Coral Reef Ed-Ventures Program
Alumnae Newsletter
Summer 2009 – 10th Anniversary
**Cover Photo Captions** – top: logo from the 2009 Coral Ed T-Shirt, designed by Hannah Dunning ’09 and Al Curran; bottom: the participants and student teachers of the 2009 Coral Ed Youth Program.
July 17, 2009 (last day of Coral Ed – 2009)

To All Coral Ed Alums,

Greetings from the Smith College campus and, of course, from Belize!

Summer 2009 marked the 10th anniversary of the Smith College Coral Reef Ed-Ventures Program in Belize, in cooperation with Hol Chan Marine Reserve and with sponsorship of the Smith Environmental Science & Policy Program. In observance of our collective Coral Ed anniversary, it seemed the fitting time for a first-ever Coral Ed Alumnae newsletter. At this point in our history, 37 Smith alumnae and students have participated as student teachers in the program. With a bit of hard work, we were able to contact almost all of our Coral Ed alums, and the good news is that we received responses from nearly everyone!

In 2000, Catya Harrold (nee Parsons) and Katie Buckman were the pioneer student teachers for our initial Coral Ed-Ventures program in San Pedro. That year, seven local San Pedro children were enrolled in the program. This summer just over 100 San Pedro students participated, and that has been the case for the past several years! Indeed, Coral Ed has grown and developed in many new and exciting directions.

The 2-week, activity-based Youth Program for children ages 7 to 11 remains the core of the program, and it has been held at the RC School for the last several years. A more recent addition is our Advanced Program for those children ages 12 and older. This is a smaller group, but they have achieved great things. Last summer, in recognition of the International Year of the Reef, the group produced a very professional magazine titled Save the Reef! That’s A Belief! This full-color publication consisted of 14 pages of short essays, poetry, drawing, and photos, all related to reef conservation and sustainability. It was printed in San Pedro and widely distributed locally. This summer the Advanced group produced a second, very impressive magazine, The Reef and Us.

The 2009 Team did an exceptional job, as usual with all our teams. Positive community response has grown over the years and is now quite strong. We are greatly indebted to Miguel Allamilla, Jr. and the staff at Hol Chan Marine Reserve for their unwavering support throughout and to Mellie Badillo for making her apartment available to now many Coral Ed teams. For the past two years, the Teams have made a real effort in local fund-raising, with considerable success. This year close to $1,000 US was donated to the program by local businesses, in addition to many donations of snacks and program supplies. The funds went to support the glass-bottom boat expedition for the Youth Program and the publication of The Reef and Us, with a copy given to all “graduates” of both programs. We thank the 2009 Team for its good work. Two excellent news stories in the San Pedro papers give an excellent overview of Coral Ed. We urge you to read Story #6 in the July 9, 2009 edition of Ambergris Today (www.ambergriscaye.com) – check the archives upper section of home page, and the story in the San Pedro Sun of June 6, 2009 (http://ambergriscaye.com/sanpedrosun/). Both stories also can be accessed from Smith College Gate news (check the July 2009 news archive).

We thank all of you for your contributions to this newsletter and salute you on your many accomplishments!

Our best wishes to all of you,

Al Curran, Susan Etheredge, & Paulette Peckol
(acurran@smith.edu, setheredge@smith.edu, ppeckol@smith.edu)
Summer 2000: The Initial Venture!

L to R: Al Curran, Kate, & Catya examine a coral specimen from the rubble beach at Bacalar Chico.

Kate Buckman, Bio and Marine Science & Policy (= MS&P) ’01:
buckman@whoi.edu

Since my graduation from Smith I have continued to be involved in marine science and education. Through a series of serendipitous events I was able to participate in a WHOI-led research cruise to the Galapagos following my last summer in Belize (2001). As a result of the contacts I made during that experience I had the good fortune to be able to participate in a number of additional cruises, studying the biology, chemistry, and geology of hydrothermal vent systems in the Pacific Ocean, which was a totally new and exciting aspect of oceanography for me and led the first of multiple dives in the submersible Alvin as part of my research. I also spent a number of months working for Sea Education Association as an assistant scientist, and thoroughly enjoying the unconventional combination of teaching and research while on a tall ship. I continued to work as a tech at WHOI for about a year before making the decision to further my education in graduate school. Now, I am on the verge of getting my PhD from the MIT/WHOI Joint Program in Oceanography, where I have continued to study hydrothermal vent ecology, with my thesis focused on the ecology of the little-studied fish species that live at vents on the East Pacific Rise. Throughout my time at WHOI I have had a number of opportunities to work with students and teachers, both on land and at sea, in person and virtually; and have always found that my experiences in Coral Reef Ed-Ventures prepared me well for these interactions. I look back fondly at the time I spent teaching and surveying fish in Belize, and am very proud of the work that Smith students are continuing to do. It's amazing to think of how the program has grown since Catya and I were first there! Keep up the good work.

Catya Harrold (nee Parsons), Bio and MS&P AC ’01; M.A.T. ’04: cat_harrold@yahoo.com

When we returned from Belize in 2001, I looked for environmental education position, but the disaster of 9/11 put a freeze on most hiring. I worked for the Smith Alumnae Association for 2 years after graduation while I debated whether to get a masters degree in education or science. My experiences in Belize convinced me that I could help the environment, especially the ocean and its reefs, by exciting children about the wonders of the natural world. I received my Masters in Education from Smith in 2004 and began teaching that fall, first in the New York City projects and now in a large private school in the Maryland suburbs of Washington, D.C. My students will not all be scientists, but I believe they will be better citizens capable of making informed, logical decisions that will improve the environment. I know some have already encouraged their families to compost and recycle, notice and discuss scientific topics in the news, badger the school’s cafeteria to use reusable or recyclable materials, and even get the family to take vacations at geological sites.

