

Students teach and learn at refugee haven



Getting to help conduct research side-by-side with faculty is an invaluable experience for JMU undergraduate students. Junior Sara Kim ('15) and sophomore Steve Kim ('16) got firsthand experience during a Study Abroad trip to Seoul, South Korea. Their destination was the Yeo-Myung School in Seoul, a haven for North Korean refugees. The school teaches educational curriculum, life skills and cultural assimilation for young adults who have fled their lives in North Korea to live in democratic South Korea.

Teaching a classroom full of peers was an unusual but exciting challenge for the students. Steven, an English major, taught the upper-level English class and says, "I was able to connect with the students by being open and friendly with them. If I had started my relationships with them by acting as their teacher from the beginning, it would have been difficult to get closer because of the culture in Korea."

Sara taught the middle-school level English lessons and tried to relate her curriculum to American pop culture, something the

Korean students were very interested in. "I taught them English by learning the lyrics of Pink's song *Cry*. The lyrics include 'gotta get up and try' and it fits so well with their situation. They're experiencing conflict in so many ways. Their thinking, behavior, family situation and how they grew up; it sticks with them for the rest of their lives," says Sara.

"I learned more from them than they did from me. They got there somehow, they didn't give up and they are still trying to survive. This makes me realize that I need to be thankful and humble about what I've been given; they don't really say 'thank you,' but they know they are lucky and they are grateful," adds Sara.

Steven hopes to return to Korea and reconnect with his students, "This experience really reinforced my decision to go back to Korea after graduating. My goal is to become a teacher in Korea. I can really imagine myself becoming one and sticking with it for a long time." ❧

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Latino initiative pairs Centennial Scholars and high-school students

JMU's Centennial Scholars are being paired with local high-school students as mentors through the Shenandoah Valley Scholars Latino Initiative. The initiative partners sophomore Centennial Scholars at JMU with selected Latino sophomores from

Harrisonburg High School for a three-year mentoring relationship.

The goal, according to Carlos Alemán, JMU professor of communication studies and coordinator of the mentoring and academic program, is to empower and

encourage promising Latino students who might not otherwise have college in mind for their future.

Dulcé, a 16-year-old junior at Harrisonburg High School, is interested in the medical field and landed a volunteer position at Rockingham Memorial Hospital through SV-SLI. The mentoring program "lets you know that you have someone there with you who's been through what you're going through," Dulcé says of her mentor, JMU senior Andrea Gonzalez ('15). "She's kind of like an older sister. She keeps me on track. She'll say things to me like, 'you can't slack off or you'll get behind. You have to pay attention.'" ❧

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Andrea Gonzalez ('15), fourth from left in front, with new inductees at the April 2014 induction ceremony at Harrisonburg High School.