

# KALEIDOSCOPE

## YOUTH INITIATIVE HIGH SCHOOL



Vol. 17, Issue 4; Winter 2012

### PREP SCHOOL FOR THE UNIVERSITY OF LIFE

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#### WHAT NEXT?:

#### A PANEL DISCUSSION ON POST SECONDARY

#### OPTIONS

A frank discussion about education after high school featuring experts from liberal arts and technical colleges, financial aid, gap years, and more.

**JANUARY 15TH @ 7PM**

**HOSTED BY YIHS**

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It's not the 1970s anymore. Not only has our culture lost touch with Barry Gibb and more or less forgotten the Gerald Ford years, but a four-year college degree is no longer a golden ticket to a life of social status and relative material comfort either. In fact, 53% of recent college graduates are either totally unemployed or working at jobs that don't require a college degree.

However, despite increasing tuition costs the number of people under 25 with a college degree has increased 38 percent since 2000. More than ever students need to follow their passion and find excellence there. The time for loping through college because somebody told you to has passed; it simply won't pay off.

To be successful, young people need to know how to imagine, how to create, how to learn, and how to evolve. For many, the best place to do that is at a four-year college and the overwhelming majority of our graduates eventually attend a college or university. But increasingly, our students are blazing their own path to get there, using their experience at YIHS to create their own education, tailored to their passions and interests, and to the needs of a global world.

Sure, our students are prepared to go to college, but they're prepared to do much more than that.

#### WHY COLLEGE?

By Shawn Lavoie

I decided to go to college in 2000 because it was the thing to do--it was all my honors-tracked peers talked about. Deep down I had intellectual and aspirational interests, but mostly when discussing college with my peers and teachers the topics were: Where are you applying? How many are you applying to? What did you get on the SAT?

I hardly considered not going. There was passing talk of a "gap year" and I'd known of someone who'd done something like that--I believe he worked for the Forest Reserve out west. But when

I started to entertain such aberrant thoughts, I was reminded, both subtly and directly, about the danger of such deviation. At school, it was my guidance counselor, a good guy, who said that I tended to rise to the expectations set for me. Or, in other words, I had a dubious capacity for initiative. For myself, I only needed to remember my parents to re-focus on college: my mother, who had a child the summer after high school, and my father, who had to drop out to take care of the growing family. In short, for me, college was inevitable.

Increasingly, for most Americans it is also “inevitable.” In 1959 45% of high school graduates went to college, meaning more than half didn’t go. In 2009, however, through decades of college promotion and a shifting economy, the numbers shot up to 74% going to college, hence making it “abnormal” if you didn’t go. Of course, there are a lot of complicating factors to this story, but one I want to point to is college dropout rates. It’s great from the perspective of national prosperity that more and more students go to college, but what do they do once they’re there? According to a 2011 study optimistically titled “Pathways to Prosperity” just 56% of students who start a bachelor’s degree finish within 6 years. Even worse, only 46% of Americans complete college (2 or 4 year degrees) once they have started. This is like rushing kids onto the bus in the morning, making sure they have their scarves and mittens and lunchboxes and apples for the teacher, only to drop more than half of them at the mall.

Whatever the reasons for these alarmingly high college dropout rates--and there are many--this trend says to me that many students are going to college for the wrong reasons. College, in many ways, is not where they need to be, at least not right after high school. So, thinking about juniors and seniors in high school who are looking forward to the great unknown, I want to ask what they should be considering when considering college and what, ultimately, are the *good* reasons to go.

## Personal Aspirations

I think I went to college for a mix of good and bad reasons. The bad ones I listed above: social pressure and fear of lacking self-direction and initiative. The good ones I held close to the chest, maybe even hiding them from myself. On the gut level, full of excited butterflies, I wanted to get out of my small New England town, to experience a new place and new social scene. This somewhat banal desire, I realized, didn’t necessarily point to college, it could have pointed to a hitchhike across Europe. Also on the gut level, I knew that the people I wanted to be like, my personal giants, had gone to college and I wanted to follow their footsteps.

Kurt Vonnegut was such a giant for me in high school. Having read nearly everything he’d written, from *Galapagos* to *Slaughterhouse-5* to *Breakfast of Champions*, I was in love with the post-apocalyptic, slightly racy, philosophical, quirky and morally ambiguous world he created. He was one of the few authors I continued to read after we’d stopped reading him for class. By chance, I learned from the back flap of one of his books that Vonnegut had gone to the University of Chicago. He studied Anthropology at the University of Chicago.

When I read this, something clicked. I had just looked up the word “anthropology” after hearing Daniel Quinn, author of *Ishmael*, an immensely influential book for me at the time, say it in a talk he gave at a nearby community college. I was pretty sure that I was interested in studying whatever it was that “anthropology” was--my understanding at the time was studying other ways of living, because our society’s way seemed broken.

