This past semester students had the opportunity to team up with SSA to lend a helping hand to Humanitarian Services. Throughout February you could find students volunteering on any given Tuesday or Thursday evening.

The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints put out a request for over 1,600 quilts! Local missionaries for the Humanitarian Services Department of the Church eagerly welcomed SSA and quickly put us to work to meet the demand! Experienced and non-experienced students alike had the opportunity to forget themselves and get to work!

David Amorim noted that “it was amazing to realize how simple, easy manual labor could produce such basic yet essential life-supporting items, such as the quilts and blankets that we helped make. Overall, it was a great experience, and it is very accessible – all we had to do was walk in and start working. The environment was great and no previous experience was necessary. It really was a great opportunity to put YOUR life on hold and start thinking about others... It was great!”

During these service opportunities, we discovered the benefits of serving including new-found friendships. We also found that serving was addictive. Lindsey Sowards excitedly exclaimed, “I loved this opportunity to serve. It was a load of fun with the best people ever! It didn’t take that much time out of our day and it was like an addiction!! We never wanted to stop when our hour was up!! It’s such a blessing to those that need our services and it blesses us as well. Every night, coming home I felt amazing and on top of the world knowing that we had just helped someone stay warm by helping make a blanket! It’s the best feeling in the world, serving others, which in turn serves Christ and we can feel His love through these services.”

If you love to serve or are just interested in getting involved, Humanitarian Services is always looking for helping hands. Anytime between 10 a.m. – 4 p.m. Monday through Friday you can drop by Deseret Industries (DI) in Provo and volunteer for as long as you like.

For more information, contact Humanitarian Services at (801) 373-7920.
Ramon’s Recipe for Success: a graduate perspective

If you have been walking by the graduate lab this year and could smell the aroma of carne asada tacos filling the hall, you have this year’s graduate cohort to thank for that. From blueberry or caramel apple French toast, gyros and souvlaki, to chocolate covered doughnuts in the shape of a Y, this year’s graduate cohort has developed a unique approach to building a cohesive team whose friendships will last beyond their time here at BYU. Team building is an integral part of life and here are two tips that I have found to be useful in my experience.

First, make sure you want to be a part of that team. Graduate school is no picnic, but neither is life. From working in an operating room to directing air traffic over the east coast, I have always enjoyed what I did, but sometimes my goals haven’t always matched the goals of the people around me. Though I left a job that pays more than most university professors, the team that I am now a part of has forced me to grow in many unforeseen ways.

Within our cohort we have many types: the geniuses that make me feel like an idiot, those who bring comic relief to a tense situation, and those whose talents enrich our gatherings. Each person within our team fills an important role that builds the unity of the team. In life it is finding how we contribute to the team that leads to success in the long run. Many define success by money, jobs, or academic achievement, but I would contend that those measures of success are a very small part of the puzzle. The quality of our relationships throughout life is the true measure of our success and lasting happiness. It also defines who we become. Our cohort has developed ties that have encouraged friendships that concentrate on the success of everyone within the group, not just certain individuals. This selfless concern for others has built our team into a cohesive unit.

BY RAMON CASTILLO

Program Assessment Internships: an opportunity to get involved

Program Assessment Internships provide students with hands-on experiences where they can gain skills they can use in the labor market—specifically the ability to collect, analyze, and interpret data. Many smaller NGOs that focus on development need help in this area. Another goal of our program assessment effort is to develop a database over several years which includes the NGOs, their internships, and the evaluations.

This summer three of our faculty will mentor eight students while they intern abroad with various NGOs. Some of the students will work with an organization called HELP International that provides volunteer experiences in developing countries. Alexander Gray, Kiira Fox, and Robert Morelle will evaluate programs in El Salvador, India, and Uganda, respectively. Other students—Jeff Swindler, Michelle Rubio, and Logan Theodore are working with Choice Humanitarian in Mexico to help implement an evaluation strategy to assess the effectiveness and efficiency of their various projects. Rilee Buttar and Rachel Fischer will work with an NGO called Courage to Hope which is developing a women’s shelter in the Ukraine. These students will perform a needs assessment to guide the priorities of the shelter. We’ll update you on their experiences with these internships in the upcoming Fall issue of the newsletter.

Interns take Soc 301: Applied Social Research Methods (SOC 300 and 405) are also highly recommended prior to their internship. In this course they develop an evaluation project to help an NGO. Language proficiency is also encouraged but is not necessarily mandatory. If you want to learn more about these internships or are interested in participating in the future, please contact Dr. Tim Heaton at tim_heaton@byu.edu.

Each of these interns were given funding by alumni donors. We’d like to thank them for their charitable contribution. If you’re interested in making a donation to assist other students in future research or internship opportunities, please see the link on our website: sociology.byu.edu.

The Census and Statistics: an alumni perspective

During graduate school my academic interests were international — I cared about the plight of malnourished children in struggling countries. I found that the education of a mother had a real impact on the lives of her children and every year of maternal education improved the well being of those children. During those formative college years I never imagined that I would have a career as a statistician, let alone one whose main concentration would be education in the United States. I have worked at the Census Bureau for six years focusing on school enrollment and educational attainment. My background in sociology, specifically demography, has suited me perfectly for this role. Although my concentration has shifted from an international to a national perspective, I am still fascinated by the influence of education and recognize the value and importance of it. School enrollment is an exciting subject because it is absolutely driven by population influences such as births and immigration. Working as a sociologist among other sociologists and demographers in a non-academic setting is a remarkable opportunity and one that I entirely attribute to the mentoring and influence of my professors at BYU.

