

## Alumni Profile

"I enjoy what I do, and therefore I don't think of it as a chore, but rather an opportunity."

Even while studying abroad in Aix-en-Provence, France, Nishith Pandya of Orland Park, Ill., has been excited to watch the tight presidential race. This CEP alum loves political activism, and this year offered abundant opportunities for him to participate in campaigns.

In 2001, Nishith, 20, spent his spring break on a CEP trip to Birmingham, Ala. He returned to CEP for the alumni trip to the Iowa caucuses in January 2004 and volunteered at campaigns for the Democratic presidential nomination.

When he returned to college at the University of Illinois-Urbana Champaign after CEP, Nishith realized he wanted to keep volunteering in the political arena.

"My proudest service activity was being in-

# Nishith Pandya

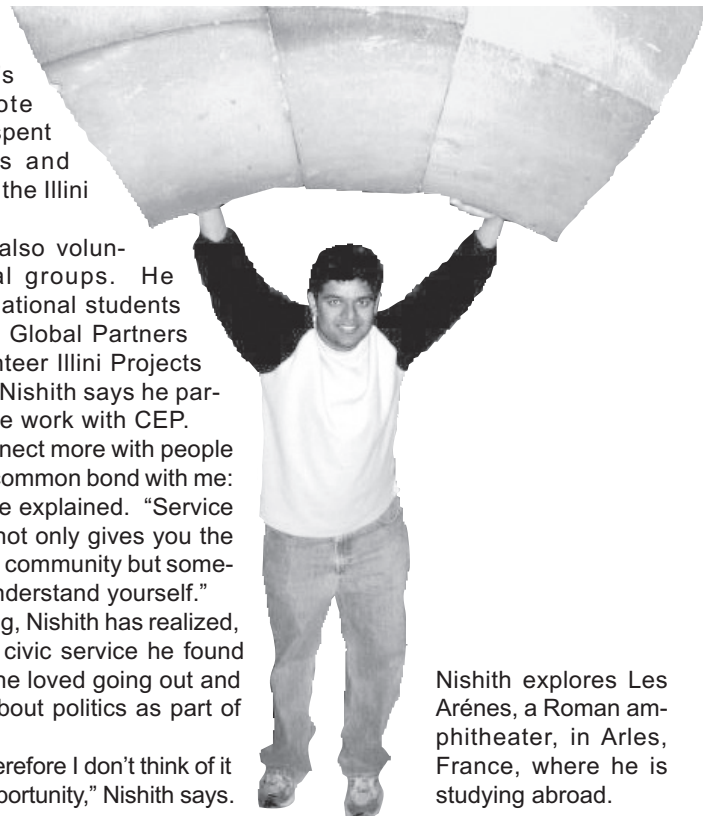
involved in UIUC for Dean, my campus' organization promoting Howard Dean's candidacy," Nishith wrote from France. He mainly spent time talking to students and passing out information in the Illini student union.

At UIUC, Nishith has also volunteered with non-political groups. He served as a host to international students through a program called Global Partners and helped with the Volunteer Illini Projects service organization. But Nishith says he particularly likes doing service work with CEP.

"CEP allowed me to connect more with people my own age who shared a common bond with me: the desire to do service," he explained. "Service should be something that not only gives you the opportunity to improve your community but something that lets you better understand yourself."

Part of that understanding, Nishith has realized, was learning what type of civic service he found most interesting. He said he loved going out and talking to other students about politics as part of the campaigning for Dean.

"I enjoy what I do, and therefore I don't think of it as a chore, but rather an opportunity," Nishith says.



Nishith explores Les Arènes, a Roman amphitheater, in Arles, France, where he is studying abroad.


"I learned about the world - and myself."

