We are delighted to introduce you to the 2009-2010 Princeton in Asia fellows. This year, we selected 155 people (141 full-year fellows, 14 summer interns) from the most robust applicant pool to date. And those selected make us realize, even more than before, that if we alumni applied to PiA today, we would never get in. The candidates come to us from over 110 universities and colleges in North America and Europe and bring with them incredible talents, a desire to learn, and an unmatched commitment to service. This year’s formidable group encompasses a former Buddhist monk, an Italian chef, a student fluent in five languages, artists, cartographers, and a farm girl from Canada whose cover letter promises she can castrate a bull calf if necessary. Some candidates have traveled to six of seven continents while others have never left the comforts of home, but all are eager to have their worldview completely altered. This is the time of year we love the most – the opportunity to meet one of the most incredible groups of young, inspiring people around is one of the most rewarding aspects of working at PiA.

PiA 2008 teaching fellows in Nan, Thailand getting their last licks before handing over their posts to their eager successors. Karen Bailey, Helena Minchew, and Kelly Harper (from left to right).

PiA Grows while the Economy Slows

The number of applicants to PiA grew nearly 20% this year, due not only to word of mouth from current fellows and alumni but also to the slowdown in our economy. With fewer banking and consulting jobs available to recent graduates, young people are re-thinking their post-graduate options. Many are much more open to traversing the less-traveled paths and exploring opportunities that will help them grow beyond the tradition and comfort of the lives they have known. Our fellows have put much careful thought into their decisions – discovering their true motivations for wanting to do a year of service and understanding how their time with PiA will fit with their larger goals, both as professionals and as global citizens. We would like to share with you a few of their thoughts from application essays PiA received this year.

“As the bus pulled away and the other passengers scattered, the old woman I befriended told me to wait. Sheikh Suleiman, the religious leader of the village and my new boss, would come to collect me soon. Reminding me one more time that I was not to speak to men, she kissed me on the cheek and left. It was my first day in the Jordanian village that was to be my home for the next two years and standing alone in the deserted bus station, I wondered what I had gotten myself into. Two years later, I found myself standing in the same bus station but under very different circumstances. I was leaving the village. I left my village feeling like I could do anything. That feeling has yet to go away.”

Bess Nuland, Dili, Timor-Leste

“I hope with all of my heart that I am presented with an opportunity to work with (continued on page 2)
Meet the 2009-2010 PiA Fellows (continued)

young children next year. I think that the hardest part of living in any of these countries may also be what makes living in them incredible. I want to be exposed to different ways of life and people with different priorities, faiths, and daily lives. I would be lying if I said I didn’t have any fears. I am not entirely sure what it is that I’m looking for or if what I’m looking for can be described in words. What I do know is that I need to see the world. I need to see the good, the bad, the ugly, the weird and the beautiful."

*Samantha O’Hara, Yakage, Japan (elementary school teacher)*

“I have always been involved in volunteering and teaching underprivileged students in the United States, Jamaica and Belize and to give to the children the same opportunities for education that I was afforded. But until a year and a half ago I expected to graduate with an accounting degree. My original goal has shifted and instead I will shape the affairs of something far more valuable, the minds of individuals.”

*Larry Graham, China*

“I believe that experience is the most crucial construct of one’s identity and thought process. A person who has broader experiences thinks across a wider plain and develops an ability to address and solve social problems at a more natural and holistic level. On a personal level, I hope that my basic assumptions and values will be challenged and expanded through the experience. Although, I would like to think that I am a global and open-minded thinker, my experience in cultures truly different from my own is limited. For this reason, I am very excited at the possibility to immerse myself in traditions, foods and rituals different from my own.”

*Matt Kuzio, Ulaan Baatar, Mongolia*

Opening the Singapore Field Office

PiA will be opening a PiA field office in Singapore in July 2009. PiA Deputy Director Leslie Medema drew the lucky fortune and will be on the ground soon to establish the office infrastructure. The goals of the PiA field office are to:

1. Assist in health and safety emergencies in real time
2. Enhance PiA’s impact through support of current fellows, including on-site training and professional development
3. Expand PiA’s reach by taking advantage of new initiatives and placement opportunities quickly and comprehensively
4. Strengthen relationships in the region and gather regional alumni more often
5. Serve as host and guide to Singapore’s best Hawker Centers for all visiting guests. Please visit soon!