BY JESSICA DAVIS
What Is the Canadian Rule of Hockey? A Response to *Outliers*

According to Malcolm Gladwell (*Outliers* 2008), there is one clear Canadian rule of hockey: birth months are destiny. Canadian hockey rosters everywhere are stacked with birth months of players in January, February, and March. Why? Because much earlier in their hockey careers, at ages 8-11, they were sifted and sorted by coaches and scouts in leagues with stringent age cutoffs, January 1st. As a result, players born in the first few months of the year are the oldest and thus unfairly advantaged when compared by coaches and scouts with their younger counterparts.

Gladwell and the researcher he cites claim that over 40% of rosters across Canada will have this unfair stacking. The effect is so large that is does not take “statistical analysis to observe it, just look at the data” (p.23). So some students and I got together and did just that.

First we looked at the roster for the Medicine Hat Tigers for their championship game in 2007, as the book reports. Sure enough, the pattern is clearly evident, with 56% of the players born in January, February, or March. Their opponents, the Vancouver Giants, showed a similar result: 44% born in the first three months of the year. In 2010, the pattern still appears to hold.

The big question remains, does it matter for the big prize in Canadian hockey—playing on the Canadian Olympic team or in the National Hockey League. The answer appears to be a resounding “no.”

(continued on page 4)

Education—An Interactive Process: an opportunity to get involved

Your college and educational experience is what you make of it. After all, education is an interactive process. The professors of the sociology department are dedicated to your learning and education. Many of our professors are currently investing in students by mentoring them on various research projects. Working with a professor on research is a great way to invest in yourself and your educational experience. Professors love to work with students who are dedicated to learning and committed to the process.

If you want to strengthen your relationship with your professors, we encourage you to get to know them and allow them the opportunity to get to know you. In order to do this, it is recommended that you visit your professors during their office hours to get help when needed as well as to discuss their research endeavors and any interests you may have. If you want to stand out in class be sure to complete you assignments on time and actively participate during lectures and class discussions.

Participating in a mentorship can be fun as well as academically beneficial. One of our own professors, Dr. Lance Erickson has focused much of his recent research on the role and benefits of mentoring in the lives of teenagers. He mentioned that mentoring is perceived positively because it is seen as a way to solve problems of disadvantage that some teens face.

Students, if you need help with your course work or are interested in getting involved with research—do not hesitate to meet with your professors and discuss the options available. Each year, students that participate in mentorships have the opportunity to showcase their mentored research, present results, and discuss their find-

Family Formation & Reproductive Industries: an opportunity to get involved

The growth of an industry such as the family is impacted by numerous changes in society, politics, and even technology. The Family Formation & Reproductive Industries Project focuses on understanding the growth of such industries in relation to these changes. Students who participate in this project have a chance to look at industries in relation to social movements such as pro-life and pro-choice as well as the movement concerning women’s health. They also investigate the effects of policy change such as Roe vs. Wade and adoption laws on the growth of an industry like the family. New technologies such as birth control, in vitro fertilization, gamete sales, and surrogacy mothering also influence the growth of industries, and students have a chance to analyze influences.

Instead of focusing on social trends such as the rise and decline of abortion, adoption, in vitro cycles, and surrogate mothering like other research, this project examines the influence of professional entrepreneurs and social activists in legitimating a variety of family formation strategies. New organizations have emerged over the past 30 years offering a variety of services that legitimate and facilitate new ways of creating parent-child relationships. While many are worried about the decline of traditional family life as suggested by out of wedlock births, cohabitation, divorce, and delayed marriage, this project recognizes that a substantial number of people are continuing to form families and that some go to great lengths to do so, investing thousands of dollars in efforts to conceive, adopt, or pay for a surrogate mother.

If you are interested in participating in this project, please contact Dr. Marie Cornwall at marie_cornwall@byu.edu.
coaches have every incentive to look for current talent, regardless of age. Where potential talent is more the game in minor levels, current talent stands independent of any artificial boost according to month of birth. Of course, those born in the early months of the year have an advantage by just having more players in the minors, but when it comes to elite hockey, skill trumps month of birth even if there are more “early monthers” to choose from.

It seems reasonable that the iron rule of Canadian hockey isn’t birth month, but playing hockey from birth. For any player to do well, they should come from a hockey town and begin hockey early. Doesn’t this seem like a more important rule? Doesn’t it seem more critical to know if players in the Canadian Olympic Hockey team or on the Medicine Hat Tigers were born in towns with tremendous hockey facilities and selective pee- wee leagues, and into families with vast resources to cultivate early hockey talent? It’s still cumulative advantage, as Gladwell claims, just a more critical advantage then when you were born.

But perhaps this conclusion is too dismissive. We shouldn’t underestimate the power of the Thomas theorem. If Gladwell’s iron rule isn’t real, it may be in its consequences. Imagine what might happen when hockey-crazed couples planning to have children pick up Outliers, we just might see a spike in births in January, February, and March.

BY BENJAMIN GIBBS, SHAWN MEINERS, AND DAVID JETER