So these were some of my good reasons: very idiosyncratic and of-the-moment. At the time, these thoughts and motivations were bubbling under the surface, the surface on which the bad reasons whirled about and dominated.

Since then, and since applying and coming to graduate school, I’ve learned another important, good reason to go to college that transcends my own personal justifications: colleges and universities are powerful institutions that can positively transform you.



*Is education like a balance beam? Is it harder to get back on once you’ve gotten off?*



*Shawn Lavoie, college graduate and clown, seen here during his time with Circ-esteem, a community building Circus program.*

## Institutions have magical power

The first day of orientation at the Harvard Graduate School of Education, where I'm currently studying, Dean McCarthy alerted the 700 incoming students to the power of having a Harvard degree. The Dean described a former graduate who was offered a position as a head of a large urban school district. The student had written saying that she was worried that she was unqualified, that she had never taken on such a big responsibility. The Dean

reminded us that when we are stamped with the Harvard name, people will assume competency and leadership capacity. Further, she exhorted us to be prepared to be take on such positions, like the former graduate ultimately did.

Harvard, of course, is a special case, but I would contend that most universities carry a similar weight. People want to believe that institutions of higher education have power, that a college degree matters. Our society has a lot invested in college and what is supposedly learned there. The combined force of that belief and of the actual increase of knowledge, skill, and confidence in the students, make for a powerful transformative punch.

Going to college because it endows graduates with a certain amount of "social capital" is a very different sort of good reason to the ones I described above, but I believe it's equally valid. I believe in the power of individuals, but I've also learned that individuals need institutions in order to grow. Although you give up some of your "freedom" by going to college, you become a part of something greater than yourself.

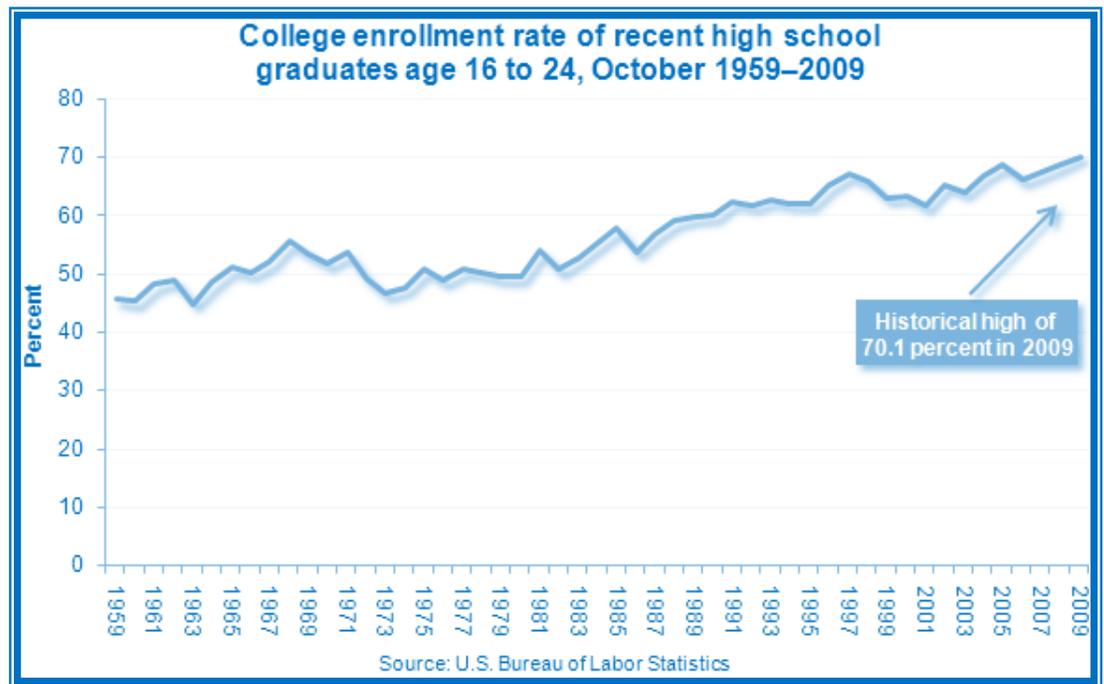
## Take ownership over your own education

This all leads me back to the very purpose of education. I think learning is what we're on Earth to do, but the question remains, how do we learn best? There is a strong counter-argument against any educational institution, which proposes that learning is self-motivated and works best when it is self-directed. The classic image for this is Rousseau's Emile, alone in the field contemplating life away from the corrupting influences of society. There are many popular images we can easily conjure up for the corrupting influence of schools, for example, Pink Floyd's "we don't need no education, we don't need no thought control..." But I think it is very important to critically examine this line of thinking. I agree that learning requires self-motivation--think of the college dropout rate--but we only get so far without seeking teachers.