Let’s Face It

Times are tougher than rush hour in Tokyo…

Luckily, the Tiger Baron Foundation has pledged up to $50,000 to match any donations made to PiA before June 30, 2009.

Our goal: increased participation from all corners of the PiA network.

You can provide the spark we need during the economic slowdown – and help PiA make a powerful statement about the strength of our network, even in difficult times.

If you never thought your humble yuan, yen, or rupees would make much of an impact, this is your chance to help us take advantage of this remarkable opportunity to light our FIRE!

PiA summer intern alumna and current PiA fellow Lisa Kelley lights a lantern with a member of the Jishou community in Hunan Province, China.
To paraphrase one high-profile Princeton alumnus: there are known knowns – the things we know we know. There are also known unknowns; that is to say we know there are some things we do not know. But there are also unknown unknowns – the ones we didn’t know we didn’t know. Funny how those unknown unknowns can change everything.

My PiA journey began with what I knew I didn’t know: namely, anything about Asia. Senior year I found myself about to become a college graduate without even the faintest clue what was up with that “eastern” continent (I was a religion major and took my only Buddhism course senior spring), and like many of us claiming that our education was “in the service of all nations,” I found this deeply troubling. I put myself entirely into the very capable hands of PiA – I remember distinctly telling Anastasia, “Send me anywhere – I’ll literally do anything,” – a statement which, now that I know her better, verges on terrifying. I was FUN – didn’t Anastasia know I was fun? Why didn’t they send me somewhere fun?

But lest our alums from the Mount Rushmore State protest, I admit that I was immediately and unexpectedly won over by the Thai heartland. From the moment I touched down, my experience moved solidly into the realm of unknown unknowns – things I could have never anticipated. I fell in love with teaching, the absurdly hot weather, the freakish hospitality of the Land of Smiles, the unimaginably spicy cuisine (in a country of fiery food, Isaan wins the prize for most lip-numbing). I traveled to places I had no idea I was dying to see – temples in Angkor Wat, tiny Laos towns on the Mekong, the summit of Mt. Kinabalu at sunrise. I also couldn’t have known that when my hairdresser abruptly decided to chop off and donate my long hair right before I left for Thailand, she was setting me up for months of hilarious gender ambiguity – everything from Burmese villagers unabashedly asking whether I was a man or a woman, to students dubbing me the “handsomest” teacher in the department. Oddly, this didn’t bother me in the slightest; it was at once so bizarre and benevolent that I couldn’t help but be amused and flattered (hey, handsomest isn’t half bad – I’ll take it over boringest any day!).

At the end of my PiA year, I returned to New York and joined a financial services consulting firm (apparently I have a knack for putting myself in situations I know I know nothing about). But to enhance my connection with Asia and PiA, I volunteered to help plan last year’s Lunar New Year Benefit at the Rubin Museum in New York, and I was much more engaged and excited about the work I was doing for PiA than for my “actual” job. I had caught the PiA bug. Looking around the room at my first Annual Dinner after returning from the field, I realized that like the University, PiA’s alumni network is its most valuable unknown unknown. Like high school students applying to Princeton, new PiA fellows cannot imagine that hidden behind this incredible experience is a lifetime of connections to amazingly talented, engaging, hilarious people.

I’m extremely excited to come on board as Director of Alumni Relations, joining the most fun and inspiring coworkers I could’ve asked for. I’m hoping to find creative and meaningful ways to broaden our already strong network of alumni, family, and friends, both in the Princeton area and around the world. I’m splitting my time between the Princeton office and various wifi hotspots in New York City, so please let me know if you find yourself in either area and I would love to catch up, and I look forward to meeting many more of you in the coming months – to share stories, Singhas, and your ideas for the future of PiA.

And if you live in Brookings, get your guest room ready; if Khon Kaen taught me anything, it’s that I don’t even know how much I’ll love it there.

Megan McGowan, PiA Khon Kaen, Thailand ’06-’07, (new) Director of Alumni Relations & Thailand Program Director
**Asia Trip**

When the cat is away, the mice will play... or so the saying goes. But what better way for this mouse to justify a five-week trip to Asia than to invite the cat to come along. This fall I had the pleasure of being joined on the annual Asia trip by the President of Princeton in Asia’s Board of Trustees, Margaret Cannella (’73.) The annual Asia trip provides an opportunity for PiA leadership to assess sites, touch base with partner organizations, and see firsthand the impact PiA fellows can make, in the communities in which they live and learn.

