

Fellows Gain Experience at U.S. Department of State

The Frasure-Kruzel-Drew Memorial Fellowship of Humanitarian Demining has been awarded to promising students and recent graduates of James Madison University for over 10 years. This fellowship with the Office of Weapons Removal and Abatement in the U.S. Department of State's Bureau of Political-Military Affairs (PM/WRA) has provided Fellows with a stepping stone to careers in mine action and continues to leave a lasting impact on its participants.

by Lauren Nicole Hill [Center for International Stabilization and Recovery]

Every year since 1999, the Mine Action Information Center has awarded one or more students or recent graduates of James Madison University the Frasure-Kruzel-Drew Memorial Fellowship for Humanitarian Demining, which is funded by the (PM/WRA). The Fellowship was created in honor of Ambassador Robert C. Frasure, Dr. Joseph J. Kruzel and Colonel Samuel Nelson Drew who lost their lives to a landmine in 1995 while on a mission to negotiate an end to the conflict in the war-torn country of Bosnia and Herzegovina. The Fellowship was established to raise awareness about landmine contamination around the world and U.S. government efforts to address the problem. It first began as a semester-long position, but soon expanded to one full year. This extension enabled each Fellow to have a more substantial work experience, granting him or her additional time to complete projects and take on greater responsibilities, while providing day-to-day assistance to PM/WRA.

PM/WRA, then called the Office of Humanitarian Demining Programs, was established in 1998 and supports the mission of the U.S. Conventional Weapons Destruction Program. The program has assisted almost 50 countries since its inception and works closely with other U.S. government agencies such as the U.S. Department of Defense, U.S. Agen-

cy for International Development and the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. PM/WRA also develops, implements and monitors U.S. policy on anti-personnel landmines, small arms/light weapons and man-portable air defense systems (also known as MANPADS, or shoulder-launched missiles).

The JMU Fellow assists PM/WRA's Program Managers with mine-action and conventional-weapons-destruction programs for one or more countries. Working with staff on current projects and traveling on policy-assessment visits are a major part of the Fellow's responsibilities. The Fellow also drafts press releases, conducts research on landmine issues for special projects, and prepares speeches and presentations. Past Fellows have traveled to Afghanistan, Azerbaijan, Cambodia, Djibouti, Peru, Senegal, Sudan and other countries where PM/WRA has programs.

Colonel Yori Escalante, a combat engineer in the U.S. Marine Corps and former Deputy Director of Mine Action Programs at PM/WRA, worked closely with the Fellows from June 2007 to May 2010. He says he has seen the caliber of candidates increase year after year. "As an active-duty Marine, it is good to see that the same level of patriotism and enthusiasm that I see in junior Marines is also evident in the young Americans who want to serve their country outside the military," says Escalante.



Emma Smith with DynCorp International security personnel while conducting a site visit to an Organization for Mine Clearance and Afghan Rehabilitation (OMAR) Community Based Demining project in Kunar province, Afghanistan. March 2010.

PHOTO COURTESY OF PM/WRA

Past Fellows Grateful for Experience

Many of the 18 past Fellows have credited the opportunity for educating them in the mine-action field and for preparation in their careers upon completion of their Fellowship. After serving as the Fellow in 2006–2007, Elise Becker joined The Marshall Legacy Institute in July 2007 as Program Manager. MLI is a nonprofit organization based in Arlington, Virginia, that supports landmine-clearance operations around the world. Becker's duties primarily entail managing MLI's Mine Detection Dog Partnership Program, which provides highly trained mine-sniffing dogs and integration training to indigenous organizations within landmine-affected countries. MLI's current MDDPP focus countries are Afghanistan, Bosnia

and Herzegovina, Iraq and Lebanon, with plans to expand to Angola and Sri Lanka in 2010. Becker has also implemented several survivors' assistance programs in Azerbaijan, and will launch new programs in Bosnia and Herzegovina, and Iraq in 2010. While at PM/WRA, she conducted onsite assessment visits to Afghanistan, Angola, Azerbaijan, Bosnia and Herzegovina, and Iraq. Becker says that her work is both rewarding and challenging. Setting up programs in unfriendly environments such as northern Iraq and Afghanistan can be difficult, but she recognizes that the PM/WRA Fellowship provided her with an early window into mine issues and challenges that she would later encounter in her career. "I am very grateful to WRA and JMU for providing me

with the opportunity to serve as the JMU Fellow," she says. She also feels good knowing that she has assisted MLI in helping people in the mine-affected world since she came on board.

Anthony Morin began working with Harding Security Associates, a government contractor with the U.S. Department of State when his year-long Fellowship ended in 2009. Within the Office of Overseas Protective Operations in the U.S. Department of State's Bureau of Diplomatic Security, he now works as Security Program Officer and is responsible for providing management oversight, operational guidance and budget supervision necessary to establish and maintain effective security forces at U.S. diplomatic and consular facilities.

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JMU Fellows: Where are they now?

Stacy Smith

Stacy Smith, summer 2001 Fellow, was employed by RONCO from June 2002 to January 2010. She worked as a Program Manager for mine-clearance operations and has managed security and training contracts in Afghanistan and Peru. During her tenure at RONCO, Smith had the opportunity to travel to Afghanistan, Angola, Azerbaijan, Peru and Sri Lanka. Smith is currently doing consulting work in the United States for Exploration Logistics, Inc., a subsidiary of Exploration Logistics Group, which provides specialized medical and safety assistance to organizations working in challenging or dangerous environments.

