I used my skills to provide non-judgemental emotional, physical, and educational support to parenting people. I also teach childbirth education classes both freelance and at Lifecycle Womancare (formerly the Birth Center in Bryn Mawr). Additionally, I teach a group prenatal workshop on mental and emotional preparedness for labor and birth at Belly Pilates in Bryn Mawr. I still take a birth or two each month even though I now work full-time at the Lang Center. I love the work! The skill of coming alongside someone
and supporting them through something unimaginably difficult and painful has been a skill that has come in handy in other areas of my life.

For more information on SwatDoulas, contact Hana.

Discovering Abilities
by Josie Hung ’19

Temple Grandin once said “The world needs all kinds of minds.” From March 21 – 26, Swarthmore organization Global Neighbors hosted Discovering Abilities Week, which is designed to raise awareness and celebrate the uniqueness of people with special needs.

Global Neighbors is a Swarthmore College student group dedicated to removing the negative stigma surrounding the word “disabilities,” advocating for an outlook that recognizes the specialties each individual brings despite different needs. From speakers to a movie screening to an arts show, Global Neighbors president Chris Chan (’17), program coordinators Alice Liu (’18) and Josie Hung (’19), CADES coordinator Julius Miller (’19), and public relations coordinator David Wible (’18) worked together to create a week of events embodying their mission statement.

First, Global Neighbors invited Esther Bubb-Mckinnie, the Assistant Director of Elwyn Seedlings program in the Elwyn Institute, a school at the forefront of developing unique, innovative services for people with disabilities, to give a talk, “Equity and Excellence in Special Education,” on March 21. Esther spoke about the power of a community promoting resiliency in its members. She provided different stories of success about the people she worked with, such as how she trained one student with echolalia to respond with
comprehensive sentences. Advocating for maximizing and equalizing access to choices, she articulated the importance of embracing differences and diversity.

Then Global Neighbours invited Symme Trachtenburg, the director of Children’s Hospital of Pennsylvania’s (CHOP) department of Community Education and program director of the Leadership Education in Neurodevelopmental Disabilities (LEND) Program, to give a lecture, “Inclusion of Youth with [Dis]abilities” on March 22. Symme described how her internship program, which is designed for teens and young adults with special needs, provides an opportunity for participants to integrate into the workplace. By adopting the unique approach of including the voices of the target community in the creation of the program, the program finds what each individual specializes in -- oftentimes a task that could not be done by anyone else.

On Friday evening, Global Neighbors screened the movie “I am Sam”, a gripping story about the love between an autistic father and his daughter. Finally from March 30–April 1, Global Neighbors held an art show in Shane Lounge to showcase the work of Paul, the art teacher at Children and Adult Disability Education Services (CADES), and his students. CADES is a center in the Ville that helps people with intellectual and physical (dis)abilities. Once a week, Global Neighbors members go to volunteer at CADES, participating in art activities and sports.

After a successful Discovering Abilities Week, Global Neighbors hopes to continue the dialogue surrounding people with special needs, proving that the world truly does need each kind of mind. For more information or to get involved, contact Josie Hung ’19 (jhung1@swarthmore.edu).