Overall, the PiA team visited 39 cities in 14 countries; touched base with 109 fellows, and dozens of partners and safety advisors; and toasted PiA with 110 friends and alumni who turned out for PiA alumni events in Singapore, Beijing, Hong Kong, New Delhi, and Bangkok. Margaret joined us in 8 cities in 5 countries, bringing a wealth of knowledge, contacts, and perspective to assessing new sites, advising fellows and better serving our partner institutions. Her presence lent gravitas in the meetings and sent a very strong message about the engagement and level of support PiA receives from its Trustees.

We had a fabulous trip and were both very grateful for the opportunity to experience Asia through the eyes of our fellows. Let the record also reflect that Margaret made her way through Asia PiA-style – eating at local food stalls, riding in rick-shaws, crooning late-night karaoke, and putting the nickname “five-star Cannella” to shame. PiA is lucky to have such committed Trustees, willing to donate significant time and effort to help us build and strengthen our program in Asia, and I am lucky to have such bosses. I look forward to hosting more PiA trustees and friends in Asia. Tremendous thanks to Margaret.

**Anastasia Vrachnos, Executive Director**

I had the pleasure of accompanying Anastasia Vrachnos, Executive Director, Leslie Medema, Deputy Director, and Kai Even- son, Program Director, on their annual trip to visit Princeton in Asia fellows, our business partners, our safety advisors, and our many friends and alumni in Asia. I tagged along on the early part of their month-long odyssey, visiting Bangkok, Hanoi, Ho Chi Minh City, the Mekong Delta, Banda Aceh (Indonesia), Singapore, and Delhi and spending time with the fellows.

My association with Princeton in Asia has lasted many decades. I was a fellow myself in 1972 and 1973 in Japan, where I taught English. I have been a supporter for many years, and I became a board member in 1999. More recently, I have had the pleasure of serving as President of the PiA Board of Trustees. All the while I have kept in touch with Asia by traveling extensively throughout the region as an investment banker and living in Hong Kong for five years.

Although I have been involved with PiA for over thirty years, this was the first time in several decades that I have had the chance to see so many PiA fellows “in action and on location.” What a great experience and one that would make us all so proud! I wanted to share with our alumni and friends some of the extraordinary things our fellows are doing.

You will be very proud to know that each and every one of our partners, from the universities and colleges where our fellows are teaching to the NGOs, news organizations and businesses where they are working provided us extraordinary feedback on their performance. Their managers talked about their ability to think critically, their dedication to their work, and their immersion in the local culture. They talked about the fellows not just becoming members but also leaders in their respective workplaces. And every employer talked about their hard work and the long hours spent on the job. We chuckled when one of our fellows summed up his life in Singapore by saying, “I go to bed earlier than my parents!” I saw him at a party the following evening, so I was reassured that he was also having a social life!

I was especially impressed by the complex level of work being done throughout Asia in different milieus:

- At a community college in Vietnam, two fellows taught English for 20 hours each week then spent evenings volunteering at a local orphanage in a program begun by a former PiA fellow.
- At a business in Bangkok, two fellows were working on an investment proposal for a significant environmental project in China with the European principal behind this project.
PiA 2nd Year Fellows: Voices from the Field

A distinctive aspect of the PiA fellowship is the option to stay a second year. The number of fellows choosing to stay with PiA or on their own in Asia grows every year. We keep hearing about the added value these seasoned veterans bring to their organizations through their language abilities and cultural sensitivity. And a 2nd year allows PiAers to fully acquire language fluency and to connect more deeply with their communities.

As you can guess, I’m really enjoying the work. I’ve decided to continue being Asian for awhile. After all, my colleagues are put to shame by my superior chopstick and chili-eating skills. I went to the Singapore American School last weekend (with my track & field kids), and they said I say “can” and “wah lau” way too much. Scary, right? But I’m loving the experience here, and I’m staying on.