Summer 2001:

Katie Buckman, (see Summer 2000 report)

Kim Cheney Hess, Geo ’02:
imberlycheney@gmail.com

Kim Cheney Hess now lives in Tampa, Florida. She is married and is presently serving as a helicopter pilot for the
U.S. Coast Guard. The following was abstracted from an email note from Kim to Al Curran, received in February 2008. At that time, her flying missions were in the southern Bahamas-western Caribbean region. Here's Kim - "Ironically, my life has taken me to being above looking down upon the waters you so dearly love to study. It's really been quite an incredible experience because it is more spectacular than I ever could have imagined. When we are in the Caribbean, we are primarily doing search and rescue and drug and migrant interdiction, but for me it's a geologist's paradise. Life is really great these days, I've been in the Coast Guard for 4 years now, recently completed flight school in June of 2007 and loving every second of being a CG helicopter pilot. I got married a little over a year ago to a fellow pilot and couldn't be happier! I'm so glad I waited for Mr. Right." (Unfortunately, we could not make contact with Kim for this newsletter, and we're not sure this email address is still "live." If anyone has further update information on Kim, please forward to HAC.)

**Mattie Byrd McHold, Ed & Child Study, ’02:** mattiebyrd@hotmail.com

No report received.

**Cathy Parsons, (now Catya Harrold – see Summer 2000 report)**

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**Summer 2002:**

Coral Ed team '02 - L to R: Beth, Anna, Jocelyn, & Susan prepare for the coral polyp feeding game.

**Jocelyn Brown-Saracino, Bio ’04:** jbrownsaracino@hotmail.com

I am currently finishing my master’s degree in Marine Science at the University of New England. Next year I will be moving to Washington, D.C. to participate in federal marine policy work through the Knauss Marine Policy Fellowship program. After graduating from Smith, I taught middle school science in the Mississippi Delta and coordinated a dual enrollment program at a community college in Boston. I have wonderful memories of participating in the Coral Ed-Ventures program, and it has helped to inspire my teaching work since.

**Beth Callaghan, Bio AC ’04:** bethanncallaghan@yahoo.com

After completing my B.A. at Smith, I received a U.S.E.P.A. STAR fellowship to conduct environmental research and began an M. A. in Biological Sciences at Smith College working with L. David Smith on invasive crab species along the New England Coast. In 2006 I was awarded a National Science Foundation Robert Noyce Fellowship and took a leave of absence from Smith College to enroll in and complete a Master of Arts in Science Education program at Duke University. For the past two years I have been teaching Biology, Ecology and Human Anatomy and
Physiology at Easthampton High School here in Massachusetts. I returned to Smith College this summer and am on track to complete the M.A. in Biological Sciences by the end of July.

While "Science Week" was initially my primary motivation for joining the Coral Ed-Ventures team and while it had an enormous effect on me in terms of building confidence in my ability to conduct scientific research, working with local students in San Pedro is what solidified my desire to teach. I was fortunate to have the opportunity to participate in Coral Ed and return to San Pedro 3 years in a row. My resulting interactions with Coral Ed students, fellow teachers, the local community and my Smith College teaching mentors (Professors Al Curran, Susan Etheredge, Paulette Peckol, and David Smith) were what made me realize the broader effect I might have on the environment through education of future generations. Coral Ed was where I first realized how creatively and intellectually rewarding teaching and working with teachers in training could be. Through my work with students and teachers at Easthampton High School, I continue to find teaching, stimulating, rewarding, exciting and just plain fun!

Anna Marchefka, Geo '02: amorchefka@gmail.com

After graduating from Smith College in May of 2002, I joined Coral Ed-Ventures teaching for the summer in Belize. Upon my return, I participated in a year long Outdoor Leadership Program (OLP) at Greenfield Community College that provided me with many skills needed to work in the outdoors. My experiences led me to a teaching career in the public schools in hopes of bringing the outdoors into the classroom and bringing the classroom outdoors. After teaching for 2 years in Western Massachusetts, I moved to Philadelphia, PA and began working for the Schuylkill Center for Environmental Education. Through this non-profit I'm able to teach environmental science to second, third and fourth grade students while utilizing our 350 acres of forested land within the city limits. Many of the teaching practices that I incorporate in the classroom today are rooted in my experience with Coral Ed-Ventures and the rich and diverse background in science and education I received at Smith College with Allen Curran, Bosiljka Glumac, Paulette Peckol, Esteban Monserrate and Susan Etheredge. My professional life has been deeply influenced by the time, energy and care you have given. I had no idea at the time I participated in Coral Ed-Ventures how rare my experience would be teaching in such close collaboration. Working with Beth, Jocelyn, and Susan in Belize opened my mind and allowed me to imagine what education could look like both inside and outside of the classroom.

Susan Vincent, Geo and MS&P AC '00; M.A.T. '02: vincent.susan@gmail.com

The Coral Ed program provided a great first teaching opportunity for me in an environment that has many similarities to my present situation. Many times I have reflected upon the two little cousins who showed up every morning for school, but could barely keep their eyes open because they had gotten out of bed at 4:30 to help their dad/uncle catch and clean fish for the family's livelihood. Or, the little fellow whose sister helped him walk to school on a very swollen, infected foot—yet he showed up every day! There were so many stories of wide-eyed eager learners who wanted to come to the one-room, un-air-conditioned, cement floor classroom to broaden their world view.

I have worked in East Harlem for the past 7 years with young folks that have different, yet similarly challenging circumstances, and yet, demonstrate determination to learn and grow through their difficulties, just as the children on Ambergris Caye. They are intrigued with the stories I tell of the children that I taught in Belize. These first students that I taught will forever remain with me in memory. I am so glad you are developing a newsletter and look forward to hearing about all the wonderful
progress that has been made since my participation in the program.

Now, what have I been doing? It has been a very exciting, rewarding, dizzying spring! I have had a Columbia graduate student with me all school year as a part of a National Science Foundation Graduate-K12 Program. The program funds a graduate student to work with a high school teacher for 15 hours a week. We presented a poster and gave a talk at the NSF GK-12 national conference in Washington, DC the end of March. Last week we took 16 students to present at the Young Science Achievers competition where one of our teams won honorable mention. Our 6-team entries had won a total of $3,000 to carry out their research projects this spring semester.