Seeking teachers is a key phrase, I think, when considering college. After 12 years of compulsory schooling, many students have forgotten what it was they were actually interested in. In this case rushing off to college is a bad move. Rather, I think it's vital for students to take ownership of their education and to ask themselves: What do I want to learn more about? Where might I do that best? Who do I want to be my teacher?

Coming out of YIHS, students have had many chances to learn how to learn. Countless self-evaluations and teacher evaluations have primed students to understand what works and what doesn't in a learning environment. Independent studies and senior projects give students the opportunity to define and pursue their interests and to reach out to mentor teachers. This is perfect training, I believe, for choosing a college, or a gap year program, or an internship, or whatever it is that will allow a student to further his or her learning.

So in the end, learning is the best good reason there is to go to college. Learning requires not only your own motivation, it requires your willingness to seek teachers.



# FISHING FOR UNDERSTANDING

By Ella Wegman-Lawless



*Ella (Class of '12) is now working in Latin America for the third time: she took service trips to both Mexico and Guatemala during her time at YIHS.*

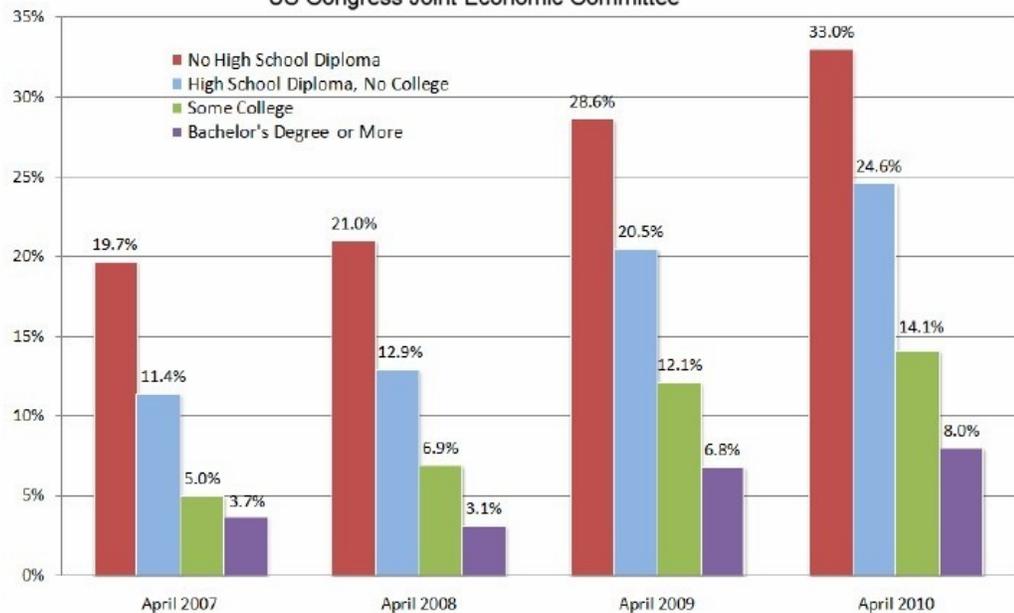
It all started when my host mom came to my door and asked me if I would like to go to the Achote River. I, of course, said yes, wanting to get to know more and more of the land that surrounds my house. When I walked outside, to my delight and horror, two horses were there waiting. My family had been asking me if I knew how to ride a horse. I hesitantly had said yes because it's true, I have ridden a horse before, but always with a saddle and always on a legitimate path. I guess they took that as a "yes, Ella wants to ride this horse to the Achote." So after I failed at getting up on the horse by myself my mom gave me a butt lift and I was up on the horse with only a blanket and a couple of feed sacks separating us. My sister graciously folded over a rope to make me some stirrups.

My mom grabbed the machete and we were on our way. When we started moving my mom told me the story of how she broke her leg riding on the horse I was currently riding. She also told me all about how jumpy it is. With those words I gripped onto neck of that horse as hard as I could. After we crossed the first river I was warned to watch out for the branches that were coming up. We would soon be going through the cacao and coffee trees. Before I knew it my head was down and stayed down for fear of being slapped in the face by a cacao branch.

Then we entered the jungle, my first experience in the Ecuadorian wilderness. I felt so giddy saying over and over to myself "Oh my God, Ella, you're riding a horse almost bare back through the Ecuadorian jungle. Oh, my God." Pretty soon we started moving downhill at a very intense angle. My horse started to slip and trip all over the place as we went down the muddy river valley. This is when I gripped so hard onto the mane of that horse that when I pulled up my hand for one second I had a palm full of black, coarse hairs. I quickly threw them aside, partially so no one would see but also because I had to hold on again before we crossed more small rivers and went down more slippery slopes. After a good chunk of time, (my

## Unemployment Rate of 16-24 Year Olds By Education

US Congress Joint Economic Committee



Source: Bureau of Labor Statistics, Household Survey.

sense of time here has gotten a little fuzzy) maybe 45 minutes, we finally arrived at an opening and I realized we had (for the love of God, finally!) arrived at the river!