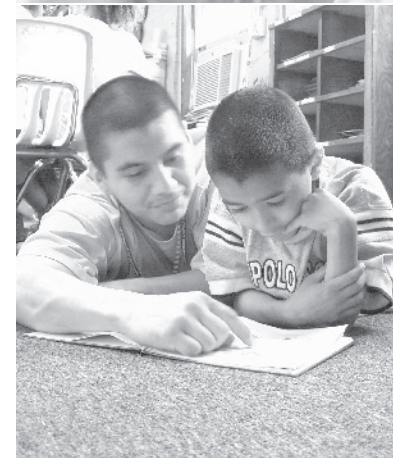
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On a weekend excursion to the Fiesta del Sol, a summer festival in the Pilsen neighborhood of Chicago in late July, CLI student Zach Fuchs samples a fresh fruit treat.

A program of the  
**CENTER  
for TALENT  
DEVELOPMENT**  
  
**NORTHWESTERN  
UNIVERSITY**



THE CIVIC EDUCATION PROJECT

# Catalyst

CEP's Alumni Newsletter • December 2004

## Spring into CEP

Look for improved programs in New York City and Chicago

CEP is all about changing the world, and that means CEP itself has to change to keep up.

Every spring for the past six years, CEP has offered fun, intense weeks of service-learning. Now, based on feedback from prospective students and alumni, we're looking to revamp and improve those programs to make them even more exciting and more effective.

We'll still be offering incredible weeks filled with eye-opening experiences, but some of the logistics will change. To begin, we're concentrating on developing stronger curriculums at fewer sites. By focusing on a smaller number of sites, we hope to improve the learning experiences, speakers, and service opportunities.

Another important change is that students will meet at the sites instead of travelling together. With this change, we will be able to open the program to a national pool of students and accommodate more students per site.

We've also heard from prospective students and alumni from all over the country who were excited to participate in spring programs but couldn't because of the pre- and post-trip requirements. Now, the programs truly will be one week long; there won't be preliminary or follow-up meet-

ings in Evanston. Instead, we'll meet at a central location, such as the program city's airport, and then go to the sites that you'll call home during your week of service.

Meeting at the sites will also allow us to expand to locations outside the Midwest and tackle different themes. Someday, we'd like to study immigration on the Texas-Mexico border, delve into race and social justice on the Civil Rights Trail, or learn about HIV/AIDS in San Francisco.

This spring, we'll offer two awesome new programs, one in New York City and one in Chicago.

In the Big Apple, the theme will be Education and Youth Development. We'll be working in schools and with educators on service projects in one of the most metropolitan cities in the world. You'll be able to use many of the skills that you learn when you return to your community.

In the Windy City, we'll delve into Hunger and Homelessness. Whether you're from DeKalb, Ill., or Portland, Ore., you'll be discovering sides to the city that you'd never see as a tourist, and you'll be learning about problems that affect cities both big and small.

We'll schedule the programs during the most popular weeks for spring breaks, but we'll also be offering high school credit for the course so that you can take it whether or not you're on vacation from school.

We're thrilled to take the CEP programs to a new level. And although, after raising tuition by only \$30 in the past five years, these programs will cost more, we're hoping that we'll also be able to grant more financial aid.

In addition, we'll be working hard to improve our winter college-age alumni program. We are taking this year off from planning a winter program so that we can concentrate on the changes for the spring, but be on the lookout for alumni programming in future years. If you have ideas about programs for alumni, e-mail your suggestions to [cep@northwestern.edu](mailto:cep@northwestern.edu).

Thanks for your help as we make these changes. If you're in high school, look for a catalog featuring our new, improved programs in the next few weeks!

### Summer of Service

*Top:* Shanker Raman shares his input on a panel featuring four other CLI Baltimore students and five students visiting the program from Morocco, Lebanon, and Egypt.

*Middle:* Alberto Trujillo spends some quality time reading with a child at the Gads Hill Center on a volunteer trip with his CLI class in Chicago.

*Bottom:* Stephanie Wu and Antonina Shapovalova enjoy Washington, D.C., where students visited the Holocaust museum and met with senators from their home states.

