SPECIAL REPORT: ASUSTUDENTS

Future Doctors Find Adventure in the Jungles of Peru

By May Donnell

Deep in the Amazon rainforest at the Hospital Apoyo Iquitos in northern Peru, freshman Phalander Rudd of Phenix City, Ala., delivered a baby boy.

Yes. You read that right.



"I'm like, man, I just brought life into the world."

"He just reached in and pulled the baby out," said Joyce Davis, supervisor of a unique program that puts ASU students in the hot seat of real, third-world medicine as practiced in the flood-prone river city of Iquitos where there is an abundance of heat, flies and infection but very little air conditioning or other comforts.

"It (the baby) was blue, slimy, slippery and warm," Rudd said of the child. "I handed it to the nurse, and she asked for my name so they could log it in the delivery book. I'm like,

man, I just brought life into the world."

Rudd's amazing experience came in an area where dogs run the open market in packs among tables piled with raw meat, fried insect larvae are sold right from the pan and infectious disease is rampant.

Shennell Reynolds, a junior from Dallas, Texas, was with a group of observers in the emergency room when paramedics brought in a man with severe head injuries. "I was up at the front, and the doctor pointed at me and said, 'Hey come over here!'" Reynolds said. "He handed me the suture needle. Blood was just gushing everywhere. We'd had a suture class the day before, so I helped sew him up."

While in Iquitos, freshman Robert Emeh was praying about his interest in becoming a doctor. The next day, he assisted with the amputation of a boy's toe. "It was an ugly sight but a beautiful thing," Emeh said. "It made me know I want to be a pediatric surgeon."

Rudd, Reynolds, Emeh and seven other ASU students spent their Christmas holiday break on a medical adventure that could be described as a boot camp for aspiring doctors. The program is the creation of former U.S. Army surgeon Dr. Lane Rolling and is run by TPaIDA, the Tropical Pathology and Infectious Disease Association headquartered in Cusco, Peru. The intensive 10-day program offers three hours of credit and for every student, a life-altering experience.

"This program gives students the chance to truly make a decision about whether they will go into medicine," said ASU's Dr. Sharron Herron-Williams, a program supervisor who accompanied the students on the trip. "At the same time, they are serving the less fortunate."

Courtney Oliver is a senior who was on her second visit to Iquitos. The aspiring orthopedic surgeon said one of her most challenging moments came while assisting with an amputation. "I just didn't want to make a mistake," she said. "I cut the connective tissue between the toe and the foot (successfully)."

Also along to observe and participate was biology chair, Dr. Karyn Scissum Gunn.

"It was a thrill for me to see these young people develop and grow in a matter of 10 days," said Scissum Gunn. "They literally found themselves responsible for people's lives."