In April I was given the National Wetlands Educator Award by the Environmental Law Institute. I also won the Merit Award from the Environmental Education Institute. And, was named as a fellow in the Society for Science and the Public. I will be spending a week in Washington at the end of July to attend the SSP workshop, where I will receive a four-year renewable $8,500 grant to carry on the Piermont Marsh investigation with my students.

Last summer I was given the Young Women’s Leadership Network Travelship award through which I was able to spend 10 days in the Galapagos Islands.

And, the Smith College Coral Ed Ventures program launched my teaching career and was the springboard into all the activities that I am currently involved with!!

**Summer 2003:**

Beth Callaghan, (Leader – see Summer 2002 report)

Lisa Rivera, Psych and Anthro AC ’06: lrivera71@gmail.com

I am impressed at how much the program has developed and the number of participants in this summer’s program.

In 2003, I participated in the Coral Ed group with three other Smith students, all education and science majors. Aside from an interest in Marine Ecology, my direction and major at Smith were undecided when we left for San Pedro. When we arrived, the excitement with which we were welcomed by the community inspired me; the hospitality amazed me; and the student’s eagerness to participate in the program motivated me. Learning wasn't limited to the classroom: "lessons" would as likely include a discussion with a business owner about harvesting coral for calcium and its effect of the reef as listening to a student explain why it was important to properly dispose of fishing lines so they wouldn’t hurt turtles. Seeing the effects of the CoralEd program on a community that constantly weighed the balance of economic needs with the preservation of natural resources was profound. And it affected by my decision to major in Anthropology upon my return to Smith the next fall.

For the following two summers, I studied artesania and the economy of street artisans in Peru and Bolivia. I did miss San Pedro's beaches (even the 100 degree days) while trying to stay warm in the Andean Mountains.

Since graduating from Smith, I've been working as a Project Manager at a non-profit. My interest is still in Cultural Anthropology, I continue to work with Andean artisans, though I would love to find a way to make that more full time. This desire will likely shape my plans for the immediate future (though I don’t know what that will be yet).
The Coral Ed program is another example of what, for me, was so inspiring and powerful about attending Smith College and a liberal arts education. Without a science background, but with a strong interest in Marine Ecology and SCUBA, I was able to contribute to AGRRA research and facilitate a learning experience for local students - and myself.

Alicia Simonti, Geo AC ’05: asimonti@gmail.com

Since Smith, I received my M.A. degree in Geographic Information Science in the Development and the Environment program at Clark University, where I worked on a project to separate independent oscillations in sea-surface temperature (SST) in the Caribbean in order to determine what caused the massive coral bleaching event of 2005. I finished in August ’08 and started working for MDA Federal Inc. (Formerly Earth Satellite Corp.) just outside of Washington, DC as a Senior Geospatial Analyst in December ’08. I work on a variety projects from environmental to intelligence (can you believe THAT?!?!?!). Most recently I was involved in a feasibility study of the country of Colombia for renewable energy. I am also part of a working group here at MDA to move us into more green industries. My personal agenda is to move towards more renewable energies and smart-grid technology.

My experience in Coral-Ed forged the way for me in terms of figuring out what I want for my career path. Although I am not currently working in corals, I strive to work on projects that protect our environment and result in sustainable energy generation and move us away from carbon-based energy. I look back on that summer as one of the most rewarding of my life, academically and personally. I grew more as a person because of Coral-Ed than from any other experience.

Daryn Sirota, Ed & Child Study, ’05: darynsirota@gmail.com

After graduating from Smith in ’05, I spent a year in Greece working as a teaching fellow at Athens College. After my experience in Belize, I craved another work abroad experience! While living in Greece I was deeply troubled by the seeming lack of concern for the thousands of stray cats and dogs. I volunteered for the Greek animal welfare fund, and helped to rescue both domesticated and wild animals. I also did the best I could to bring awareness back to the classroom.

For the last two years I have been working as the 4-6 grade Gifted & Talented teacher in the town of Rutherford NJ. Next year my responsibilities will be increased to grades 4-8. I have created an environmental unit as well a unit on endangered species as a part of my fourth grade curriculum.

I am presently getting my Masters degree in “educational theatre” at the City College of New York and am loving every moment of it. It’s amazing that any curriculum can be taught through drama! I often think about the puppet show I wrote for the students the summer I was in Belize...(if only I had a copy lol)! My ultimate goal is to become a drama teacher, perhaps when the economy begins to turn around there will be more funding for the arts in education.

My summer in Belize definitely helped to shape my outlook on the world. I am sure I am not the only teaching fellow who embraces her Belize memories as some of the best! Thank you so much for creating such a wonderful program. Coral Ed-ventures truly made my undergraduate experience!

Summer 2004:

Beth Callaghan, (Leader – see Summer 2002 report)

Erica Nichols, Geo ’04: erica.nichols@gmail.com

It's been 5 years now since I taught for Coral Ed, and I still wonder how "our kids" are doing today. I remember a lot of them and
am excited that Coral Ed has become somewhat of an institution for their families, including younger brothers and sisters. Since that summer, I have done a Fulbright fellowship in Cameroon, a UNESCO-Fulbright fellowship in Paris, a Master of International Affairs degree from Columbia University, and I am now working for Shell International in London. I never pictured myself working for an oil and gas company, but I have been interested in social and environmental issues within the industry since I was at Smith, and I’ve found the most effective contribution I can make is from the inside.

Thinking back to my Coral Ed days, I wish I could have repeated the experience. I had a wonderful time that summer. I think it is really valuable for people with science backgrounds to be see first-hand how their knowledge can serve other people in such a direct way. Also, it is a clear example of a strong partnership between Smith and the school and community on San Pedro, and partnerships have so much potential for improving today’s world.

I look forward to hearing further news about Coral Ed, and hope it will continue to go well.

Michael Tattan, M.A.T ’05:
mtattan@gmail.com

So, Coral Ed has changed my life. I presented a Coral Ed slide show along with the poster you loaned me back in 2005 to a bunch of elementary kids with learning disabilities at a private school in Holyoke. Everyone loved the show and they hired me as a teacher. I’ve been working there ever since and have loved every minute of it.