Kurt Kuehne
Beginning his 2nd year in Singapore
Ministry of Education, Singapore ’07-’10

Things are going great here in Rach Gia. Just finishing up the kite flying season, and the rainy season is about to start. On a personal note, teaching has been going well. We’re currently teaching a lot of pronunciation classes, so I’ve been dreaming about “ship or sheep,” “cheap or jeep.” All in all a lot of fun though. I was recently on a Vietnamese cooking show. My student and I made it up to Ho Chi Minh City to do the taping this past weekend. Pretty crazy being on the TV set, my student was utterly star struck meeting all the “famous and lovely hosts. And I had to go into the makeup room prior to taping...I came out looking pretty clownish (nothing like fluorescent pink lipstick).

Cat Peff, Finishing her 2nd year
in Vietnam Rach Gia, Vietnam ’07-’09

Michael has become an indispensable part of our team and is carrying his weight on a daily blog we put out on China’s environmental issues (www.greenlaw.org.cn). Thanks to Michael’s hard work, this has become a great resource for people working on China’s environmental issues.

Alex Wang, Executive Director
Natural Resources Defense Council
Mentor to 2nd year fellow Michael Zhang
Beijing, China

Michael’s hard work, this has become a great resource for people working on China’s environmental issues.
**Remembering David Dodge**

On January 20, 2009, the Princeton in Asia community lost a treasured friend with the passing of David Stuart Dodge. We will deeply miss David. He was an integral part of PiA’s history and continues to stand for our best ideals: the bridge-building and individual diplomacy on which mutual understanding is built and the courage to pursue engagement in the world’s most challenging places. We can’t imagine a more dedicated, supportive, and erudite trustee, mentor, and friend. Our most sincere condolences to the Dodge family. We are comforted by the fact that David’s presence will always be alive and strong at PiA. Because David has meant so much to so many of us, we asked some of the PiA community share with us “their David Dodge,” and we have included some of their comments below.

– Anastasia Vrachnos, Executive Director

David Dodge was born and raised in Beirut. The descendant of five generations of Princetonians, David graduated with the class of 1945 and earned a master’s degree in Near Eastern studies from the University in 1949. He joined the faculty of the American University of Beirut in 1979 and served on the Board of Trustees and as University President. David later returned to Princeton where he worked briefly as recording secretary of Princeton University before retiring. He lived in Princeton until January.

David was invited to join the PiA Board of Trustees by Bob “the Middle East is in Asia” Atmore, and served as an active and beloved trustee for many years, developing posts in Lebanon, Egypt, and Jordan. His lifelong passion for hiking brought him to the peaks of the Matterhorn, Mt. Kilimanjaro, and – for his 70th birthday – the Himalayas. He is survived by his wife Peggy, as well as his sister, four children, and four grandchildren.

“The opportunity to talk with David Dodge was always one of the highlights of Princeton in Asia board meetings in New York (and the hours on NJ Transit, getting back to Princeton). David had a combination of humanity, courtesy, and realism that is too rare in this world. I and many others – in Beirut, in Princeton, and elsewhere – will miss him greatly. He was a boon to all who knew him.”

Professor Lynn White, PiA Board of Trustees

“We feel a particular sense of loss at David’s passing. He was an elegant presence among us, a gentle man of soft voice, warm handshake, and sagacious insights. Involved in many endeavors, he was particularly invested in PiA, where he was much respected as one of our ‘Most Venerable’ board members. David’s passing leaves a void that cannot be filled.”

Tom Pyle ’76, PiA Board of Trustees

“David Dodge has been a friend to me and to Davis International Center ever since we started the Center 34 years ago. He offered us unconditional support and advice and advocated on our behalf before the University administration. A true friend who asked probing questions with a gentle smile, David inspired me with confidence and resolution. I shall truly miss him.”

Paula Chow, PiA Board of Trustees

“In June 1997 [when] I accepted the presidency of the American University of Beirut,… David Dodge was acting president. Over six months I met regularly with David, poring over files and documents, discussing at length personnel and other pending issues. He was my tutor and my mentor, and, no surprise, he was great at both. David had AUB in his blood, being the great grandson of the founder… and AUB basked in his love and service.”