I happily got off the horse and walked over to the bank of the river. After I took in the beauty that surrounded me I realized I didn't really know what we were doing there. My family had told me before that they go to the Achote to fish, but I didn't know how. Soon enough my family, still fully clothed, walked into the river, laid on their stomachs around a rock, and stuck their hands all around the edges of the rock. I described to my mom catfish noodling and asked her if that is what they were doing. She kind of shrugged and said yes. As I said to myself "alright you're going to go noodling Ecu-style" I squatted by the rock and stuffed my hand into its deep, dark, unknown crevices wiggling my fingers around searching for fish. After a little while my whole family got excited and I realized that we had found a fish. They corralled it over to my side of the rock telling me to catch it. (This is when I realized it wasn't noodling it was just catching fish by hand.) It was so slippery and I couldn't for the life of me get it. Then the fishing team started to wrangle a sock on to my hand, I put two and two together and with my newly frictioned hand I pulled the fish out of the water. I caught my first fish by hand! It soon met the machete, its guts thrown to the rock and then it thrown in the bag. This process got repeated over and over again that day until our sack was full of fish. We were tired, wet, and ready to go home.

Before I could offer the horse to one of my siblings so that I could walk and not ride the horse, I got butt lifted again onto that horse to do that whole journey in reverse. This time I was holding on to the neck hair for my dear life as the horse tripped up the muddy slopes, over streams and through the cacao and coffee branches. We finally reached the last river, I was so happy to know I was almost home. When we got home I got off the horse, the machete got put on the shelf, a pot of rice started boiling and the fish thrown in the pot: head, tail and everything in between. My whole family of 7 and I feasted on fresh guanas, which is what the fish is called, and, of course, rice.

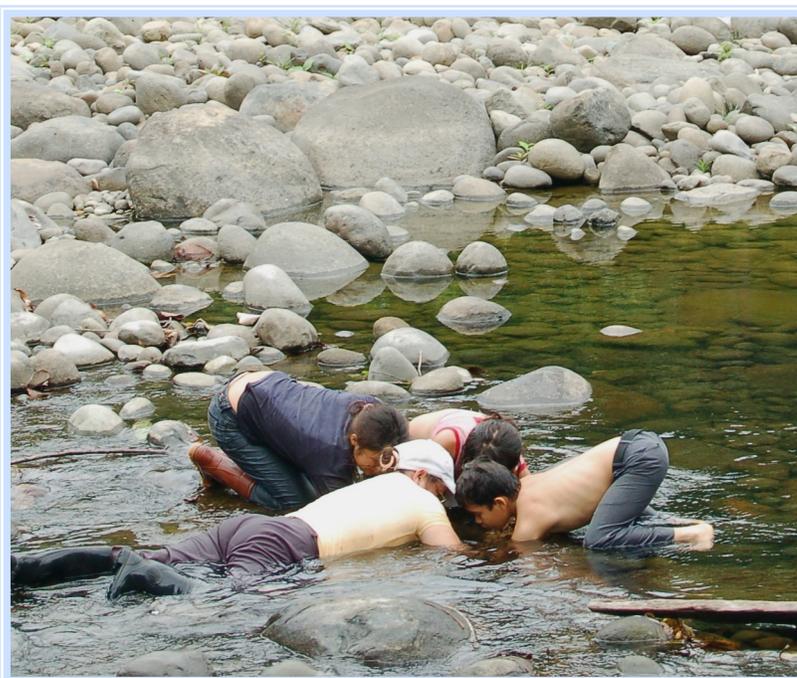
My host family consists of my mom, dad, three sisters and two brothers. My siblings' ages range from 10-26. This fabulous open family and I live on a small cacao and coffee farm. We have dogs, horses, cows, ducks, chickens, turkeys, pigeons, guinea pigs, and a ton of pigs. So there is usually always something going on here, whether it be fishing by hand, feeding the pigs sugar cane, or cooking plantain tamales. We live in the country a fifteen-minute walk from the closest "town." Believe it or not it is even smaller than Viroqua. This town boasts a school, a church, one store off the side of a house, and three other houses.



*Ella is helping improve agricultural science in Ecuador through the Global Citizen Year program.*

I work once a week at the school, in the school garden with grades 3-7. The other days I go to different cacao farms around the area, to improve the health of the cacao trees. Mostly by helping the farmers spray microorganisms (don't worry it's all organic) and applying compost! More than that though, I think of my work as learning the Ecuadorian culture, language, and seeing how Ecuadorians work and interact on a daily basis, and, of course, getting integrated with my family here.

If you liked my story and want to read about my adventures, take a gander to this page to see my blog: [www.globalcitizenyear.org/author/ella-wegman-lawless/](http://www.globalcitizenyear.org/author/ella-wegman-lawless/).