# Service and Sun SUMMER '04

*Below:* At the Fiesta del Sol celebration in Chicago's Pilsen neighborhood, Jackie Valentine and Natasha Davis make an appearance on a Spanish-language TV station.

*Right:* Anstes Agnew listens intently to a panel discussion with five students from the Middle East during CLI Baltimore.



*Left:* Dan Kandy performs a number on the banjo at the end-of-session CLI Chicago talent show, which ended in an all-campus pool party.

*Above:* At CLI Baltimore, Joshua Stein, Hannah Marshall, and Jill Feffer spend time preparing their final group project.

## Community activism

From playing with kids at a community center to debating the causes of world poverty in an integrative seminar to listening to the U.S. Surgeon General speak, Civic Leadership Institute participants spent their summer learning about social issues and how to solve problems.

This year, each class in Baltimore and Chicago was paired with a neighborhood so that they could learn more about one area's residents, problems and strengths.

In the Charles Village neighborhood of Baltimore, students served a meal to homeless people at the Helping Up Mission. Though they saw the effects of homelessness, they also said they saw the love and hope associated with social change.

Another group of students in Chicago learned about the high-crime neighborhood of West Garfield Park. They were impressed by the assertiveness of leaders at CeaseFire, a group that approaches high-risk individuals to reinforce the idea that guns aren't tolerated in the community and instead offers them safe havens and other opportunities.

Students discussed their expectations of an inner-city neighborhood, and after tours of their communities, they said they were impressed by how the neighborhoods differed from their preconceptions. One student wrote, "I'm still left with the question about why these areas are in their present condition. If the people aren't the problem, what is?"

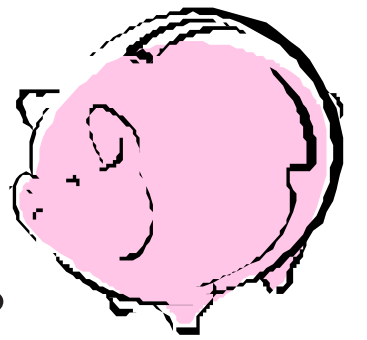
The Changemakers speaker series helped students better address these questions and understand the need for social action. Anthony Oliver, the founder of Streetwise, a newspaper that is sold by the homeless and those at risk for becoming homeless, spoke to students about this innovative approach to change. They also heard from a journalist and former member of the Black Panther Party, Salim Muwakkil, about his activism work.

Meanwhile, in Youth and Society classes at the Center for Talent Development and the Center for Talented Youth, 7th to 9th grade students learned about and discussed social issues such as racial discrimination, domestic violence, homelessness, and HIV/AIDS. In Evanston, as part of their final project presentation, the students traveled to Navy Pier to join in a live broadcast discussing these issues.

At all grade levels and both locations, students gained skills over the course of the summer that will enable them to lead social change in their communities. With the school year in full swing, now is the time to translate that knowledge and experience into focused action in your corner of the world!

Become an:

## Effective fundraiser



Good service ideas are easy to come by. Money, conversely, is not. There's no better time than the outset of the school year, when motivation is high, to harness the enthusiasm left over from summer, whether you were at the Civic Leadership Institute or getting involved elsewhere, and use it to do something fantastic for your community. Paying for a huge project may discourage you from pursuing your idea, but don't let that obstacle stop you.

There are, of course, limitless ways to raise funds. You can organize a special event. You can hold a car wash. You can sell a product. But one of the most accessible treasure chests of resources is often ignored. The business community around you can be a rich source of funding if you take the time to simply approach owners and ask for help personally, and a well-written fund-raising letter to accent the interview can open doors you never dreamed existed.

Many organizations will ask for a letter before agreeing to donate to your project. When you make a personal contact at a business, have a letter prepared to present at the end of your conversation for easy reference once you've left. Here are a few tips from Hope Associates, a consulting practice for nonprofit organizations, on composing an effective and persuasive letter.

