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Since its opening in 1970 Apex High School has seen many great educators, shaping the minds of the next generation. Among the best is the 9th grade AOIT Biology teacher Mr. Jeffery Derda. After graduating high school with a GPA of 4.8 he was accepted to the University of Pittsburgh where he gained a bachelor's degree in 1998 and a master's in 1999. Since then he has held a position at Apex High School teaching biology in a way that is very hard to describe. Mr. Derda is the kind of teacher who doesn't just make the class take notes for 90 minutes every day. He keeps class interesting, turning the worst lessons into fun and exciting days. He gives us

Teacher Spotlight Mr. Jeffery Derda

labs that everyone will enjoy and turns projects into role playing games. He is very good at taking the pressure off of tests by reassuring us and telling us exactly what we are going to be looking at. Never has there been something on a test that was not shown in the notes. Mr. Derda does not set the class up to fail, but rather builds us to success. This is why he has won an award from the University of Pittsburgh for be-

ing a Distinguished Alumni. Of the thousands of people who graduate from the University of Pittsburgh every year, Mr. Derda stands out as one of the best by doing what he loves and taking pride in his work. Being part of the AOIT Program he also integrates a lot of technology in his lessons. Rarely does a day go by when we don't use the camera tray and projector for notes or to view diagrams. We have used



telescopes to look at cells that are invisible to the naked eye. Overall, Mr. Derda is an excellent teacher and always does fine work because in the end he cares about all of us, and wants to see us all succeed.

Apex High School—Academy of Information Technology (AOIT)

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By Mackenzie Dolan

“A great last break to end the school year.” Many other AOIT students agree with this quote said by senior Alex Hoffmann. Spring break is the last big break before school is out and then everyone will be busy for the summer. Also, this is the last spring break of high school for the AOIT seniors. For her spring break, Alex Hoffmann traveled to Los Angeles, California

where she walked



Alex Hoffmann and Mackenzie Dolan shopping

Spring Break 2011

around the boulevards and took day trips to Venice Beach and Santa Monica. She had a great time! Junior Alia Capone went to Myrtle Beach where she went to the beach every day and spent time with her friends. “It’s fun to have a week off from all the stress of school and just relax with friends,” said Alia about her spring break trip. Freshmen Cole Bowser took the week to travel to Hilton Head with his family and



Alex Hoffmann on the Santa Monica Pier.

friends. There, he went to the beach, rode bikes around the town, and ate at the Salty Dog Café. Overall, the students of AOIT had awesome spring breaks. As Cole said it, “Now the next break to look forward to is summer!”



Marybeth Burris, Danielle LePage, Alison Winters, and Alia Capone.



By Mariane Ghazaleh

On Thursday, March 24, the freshman AOIT class went on the famous field trip to the North Carolina Zoo. With blue skies, and comfortable temperatures, the day could not have been any more perfect. The freshman class left around 7:40am and arrived back at the school at 2:15pm. During their day out, the students were able to walk around the park and visit the gift shop. “My favorite part of the zoo was getting to see the variety of

NC Zoo Field Trip

animals they had,” says Monica Rizk. The trip was not all entertainment however. Earlier that week, the students were put into groups and assigned an animal to research and observe at the zoo. On the field trip, the students had to research the animal, its habitat, and any other information such as marketing and advertising to help them complete their largest assignment: convincing the Board of Directors at a zoo to purchase their animal. On April 14, the presentations were given in Mr. Derda’s room in front of the board, consisting of Mr. Derda, Mrs. Oster, Mrs. Cherry, Mrs. Smith, and Mrs. Francis, and four

other classes. The different angles the groups took on the presentations were very creative. One group took on the role of a major animal selling company while another introduced themselves as a non-profit organization. The presentation was not only graded on the group’s knowledge of the animal, but also how well they could persuade the audience. “The thing I learned most from this project was how to be appropriate in a business setting, and how to interact with people,” MaryAlex Thompson states. Overall, the project was one everyone has benefited from.



By Maite Ghazaleh

Congratulations to Mrs. Francis and Mrs. Szep!

Mrs. Francis (AOIT English I and IV) and Mrs. Szep (AOIT e-Commerce II) have each received a Borchardt Fellowship through NCSU which covers expenses for study abroad in England, for a value of approximately \$1700. In addition, they will receive 3 hours of graduate credit for a value of approximately \$700. They are responsible for paying flights, and the PTSA has stepped in to generously fund \$500 each to defray the cost of the flights.

The course blends academic and experiential learning. Participants not only study current research and theory in the teaching of writing, they experience every aspect of the writing process approach through daily writing and 21st Century technology.

England will be their classroom! They will visit literary and historical sites and use these to prompt their writing. They will look for Platform 9 3/4 in King's Cross, walk in the footsteps of Jane Austen, sit down with Shakespeare at the Globe Theater, experience a dab of Dickens' London, to name a few of the excursions. And they will share these experiences with international students.

This course is planned in conjunction with the orientation for international students at Surrey University. They will join this group on some of their excursions and will have their own tours: Surrey countryside, Winchester Cathedral, Windsor Castle, Dickens museum, Austen's Chawton Cottage, the Globe Theater, for example.

They will use digital tools to help capture ideas, experiences and reflections on the trip. They will also create resources that can be shared with friends, family and students.

Mrs. Francis and Mrs. Szep will attend the seminar from July 25 to August 7.