*Fishing*



*Christine and Sam sleeping off another trip to foodservice.*

# THE GREAT AMERICAN ROAD TRIP, YIHS STYLE

By Grace Hallberg-Cain

*Each year the junior and senior class take separate tours of the upper-Midwest, visiting a wide variety of post-secondary educational institutions. From art academies to tech schools and from liberal arts colleges to massage therapy institutes, YIHS students are given an up-close and personal look at many of the options available to them after they graduate. Here is the story of this year's Senior College Tour:*

After a 3-hour drive to St. Olaf college in Northfield, Minnesota, most of us found ourselves feeling a bit stiff and tired. We flooded

the admissions office and proceeded to feast on pastries and an assortment of teas (one of the perks of visiting colleges is all of the free snacks). Our class was broken into two groups for a tour of the campus. It was a beautiful, traditional looking campus with ivy-laden stone buildings. Our tour guide highlighted a formerly ordinary looking flower garden when she tripped and fell into it (we all relaxed a little bit after that, maybe college isn't so intimidating after all). St Olaf has a prestigious music department which is one of their main focuses. For me one of the highlights of the visit was walking down a hall in the music wing and hearing students practicing in private cubicles. We heard a variety of piano, violin, clarinet, cello and trumpet. Our guide explained that the cubicles were soundproofed so that we could hear the music that was being played but the students couldn't hear each other. A few of us on the tour were blessed

enough to hear a choral rehearsal. It started out in a group message line and ended in an overwhelmingly beautiful harmony. After the choral rehearsal and a delectable free lunch we set off on what we thought would be another three hour drive to the University of Minnesota, Morris.

Sadly we did not account for the possibility of becoming lost. Our estimated time of arrival stretched to five hours and then seven. Some of us were even reduced to asking the forbidden question: are we there yet?? After some time of aimlessly drifting through the unknown



countryside, we admitted to the rather unfortunate truth: we were lost in the country and almost out of gas. I like to compare the following events with the story of Mary and Joseph on the night of Jesus' birth when on a very cold night they were denied entry to the first two inns where they tried to seek refuge.



*The 2012 Senior class, the author is in the top row, left.*

The first farm that we went to

actually laughed at us when we asked them for gas. The second farmer was more amicable but was unable to help us. The third farmer saved us when our only other options would have been to call AAA or walk to the nearest town. When we finally got to Morris at around 11:00pm there was a group of disheveled looking college kids waiting for us; they had obviously been waiting a very long time. They welcomed us with expressions of relief and happily helped us carry our things to their dorm rooms. That night I played a card game with my hosts and their friends and then got some much needed sleep. In the morning we ate a savory breakfast of pastries, fruit, hash browns, eggs and plenty of espresso in the school's cafeteria. After breakfast we toured the school. One of the things that perked my interest the most was a beautiful sprawling stable. A unique opportunity Morris offers its students is to board their horses on campus. We also got to sit in on a 2D design class where students were designing album covers. We wandered around looking at the art facilities: a kiln, a melting pot for metal sculpting, a block printing press. The store room for all of the unfinished artwork and materials was a bit like a real life version of an I Spy book. There was an assortment of dismembered baby dolls, tiny shiny buttons, giant half finished canvases, beanie babies sewn together and formed into abstract sculptures, gorgeous ceramic plates, cups, and vases, and covering almost everything in the room was a thin splattering of paint. We also got to see a life drawing class that was taking place in the next room. After a toothsome lunch at Morris we got back in the car and drove down to Minneapolis.



*The hallowed campus of the University of Minnesota, Morris. Alma Mater of YIHS teachers Matthew Voz and Julee Agar and YIHS alumna Molly Heberlein and Emily Colacino.*

When we arrived in Minneapolis we stopped at a small coffee shop to regroup. Some of us went out exploring while the rest of us stayed, talked over coffee, and filled out college applications. That night we ate at a sushi bar called Origami. Some of the more adventurous people in our group ordered sushi stuffed with an assortment of octopus, eel, and squid. The rest of us, vegetarians, ate rolls containing less exotic fillings such as avocado, squash, and pickled radish; all with large helpings of wasabi, wow! on the way to our hosts my car listened to the James Bond theme song and glided through the streets of downtown Minneapolis in our black van pretending we were spies. All in all, it was a very enjoyable day and there was the promise of a comfy sofa on which to sleep off the hours

of driving.

On Wednesday morning we woke up, packed our things, and were off on another day of visiting prospective colleges. Half of the group visited MCAD (Minneapolis College of Art and Design), while the half I joined visited Macalester College. We got to Macalester at 9:30 for a tour. It struck me how active and diverse the student body was. They have a radio station, 3 student-run publications, 16 different musical ensembles, and countless student organizations and clubs. They have specialty housing for vegetarians (who share daily meals together), culturally active students (who are required to work at the multicultural center to make the campus more accepting and aware), and there are also language houses where students are fully immersed in the language of their house (right now there are 7 different language houses: German, Japanese, French, Spanish, Russian, and Mandarin).