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OUT of the BOAT



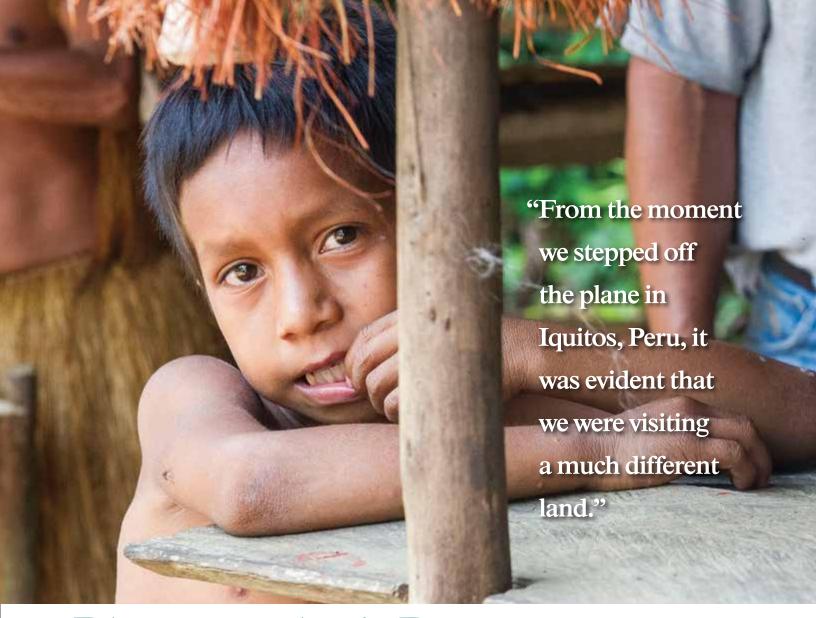


- 1. Kasey Martin administers anesthesia to a young patient prior to a surgical procedure in Hospital Apoyo.
- 2. Dr. Lane Rolling and Dr. Sharron Herron-Williams sign a memorandum of understanding between ASU and TPaIDA while (from left) Dr. Karyn Scissum Gunn, Rolling's wife, Dr. Sany Benites Villasante, and Joyce Davis look on.
- 3. Tabitha Lewis leads the ASU group as they trek through the Amazon jungle.
- 4. Joyce Davis comforts a patient having a major medical procedure in the surgical ward of Hospital Apoyo.









Photographer's Perspective

By David Campbell

ASU photographer David Campbell was invited by Dr. Lane Rolling to be part of the Peru adventure. David captured literally hundreds of amazing photographs, only a few of which could be included in this edition of ASU Today. You may visit www. alasu.edu/peruinternship to see more of David's work. Below are excerpts from David's firsthand account of his experience.

Traveling with Alabama State University students to document their journey through the TPaIDA medical internship program was one of the greatest assignments I have had in more than 25 years as a professional photographer. From the moment we stepped off the plane in Iquitos, Peru, it was evident that we were visiting a much different land. From brisk and sometimes harrowing rides through the streets of Iquitos in motorcycle taxis, to

meals consisting of beans, rice and fried plantains, it was a fantastic cultural experience. On our first night, we visited an animal refuge where students were able to hand feed Amazonian manatees. Later that evening, we all sat down with our host, Dr. Lane Rolling, and quickly learned that this was not a vacation but a real learning experience.

The next morning, we toured Hospital Apoyo Iquitos and met the doctors with whom our students would work. Dozens of people sat on wooden benches or lay in beds in the open-air corridors awaiting care.

The students' first week consisted of lectures, hospital rounds and assisting in surgical procedures with Peruvian doctors. We witnessed people suffering from Dengue Fever, malaria, HIV and other conditions in the infectious disease ward. I took photographs as Phalander Rudd pulled a

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baby from a mother during a caesarian delivery, as Robert Emeh assisted Dr. Rolling with an amputation, as Kasey Martin ran anesthesia and as Courtney Oliver closed an incision following an amputation. Our students worked early morning hours and late evenings. Hospital Apoyo may not have the modern amenities of American facilities, but the staff did an amazing job with what they had. As Peruvian Herman Silva said, "What they lack in equipment and supplies, they make up for with compassion and love."

Sunday, December 15, was a day for a different kind of experience. Dr. Rolling had been teaching how pathogens cause diseases, and now, it was time to see firsthand where many of the illnesses originated by visiting the floating city of Iquitos' Belen District. We walked through a bustling marketplace where people handled raw meats and placed them on unclean tables as they exchanged money. We strolled through an area where people live without plumbing and electricity, as children roamed barefoot through the streets. Sewage ran straight to the river Italia, where drinking water was retrieved as well.

We stopped in a square and gave candy to children. I will never forget the look on a young boy's face as I gave him a piece of candy called a "ring pop." He was excited beyond comprehension over something we, as Americans, would normally find so simple. I knew at that moment, should I ever return to Belen, I'll bring a backpack full of ring pops.

The next day, we returned to the hospital. As a photographer, I was enthralled by the way light beamed through the open windows and doorways of the hospital, casting interesting shadows. It was a perfect environment for shooting in black and white. My portrait of Induarim Fiero and her three-week old infant (see page 24), who had been infected neonatally with toxoplasmosis, may be the strongest portrait I have ever captured.

For our final two days, we ventured into the Amazon jungle. After a twohour ride on a banana boat, our first stop was a village inhabited by members of the Bora tribe. We were treated to a demonstration of traditional song and dance and all got to take a shot at firing a blowgun.