John Waterbury, President, American University of Beirut (1997-2008)

“I used to meet David regularly for lunch – along with four others, we were part of a group that called ourselves the ‘Savvy Six.’ We were all involved in fundraising for the University (David was recording secretary) and met every few months to have lunch and trade stories. It was always a relaxed and amusing time. At one lunch after David married Peggy, I offered my congratulations from the ‘Brothers of the Lodge of the Savvy Six.’ I called it Happy Days:

*There is a fine fellow named Dodge. Who can take the Hodge out of Podge. He is certainly not a Stodge; glad he’s a member of our Lodge. His most fortuitous meeting, with attractive Peggy Keating Became more than just a greeting—it happily led to troth pleading. Now the team of Keating and Dodge jointly take the Hodge out of Podge While neither of them is a Stodge—and David doesn’t leave our Lodge.*

David Dodge was a fine friend, with a warm heart, a low-key way, and a strong interest and support of worthy causes. His departure is a great loss.”

Joe Bolster

Joe Bolster

David Dodge was a fine friend, with a warm heart, a low-key way, and a strong interest and support of worthy causes. His departure is a great loss.”

Joe Bolster
I remember when I got a phone call from my mother last spring. She said “Before you say no, just listen. Your crazy sister wants to go to North Korea. Do you want to go with her?” “Sure,” I replied without a moment’s hesitation. At the time, I didn’t fully appreciate the exceptional decision I had just made. North Korea seemed like just another random destination chosen by my Asia-loving sister Erin (China ’04).

Flash-forward to September 30, 2008, when I found myself stepping off of a plane at the airport in Pyongyang, North Korea (or the Democratic People’s Republic of Korea as they prefer to be called). I stood still, waiting for that magical moment you see in the movies, the moment when you realize the gravity of the situation at hand. It didn’t come. Instead I found myself snapping a few quick pictures of the Pyongyang airport sign and hurrying inside.

Before the trip, the tour company advised that to fully experience the DPRK, one has to let Stockholm syndrome take over (at least to a small degree). I tried my best to keep an open mind as I mulled over speeches about “evil American imperialists.” From the moment we left the airport, I felt as though we had taken a wrong turn and ended up on a Hollywood film set in the 1950s. The color palate of the city and people’s clothes was one of muted greens and grays. Everything about Pyongyang looked outdated, as if the outside world flew by in a flurry of activity and modern technology left this lone city behind.

Equally intriguing was the sense of normalcy surrounding everything, as men and women hurriedly went about their daily routine. I think I had unconsciously expected people to seem unhappy and to want better things. Instead I found a completely different scene (outwardly at least). I recognize that we were shown the best and brightest aspects of the country and that likely does not reflect a much different life for people in the smaller towns and countryside. But on the whole, seeing things with my own eyes helped to burst the bubble.

Over the next four days, we were taken to the main sights in and around Pyongyang (those deemed appropriate for Americans, that is). At the Demilitarized Zone (DMZ) and the 38th Parallel, we waved to South Korea from the North Korean side and had an enlightening conversation about American politics with a DPRK guard. Further north in the mountains, we visited the International Friendship Museum, a tribute to Kim Il Sung and Kim Jong Il, that houses every gift they’ve ever received, including a Michael Jordan-autographed basketball from Madeline Albright and silver platters from Billy Graham. Apparently even individuals can send gifts that will then be displayed. (Erin and I are still thinking about what we should send.)

The Mass Games – the very reason America and the Ringling Bros. circus, the Mass Games aims to highlight unity among the Korean people. It does so not just with the themes of each act, but also by design: for the individual participant, the point is to blend in and contribute to a successful collective. It is a massive display: 100,000 performers, including 24,000 school children creating a constantly changing “pixilated” backdrop, and putting on one awesome and slightly nerve-racking show.

In the end, I did have that Hollywood-esque “magic moment.” It came as I stood stirring at a glass box, the frail old women in front of me holding hands and weeping before it. Inside the box lay the body of Kim Il Sung, who fourteen years after his death is still revered as the President and leader. What I realized is this: We are all just people. We are all just people trying to make the most of our lives the best way we know how. And we are doing this in the context of the decisions and actions of those above us. We will not always agree with those in positions of power, be they leaders, presidents, prime ministers, or kings, but the benefits and consequences of their actions affect us all.

The greatest gift from this trip was a reminder to always keep an open mind, to take the time to see past the differences (no matter how stark), and to find those things that unite you. Truly dive into the culture and appreciate its people. What you find may surprise you.

Kelly Harper
Nan Elementary School
Nan, Thailand ’08–’09
It’s not often that you have a whole village helping you buy toilet paper. However, five weeks into our time in the small village of Kadod, Gujarat, back when our language skills were rusty at best and our presence here was still a novelty which caused small children to follow us and women to surreptitiously whisper and giggle, this is the position in which we found ourselves. The supply that had been mysteriously materializing in our outdoor bathroom, at the behest of the principal of Kadod High School where we teach English, had suddenly dried up, and after a few days of roughing it, we’d decided it was time to find a local supplier.