Later that afternoon my group visited the University of Minnesota, while the other half toured the Art Institute. Going to the University of Minnesota is similar to visiting Vatican City. The student body alone is 51,853 not counting teachers, employees and visitors. It feels as if it is its own separate city. The campus was enormous and as we found quite easy to get lost in. Visiting the library was a religious experience in its own right. After we were done visiting the University of Minnesota we embarked on another 3 hour drive to Community Homestead in Osceola, WI.

When we reached Community Homestead (a farm commune that offers an alternative way of living for people with special needs) we enjoyed a wholesome dinner of cheese and home-baked bread as well as a homemade salsa provided by our hostess, Lisa. We relaxed after the long drive and got to know Lisa's family. Then we took part in the Community Homestead Halloween party. There was a jack o'lantern carving contest, the Halloween version of musical chairs, and a game where each person was blindfolded and tried to bite a doughnut attached to a string, another person held the other end of the string trying to keep it away from the blindfolded person, pinata style. There were a creative array of costumes: Johnny Cash, a Hershey's Kiss, a cow, a mummy, an eggplant, and a male hula dancer. The next morning we woke up, had a tour of the farm, and learned the history of the project from Christine, one of the founders of Community Homestead. The farm makes baked goods, grows produce, milks cows and sells crafts and wooden furniture to support itself.

For the last leg of our journey we visited Northland College in Ashland, WI. Northland focuses on environmental studies, they say that every course they offer has at least a little bit of the environment in it. The college is located about a mile from Lake Superior, it is an extremely beautiful area. The students and faculty were very accommodating and laid back, I saw at least 4 people walking around campus with bare feet in 30 degree weather. We stayed in dorms again with student hosts, we spent time getting to know a multitude of students who all seemed to really love their school. I sat in on a fascinating lesson called Soils and Slutes. The teacher of the class was a very tiny, enthusiastic, redheaded man (who happened on that day to be wearing one of his trademark dinosaur tattoos). That day's lesson was mainly focused on shorelines and rock formations. After lunch on Friday we embarked on the 7 hour drive back to Viroqua and our own beds at last!!!!



*Chenoa Moore, on the road, documents a very collegiate breakfast.*



*YIHS seniors at the Community Homestead in Osceola, WI.*

# LEARNING THE VALUE OF IGNORANCE

By Eamon Heberlein

*Eamon Heberlein graduated from YIHS in 2009 and was accepted to Deep Springs College on the Nevada-California border. Deep Springs offers only an associates degree in the liberal arts, yet its holistic and rigorous curriculum draws some of the best young minds in the country to spend two years rustling cattle and wrestling with the questions at the very core of the human condition.*

I was drawn to Deep Springs College because it suggested an honest picture of intelligence. I admit I've often thought "intelligence" was a strange concept. Or perhaps I never fully understood what people meant by the word. Academically we seem to define it too much by memory: if you can remember the day's reading, what enzyme facilitates transcription, Pythagoras's theorem, or what year the French commons stormed the Bastille, you're considered intelligent. But even by the end of my first year at Youth Initiative High School I felt that picture was incomplete. A new addendum seemed necessary to our cultural description of this "intelligence" we care so much about.

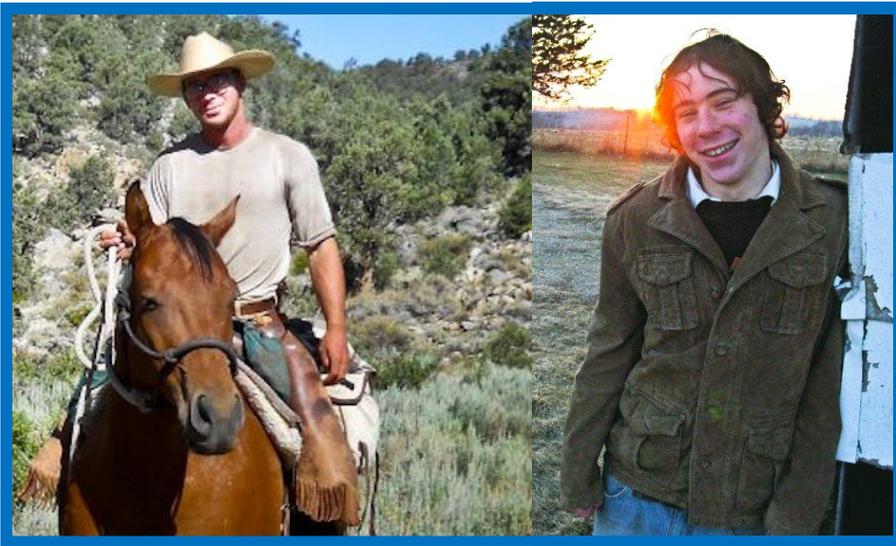
What I loved about Youth Initiative is that it asked me to think holistically. In student meetings, classrooms, and committee work I always felt I was being asked to identify root causes, basic principles, or cause and effect relationships. It's true, we memorized facts, but I've forgotten much of that. What I remember centers more on "feelings" my education gave me. For example, I've retained only rudimentary facts of cell anatomy, but I will never forget my feeling of bewilderment in biology class with Vicki when she inspired the question in me: if a cell is the basic unit of life, what makes *its* gears turn? What gives the basic unit of life, *life*?