Because of my Coral Ed experience, I’ve been able to expose inner city students to the plight of the world’s coral reefs and inspire them to consider the rippling effects of conservation upon their own environment and the world. I’m grateful for my Coral Ed experience and all the people who inspired me to care about the reefs of the world.

I’m also up for a reunion get together on San Pedro. I even remember my favorite restaurant - sandy floor and homemade salsa. If you need a Scuba Research Diver, I’m your guy!

Irma Torres-Leon Nansel, Bio and Geo ’05:
irmanansel@yahoo.com

The summer after Smith, I accepted an internship with the Department of the Interior - Bureau of Land Management through the Chicago Botanical Gardens in Miles City, Montana. In the Miles City BLM, I worked as a Fisheries Biologist Assistant for 9 months. I assisted in surveying streams for aquatic life, water chemistry and quality analysis, stream geomorphology, among other projects/tasks. I developed an analysis tool using GIS and Excel. The office managers liked my work and convinced me to stay in Miles City.

After the nine months, the Range Management Specialist Supervisor hired me on as a Range Management Technician, seasonal for 6 months. I was the lead tech within a group of 4 other seasonal employees for that summer. We assessed and established monitoring transects within grazing lands and riparian zones to determine rangeland health and potential range use. We assisted in sage grouse monitoring with U of M.

After the 6 months, I was hired on as a Natural Resource Specialist with the Oil & Gas Minerals Division, and I have been working there ever since. What do I do? Lots of awesome things! Well, at least I
think so. It is such a diverse position that I have put to use ALL the classes I took at Smith. Really. I am the person that processes and oversees all the oil & gas applications and surface disturbing activities within eastern Montana (1/3 of MT) and part of North Dakota. I make sure that oil & gas companies comply with Federal and State regulations when developing a lease. So essentially, I have to be ground water engineer, soil scientist, civil engineer, hydrologist, chemist, wildlife biologist, lawyer, GIS specialist, Realty expert, and so much more. I work with oil & gas companies, contractors, surface owners, State agencies, and the general public for each and every oil/gas well that has been or will be drilled within our office area. Processing applications also involves writing environmental impact statements to ensure that the BLM is in compliance with National Environmental Policy Act and of course State and Federal Regs. In addition to oil & gas, I also partake in other projects involving other divisions. I am also on a team of specialists tasked in writing the Field Office’s Resource Management Plan. The RMP is our office’s land use plan for the next 10 years or so. It is a HUGE environmental impact statement on how we plan to manage the office’s resources.

Aside from work, I have become a Montana native. I love it here. There is not much for the city lover, but lots for the avid outdoor enthusiast. I met a wonderful man here, and we got married last year. We now have a cute baby boy, Cooper, and a loving blood-hound dog, Moose. My husband also works for the BLM in Miles City as a Petroleum Engineer Tech. We love our jobs and enjoy our time riding horses and tending to livestock at his family’s ranch.

Regarding my Coral-Ed experience, it was most definitely life changing. Because of my trip to Belize I have many skills and knowledge I have put to good use in my community. Last year, I began giving Spanish lessons to a very bright 5-year old. We talked about Belize, the children, and of course marine ecology. She is the smartest thing I have ever been around. Definitely a Smith prospect. I have learned that issues of San Pedro are not too different than the ones in eastern Montana. The locals on the island did not take care of the reef as we (outsiders) would like them to because they lived in that environment every day of their life. It was normal for them to discard their sewage and garbage into the streets and ocean. It has taken the efforts from people, like Smith professors and students, to educate the local people in marine ecology and conservation. Similarly, it has taken BLM employees to pursue more environmentally benign methods in oil and gas development. Oil and gas companies have their traditional ways of developing fossil fuels. Changing their ways and mindsets has been the work of many over decades. My co-workers and I are always on the search for better ways to develop oil and gas in a sound environmental manner, so that the American people have fuel to heat their homes and run their vehicles, without taxing the environment.

Emily Tyner, Bio and Ed & Child Study ’06: emilytyner@gmail.com

I can say, unequivocally, that my participation as a member of the Coral Ed team was one of the most formative experiences of my life. Living in Belize, teaching, leading, and interacting with the community, all the things that brought so much joy to me for three summers, have defined my personal and professional decisions since 2006. I found such value in the close collaboration work with my Smith peers and professors and learned from the exemplary leadership skills of my fellow teachers (Beth Callaghan)! The intense experience of working and living in close quarters is like nothing I had ever done, but I hope to have similar opportunities for work/living collaborations in the future. On top of all this, the beauty of waking up on an island in the Caribbean with the beach as the sidewalk/sooccer field/tamale stand was incomparable!

I liked Caribbean living so much that I applied for a job in the US Virgin Islands while I was still in Belize the summer of 2006. After much waiting and paperwork--
time that I spent with my family in Ann Arbor, MI taking classes at a community college and working in a NOAA-Great Lakes research lab—I moved to St. Croix in the USVI in January of 2006. I worked at the University of the Virgin Islands, in the marine science department. My job was about 30% coral health and sedimentation research and 70% educational outreach on marine science issues. I managed a wetlands reserve, was part of an active and productive network of environmental educators, and led lots of programs on marine resources in schools, at summer camps, for guests at hotels, and beyond. While in St. Croix, I got involved with projects at a local farm, worked part-time as an educator on a Leatherback Turtle research project, joined an open ocean swim club, and had lots and lots of fun living on an island.

This past spring I decided to take a summer leave from my job at UVI and work for the National Park Service in northern Michigan at Sleeping Bear Dunes National Lakeshore. I'm working in the water quality division on a bird die-off/botulism project. It's interesting work and I'm so happy to be living closer to home. I will likely return to my job at UVI in the fall but am up in the air as to the future. Thoughts of grad school are always looming, and I am currently very interested in a joint masters degree/peace corps term offered at Michigan Technological University. I continue to be amazed at how you can find great people in every corner of the world. While I don't know what I’ll do next, I’m sure I will find a community of like-minded folks and love whatever it is I end up doing.