Easier said than done of course. Toilet paper is rarer than peanut butter around here. After walking the length of the short main street of the village, called Bazaar (market) street because it is home to the stationery shop, the general store, the phone booth and the village photocopy machine, we paused outside the general store, each of us looking at the other as if to say, “Uh, you do it.”

Finally, Melissa took a breath and marched in, leaving me to my cowardice. I peered inside the darkened shop and saw her muddle through a half mime, half request inside the darkened shop and saw her in, leaving me to my cowardice. I peered finally, Melissa took a breath and marched inside the darkened shop and saw her, facing the general store came running after us, a packet of large paper napkins in hand.

“Is this what you wanted?” He asked us in Gujarati, trying to do his neighbor a favor. “Uh, no, but thanks” we replied and hurried away as our giggles broke out again in wave after wave.

Having divined that no toilet paper was available in Kadod itself, we made loose plans to take the local bus after school on Saturday to see if Bardoli, an actual town half an hour away, might have what we were looking for. We were too embarrassed to ask the principal himself who, as our next door neighbor and as our supervisor, has taken it upon himself to look after us. We already had a standing invitation each evening to watch Hindi serials with his family, his wife took care of us when we had health problems, his daughter-in-law who also teaches English at the school had helped explain expectations for teachers here, and we just couldn’t bear to bother them about one more thing. Little did we know that the local wheels had been set in motion to try and provide the strange new American teachers with what they desired.

Our responsibilities for the Foundation consist of teaching free classes before and after school for the 9th grade students focusing on spoken English, as well as teaching 4th, 9th, and 11th grade English classes as staff teachers during the school day itself. This being the first year of the post, life has predictably been an adventure as each day we discover more things about the school, our students, and how to serve the community here as effectively as we can.

The next morning, we were teaching our spoken English class and the students were in the middle of discussing a trip that they would go on if they could go anywhere in the world when the same peon from the night before showed up in the doorway, carrying four or five rolls of toilet paper in his arms.

“Is this what you were looking for?” He asked us excitedly in Hindi, brandishing the toilet paper in such a way that all the students began to laugh uncontrollably. I could feel myself redden. “Uh, yes,” I said and left the class as I took the prized toilet paper over to the house. Following me, he explained to me quickly in Hindi that he had asked his neighbors on both sides what we might be looking for and they had asked their neighbors who may possibly have called their relatives in the UK and then the chain after that gets a little fuzzy since my language skills were still very rudimentary at that time.

Our time in Kadod has been marked by incidents like this one: in a place where five-year-old children can walk themselves home from school and locked doors are unheard of. We’ve had to give up any semblance of privacy that we may have thought we were entitled to. However, we’ve gained much more in the way of integration into the community.

(continued on page 9)
November 26, 2008. Scrambling to finish semester reports and pack for a long-planned trip across northern India. Halfway through my year on this mountaintop, I felt ambivalent not only about teaching, but also about Kodaikanal, India, and what this year meant. The trip north was laden with expectations: six weeks to fall in love with India – or not; six weeks to make or break my PiA experience.

Then the Mumbai Attacks happened, and PiA placed a travel-ban on northern India. Five colleagues, my would-have-been travel mates, boarded a train bound for Agra; I went home to cry and research plane tickets back to Canada for the vacation. Sense of adventure? Out the window. Adaptability? Completely depleted. But not quite. Thanks to a sequence of coincidences, 36 hours later I was in an ashram, undergoing initiation rites for a month-long yoga teacher-training course. It was the most unexpected, challenging, enjoyable, and transformative experience of my life. No meat, coffee, sugar, spice, music, novel reading, napping, alcohol, or Internet. No need to make a single decision. 28 days in heaven. Every day went like this: 5:15 wake-up. Meditation and chanting until 7:30. Chai break. 2-hour yoga teaching practice. Food. Karma yoga (i.e., scrubbing toilets). 1-hour Bhaghavad Gita lecture under the shade of a mango tree. Chai break. 2-hour mind-blowing Vedantic philosophy lecture. 2-hour bone-breaking yoga practice. Food. Study time. 90-minute meditation and chanting. 10:00 lights out.

