I am a first generation college graduate and the first among my father and mother’s siblings to attend and graduate from college. My father was my inspiration. He did not inspire me intentionally by telling me to go to college. He, in fact, told me that I should get married, raise a family, and have a child just like me (I was headstrong and wanted my own way). My father’s actions, however, were what inspired me. At a young age, my father quit school to work on the family farm and then joined the military to send money home to help with the family finances. While he was in the Navy, my father finished high school and obtained his GED. He served during World War II and then was honorably discharged following a ship explosion in which he was injured.

My father often told me he wished he had been able to attend and graduate from high school and then go on to school, but times were different. He married my mother before going into the Navy and had a family to support when he left the Navy. Thus, he never had the chance for additional formal education, but always seemed to “yearn to learn.” My father was the only person I ever saw reading the encyclopedia and enjoying and commenting about what he read. He said that there was so much we could learn from reading. Reading became a favorite pastime for many in my family of 11 siblings.

Although only having a GED, my father was a whiz at math. He said he had thought about studying to be a math teacher, but that he had a family to support instead. He helped me through my many math courses in high school. It was because of his help, desire, and his “yearn to learn” that I wanted to attend college and become a math teacher.

While a senior in high school, I had planned my future to attend St. Cloud State University to become that aspired math teacher. Although being a math teacher was my initial intent, this was not my ultimate destiny. After obtaining a position as a department aid at St. Cloud Hospital in the operating room, I changed career paths, attended St. Cloud State University for one year, and then transferred to CSB to obtain my degree in nursing. I am proud to tell you I am a Benny!

I graduated from CSB with the first graduating class majoring in nursing. I initially worked as a surgical and operating room nurse and then started graduate study when I was approached to consider a teaching position. My love of learning, lead me to attain two master degrees and a doctoral degree. For the past 21 years, I have continued to work as a professional nurse during summer breaks. I love both worlds—being a faculty member and being a nurse! I, also, still enjoy math and use it as a teacher, nurse, researcher, and even when doing my own taxes!

My father has been dead a long time, dying at the age of 50. But he knew the importance of learning. I am forever thankful of the gift of an education that he and my mother gave to me.

Thus, my message to you is this, be sure to thank those who have inspired you and made your education a reality. Seek out your faculty, ask questions, use your resources, build friendships, get involved, take advantage of study abroad experiences, and make the most of your college experience. Make your parents and those who have inspired you proud! I hope you grow in your love of learning as I have grown to love learning, practicing as a professional nurse, and teaching. My best wishes for your success and an awesome future!

Kathleen Ohman, Professor
Student Activities and Leadership Development and Orientation

Are you looking to branch out and try something new? Enhance your leadership potential? Join a club? Or just try something new? Student Activities and Leadership Development & Orientation works to help you find your niche on campus and be successful on campus. With four different corners in the SALD-O house, you can believe there will be something to meet your needs and help you find your place on campus.

The first corner of the SALD-O house is Orientation. As you entered campus, you likely took part in the Orientation program, with the theme of “Know Your Roots…Expand Your Perspective.” In an effort to help us all look at who we are and what we bring to campus, this event introduces students to campus. If you are looking to enhance your leadership potential in the future, 50 Bennies and 50 Johnnies are hired each year to be Orientation Leaders. Applications are generally due in the Fall Semester. Watch for your chance to participate in this program next year!

The second way to get involved with SALD-O is through Clubs and Organizations. Both of these areas encourage you to explore an interest, try something new, and meet new individuals to enhance your social circle. With over 90 clubs on our campuses, as well as the opportunity to charter additional clubs, everyone can find a way to be involved.

Programming is the third corner of the SALD-O house. Planning events every weekend evening, placing the WOWs in the various dining facilities on-campus, and making sure you have opportunities to socialize and take a break from studying is important while in college! We help to make sure your social calendar can stay full and the campus is vibrant!

Finally, leadership development is a vital corner of the SALD-O house. With leadership development happening through clubs and organizations, within your residence halls, on study abroad experiences, or through our Inspiring Leaders Certificate Program (ILCP), you have undoubtedly already experienced something leadership-related. Weekly, there are different events going on to expand your leadership potential and continue to help you be successful!