**Summer 2005:**

**Ashley Barton, Ed & Child Study ’07:**
ar_barton@yahoo.com

Since leaving Smith, I have been working at the Children’s Museum in Holyoke as an Education and Programs Assistant as well as an Operations Assistant. I design and implement their preschool programming and support the rest of the staff when needed. I also went to culinary school in New York City about a year ago and finished the Chef Training Program at The Natural Gourmet Institute for Health and Culinary Arts. So in addition to my museum job, I have been doing some personal chef work in the Pioneer Valley. I plan to eventually go to graduate school for nutrition and blend my love of education and food.

**Nora Beem, Bio and ES&P ’05:**
ntbeem@yahoo.com

After Coral-Ed summer 2005, I worked for a year and a half teaching environmental education in Maine, South Carolina, and New York. In January 2007, I started my Masters with the Jackson Estuarine Laboratory at UNH in environmental conservation, during which time I focused on the effects of human activity on eelgrass populations in the Great Bay Estuary, as well as designed an eelgrass curriculum for local students and executed it during a 2 day outreach event at our lab. After graduating in December 2008, I moved out to the Olympic Peninsula of Washington and currently work as a field science educator for...
the Olympic Park Institute. We regularly take students to the Elwha River Valley to perform inquiry projects assessing the effects of the 2 dams on the river.

Maria Lazaro, Ed & Child Study ’07:
mlazaro.smith@gmail.com

I am happy to hear that Coral Ed is thriving as the years go on! I graduated from Smith in May 2007, and I began work in a private, elementary school in northern Mexico as a teacher in August 2007. I taught English as a Second Language to 1st and 3rd graders for two years. I completed my two years just this past June. Right now I am at home in New York City and looking for a full-time teaching position here in the city. I am also considering grad school.

I am grateful to have been part of the Coral Ed program! I remember how at first I was nervous to stand in front of a room full of children. I look back and can only say that it was a wonderful teaching experience! I experienced teaching, and learned from the students and fellow teachers as a college student who was unsure about teaching at the time. The hands-on experience and direct contact with the natural environment during that summer was priceless and memorable! It still is... I have to say that it made me even more confident about becoming a teacher and working with children. It also makes me consider teaching science later on in my teaching years.

Katie Marlowe Wright, Bio ’04 and M.A.T. in Ed ’05: misskpm@hotmail.com

I taught for a short while at a charter school in Holyoke, then moved to Maine to build a house and to work at a school/residence with teenagers with emotional, behavioral, & mental health problems. I also have a great baby boy now! I miss working with younger kids and in environmental science and am hoping to enter the University of S. Maine’s School of Marine Science to get my MS, and then perhaps return to environmental ed or get into marine policy. I’m slowly getting tapped into the local marine science circle. I am also starting work on a children’s book about the connection between community and biodiversity in Peru (this with another Smith alum - Melanie Patterson). My summer in San Pedro has stayed with me as it fueled my desire to work with both people (especially kids) and the environment. Despite not working directly in marine science & education at the moment, I cannot keep myself away from anything related to it. San Pedro, in part because it is an island, made it so clear how accountable we all must hold ourselves for our actions, in terms of both human communities and our effect on the environment.

Elizabeth Thomas, Geo and Bio ’05:
elizabethkthomas@gmail.com

Since graduating from Smith, I have lived in Buffalo, NY, working as a research tech and obtaining my MS in Geology, studying past climate change. The highlights of my time in Buffalo (besides the lovely summers) are doing fieldwork on Baffin Island and Greenland, far above the Arctic Circle!! One of my favorite Arctic activities is to do outreach in schools in the small native communities (which are remarkably like San Pedro) and take students and community members on field trips to show them how I do research near their town. The experience I gained during Coral Ed and this subsequent outreach helped me obtain an NSF Graduate Research Fellowship (the NSF loves ‘broader impacts’, which includes outreach to underrepresented minorities). This funded a year of my MS and will fund two years of my PhD, which I will begin in September 2009 in the Brown University Department of Geology. I will continue to study past climate change, and thanks to the wonderful experience teaching in Belize, I am planning on being part of Brown’s active involvement in outreach to local schools.

Emily Tyner, Bio and Ed & Child Study ’06
(Leader – see Summer 2004 report)
Knowing and Living in a Space of Blessings: Is life just a bunch of coincidences? I don’t think so. When I left home, en-route to Smith College, I never envisioned the totality of what that meant. I knew I was interested in psychology and education. I knew that I was interested how kids think and how they negotiate their worlds, but I couldn’t pin down exactly what that meant. Smith afforded me with a testing ground to explore both aspects of my interests. There was room to think about how kids learned and also space to explore children and adolescents in schools.

Continuing my quest to work with and understand children led to my interest and subsequent blessing of becoming a member of the 2006 Coral Ed-Ventures Team. Becoming a part of this team was yet another way to think outside the box and push myself beyond my comfort zones. Being so far away from home not only gives you an opportunity to pause and think while taking in one of the most extraordinary landscapes that I’ve ever seen, but it also provides a chance to discover and learn about another culture in its true context; a context that can never be fully understood from a book or a website.

Going to Belize changed my life. It allowed me to expand my thoughts and feelings about education and access. Having access to educational experiences and opportunities has always been a dominant aspect of my work. I carry these thoughts, which have been made more real and concrete by the children that I have met both here and in Belize, in the recesses of my mind. Coral-Ed has expanded my mind to consider not only children here in the States but also those who struggle abroad. These children etch faces in your mind that you never forget. Faces that I knew existed at home also have meaning and haunt me when I think beyond the sea. It’s ironic how environments that offer so much richness and greatness can also harbor so much poverty and paucity. My thoughts and work never leave those who (for a variety of reasons) seem to get left behind or isolated. It’s just a part of who I am. The Coral Ed-Ventures Program gave me another lens in which to see the world and understand humanity while embracing all of who I am and hopefully working to make a difference in the world.

Upon graduation from Smith, with feelings of joy and anticipation, I still had feelings of being unsettled and I was not able or ready to commit totally to the role of scientist, researcher or teacher so I continued my journey which has led me to the University of Wisconsin-Madison, where I have just completed my 2nd year of my PhD program in Educational Psychology.