We breathed. Participated in elegant, mysterious pujas for Ganesh, Vishnu, Shiva, and Durga the Divine Mother. We learned to stand on our heads and floss our nostrils (not at the same time). Chanted the entire ‘Gita. Received mantra initiations and spiritual names. Got attacked by monkeys in the yoga hall. And we learned what yoga really is and practiced it. I met incredible yogis from all over India and the world, acquired a new approach to teaching, and fell in love with India.

Thinking back, I like to imagine that a month at the ashram was in the cards ever since PiA interviews last January. Our Swami, upon hearing how I came to join the course at the very last minute, said it was karma. Cards or karma or chance? Who knows. PiA sends us to Asia with the advice to be flexible, willing to try new things, and open-minded. The experiences that make or break a year in Asia can’t be foreseen, contrived, or controlled: buses break down, diarrhea incapacitates, lessons flop, terrorists strike. Flummoxed plans lead to a life-changing experience and to the glorious unexpected.


As of today, a frighteningly short interval remains in our school year. Just 99 days left to knock their socks off in the classroom. Being a first-semester teacher was terrifying and exhausting; being a second semester teacher, I am grounded in yoga, more flexible, open-minded, and eager to experiment, is exciting.
Alumni Updates

Expanding PiA Families

Congratulations to PiA Trustee Hilary Roxe ('97 Hong Kong, PiA’s first intern with Time Asia) and her husband Christopher on the birth of their second child, a son, Kieran Christopher Thomaskutty. Kieran was born March 29, 2009, weighing in at a healthy 7 lbs, 3 oz and measuring 20 inches.

April showers bring... PiA babies. Brian Vogt (Indonesia ’96), and his wife Laura welcomed a new little Vogt into the world. Maya Clare was born on April 17, weighing in at 7 lbs 1 oz and was 20 inches long.

Caroline Carter (Korea ’04, Timor-Leste ’05) welcomed her son, Reid Carter Sequella, a healthy 8 pounds 4 ounces, 21 ¾ inches, on April 24.

Melissa Titter (Singapore ’02) tied the knot with Steve Paschell in June, and is now “satisfying [her] wanderlust” in Switzerland, where she is studying and working at the University of St. Gallen.

Still Living the Dream in Asia

Mark Dunn (China ’98) has moved back to Asia. This time, Mark is stationed in Bangkok “where it’s warmer and the food is better.”

Congratulations to Peter L. Jaeger (Japan ’80), who has been promoted to the Head of Futures and Options for Japan and Korea at JPMorgan. Peter’s family relocated to Tokyo in July after 11 years of being away, and his children are adjusting to life there despite having become native Londoners.

PiA in the Working World

Leif W. Haase (China ’88) is living in California with his wife Leslie and daughter Julia Margaret. Since 2007 Leif has worked as the Director of the California Program of the America Foundation, a think tank based in Berkeley and Sacramento.

Farook Ahmed (Korea ’04-’06) recently finished his MA at Georgetown University, and when he’s not helping PiA out with interviews at Princeton, he’s being granted new security clearances as a government contractor in the Washington D.C. area.

After surviving three Minnesota winters in Minneapolis, Robin Matross Helms (China ’97) has moved back to Washington, D.C. with her husband, Tom, and their daughter, Helena. Robin is now working as an independent consultant, specializing in international education and loving it!

Fiona Havers (China ’97-’99) received her MA in East Asian Studies from Harvard in 2002 and her MD from the University of Washington in 2006. She is now a second year internal medicine resident at Johns Hopkins in Baltimore.

Sarah Butsch (Thailand ’06), a “tree hugging Vermonter” is working for an environmental networking organization called Green Drinks NYC. She’s also teaching yoga on the side (namaste!) and leading a running group.

After working in reproductive health and HIV issues (largely in SE Asia), Justine Sass (Indonesia ’97) took a job at the UNESCO HQ in Paris. Justine lives with her husband who works for the French Ministry of Defense in Indonesia and Malaysia and her two sons Liam and Aidan.

Tina Sung (Japan ’71) joined the Partnership for Public Service in October as Vice President for Government Transformation.

Andrew Turco (Summer of Service ’06, Cambodia ’07) is working for a non-profit affiliated with NYC Parks Dept. and enjoying the nexus of the fields of redevelopment, architecture, and planning in NYC.

