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Mount Mary College Nursing Students Feel the Heartbeat of Peru

High atop the Peruvian Andes in the remote ruins of Machu Picchu, Mount Mary College nursing students visualized the adventures that lie ahead. They were about to embark on a strange new land, where what they'd soon encounter would change their lives forever.

Mount Mary senior, Chloe Drummand, one of the nine nursing students who traveled to Peru said, "There's nothing like it: To live among the villagers, help at an impoverished health clinic and truly make a difference in their lives. I'd do again in an instant." Drummand earned educational credits in Spanish and nursing during her 29-day study in Peru.

In July, nine nursing students enjoyed the lush surroundings and world wonders of Machu Picchu, the Lost City of the Incas, and Colca Canyon the deepest canyon in the world. They studied along side Peruvian doctors in a bustling health clinic in the small village of Alta Cyma, high on a mountain top. In this squatter settlement, the students assisted in assessing patients with ailments such as high blood pressure and pulmonary disorders. "Though the people had nothing, they were so happy. They were fascinated with us and so touched that we wanted to help them," said Drummand.

"The Mount Mary study abroad program is so much more than a trip," said Richard Muirhead, Director of International Studies at Mount Mary College. "We help students grow intellectually while remaining faithful to the values of our college. By immersing ourselves in the culture, we become aware of social justice and become sensitive to the needs of others. Once students study abroad with Mount Mary, many attend future trips, because of our in-depth study and hands-on cultural experiences" added Muirhead.

Nursing students also got a hands-on lesson in social justice while visiting Colca Canyon. Though they learned about the history, the culture and environment, they got a very close look at social discrepancies within Peru. The students were led by Carlos, a local guide, to Colca Canyon a site which attracts tourists. It's common to see children begging as tourist pass by. But that day changed the students forever; they learned how one man could make a difference. Instead of allowing the children to ask for money, Carlos taught the children to set up tables and inform visitors about the country's agriculture. "I remember an 11- year- old girl teaching us about Quinoa, a tasty grain, explaining how the agricultural process works. She maintained her pride and dignity as she earned money for her family", said Drummand.

The accommodations were simple in Peru. Mount Mary students lived with local families in the rural village of Arequipa. Drummand said, "We really go to know the people. Everyone wanted to help each other and take care of each other. Here in America, we don't even talk to the people who live next door. In Arequipa, the villagers treated each other like family. They gave their neighbors whatever they had. It was really humbling. Studying abroad has changed me forever, who I am, for the better."

Mount Mary College offers opportunities for both undergraduate and graduate level students to study abroad in Europe, South and Central Americas, and Asia on a short-term basis while earning major, core or elective credits. During the 2007-2008 academic year, more than 120 Mount Mary students participated in the Study Abroad program. Mount Mary College organizes approximately six study abroad opportunities per year. Studies in South Korea/Japan, Italy, Germany, Costa Rica, El Salvador and Spain are currently planned. For more information contact Richard Muirhead, Director of International Studies at 414-258-4810.