Offices are located on both campuses, but you can find us most frequently in Upper Mary Commons, CSB! Stop by and we can help you find your niche, start a new club, explore your leadership potential, or even just chat to talk about how campus life can be improved!
Reflections on ABE Trip to Guatemala

Going on the Guatemala ABE trip this spring break has been one of the most rewarding experiences. I was able to travel with a group of Bennies, get to know them, and bond with them because of what we shared and accomplished together. I have never been one to elaborate myself with fancy designer clothes, cars, and high-tech cell phones. I believed I led a fairly simply life until I arrived in San Lucas Toliman, Guatemala. This is a place where, by American standards, the people have very little. In some ways this true, but in many other ways this couldn't be more false.

Efficiency is not important there. It’s all about the process. You do what you can do each day, and whatever you don’t get done, you try to finish it tomorrow. There is not an over laying pressure to surpass records and stretch limits. You try your best each day, and that’s what counts.

They are driven to succeed only to help themselves, not to impress other people’s judgments and standards. They are developing in health care with new technology and services. Opportunities for women to interact outside of the home are expanding in the town’s women’s center. Advancements in their coffee bean production are making work less laborious and more profitable. They aren’t forgetting where they came from though. They lead strong spiritual lives, live simply visiting the market each day for food and conservation about current affairs, and they spend time building strong relationships with family and friends. Their advancements are keeping them humble.

My experience has given me many lessons that have changed my views and actions on life, but here are the two most memorable that I have thought about every day since I have been back:

TIME- Appreciate the time in life. Work hard, but don’t stress so much on what is set before me. Take a piece out of each of my days to relax and smell the sweet roses that everyone talks about.

RELATIONSHIPS- There’s never not enough time to be with the people I love. Stop putting off gatherings, reunions, and social chats for tomorrow. Tomorrow may never come. Appreciate the people I care about now when they are still able to be with me.

I have shared a happy story with you, but undoubtedly there are other people there struggling, not experiencing such a life. I only know all I can do now is pray for them and hope the people still working in San Lucas will continue to carry on Father Greg’s mission for years to come. And, maybe one day I will be able to return to the town of San Lucas and be a part of it again. By Kristi Klaverkamp, First year Nursing major

Survey on First Generation Newsletters

Since the Wal-Mart College Success grant for the CSB First Generation Program is ending this May, I am looking for your feedback on our monthly First Generation Newsletters. We have created a short survey for each of you to fill out and give your opinion. I really do need your feedback for the future of the First Generation Program!

Please take a few minutes and let us know what you liked and didn’t like about the monthly newsletters!

Click here:  
https://www1.csbsju.edu/forms/OKIPNV0V0YPBRZ9DABDSGJGEJ70I8U.aspx

If you have any questions, please contact me at mthomas@csbsju.edu!
Over spring break I had the opportunity to travel to Holden Village in Washington State with SJU campus ministry thanks to the funding provided by the First Generation Program. My trip to Holden was an opportunity I’m so glad I took and I haven’t stopped talking about it since I have been back. Holden Village is one of Washington’s best kept secrets because it’s the most remote place in the lower 48 and tucked away within the Cascade Mountains. For some background information, Holden Village was an active copper mining village from 1927 until 1957 when the price of copper fell after WWII. When the mine closed, the Lutheran Church bought the mine and it has operated as a year round retreat center since then.

To get to Holden, 12 students, our two fearless leaders Sister Trish and Ben DeMarais, and I traveled by train for 28 hours to Wenatchee, WA. From Wenatchee we took a bus to Chelan where we caught The Lady of Lake Ferry over the crystal clear waters reflecting the mountains to Lucerne, and then finally we took a bus up the switchbacks of mountain to Holden Village where we were greeted with smiles and laughter by the villagers.

We quickly adapted to village life and had many opportunities to reflect on God and our spiritual journeys in this magical place. During the week we were considered staff and were extra work hands to assist the villagers in whatever work needed to be done. I was able to help with grouting a tile floor, staining a wooden cross, working on shoveling trails, and helping with something they call Garbology. The community in Holden is very sustainable so they recycle all of their waste, which is what Garbology entails, and the village is run entirely on hydro-electric power.