Q: How did you hear about the scholarship?

Szep: Mrs. Francis received information from NC State and forwarded it to me. We completed the applications together, as the experience seemed to fit our joint teaching.

Q: How much effort and time did it take for the application process?

Francis: I spent a good bit of time, 1st draft, 2nd draft, had several people read it over and give me feedback. We collaborated on our applications, putting the final together, side by side at the computer.

Q: What obstacles did you face during the application process?

Szep: Finding our way to the interview! Between parking and navigating our way through NC State's campus – well, that was a challenge!

Q: What advantages do you think you may have had against your competition?

Szep: Between us, we are already teaching the British Literature content, combined with technology. Because we presented ourselves as a collaborative team within the AOIT and NAF network, we believe they viewed us as being able to share our experiences and learning this summer with a wider network than just our own school.

Francis: For me, I think it was years of experience in general combined with my AOIT/NAF association. Also, I have traveled a great deal throughout my life, from the time I was a child and have an undergraduate degree in international studies.

Q: What does it mean to you to have been

awarded this scholarship?

Szep: Our goals are to enhance our understanding of British literature, culture and values. The opportunity to immerse ourselves in the University of Surrey Writing and Technology Seminar will create a stronger team between Mrs. Francis and myself, and help us bring a richer background to our AOIT students. Our vision is to share our ideas throughout the NAF collaboration network.

Francis: It's been a real thrill to think after all these years in the high school classroom, removed the halls of college academia, I have something of value to contribute and much to be gained by taking part in such an exciting two week seminar. It's inspiring just thinking about bringing home valuable ideas and learning/practicing the technological means to implement those ideas in the high school classroom. After all, finding the time to try and provide students with new lessons that blend real world activities with 21st century skills is not easy. But I work at it and we take it seriously. How could we not and continue our career as educators?



Congratulations 2011 AOIT Graduates!

Kendra Joan Bell	Kurtis Abraham Eller	Philip Cunningham Kinney	Samantha Ann Slade
Stephen Paul Benbow	Zachary Lewis Erlemann	Kenneth Murithi Kivuti	Dana Gibson Smith
Charles Francis Bossé	Torrey Maya Feldman	Nicholas James Lynch	Joseph Nathaniel Stephens II
Ashley Nicole Bowser	Eric William Fletcher	Kristina Lyn Marks	Sierra Frances Swann
Jill Corley Boyle	Matthew William Frank	Josh Thomas Nagel	Arianna Marie Swift
Cawley Mae Bromley	Pranav Hemant Gandhi	Caroline Joy Nieman	Curtis Tholen Thomas
James Jalen Campbell	William James Garrison	Michael Joseph Pittelli	Laurin Alyssa Thompke
Kelsey Jane Carter	Thomas Dean Genduso	Alexandra Leigh Radford	Cory Adam Thompson
Griffin Rorie Connors	Maite Hunes Abu Ghazaleh	Sunil Ramakrishnan	Stefan Archibald Vannatta
Richard Selon Cook II	Avriel Reyes Harvey	Christina Marie Rizk	Renato Varga
Kelly Lynn Cravener	James Paul Haughney	Jessica Marie Roesner	Adrian Khoi-Nha Vu
Chelsea Nicole Delponte	Andrew James Hibbard	Christina Marie Salpietro	Kathryn Elizabeth Wagner
Jared Andrew DeMorat	Alexandra Marie Hoffmann	Adam James Schlobohm	Andrew Hans Weih
Brandon Joseph Dickey	Benjamin Clayton Housley	Samantha Erica Seelinger	Emil Harold Weiss
MacKenzie Alexandra Dolan	Erica Lashonda Houston	Alecia Lani Shepard	Oliver Brian Weston
William James Dwork	Atiyasha Kaur	Christopher Michael Shirley	Lawrence Edward Williams





By Julie Oster

AOIT had a busy spring with field trips to Cisco, Net App, the NC Zoo, Beaufort, Linville and the Challenge Course at UNC. Our ninth grade students also participated in a videoconference with an AOIT program at Hilltop High School in Chula Vista, CA. The students compared data collection from the Atlantic and Pacific Coasts. Thank you to LORD Corporation for the use of their videoconferencing system.

On May 19, we celebrated the AOIT graduation of 64 seniors. Senior banquet committee chair, Nancy Clemons,

coordinated the event that included the students, parents, advisory board, faculty, and WCPSS staff. The keynote speaker was Iain Gray, VP of Customer Engagement at Red Hat.

As our seniors move on, we welcome 90 new AOIT freshmen for 2011-2012. AOIT will have over 235 students over the four grades. The junior class will be the first group of 90 students looking for internships. Our current juniors (70) have started or are still looking for internship positions. Please share information about our AOIT internship program to everyone you know. More information can be found at

www.apexhigh.com/aoit/internships.

At the end of this school year, we also say good-bye and good luck to Chris Cherry, who is retiring. Ms. Cherry is one of the original teachers in AOIT and will be greatly missed. She has taught AOIT Computer Applications I since 2001 and has been a teacher at AHS for 21 years. Chris plans to spend more time with her family, including her three grandsons.

I hope everyone has a great summer. Best of luck to the class of 2011 and welcome to the class of 2015!



AOIT Freshmen, Jordan Sink, Mariane Ghazaleh, Sneha Venkatraman, Christie Kendall, and Monica Rizk take a break while visiting the NC Zoo.

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