Erin Benger, Bio ’07:
emccuin@gmail.com

So, since graduation, I spent a year and a half saving money for a trip to Europe, which is where I am now until the end of August. I worked on a vegetable and produce farm in Massachusetts the summer and fall of ’07, at a ski mountain in Vermont over the winter, and last summer and fall I worked for my aunts’ gardening and landscaping business in Vermont. I left the States at the end of December ’08 and have been traveling in Europe since. At the moment I am in the UK WWOOFing, which stands for World Wide Opportunities on
Organic Farms. It is an exchange of labor for room and board, not to mention the cultural exchange! It is an ideal situation for me right now because of my interest in farming and agriculture. When I return home my immediate plans are to work for my aunts again through the holidays, and then I am thinking about traveling in the States until spring. What I am planning to get involved in for work is solar panel installation, so I am considering that for the following season, as well as working on a farm or for a progressive nonprofit in Vermont.

Coral Reef Ed-Ventures was a wonderful experience at the time, and it has enriched me as a person. I know it prepared me mentally for traveling abroad on my own and gave me an opportunity to start exploring and shaping my views of the world. I think most importantly, the experience taught me to be humble towards other cultures, to not prejudge something that I do not know, and to appreciate the value of a new experience. I am so glad that I had the opportunity to participate in '06 as a student teacher.

Whitney Dorer, Psych & ES&P ‘07: wdorer@gmail.com

Since graduation in 2007, I have found a nice niche in Portland, OR. Being a lover of the outdoors, I quickly applied for an AmeriCorps position at Friends of Trees, a local non-profit. I have since been hired on in our Neighborhood Trees Program. I organize neighborhood plantings within the city and find myself often teaching others how to plant trees and care for our urban forest. Check us out at www.friendsoftrees.org. I am able to bike everywhere in the city and have found many others that are excited about lowering their carbon footprint. I love visitors!

While I do love the job I have, I can see myself going back to school in the near future for environmental education. With my experience from Coral Reef Ed-Ventures I am able to see the potential that children have in becoming stewards of their local environment. I jump at opportunities to plant trees with schools in Portland. It is so exciting to be able to talk with youth about the importance of greening the city. I see the wheels turning in their heads as they take an active role in planting and caring for trees.

Katie Morrice, Bio ’07: kmorrice@gmail.com

Since graduating from Smith, I moved to Santa Cruz, California to pursue my masters in marine science at Moss Landing Marine Laboratories. I joined the physical oceanography lab, and I am working for Dr. Erika McPhee-Shaw as well as several oceanographers at University of Washington and University of Victoria. We are working on an NSF-project that is looking at internal wave energetics and boundary layer detachment in the Monterey Bay Canyon. I am really enjoying all of the research opportunities here, and classes have been very interesting with lots of field experience. I am hoping to finish in the next year or two, and following that I would like to pursue a Ph.D. degree and a career in ocean energy.

My involvement in Coral Ed helped shape my interests in marine science, conservation, and environmental education. As a scientist, I think it is incredibly important to be involved in public outreach so that the local community is aware of their surrounding environment and the science explaining it. It is just as important to get children interested in and excited about science. I really appreciate the unique opportunity of having been a part of Smith Coral Ed as a student-teacher.

Emily Tyner, (Leader – see Summer 2004 report):

Kelsey Winsor, Geo ’07j: kelsey.winsor@gmail.com

After graduating Smith in December 2006, I took an internship in the desert of eastern Washington studying groundwater. My main memory: wanting to eat soup when the winds carried the scent of
sagebrush. Then, I interned at Woods Hole to study paleoclimate and spend another summer on the ocean. Main memory: biking home watching the sunset over the ocean, or, less pleasantly, biking to work watching the sunrise. I returned to eastern WA for a while, then went off to Turkey for field camp- kids there were just as excited to talk to us as the kids were in Belize! They all know "Hello" and "What is your name?" in English. Main memory: racing down talus slopes and being very hot. Now, I'm at University of Wisconsin-Madison getting a master's in geology. I'm studying the last deglacial retreat of the Greenland Ice Sheet, and just got back from field work in Greenland. I'd like to try my hand at teaching again, since I look back on Belize so fondly. I hope everyone else is enjoying their time as well!

**Summer 2007:**

![Coral Ed team '07 - L to R: Stephanie, Maya, Andrea, Loretta, Penny, & Whitney on the apartment balcony.](image)

Ling San “Loretta” Cheung, Gov and ES&P ’09: lcheung925@gmail.com

I graduated from Smith in May, and I'll be applying to grad programs in the fall for Environmental Science and Policy or Environmental Management (depending on the school).

Coral Ed’s impact on my life: so much. The program made me realize how easy it is to influence others, especially children, for a positive change and how every effort can have lasting effects. It was also such an amazing experience to see how people in the community are so willing to help and then feeling like I've become part of that community by the end of the program. It definitely has made me a more optimistic person and shifted the way I see the world and my place in it. I think retaining these feelings towards the experience already shows how much the program impacted me.

It's so great to hear that Coral-Ed is doing so well and becoming even more involved in San Pedro. It seems like the program is getting better and better every year and will only continue to do so. I'm so proud to have been part of it.

**Whitney Dorer, (Leader – see Summer 2006 report)**

Andrea Gohl, Geo AC’08: alugohl@gmail.com

In September, 2008, following completion of the Coral Ed program in July, for which she served as co-leader with Penny Luo, Andrea joined the Peace Corps and became a volunteer in Cameroon, West Africa. After completing basic Peace Corps in-country orientation and training, Andrea received an agroforestry and community development assignment for a village in northern Cameroon, near the city of Maroua. The challenges are many, but Andrea is thriving there. I recommend that you check out her blog, "Annee in the Hinge" [www.anneeinth hinge.blogspot.com](http://www.anneeinth hinge.blogspot.com)

In reading some of Andrea's blog entries, I'm sure you will see connections between life in San Pedro and Cameroon, although her village in northern Cameroon is far less developed than San Pedro. I know that Andrea would really love to receive a letter from you: Andrea Gohl, Peace Corps Volunteer, BP 131, Maroua, Cameroon. Andrea also can receive emails, although she has only occasional internet access. (by HAC for Andrea)

**Penny Luo, Bio and MS&P ’08:** pennylou908@gmail.com
Life as a post-graduate Smithie Biology major/Marine Science minor in New York City has forced the harshness of reality upon me. With the recent downturn of the economy, I struggled through many months of job searching without any positive results. Finally, 6 months ago, my friend introduced me to my current job at a Freight Forwarding Company that provides customers with import and export services to ship freight via ocean carriers to various locations worldwide. As an Export Operations Coordinator, my duties entail mostly customer service and documentation. While this is not the most environmentally friendly job, it makes ends meet and is allowing me to look at life from a different perspective, as I will explain below.