**1. Know to whom you're writing.** Carefully consider which organizations or businesses in your community have a personal interest in the issue you'll be tackling. Smaller institutions are often better. Once you've isolated a few, educate yourself on what they do so you can talk intelligently about the business and suggest very specific ways in which the company can help you.

**2. Explain the common good of your project.** Tell the donor what human need will be fulfilled through the money (or goods or services) he or she gives. Don't simply tell them they will be providing Christmas dinner for a needy family; let them know that they'll be feeding undernourished children, encouraging parents, and inspiring the community to take action on the issue.

**3. Ask for a specific amount.** Be bold. Request more than you think the organization will give you. Remember that what sounds like a substantial amount of money to you is often a drop in the bucket to a business.

**4. Provide a timeline for response.** Name a specific date or week. Make a timely response urgent ("Help fund this project before your chance to impact a life during the holiday season is lost").

**5. Make it easy to respond.** Include a self-addressed, stamped envelope where appropriate, or at least provide clear and easy-to-find contact information.

**6. Keep it short!** If you don't hook your donor in the first paragraph, he or she will lose interest quickly. Keep your letter to one page.

**7. Follow up promptly and enthusiastically.** Treat each donor as if he or she is the most important contact you have. Respond to each gift with a genuine and personal thank you card or letter.

For more fund-raising letter advice, visit Hope Associates at [www.hopeco/fundraising\\_letter.htm](http://www.hopeco/fundraising_letter.htm).

## 2005

Programs

**Spring 2005  
CIVIC WEEK (9th-12th)**

Hunger & Homelessness in Chicago, IL  
March 20-26

Education & Youth Development in New York, NY  
March 28-April 3

**Summer 2005  
CIVIC LEADERSHIP INSTITUTE (10th-12th)**

Session 1: Center for Talented Youth  
Johns Hopkins University, Baltimore, MD  
June 26-July 15

Session 2: Center for Talent Development  
Northwestern University, Chicago, IL  
July 24-August 12

**YOUTH AND SOCIETY (7th-9th)**

Center for Talented Youth  
Johns Hopkins University, Baltimore, MD

Center for Talent Development  
Northwestern University, Evanston, IL

Session 1: June 26-July 15  
Session 2: July 17-August 5

## Spotlight on

# Service

**The voice of  
Amnesty  
International  
demands justice  
across the globe**

In hundreds of locations around the world, innocent prisoners await execution for crimes they did not commit. Minorities suffer extreme physical torture. Governments detain citizens for years in jail without informing them of the charges against them or allowing them a trial of any kind. The United Nations' Universal Declaration of Human Rights forbids these actions, but enforcing the tenets of the document and ushering in justice requires a massive amount of manpower.

Amnesty International, a worldwide campaign for human rights, offers ordinary citizens the opportunity to change history and preserve the life and safety of victims of human

rights violations. Through organizing fund-raising concerts, demonstrating publicly, and flooding governments with thousands of letters in a matter of days, members of AI have convinced governments to change their laws, freed prisoners of conscience, and brought abusers to trial under international standards. With 1.8 million members, supporters, and staff spanning 150 countries and territories, Amnesty International makes demands with a voice that is difficult for oppressors to drown out.

A number of the volunteers whose efforts move such mountains are students, many of whom operate through Amnesty International clubs at their high schools or colleges. Some focus on global campaigns targeted at a specific country or issue over a long period of time. In an immediate crisis, students mobilize quickly to generate letters and e-mails that, along with thousands of others from around the world, put pressure on governments and individuals within hours.

Options for getting involved with Amnesty International range from simply joining the organization as an individual to linking up with a local network to starting an AI club at your school. The group's Web site posts detailed appeals for action by anyone who wishes to speak out, including coverage of the circumstances that need attention, the name and address of the person to petition for change, and sample letters to each. Visit [www.amnesty.org](http://www.amnesty.org) to learn more about urgent human rights issues, the movement as a whole, and specific ways you can join in the task of preserving human rights for all people at all times.