



Lindsey Gillam/Index

Senior Jon Ginder, far left, plays Dungeons and Dragons with his friends seniors Nate Ealy and Hannah Oberlohr in West Campus Suites multipurpose room Sunday night. Dungeons and Dragons is a game in which players quest through a series of rooms to win the game.

Truman alumna serve in Corps

BY EMILY BATTMER
Staff Reporter

After graduating, most students choose to go into the workforce or go to graduate school, but some Truman State students choose to do something that benefits others' education in addition to their own. The Peace Corps is one such option, and according to the Truman State website, 20 alumna are currently serving through the corps.

Truman places 15th on the "Top Peace Corps Volunteer Producing Colleges and Universities" among medium-size schools, according to the Peace Corps website. This dedication to service has given many Truman alumni the opportunity to help others and test their abilities.

Alumna Jen Graves graduated during December 2010 with a health science degree. She said she knew she wanted to get her public health master's degree, but first she wanted to gain real world experience and take a break from school.

"I want to implement things I've learned in undergraduate school and come back to graduate school and say, 'I've done this in a real world setting in another country,'" she said.

Graves will leave for Albania on March 14. Once there, she'll spend three months living with a host family, doing pre-service training and learning about the culture and language. Then she'll move to her two-year site, where she'll teach health education somewhere in Albania, work with adolescents and teach about nutrition. Graves said she will not know the two-year site until she gets to Albania.

She said she is excited about the opportunity to help so many people, but thinks she'll end up feeling like she gained even more than she's given. She said she likes the Peace Corps because it gives Americans the opportunity to learn and grow outside their comfort zone.

"Peace Corps is really appealing to me as a person because my goal is to help people and travel and gain as much experience as I can," she said. "I want to be a well-rounded person in that sense."

Graves said, after returning from the Peace Corps and attending graduate school, she wants to continue traveling and teaching health education, so the skills she gains in Albania will be highly applicable.

She said beside the future opportunities it will give her, she hopes to challenge herself and gain a new perspective by leaving behind her family, friends and physical belongings.

"For me, it's just kind of answering the question, 'What do we have left when we're stripped of our possessions,

our family and friends, and everything we rely on?" she said.

Alumna Andrea Morris has been working in Nicaragua since September 2010 as a Peace Corps volunteer, and her work there has answered that question for her. She said that in addition to gaining a deeper understanding of both American and Nicaraguan culture, working with the Peace Corps has helped her gain a better understanding of herself, her skills and her weaknesses.

Morris graduated during May 2010 with bachelor's degrees in English and Spanish. She wanted to participate in some sort of service, and was drawn to the Peace Corps for its focus on sustainable development projects rather than one-time monetary donations. Her primary project has been training English teachers in Nicaragua. She said she works directly with Nicaraguan English teachers to help them develop more interactive and appropriate learning environments.

"It's a good dynamic to be able to work alongside people using only the same resources they have," she said. "It's a really different kind of volunteer experience."

Morris said it has been rewarding to watch teachers implement the ideas she's helped develop. She said it has increased the success of classes, created a better learning environment and helped students value learning much more.

She said she would recommend the Peace Corps to other students because it is a different way of doing volunteer work. Having the opportunity to immerse yourself in a different culture and become part of the community is a valuable experience, she said.

"It's important to gain an understanding of the world outside of your little bubble in the United States," she said.

Career Coordinator Katie Vanderhoof said Truman has had a strong connection with the Peace Corps for a while, and that relationship has grown even more during the past couple of years because of the number of Truman students who join.

Vanderhoof said the liberal arts education and the strong service-oriented attitude Truman emphasizes probably contributes to Truman's graduates' interest in doing non-profit work. She said the Peace Corps appeals to students across all disciplines, and the skill set students gain from volunteering overseas can be translated to any career path.

"Once you're done with the Peace Corps, you can pretty much do whatever you want," she said. "It's a great stepping stone to help you achieve whatever goals you've established."

Slaying to socialize

Students use Dungeons and Dragons as a method of socializing

BY JENNIFER MARKS
Staff Reporter

In the hands of juniors Nate Ealy, John Ginder and Hannah Oberlohr, sword fighters, archers, shape shifters, spell casters and healers complete quests created by the Dungeon Master in a Dungeons and Dragons game.

Despite the stereotypes associated with the game, these three Truman State students view Dungeons and Dragons as an adventurous and imaginative form of social interaction.

"I think the general stereotype is someone who is kind of a homebody that doesn't go out much, kind of lacking in social skills," Ealy said.

Oberlohr said it often is assumed people who play D&D are hairy and wear a lot of black, long coats and big combat boots, but this stereotype is not true.

She said she didn't learn to play until last year, making her the least experienced in the group. A self-proclaimed fan of all things fantasy, Oberlohr said it took some persuading to play with Ginder and Ealy. She said it seemed too geeky at first, but after she played a few times, she realized it was right up her alley.

Ealy said the great thing about D&D is you can be characters and do things you couldn't do in real life.

"I wouldn't be surprised if people who are bad at talking to regular people have a noble personality when they are role-playing a noble character," Ealy said.

Instead of players talking to each other, Ealy said they will talk as their characters.

While the D&D players stereotype is that they are antisocial geeks, Ealy said it actually is a social game.

"It's not a game you can play by yourself," Ealy said. "There has to be some amount of interaction."

Ealy said D&D is more social than video games. He said you might be in a room playing "Mario Kart" with people, but you aren't really interacting with them, aside from yelling profanities. In D&D, you have to



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Seniors Nate Ealy, left, and Hannah Oberlohr, right, create the quest in a Dungeons and Dragons game. Ealy taught Oberlohr how to play Dungeons and Dragons last year.

cooperate with and get to know the people with whom you are playing, Ealy said.

Ginder said that because the game seems so exclusive from the outside, he can see why people associate those who play with being antisocial. It might seem exclusive, but Ginder said he doesn't think there is a D&D group who would exclude someone who truly wanted to play. D&D's social aspect is what makes him enjoy the game so much he said.

"I get to hang out with my friends for a couple hours at a time, eating snacks in a study room," Ginder said. "What's not to like?"

Though they haven't had as much time this semester to play, Ealy said they used to play once a week Friday or Saturday for about four hours.

Ealy said he began playing at 9 years old. He said his father would play the Dungeon Master and Ealy would play multiple characters. Now the experienced player, Ealy said he plays the Dungeon Master for Ober-

lohr and Ginder, two other students whom he taught to play. Ealy said D&D is basically cooperative story telling in which the DM plays God.

Ealy said the Dungeon Master creates a campaign for the players' characters to carry out and decides what monsters the players will fight, where on the map the monsters will occur and the rooms in which they will fight the monsters.

Ginder, who began playing during his freshman year at Truman, said that when playing D&D, players want a balanced party. This means a wide range of characters to execute the campaign. Ginder said players should aim to have melee fighters, characters who fight up close, ranged attackers, those who shoot from a distance, and healers, characters who can treat the injured party members.

"It's pretty complicated," Ginder said. "But once you're comfortable with a lot of the basic ideas it doesn't seem as intimidating."

Top medium colleges and universities for Peace Corps volunteers

- 1: The George Washington University
- 2: American University
- 3: Cornell University
- 4: Miami University – Ohio
- 5: The College of William & Mary
- 15: Truman State University



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