

Diary of an ASB'er: It's the final countdown!

By Ustav Gandhi & Alex Miller
CAMPUS EDITOR & STAFF WRITER

So on day 3, our actual work began. The reason we're actually here, all the way in California, giving up our spring break to come out and make a difference through some real community service.

Excited as we all were, it really wasn't a surprise when almost everyone was up at 7 in the morning with incredible energy, lunches packed the night before and breakfasts made with superfast speed, all raring to go. The morning was cold (nowhere close to the Chicago norm, though) and the traffic jams gave us ample time to bond over our epic 'ASB playlists' – favorite songs contributed by every member of the team – and believe me, that was a diverse collection of some of the most incredible songs we had ever heard, and was in a way the perfect reflection of the diversity of people who had contributed them.

Once at the site, after a little orientation session with our really enterprising site leaders, we were split into groups and sent to two different work sites – and it seemed that today we were going to be helping with hauling lots and lots of wood and metal into piles that were to be recycled or discarded or set aside for storage – and there were pretty rough pieces of wood and metal that we were dealing with here.

An amusing skill that emerged amongst two of our team members was ... of wrapping the piles in plastic! Rani and Maria were complete naturals at this unexpectedly difficult job, and by lunch on the first day we knew that we were all definitely out of our comfort zone here.

Post-lunch was also spent at the same site, working in the store yard, and we were pretty exhausted by the time we met the other group and shared our experiences.

The other team, meanwhile, watched over half of the students pack up their bags and head off in the Chevy Suburbans. The group left behind at the warehouse split into two groups: construction and organization. We hauled buckets and boxes full of metal, tools, nails, screws, and various other objects into the shelving area, then split them into their respective groups.

The trailer we were emptying seemed to never end. The other half of the morning was also quite interesting. Cutting up wooden I-beams, we then attached them to become ceiling and floor joists in the new back rooms.

The next day was installation day: putting in drywall. Holding up drywall was quite an interesting task, especially as putting it up on the ceiling required holding it up with a very interesting tool--our heads!

We also went exploring Berkeley the next night. Getting frozen yogurt (again!) was one

of the highlights of the night, but our carpool also went into the records store, selecting a classy country CD.

Using Erin as our tool, we pretended the country CD was part of the ASB playlist. Chris, our driver, tried to be as nice and understanding as he could, but he couldn't understand why we all were cracking up until we got back to the church and he ejected the CD to discover its true identity.

The next two days were spent at a different site, working with some new friends we made who had come from Utah. They were really friendly and we all got along with them really well, especially Coach Neal. These two days were spent actually constructing houses in a site with seven of them getting ready, and our jobs included putting up Tyvek paper to render the walls waterproof (a pretty important job!) and fixing up the windows, among other things.

At the end of it all, we really thought we had made a significant contribution. In a way, it was quite hard to say goodbye to our friends from Utah. Those four days of our actual, real service were incredibly rewarding, incredibly fulfilling.

The most unforgettable moment of the trip, however, wasn't on the work site. And it was unfortunate that everyone wasn't there to experience it. Thursday was the day of the typi-

cally gorgeous California weather, and in the evening we were not going to go without taking advantage of that.

After work, the group split up, and there were a few who chose to take their cars all the way to Point Benita, a part of the largest urban national park in the United States, the Golden Gate National Recreation Area. A secret jewel of the Bay Area, Point Bonita is still an active lighthouse. The U.S. Coast Guard maintains the lighthouse and the National Park Service provides access to visitors. It was the most beautiful spot to witness the most beautiful sunset overlooking the Gate on one side and the endless Pacific Ocean on the other.

All credit to Coach Neal, who, having trained there many years back, had a razor-sharp memory and knew exactly where to navigate the car – even without a GPS. In many ways, that was the cherry on the cake for us – as we bade goodbye to our gracious hosts at the Church on Saturday, as we drove over the Bridge one last time on Thursday, as we ate our final prepared meal, as we saw Chicago on the distant horizon on the plane back – we just had one sight, that of the waves crashing on to the rocks at Point Benita, just one sound, that of the seagulls encircling our heads, and just one feeling, that of pure exhilaration, embedded in our senses. ASB '11 was in many ways, an unforgettable 'alternative' experience.

ISA shows pride on campus through new, fun events

By Ustav Gandhi
CAMPUS EDITOR

This past semester, the Indian Students Association (ISA) on campus has been very active in organizing a number of interesting events which have seen enthusiastic participation from both the Exec Board and the student population in general. Four members of the current exec board, Danny Varghese, Shwetha Gandhi, Sakshi Sahni and Urba Mandrekar are either graduating this semester or in December, so this was a year where the freshmen were trained to take on the responsibility from next year.

January 26, India's Republic Day Celebration: This was celebrated in the MTCC Auditorium on Thursday, April 27, with a short orientation of the current exec board members and then an excellent TED talk screening, "Why Nations pursue 'Soft' Power," where he talks about how India is fast becoming a superpower -- not just through trade and politics, but through "soft" power, and its ability to share its culture with the world through food, music, technology, and Bollywood.

February 17, Mehndi Night: For those of you who don't know, mehndi is also known as "henna." It's a beautiful temporary form of skin decoration. There was music, dancing; everything involved to make this a classic and beautiful evening.

March 20, Holi: IIT celebrated the Indian festival of colors at the Quad and the Delts House. Holi - the festival of colors - is undoubtedly the most fun-filled and energetic of festivals. It's an occasion that brings in unadulterated joy and mirth, fun and play, music and dance, and, of course, lots of bright colors! Co-sponsors: Union Board and Delta Tau Delta.

March 31, ISA Cultural Night: There was Bollywood, there was the energy of South India, there was Bhangra, there was a fashion show, there were some beautiful multilingual singing performances – this show had it all. The biggest night of the year was the ISA Cultural Night, held on the 31st of March. ISA also donated all the proceeds to the Mission India Foundation, a US-based charity organization that focuses on child vaccination.

Students are already looking forward to an equally exciting line-up of events the upcoming year.

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