

Business class requires students to 'save the world'

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Warner Woodworth with Jaime Figueroa and some of the Patacancha village kids at the Moroni Community Center in Peru.

Courtesy photo

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On Tuesday, Oct. 17, two students will travel to the Arizona desert to save the world.

Stephanie Moore and Mandy Cohn have researched the Havasupai American Indians in Supai, Ariz., and now they will meet with them and try to design a program to help them as part of a "Save the World" project for their Third World development class.

"We haven't sat down to decide what our project focus will be and what they need because we don't know what they need," said Moore, 25, from Atascadero, Calif., majoring in business management. "That's what we're going down there to find out."

There are challenges in working with them, Moore said. Americans sometimes go into these situations with arrogance, and they can be condescending, which will create resistance. Such an approach yields few favorable results.

When you leave, everything you tried to do there will leave with you, Moore said.

"We intend to use a pull strategy instead of a push strategy," Moore said. "A pull strategy is where we go in and find out from them what their needs are, and then we meet those needs instead of deciding beforehand what they need and giving it to them."

That is one of the principles they have learned in the class, Moore said.

Dr. Warner Woodworth, an organizational behavior professor who teaches the class, said the course is a call to action. It is designed to give students an awareness of Third World problems.

Woodworth started teaching the class 10 years ago because he said he was interested in how he could build Zion - how to change the world.

Cohn, 25, from Littleton, Colo., working on her master's degree in public administration, said they chose the Havasupai because they are a Third World culture living in a First World country.

Often people think Third World development only occurs outside of the United States, but there are some cultures and tribes close to modern civilizations that are struggling, Cohn said.

Several successful programs were started by small student projects, Woodworth said. In the past 10 years, Woodworth said he has witnessed the expansion of projects in West Africa, China and South America.

Cohn said Woodworth emphasizes the alienation of poverty and that members of the LDS Church have a different perspective -- serving fellowmen is serving God.

"Ghandi said, 'The worst form of violence is poverty,'" Woodworth said. "We need to reach down and lift the poor."

Cohn said poverty is born out of ignorance. When she and Moore visit the Havasupai, she said she would like to find out if they remain in such a poor state because of a lack of resources or a lack of desire.

Woodworth said he sent students to Mali, Africa, the third-poorest country on the planet, to set up village banking or microcredit, a system where they give out small loans to the villagers so they can become micro-entrepreneurs. Even the president of Mali Alpha Konare joined the village bank. The program has created a couple hundred jobs.

Another ongoing program called HELP, Help Eliminate Poverty, currently serves Honduras, El Salvador, Peru and Venezuela, Woodworth said.

Students went 9,000 feet into the Andes to develop a program for members there since 70 percent of the 160 members were unemployed or under-employed.

Woodworth said they developed training programs to teach them how to start small businesses and

become sustainable.

"We become their supporters, their advocates, their fund-raisers," Woodworth said.

All the money they use for the microcredit loans and other programs comes from donations.

Other colleges and universities, including University of Utah, University of Southern California, Texas Christian University, Utah State University, Ricks College and a few black Baptist colleges in Alabama, have noticed the progress and success these programs have had and have become interested in getting involved, Woodworth said.

Moore and Cohn have similar expectations of developing a program that will be ongoing. They said they hope to build relationships with the American Indians during this trip and let them know they are important.

"This is something we really want to do; it's not just part of class," Moore said. "This time we'll do a lot of research and follow whatever leads they give us. Eventually, we'd like to develop a program to help them. We do not wish to help them because we think we are better, but because we see their struggle as part of our survival."

Woodworth said that as a member of the LDS Church he hopes that his students will go away with a vision of how to build Zion and the realization that one person can make a difference.

Some of his students went to the Patacancha Indian village 13,000 feet in the Andes, where the people are living on less than a \$1 a day.

The Indians requested help in improving their valley, teaching their children and building a place where they could worship God, Woodworth said.

He and the students built the Moroni Community Center and equipped it with benches and a pulpit from an LDS Church and pictures of Jesus Christ and Joseph Smith. The Indians have begun to read the Book of Mormon in their native language and have requested missionaries.

All of this started with a group of students and a few returned missionaries, Woodworth said.

More than anything, Cohn said from this experience she will take with her the realization that she can make a difference and how to put that realization into action.