Kurt Chesko

Since the end of Kurt Chesko's spring-semester fellowship in 2001, he has been working for The HALO Trust, the world's largest humanitarian landmine-clearance organization. Currently, he serves as Vice President at HALO USA. Chesko's office works closely with PM/WRA, as well as HALO's American private donors and colleagues in mine-affected countries around the world. Since joining HALO in 2002, he has worked in Afghanistan, Cambodia, Georgia, Mozambique, the Nagorno-Karabakh region of the South Caucasus, Somaliland, Sri Lanka and Sudan.



Anthony Morin poses with local children in a village outside Yei, South Sudan, in February 2009. Morin and his team had just finished lunch when they heard a loud explosion. An item of unexploded ordnance had exploded and set the grassy area next to the village on fire; however, the children were much more interested in the team's cameras and playing a game of soccer than they were in any threat to their village.

PHOTO COURTESY OF ANTHONY MORIN



Incoming 2009–2010 Fellow, Emma Smith, and outgoing 2008–2009 Fellow, Anthony Morin pose atop Monserrate in Bogotá in June 2009 after the conclusion of the *Planificación del Desminado Humanitario* in Colombia.

PHOTO COURTESY OF ANTHONY MORIN

Jennifer Lachman

Jennifer Lachman completed her Fellowship with PM/WRA in December 2005 and immediately began working at Mines Advisory Group America in 2006. MAG is an international non-governmental organization operating in conflict-affected countries to clear the remnants of those conflicts, enabling economic recovery and assisting the development of mine-affected populations. In 2000, MAG started a U.S.-based partner organization, MAG America, to raise awareness and funding in the United States to support MAG's global conflict-recovery programs. In 2006, Lachman started working as MAG America's Development and Communications Manager in Washington, D.C., and became the organization's first full-time staff member. During her time with MAG America, Lachman has helped the NGO grow to a staff of four, and her team now raises nearly US\$20 million a year for MAG America's programs. Her career with the company has allowed her to travel to Cambodia, Iraq, Lebanon and Sudan.



2009–2010 Fellow Emma Smith poses with locals during her trip to Sudan.

PHOTO COURTESY OF PM/WRA

He works to ensure a safe and secure environment for conducting foreign policy. Morin has plans to travel to Barbados, Bolivia, Canada, Costa Rica, and Trinidad and Tobago for program reviews in the near future.

The decision to leave the field of mine action was the only challenge that he faced when choosing his career following the completion of his Fellowship. He says he felt attached to the field of mine action after his fellowship experience and his work at the MAIC for over three years prior to that.

Increased Responsibilities

Recent Fellows have become more involved in the daily operations of the PM/WRA office. In the past two years, PM/WRA has teamed the cur-

rent Fellow with a Program Manager in the office so he or she can assist with more complex operations; in addition, the Fellow has recently been given the title of “Assistant Program Manager.” When

unforeseen personnel issues resulted in a vacancy in the office a few times, the Fellow was able to step in and keep a program going for PM/WRA. For instance, several years ago Jennifer Lachman, 2005–2006



Kate McFarland (second from left) and CISR employees (left to right) Jeremiah Smith, Chris Erhart and Geary Cox II pose with the James Madison statue during the 2010 Senior Managers’ Course in ERW and Mine Action at JMU.

PHOTO COURTESY OF CISR



Emma Smith visits Mine Detection Center project in Afghanistan with PM/WRA Deputy Director of Programs COL Yori Escalante, USMC.

PHOTO COURTESY OF PM/WRA

Fellow, was asked to take over the Sudan program for a short period when the Program Manager had a medical emergency. PM/WRA's current Fellow, Emma Smith, has served as the day-to-day Program Manager for Afghanistan since January 2010 when the Afghanistan Program Manager left the office for a new job opportunity. She will continue at PM/WRA as a contractor during 2010–2011.

Kate McFarland is PM/WRA's 19th Fellow; she will begin her Fellowship in July 2010. "I am very excited for even this small part in the humanitarian-demining effort; I am honored to be a part of this program because it creates a safer environment for people all over the world." McFarland has worked at CISR for a little over a year, and she recently helped facilitate the 2010 Senior Managers' Course in ERW and Mine Action at JMU to help her prepare for her new responsibilities at PM/WRA. During the course, she interacted with 19 participants from 12 countries and many presenters from various international or-

ganizations. She feels this opportunity was a good way to begin engaging with managers from mine-action programs she will deal with on a daily basis. McFarland is interested in pursuing a career in the field of human rights, so this fellowship will be a step in the right direction. The Fellowship continues to provide JMU students and alumni with valuable experiences and has proven to be invaluable in their careers. The Fellow provides substantial support to the PM/WRA office as well.

Jim Lawrence, PM/WRA's Acting Director, says, "The Frasure-Kruzel-Drew Fellowship provides an incredible opportunity for recent college graduates to learn about the Department of State and its foreign-assistance programs. Fellows work side by side with Program Managers and participate in program assessment visits. In return, the office gets some of the best young talent available. It is a great program and everyone benefits. The Fellows are professional, capable, and promising examples of future leaders in the mine-

action, humanitarian assistance, and government communities. The fellowship has helped many of them launch successful careers in government service as well as the private sector. It is an amazing program." ▶



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