During my two summers in San Pedro as a participant and then co-leader of the Coral Ed team in 2007-08, I worked with five other student teachers to teach the children of San Pedro about coral reef ecology. The highlights of my Coral Ed experience left me leaving Smith with a more open mindset. While most people are only aware of the tall palm trees, the sunny weather, and colorful corals in the bright blue oceans in Belize, not many realize the daily hardships many locals undergo to survive in a country that relies so heavily on tourism. On a common day, I often saw young kids running around in their bare feet selling jewelry, parents starving themselves to feed the rest of the family, families living in broken down houses, etc. The Coral Ed program cannot make any immediate changes for these children. But our mission to influence the local kids to become the future pioneers of the Belizean Reef protectors is showing positive results. For the past few years, every summer, more San Pedro children have been enrolled into the program as well as an increased contribution from local supporters. From the program, I learned that even the smallest contribution makes a huge difference.

While my current job has little to do with my major at Smith or my experience in the Coral Ed program, it has provided me an opportunity to look at things from the business perspective. Coming from the environmentalist perspective, I've always known the various negative effects industrial development has on our natural ecosystem, but I've never understood the opposite side of the story. What kind of measures if any does the industrial world takes to protect the environment? How do business industries justify their reasons in harming the environment? By working in my company now, I hope to have a deeper understanding of how the business world works, and in the near future I hope to help in developing better ideas for how to protect the environment.

Stephanie Moore, Geo ’07: smoore@mail.utexas.edu

After graduating from Smith in 2007, I spent the summer in Belize with Coral Reef Ed-Ventures before moving to Austin, Texas to start a PhD in geology. I have spent the last two years taking classes, doing research, and teaching labs while practicing yoga and learning to rock climb. Moments from the summer I spent in Belize not only come to mind when I'm teaching, thinking about teaching, or talking about teaching, but also when I think about what kind of effect I want to have on my community and the communities I visit. To date, the most lasting impact has been how that summer left me more open to understanding and accepting different cultures. I think, though, that Coral Reef Ed-Ventures will continue to shape my life in ways I can't yet imagine.

Maya Wei-Haas, Geo ’09: mweihass@gmail.com

Since graduating from Smith I have been working as the Nutrient Research Assistant at the Toolik Field Station located in the northern slope of the Brooks Range of Alaska. As the Nutrient RA (or “Nutty RA” as I am fondly called), I am responsible for making reagents, maintaining the machines, and keeping the Wet Lab running smoothly. I also have the opportunity to work with the lakes research assistant for the Long Term
Ecological Research (LTER) project. We collect water, algae, and zooplankton samples from lakes in the surrounding area, in addition to measuring many parameters including temperature, conductivity, and light penetration to establish a long-term database for the conditions of the lakes in this area. The water samples are analyzed in the Wet Lab at Toolik for nutrients (phosphorus and ammonium) and the other samples are preserved and shipped back to other labs for analysis. In the Spring of 2010, I plan to start graduate school at the Byrd Polar Institute at Ohio State University. I will be working with Yo Chin in the School of Earth Sciences.

My experiences in the Coral Reef Ed-Ventures program helped me realize how much I enjoy teaching. I have always enjoyed tutoring my friends, but have never thought that teaching was in my future. However, through this program, I really have discovered the rewards of teaching. I loved incorporating hands-on activities into the lesson plans and enjoyed watching the interest and fascination in the children’s eyes as they asked questions and looked at samples. In the future I hope to complete a Ph.D. program and teach at a university so that I may continue to do research and teach.

Katie Donovan, Ed & Child Study AC ‘09j and M.A.T. in Ed ‘10: kdonovan@smith.edu

Gratitude is all I can express for having had the fortunate experience to participate in Coral Reef Ed-Ventures for the past two summers. I recently graduated from Smith in May of 2009 with a double major in Education & Child Study and Liberal Studies. I will be returning to the beautiful campus this fall to begin a teaching fellowship at the Smith College Campus School and attain my M.A.T. degree. Participating in the program for the past two years has helped me develop my personal teaching style and voice and hone my organizational skills in many diverse areas. My educational philosophies, such as inquiry-based and emergent learning, align with those of the program, so I felt at home teaching scientific concepts in an interdisciplinary manner. My time in San Pedro was beyond incredible. It was an amazing experience to be in another country and feel as though it was home, especially the second time there. I have been inspired to always collaborate with the local community members where I teach and to never underestimate the passion of my students. My heart will never be far from Belize.

Hannah Dunning, English and ES&P ‘09: hannahwrendunning@gmail.com

Coral Reef Ed-Ventures is the stage on which my various passions have come to play: music, poetry, conservation, community, and education. I’ve been immersed in music my whole life through my parents’ work to host community concerts with a focus in cultural celebration. My musical involvement continued at Smith where I was in the College Chorus, the Glee Club, Groove a cappella, took lessons in classical guitar, and wrote many original songs on guitar and voice. While in Belize, I co-wrote with students from the Advanced Program two songs on guitar and voice to teach to the Youth Program. These songs became an important part of each day in the
two-week program! I also worked with other Coral Ed students and children to rewrite common songs to teach different concepts in the program.

My studies at Smith included English (my major), Environmental Science & Policy, and Education. I specialized in poetry; I’ve loved leading writing activities in both the Advanced and Youth Program where children look closer at their environment and explore their connections and feelings. It’s been a formative and inspiring experience to live and learn in a community as it works to define and embrace sustainable practices, and such a gift to be a part of these efforts. I plan to pursue interdisciplinary projects in the future similar to this one that allow me to explore the power of the creative arts in educational settings, especially in pursuit of a conservation community.

