Dear AGBL alumni and friends,

Looking back on the exciting 2014-15 trips, I can’t believe how far we have come since our first trips in 2009. To date we have had 152 students from 6 colleges participating in 19 different experiences in 6 different countries across 2 continents. 15 faculty members from 7 departments have led the way. Our 20th trip will be this January! I wish I could measure the hope that the students have generated in the hearts of our partners, and I wish I could quantify the difference we have made in the lives and dreams of our students.

We are at a wonderful point where students find me, and I have very little need to search for team members. I occasionally visit Spanish classes when I need additional speakers and have begun to visit the Applied Investment Management (AIM) program to encourage that group of students to apply. I receive recommendations from faculty and students all year long.

Our partner organizations have come to know what they can expect from us. This has led to increasing responsibilities for some of the trips, and a long list of opportunities for our involvement. We are even cautiously considering ideas for new adventures. Our Bangladesh trip this year was a fun one for me – I got to meet Dr. Muhammad Yunus, one of my heroes. I was particularly touched when the students found me a copy of Dr. Yunus’s book for him to sign. (Thanks guys!)

Finally, I’m pleased to announce that we will be able to invite alumni and friends to join on our AGBL adventures beginning in 2016. As you read about our experiences from this year, think about how much we would benefit from new people and perspectives like your own. If you are interested, please let me know.

All the best,
Dr. Heather Kohls
heather.kohls@marquette.edu
Reflections on El Salvador
Nick Clerkin, Applied Mathematics and Economics ’16

I spent part of my 21st birthday bathing in the pila. If you had asked me a couple of months prior, I would have had no idea what a pila was. But there I was on January 5th, 2015, standing naked in my host family’s backyard, reaching into a ceramic wash basin drawing water with which to clean myself. The thought that I could be home partying with my friends and family was intensely on my mind, but not with any sense of longing. Rather, I felt that I was exactly where I was supposed to be. The cool water gave me a sense of clarity rarely encountered during nights in the States where endless distractions are the norm.

Armed with barely a kindergartener’s knowledge of Spanish and no experience doing any sort of business consulting, it was impossible for me to have any clear expectations of what the AGBL El Salvador trip would be like. Part of me felt I was going to be a tourist along for the ride, and this prospect worried me. Yet by being able to adapt to situations which were constantly changing, I was able to do meaningful work, form relationships with other students on the trip and our clients in San Pablo Tacachicos, and apply the skills I have learned both in studying economics and in everyday life, to help others. I hope to keep with me the spirit of generosity and humility that the people we worked with so nobly exhibited. I am immensely grateful to have had the experience of working and living with people in a developing country.

The most important part of the trip for me was the work we were able to do. Some of our impact was immediately visible, like rearranging the products at their storefront. But more important were the intangible changes you could see in the women as they adapted quickly to a new way to run a business. Our four days spent at the store were the greatest example of “being the difference” I have been a part of at Marquette. As a student, the experience of working at the store taught me the paramount importance of listening, and of collaboration between our group and the store owners. Without a solid commitment to dialogue and learning from each other, the project – and La Canista Basica – would not have worked.

A recurring theme in El Salvador for me was being completely out of my comfort zone. The trip affected my future by making me more confident in my choice to work in development. Even if that is not the path I follow, the values I reinforced and perspective I gained on the trip will stay with me through the rest of my life. And of course, I’ll never forget my 21st birthday spent in the backyard with the pila.

Looking Forward to 2016

In January 2016, AGBL will head back to India to work with new partner, Aravind, the largest eye care provider in the world. In addition, a return trip to Guatemala will include new partnerships. March 2016 will see AGBL return to El Salvador to work with established partner, El CIS.

Alumni are welcome to participate. Email heather.kohls@marquette.edu for more information.
Reflections on Bangladesh
Andrew Terenzio, Entrepreneurship and Global Ecology ’15

I can’t imagine many opportunities that will take me back to Dhaka. In fact, I’m having a hard time picturing any way I’d have the chance to recreate the experiences we had in Bangladesh. Having the chance to work with an organization like BRAC (Bangladesh Rural Advancement Committee, the largest NGO in the world) was amazing. I’ll also likely always remember meeting social entrepreneur and Nobel laureate Dr. Muhammad Yunus.

The most remarkable part of Bangladesh, however, was the time we spent in the slums of Dhaka. You have to take a gondola-like boat just to gain entrance into the slum, and during this trip you’re given a few minutes of space from the density, cars, and people. These few moments give you a chance to breathe away from the dust, but yet inhale different scents, and see the murky water a little closer. As the boat pulls up to time-worn stone steps covered in trash, you’re already in the thick of it. The sights you see on film do not do it justice. The sights, smells, and sounds frame a community that must be seen to be believed. In developing nations, slums contain what society cannot make part of the civilized world quite yet, but still the slums are incredible places in their own right. The commerce and economy, the constant flow of people, the sense of community: it is very different, and very special. It really changed my perspective on the things we think we need. It makes you question what you throw away, what you consider dirty or useless. The saying “one man’s trash is another man’s treasure” never seemed more appropriate.

Two trips over two years with the AGBL program have been beyond impactful. The experiences I have lived befit the education that Marquette prides itself on. I am immensely fortunate for this chance to serve the less fortunate. AGBL places Marquette students with those in need, combined with a chance to explore the world.
**Alumni Reflection**

**John Costello, Bus Ad ’79**

I am a 1979 graduate of Marquette University and adjunct instructor of management in the College of Business Administration. Recently, I assisted Professor Heather Kohls with the AGBL program in Dhaka, Bangladesh. During winter break, we travelled with ten Marquette undergraduate students for their work with the highly respected BRAC organization to assist with the new urban poverty initiative called “Targeting the Ultra Poor”.

Our shared learning experience is impossible to adequately describe in a few words. From the excitement in planning the work, to the journey and challenges of arrival and navigating the densely populated city, to the fascination of the busy port and endless narrow lanes, to the culture shock of visiting the city slums and meeting people where they live, go to school and work. Every day was unique, impactful and memorable. Most of all, we will never forget the people - their joy in simple things, their love of family and community, their pride in their individual and collective progress and their optimism for the future.

As an alumnus, I am proud of Marquette for their continuing investment in AGBL. Among many meaningful experiences offered during four years at university, AGBL enables students to integrate learning from their foundation courses and academic major field of study with practical aspects of societal needs far from home. The in-country team experience provides a powerful and humbling reminder of the many blessings we have to share and how much we have yet to learn or need to re-think. For many, the AGBL fieldwork provides meaningful examples of what it means to “Be the Difference”.

I want to thank Marquette, the economics department, Dr. Heather Kohls and my student colleagues for welcoming me as a member of the AGBL team.

**How You Can Help**

Currently student scholarships provide half of the money the students need to participate in an AGBL trip. We have no full scholarships available. With your help, we could expand those offerings and allow more students a chance at a one of a kind experience.

To donate please contact Charles Ries, University Advancement, charles.ries@marquette.edu, 414-288-7212 or send a check directly to AGBL at Marquette University, P. O. Box 1881, Zilber Hall, Suite 321, Milwaukee, WI 53201