During our free time we did a lot of hiking in the mountains, relaxing in the sauna, and we finished a 1,000 piece puzzle. We also had group reflection time and my favorite discussion was about how the mountains can be compared to our spiritual journey with God. When climbing a mountain, there are barriers and you can’t climb straight up, so just like with God you have to take different paths and pray to overcome those barriers. It was reflections like these that really made my trip worthwhile and I hope that other first generation students will consider taking the opportunity to take this trip through campus ministry next year.

By Hanna Newman, First year Nutrition major

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I don’t know if I’m the only person on campus feeling so drained out as the spring semester hit mid-term or if everyone is feeling it too. Being a first year student and a first generation student, I wasn’t prepared for this stage of college; the stage where I feel super overwhelmed with everything around me. Every direction I turned there was a mountain to climb. I wanted a break, a way out, an easier path that would still lead me to the same destination. I wanted some peace and solitude, some time with God, and some time away from everything and everyone.

The Holden Village trip was the perfect opportunity for me. It provided an outlet for me. I was going to a place completely isolated from the “world”. There would be no cell phone usage and no internet connection (esp. Facebook). We would learn about the Holden Village’s sustainable way of life. There was a spiritual aspect to the trip, too. Sister Trish made it clear from the very beginning of the trip. The cost of the trip was reasonable, too. With the financial assistance of First Generation, it was possible for three other girls and me to go on this retreat.

Throughout the trip we experienced many forms of transportation. From the thirty-hour Amtrak train ride, to the rented Kia cars, to the two-hour Lady of the Lake ferry ride, to the one-hour (yellow school) bus ride up the mountains, and finally to the Wenatchee city bus ride.

Of course I cannot forget to mention the magnificent, majestic, and glorious mountains. The mountains took my breath away. Those ancient, wise and gigantic mountains grounded me back to earth. It made me realize how small of a creature I am compared to the beautiful work of God. Our group had a long discussion about mountains on one of our group meeting one night. We talked about the symbolism of the mountains to life. Like the mountains, life is beautiful, breath-taking, majestic, glorious, magnificent, and gigantic. From afar, the mountains call out to our hearts; we just want to get there and be a part of that beauty. When you get there to the mountain you start to see beauty in other mountains and your heart races for those mountains instead. In life many of us do this. People are never content with what they have, not knowing that it was the exact same “mountain” they wanted from the very start. Another great symbolism of the mountain is climbing it. Climbing a mountain is hard; it takes a lot strength and perseverance. No one can climb a mountain straight up because it would just make it all the harder. There are many switchbacks while climbing up a mountain. The mountain top is the final destination and once you reach that top you will see the glory of life. In life there is no direct path that will lead us straight to the mountain top. We must be flexible; we should be open to changes and adjustments. The switch backs teach us that sometimes we must take two steps back in order to take one step forward. Climbing a mountain is a lot like living life.

This retreat enabled me to come back to the center of who I am. It definitely gave me a sense of inner-peace. It also brought me closer to God. It made me realize how there is no easy way out. Every direction I turn there will be a mountain and no one said it was ever going to be easy. There was no escape route; you just have to choose a mountain that you will call yours and climb it with all every drop of your life. I guess I’m still all the valley of these mountains deciding which mountain will become mine. It is overwhelming but I refuse to quit.

By Kia Lor, First year Communication major

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Reflections from Two Students on Holden Village
# Upcoming First Generation Events!

- **Workshop: Faculty Relationships**  
  Wednesday, April 7  
  4 pm to 5 pm  
  Gorecki 204A  
  Faculty Panel: Aric Putnam, Matt Lindstrom, Gary Prevost, and Suzanne Hequet  

- **Performing Arts: Step Afrika!**  
  Friday, April 16  
  7:30 pm  
  Tickets are sold out!

- **Workshop: Mentor Program Closing Celebration Dinner**  
  Thursday, April 22  
  5 pm to 7 pm  
  Gorecki 120  
  RSVP by April 13 to mthomas@csbsju.edu

- **Social: End of the Year Celebration**  
  Monday, April 26  
  4:30 pm to 6:30 pm  
  Mary Commons Patio  
  Rain Location: Mary Commons Lounge

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## Upcoming Campus Events and Activities

### April 2010

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