Andrea Gohl (Co-leader - see Summer 2007 report)

Penny Luo (Co-leader - see Summer 2007 report)

Trea Schumacher, Bio and MS&P ’09: tschumac@smith.edu

I had a wonderful experience with Coral Reef Ed-Ventures, and it has forever changed the way I think about the future, both in terms of impact new generations of youth can have in the world and the importance of maintaining the environment worldwide. Since Coral Ed, I’ve spent three months in Kenya working on environmental health projects, but the memories of working with the children of San Pedro will always stay with me.

Madeline Weigner, Geo and MS&P ’09: mmweigner@gmail.com

I am a recent 2009 graduate from Smith College. My areas of study were Geology with a Marine Science and Policy minor. The Coral Reef Ed-Ventures program has been a life changing and inspiring experience for me. It allowed me to take my passion and love for water and rocks where it would do the most good. The enthusiasm for the children, both in and outside the classroom, surprised me. I had found a place that I could share my love for the reef with others. The program taught me to be something that I had never before considered: a teacher. My first time in a classroom was an incredible experience. There is no greater feeling than to be able to empower the students to be active and vocal in their community with their thoughts and ideas. I have no intentions of becoming a teacher, but the experience is not something that I would change for the world. I plan to take some time off to travel. My future goals include graduate school and a job, though nothing is currently planned. I also have intentions of returning to Belize in the future.

Summer 2009: 10 Years in San Pedro!

Coral Ed team ’09 at Amigos! L to R: Madeline, Marie, Katie, Hannah, Lily, & Emily.

Katie Donovan, (Co-leader – see Summer 2008 report)
Hannah Dunning, (Co-leader – see Summer 2008 report)

Lily Maynard, Bio ’11:
lmaynard@smith.edu

Spending the summer of 2009 in San Pedro was a life-changing experience for me. I will be entering my junior year with a major in biology and a concentration in animal behavior, conservation, and environmental policy. In my future, I hope to work towards conservation of the biodiversity in our world both through research and education. In Belize, I truly enjoyed sharing the beauty of the reef with the many excited children. The program’s founding principles coincide with my own, in that the best way to support the preservation of a species or ecosystem is to share it with people and to foster a connection with the organisms in order to motivate its protection. The compelling success of this method in Belize further inspired my future aspirations; I look forward to utilizing the techniques and enthusiasm I learned in San Pedro. Through the Coral Ed program, I learned about my own strengths in teaching scientific concepts while I was also lucky enough to feel at home in a foreign country. I plan to study abroad in South Africa in the spring of 2010, and then to travel further before and after I graduate to see the world while working to protect it.

Emily Ulrich, Bio ’11:
eulrich@smith.edu

I am a Biology major in the class of 2011. I’m interested in many fields including French, German, and Psychology, but have a real passion for biology. I am a member of the orchestra and the ultimate frisbee team here at Smith, and spend a lot of time with those groups. Recently I have been working closely with my professors to figure out what it is I am most passionate about in life. I plan to study abroad for the year of 2010 in Australia, where I will focus on aspects of oceans and the environment. I enjoy travelling and learning about different cultures around the world. The Coral Reef Ed-Ventures program has opened my eyes up to a whole new light and has changed the way that I view life. Being in San Pedro, Belize for such a long time made me feel welcomed, and realize that it is good to have connections and friends in far places. The program gave me confidence in myself in many ways. I feel better about speaking with people that I don’t know and speaking in front of larger groups. I feel more confident in my research and with finding my way in a completely new place. I am confident that in the future I will be a strong leader, and thanks to this program I have realized this. I loved every moment of every day because of how much I learned and how much the children learned, and because of the relationships we formed across borders and across cultures.

Elizabeth “Marie” Wallace, Ed & Child Study ’11:
ewallace@smith.edu

I now understand why Belize is known as "La Isla Bonita." Spending 6 weeks in Belize was an experience that changed my life! I will be entering my junior year at Smith College with a double major in Psychology and Education with a focus in Early Childhood Education. Working and learning with children is a major passion of mine, which was greatly complimented by this trip. Collaboration makes up the core of Coral Reef Ed-Ventures and that is exactly how I would describe my relationship with the children. Despite the fact that I was there to help expand their knowledge of the reef and conservation, it was the children of San Pedro who opened my eyes to a world I had never known. These children taught me so much about their culture and the importance of family and nature. Another aspect of the experience that makes this such a unique program, was that it allowed me to create a home within the culture while really helping the Belizeans I met in San Pedro. I loved walking down the street and stopping to say hello to new friends instead of feeling like a separated, lost tourist. The teaching
experience I gained on this trip I will use in the future, because I will definitely be working with children for a career. I am also looking forward to traveling to Denmark this fall to complete a semester abroad, and I will definitely use the skills and resources I gained while in beautiful Belize. I created memories there that I will use for a lifetime.

Madeline Weigner, (Science Program Director – see Summer 2008 report)

Faculty:

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Susan Etheredge: sethered@smith.edu

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Esteban Monserrate: emonserr@smith.edu

Some PS notes:

1. In the 10 years of Coral Ed, there have been 49 student-teacher participants. Since some were Coral Ed repeaters (the two three-peaters are Beth Callaghan, AC ’04 and Emily Tyner, ’06, the total number of individual Coral Ed alums is 37, counting the members of the 2009 Team.
2. There likely are errors of both omission and commission within. We apologize for any and all mistakes. Please send corrections and update information to Al Curran.
3. Some of you have expressed interest in future support of and/or involvement with Smith Coral Ed. In this regard, we invite you to contact any of the faculty sponsors at any time.
4. We thank Lily Maynard and Madeline Weigner of the 2009 Team for their great assistance in the compiling and editing of this newsletter.
Appendix: Coral Reef Ed-Ventures alumnae email list (in chronologic order of participation):

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Note: asterisk after emails indicates uncertain address.