Jacob Hundt taught me as much through his questions as he did through his lectures; gesturing towards some new way of looking at a thing he'd ask: "well, how *is* the Big-Bang theory different from a creation myth? (...Is it?)." Repeatedly teachers challenged me in this way to look at both the essence of a thing and how it related to the whole. This lesson was never brought home more effectively than during one of the most defining moments of my high school years: writing the essay that not only got me into Deep Springs, but prepared me for it. It was an essay on the simple question: what is color?

Wrestling this question was among the most profound and painful things I'd ever done; like giving birth to an idea. I wondered: Was color in objects?



*This is what intellectual cowboys look like.*



*Eamon, as he came to us in 8th grade (right), and after he left us for Deep Springs.*

Was color in light? Or was color something created in the mind? Though innumerable philosophers and scientists made different claims (Aristotle that colors were *in* objects, Berkely that colors were only ideas in the mind, etc.) culturally we seemed set on Newton's picture of "colors" corresponding to differing wavelengths of light. Science seemed to have chosen *one* answer: color is in light. But, I wondered, where were pink and brown? If pink and brown don't have their own wavelengths in the electromagnetic spectrum, then they must exist only in my mind. And if they were only in my mind, why not other colors too? It took stepping back to realize I

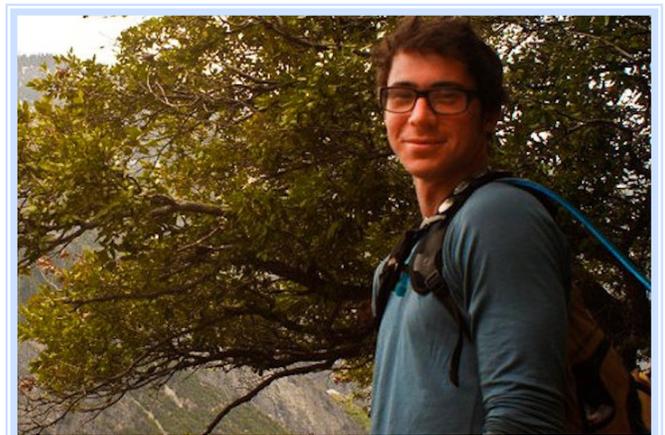
was falling into the same game as Aristotle, Berkely, and Newton, and that really all these things (light, objects, eyes, minds etc.) are necessary pieces that collectively give rise to color perception; that like most things color is best understood by its relation to the whole.

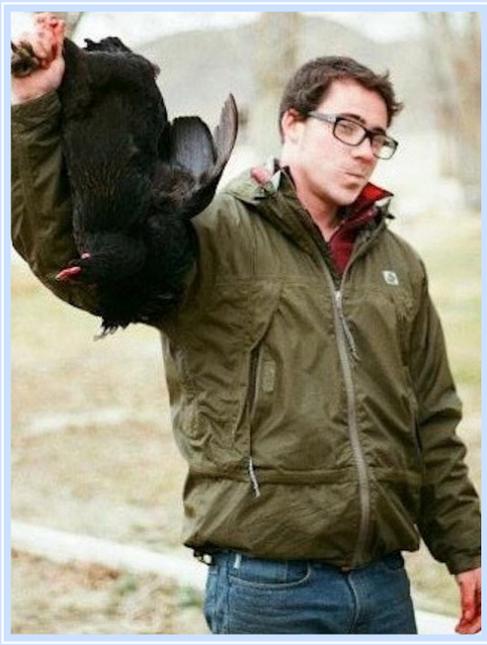
But if color wasn't something I could locate in a specific place, but instead arose out of numerable varying elements, then where was the consistency, where was objectivity? If we change just one variable (put in different eyes, or a different mind) the world becomes a different place. If different eyes with different amounts and ratios of rod and cone cells see colors slightly differently (such as in conditions of tetrachromacy and detrachromacy), how could any way of seeing the world be the right one? The thought astounded me. If there is no right way of seeing the world (literally), than perhaps no one way of experiencing and describing the world could be considered "correct" either! In this way the simple question of color became linked to innumerable other questions about the relative nature of experience. It gave new legitimacy to drastically different perspectives. The question of color became a question of truth, of ethics (where does *justice* come from when everyone's perspective has significance?) as well as religion, and science. I was stunned. One question of color had become a question of everything.