PiAers Back in School

Morgan Galland (Laos ’06-’08) finally made it out of Vientiane and is now a first-year law student at Stanford, enjoying a slightly faster pace of life. She is “happy to be back in California but misses South East Asia.”

PiA Alumna Stacey Tsibulsky (Malaysia ’06) returned home from Asia planning to apply for an Art History masters program. After staring at the applications a bit, Stacey decided she wasn’t through with Asia yet and is now getting an MA in Contemporary Asian Studies in Amsterdam.

Michael Richardson (South Korea ’04) is celebrating the birth of Caroline Sora Richardson, on February 6, 2009. Michael must be getting good at changing diapers by now.
PiA alumna Heather Jackson captures Ironman World Championship Title

In October 2008, PiA Thailand alum Heather Jackson finished first in her age group for the Ironman Triathalon World Championships in Hawaii. Begun in 1978 and held annually in Hawaii, the race includes a 2.4 mile swim, 112 mile bike ride, and 26.2 mile run. We spoke to this former captain of the Princeton Women’s Ice Hockey team recently about her win and her connection to PiA:

The Ironman Triathlon World Championships…no small feat, even for a PiA-er. What motivated you to begin training for triathlons?

“I did a few short (‘sprint’) distance triathlons in the summers while at Princeton after my parents started doing triathlons to get in shape. I also made the Princeton hockey team do one as a preseason team activity/training session…not sure how many people on the team were happy with me for that one. That was all I had really done before PiA.”

I understand that, while completing your PiA post in Chiang Mai, you ran your first Ironman race in Malaysia. Isn’t Southeast Asia supposed to be…laidback? Was it harder to train while in Thailand?

“When I got to Chiang Mai, which happens to be the best PiA post ever, my daily activities included teaching, but more so really assimilating myself into Thai culture in a “variety” of ways. I started hanging out with the guys at the gym a lot. I didn’t really consider it hard to train there, although I guess I didn’t really consider it ‘training’ at the time. I was just trying to stay somewhat in shape. The one thing I can remember that was tough was the heat. It was SO hot over there that some days I felt like I couldn’t even move. Also, the track that I trained on was dirt, and so I just remember running in what felt like an oven as dirt and dust would fly up…and then I’d have to run back through it on the next lap.”

You’ve won the world championship…what’s next?

“People keep saying that to me and it still hasn’t really sunk in. I won it as an amateur; I’m going to race as a professional next year, which will be completely different. I’m going to keep racing half-Ironmans and Ironmans but I’m thinking of trying some cycling events and maybe trying for the 2012 Olympics. I’ve always dreamed of going to the Olympics. It used to be 2006 for ice hockey, but that didn’t happen, so maybe cycling. It’s definitely my best discipline as I still have the leg muscles from hockey.”

The Ironman is known for its catchphrase motto: “Swim 2.4 miles! Bike 112 miles! Run 26.2 miles! Brag for the rest of your life”. Which bestows better bragging rights, PiA or Ironman?

“PiA by far bestows better bragging rights. The Ironman race was over in 10 hours. A relaxing swim, a scenic bike ride, and a quick jog. Done. In Southeast Asia I survived numerous transport mishaps, various bouts of gastrointestinal issues, insane heat waves followed by severe flooding, bartering over everything, blows to the head in Muay Thai kickboxing matches, and a military coup that resulted in a couple of days of holidays.”

Interview by Teresa Velez
PiA Yakage, Japan ’06-’07
with Heather Jackson
Chiang Mai, Thailand ’06-’07

PiA Needs Some Transportation!!

Our rickshaws have broken down in Princeton and we are looking for a way to transport our sacks of rice, chickens, goats, and 15 closest friends all at once. If you would be willing to donate your used car to PiA we guarantee good Karma, our deepest gratitude, and a tax-deductible receipt.

PiA fellow Justin Jimenez (’08 The Philippines) steps up to cart around the PiA team.
2009-2010 PiA Calendar

May 15-18, 2009: PiA Orientation at Princeton University
May 15, 2009: PiA Annual Dinner
May 30, 2009: PiA Alumni Reception at Princeton Reunions

Annual Dinner

May 18, 2009 @ 6pm

If you would like to RSVP for the Annual Dinner please call PiA at (609) 258-5358.