Our second stop was the native village of Madre Sciucha, which we reached by a long trek through the rainforest. The people of the village presented us with a table full of amazing tropical fruits. We then had a Christmas party, where our students sang José Feliciano's "Feliz Navidad" and then presented the children with candy and presents. We had been asked to bring toys for two girls and two boys. As an avid skateboarder, I just had to

bring a board. I had set it to the side as we gave out presents and overlooked it until the end when I saw a young boy standing outside the hut we were using. Using hand gestures, I asked if he got a present. He smiled and shook his head "no" and waved me off to let me know it didn't matter. I could tell he was enjoying watching the other children receive gifts as much as they enjoyed getting them. I motioned him my way and handed him the board. His eyes illuminated, and he said, "muchos gracias." I have never been thanked more genuinely for a gift. Following the Christmas party, our students played a game of soccer against the people of the village and then headed out before sunset.

The humanitarian and cultural experiences that TPaIDA offers are priceless. I will never forget the people or the land.

Veteran photojournalist David Campbell

To view more photos, visit www.alasu.edu/peruinternship.

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Senior Kasey Martin pumped oxygen into the lungs of a little boy undergoing surgery. "I wasn't sure if I was doing it right and I'm sure my eyes got big, but it was fine."

Students participating in Rolling's program are considered interns and wear scrubs to the hospital. Junior Domonique Dail was in scrubs and riding in a motor taxi (a cart pulled by a motorcycle) on her way to the hospital one day when a crowd flagged her down. They asked her to help a woman thrashing around on the ground. Dail explained she was only a student, but the crowd insisted. She carried the woman across her lap in the taxi to the emergency room.

"I wasn't sure what to expect," said sophomore Alayna Smith. "I'd never been out of the country before. The first day in the hospital, I scrubbed in to assist with removing a cyst

from a boy's wrist. The doctor says, 'Here' and hands me the epidural to insert. I did it."

In addition to handson clinical rotations, the Iquitos venture also features lectures and mandatory workouts. Students from Southern, Dillard, Huston-Tillotson Continued to page 29





Top: Robert Emeh dances with Bora children in their village located in the Amazonas region of Peru.

Bottom: Courtney Oliver and the rest of the ASU team brought gifts to give to children during the group's stop in a Bora village.



Dr. Lane Rolling speaks during a humanitarian stop in the Madre Sciucha village.

Dr. Rolling Makes A House Call

Energetic Surgeon a Mentor to Future Doctors

By May Donnell

Dr. Lane Rolling has "babies" all over the country. That's his pet name for students who make it through the intense Peruvian course he designed not only to teach students how to save the world, but also to show them why they should be involved in humanitarian efforts.

The course involves a 10-day experience known as TPaIDA. Think of it as a third world medical boot camp and Rolling, a former U.S. Army surgeon and founder of the 10-year-old program, as top sergeant.

"I tell students to get out of the boat," Rolling says.
"I say put the textbook down a while and take a look at reality." Rolling's reality is revealed, among other places, in a sweltering government hospital at the jungle's edge where

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"When you have compassion and energy, you go out and make the world a better place."

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the often grim fates of people are decided with nothing but smiles to give in return for services rendered.

TPaIDA stands for Tropical Pathology and Infectious Disease Association, headquartered in Cusco. The group, made up of Rolling and some 50 other doctors and nurses, treat the poor where they live, in poverty-stricken cities like Iquitos and in remote jungle villages. Six times a year, TPaIDA offers internships to undergraduate students. The program includes lectures, case studies and trauma surgery.

"It's the best investment you can make if you've got a student considering med school," Rolling said. "We have 20-hour days. We have babies being born, malaria and limbs being amputated. It's the real deal. Students not only decide to become doctors based on their visit to Peru, but many decide what kind of doctor they will be, based on what they witnessed in Peru."

The course costs \$2,875. Funding comes from any number of sources, including grants, parents, contributions and schools

According to ASU's TPaIDA program administrator, Joyce Davis, students come back from the internship with energy and purpose they didn't have before. "They start making connections between what they saw in Peru and what they are learning in organic chemistry," Davis says.

Rolling proudly tracks the progress of each of his interns.

"We have former students in almost every top medical school in the U.S.," said Rolling. "They write to me and say, 'Thank you for that experience. It changed my life."

Rolling paid a visit to the ASU campus in February as part of a three-week swing though the United States. He says he doesn't recruit students to the program, but he does like to share the reason for it.