I think it wasn't until I went to Deep Springs that I seriously began using this tool (seeking both the essence of a thing and its relation to the whole) to more fully understand and grasp the significance of an idea. Deep Springs asked me to use this way of thinking to investigate many of humanity's fundamental questions: to peel away all the complicating academic jargon and theorizing of a philosopher, writer, or thinker to try to locate the assumptions, premises, and presuppositions on which they stood. My color fascination was an example of how a deep enough investigation into *any* question always leads us to other fundamental questions. All my intellectual, emotional, and physical endeavors at Deep Spring underlined this point again and again. They continually revealed the interconnectedness of all things.

Deep Springs asked my peers and I to undergo this investigation so we could develop and grow more deliberately rooted in our basic beliefs, principles, and sources of meaning. This holistic thinking was the fodder that nurtured that development. It facilitated this growth because it's when we contemplate the essence of a thing and its relation to the whole that we either deeply (even viscerally) connect with—or feel opposed to—such ways of thinking. If the essence of fundamental principles of a theory, philosophy, or religion doesn't resonate with us, any such alignment of values is arbitrary.

Going through this painful and profound process alongside 25 other men—each growing into different values and finding the same questions via different questions—I





*As in school, so in life: keep your mouth away from an upside-down chicken.*

couldn't help but wonder at and appreciate the diverse ways we all see and experience the world. I found this to be one of the real pearls of a liberal arts education: in grappling with the meaning and significance of an inter-subjective world, one is stretched to become a more mindful, openhearted individual. But there's something else equally profound that came from such in-depth engagements with ideas: when my Deep Springs peers and I explored an inquiry so exhaustively that it escaped to the shelter of other unanswered questions, we would be left with the feeling that all we'd gained from so much painful work and thought was a little more ignorance about, say, what *justice* (or color, or life etc.) really is.

But isn't this a central liberal arts lesson?! Isn't the acquisition of wisdom the realization of ignorance? Indeed Socrates (who paved the way for the liberal arts) was proclaimed by the Oracle as the wisest man on earth, precisely because Socrates stubbornly maintained that he knew nothing. Maybe this is why I was uncomfortable with our cultural obsession with intelligence. Intelligence is about "knowing" while wisdom is about "not knowing"; and it was always in the "not-knowing" that a greater depth and wonder at the world was uncovered. We make claims like: "*color is a constituent part of a ray of light,*" and call it scientific truth, knowledge, "intelligence." But doesn't an honest and holistic engagement reveal that the more we investigate something the more

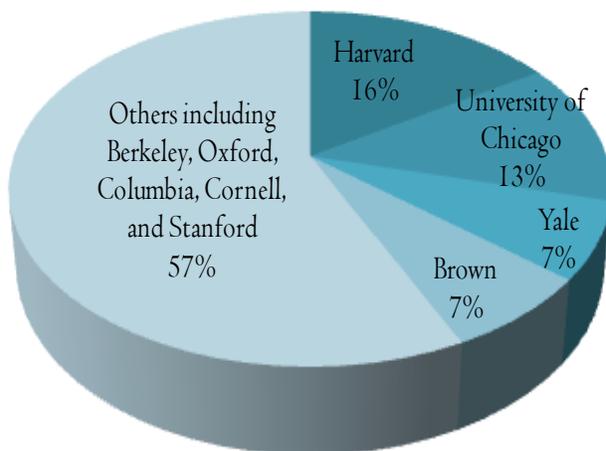
questions arise and the less we seem to understand it? Perhaps our thinking is backwards and it is in these questions that real wisdom is gained.

This, at heart, is what the Youth Initiative and liberal arts narrative is all about. It emphasizes *questions* above answers, conscience over ideology, perspective rather than truth. This is why—as Youth Initiative and Deep Springs posit—an education consists as much in cooking, art, self-governance, cleaning, animal husbandry, conflict-resolution, and singing (!) as it does in math, history, and biology. It emphasizes the need to balance

knowledge with an awareness of what one does not know. This is the kind of thinking our culture should strive for, because it is *this* kind of thinking that befits healthy democracies, communities, and an ecologically mindful world. Many of today's ecological, economic and health crises have resulted from our conviction that we can know and control everything, that we can hermetically partition the world and separate our problems. What we need are more holistically minded people to counter this cultural denial of the interconnectedness of all things. We need, paradoxically, to nurture our ignorance, because therein we find the wherewithal to harness knowledge and "intelligence" in compassionate and meaningful ways.

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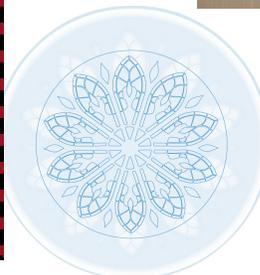
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