"We want to go back to the basic root of what humanity is and what compassion is," said Rolling, whose medical talents include being an expert on limb salvage and reconstructive surgery for diabetics. "When you have compassion and energy, you go out and make the world a better place."

Another reason for TPaIDA, he says, is that the number of black students enrolled in medical schools is woefully low.

"We help students link up what they learn in the classroom to what happens in the OR (operating room), so they become more empowered students," Rolling says.

Rolling, who spent eight years studying infectious and contagious diseases in Peru, is an enthusiastic spokesman for changing the way medicine is taught.

"Our mission at TPaIDA is to teach the next generation what human compassion is. We want to put that compassion back into medicine. I tell people, 'it's not about sending shoes or eyeglasses. It's about bringing hope."

FOR INFORMATION ABOUT THE TPAIDA COURSE OR TO HELP SEND AN ASU STUDENT TO PERU, CONTACT JOYCE DAVIS AT 334-229-4301.



Domonique Dail is a junior from Joliet, Ill., majoring in biology and pre-health. She met a young Bora Indian boy with cerebral palsy, a condition shared by her little brother. "It's amazing the advantages my brother has living in America," she said.



Robert Emeh is a freshman from Garland, Texas, majoring in biology and pre-health. "This was one of those experiences that I know will stay with me for the rest of my life."



Tabitha Lewis is a junior from St. Croix, Virgin Islands, majoring in education with an eye toward dental school. "I learned so much about myself and healthcare on this trip. It was just so hands on."



Kasey Martin is a senior from Cincinnati, Ohio, majoring in pharmacology. "I was struck by all the smiles. You rarely saw these people when they weren't smiling. Even with all their problems, they seemed really happy."



Courtney Oliver is a senior from Montgomery majoring in biology and pre-health. "This second trip to Iquitos gave me better confirmation that I want to become a doctor." Oliver plans to be an orthopedic surgeon.



Shenell Reynolds is a junior from Dallas, Texas, who assisted with a head injury. "I didn't faint," she said. "I think the adrenalin helped me out. The whole experience showed me medicine is my calling."



Phalander Rudd is a junior from Phenix City, Ala., majoring in rehabilitation services. "The doctor didn't speak any English; so, he (the doctor) demonstrated what he wanted me to do. Every now and then he'd say 'Si!"



Alayna Smith is a sophomore from Conyers, Ga., majoring in psychology. "I wasn't sure at first, but then there I was, helping perform surgery. It was amazing." Smith plans to be a psychiatrist.



Fred Yeboah is a sophomore from Kumesi, Ghana, majoring in biology and pre-health. "The conditions there were very similar to Ghana," he said. "I want to go back home and practice there." Yeboah plans to be a neurosurgeon.



Phalander Rudd poses with two of the children he met during his visit to the Bora village.

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and Morgan State Universities also participated.

"Every minute, every second was a learning experience," Tabitha Lewis said of her time in Iquitos. "Every day, Dr. Rolling challenged us, told us to 'get out of the boat." Lewis climbed "out of the boat," assisting an anesthesiologist who spoke no English. "He was showing me instead of telling me what to do for the patient," she said. "Their lives were in my hands."

A highlight of the program was a five-mile hike (depending on whom you ask) through the Amazon jungle to a small village inhabited by Bora Indians. The students gave a Christmas party and got to know some of the villagers. Later, they spent the night in the jungle, where a few creatures invaded their cabins. "There were six girls, and we all slept in two twin beds pushed together," Lewis said. The faculty fared no better. Davis gave up her bed to an unseen invader who kept scratching around underneath it. "We all had our cell phone lights out trying to see what it was, but we never could find it; so, I got out of that bed," said Davis.

Despite the challenges, Davis says the program is extremely beneficial.

"It's amazing to see these students return with such enthusiasm for their studies," said Davis. "The curriculum takes on a whole different level of meaning now that they've had this experience."

For the students who took part in the December trip, it was an experience they are not likely to forget.

"It's like a roller coaster ride," said Rudd of his temporary foray into the practice of medicine. "You're like nervous at first and then there's the thrill and afterward you say, 'Let's do it again."

Editor's note: While in Peru, Dr. Rolling and ASU officials signed a memorandum of understanding to start a Center for Excellence for the Study of Tropical and Infectious Diseases. We will have more on the center in a later edition of ASU Today.

