

Articles from The Communicator

Grad Student Impacts Society Through the Purdue Peace Project

2013-12-12 16:12:10 admin

[Like](#) [Share](#) Sign Up to see what your friends like.



[Tweet](#) 10

Snyder

Dorothy Snyder, a BLSC graduate student, spent two weeks this semester in West Africa as part of Purdue Peace Project to help create peaceful resolutions for conflicts in communities.

Snyder is in her third year as a doctoral student in the Brian Lamb School of Communication in organizational rhetoric with a minor in women's, gender, and sexuality studies.

Because she is not currently teaching in a classroom she was able to travel to Ghana, West Africa as part of the Purdue Peace Project (PPP). She believes PPP gives her the chance to influence society in a meaningful way.

"I want to do something that would have an actual impact on people and be able to get outside the walls of academia," Snyder said.

The Purdue Peace Project's main goal is to eliminate violence in conflict-prone regions of West Africa by assisting local leaders in creating peaceful resolutions. With only eight members, the group revolves around teamwork and collaborative ideas. Kelly Vibber, a research graduate assistant in the Purdue Peace Project, believes that every member involved brings new innovative ideas to the table to help local leaders in Africa.

"All of the team members bring a different background and perspective to the issues, which makes for a productive and synergistic working environment," Vibber said.

Kai Kuang, another graduate research assistant in Purdue Peace Project, finds the motto of the PPP to fit their mission well. She agrees that the goal of PPP is to “promote peace through local action” and that is why they select small scale action to ensure success.

Snyder became involved in this close knit group in the spring of 2012 and she assisted in Ghana from Nov. 1-13 of this year. While overseas she worked with local leaders in the Nandom district and the rural communities to clear up confusion about land disputes.

Snyder worked directly with the Elders in these communities to gain a better understanding of how different plots of land were divided in the past to help the farmers in the area come to a compromise on the land boundaries.

She explained how much these communities still rely on word of mouth from the Elders for information, which has caused conflict over land ownership.

While working with farmers and local leaders to come to a final decision on land boundaries, the Purdue Peace Project helps these communities write up documents for concrete proof in the future.

As an advocate for communication, Snyder found her initial experience in Berekum, Africa, to be especially significant. After 14 years of a crumbling chieftaincy that left roads, schools, and all funding at a standstill, Berekum finally elected a chief to help bring the town back together. As a symbolic gesture, the fountain that sat dilapidated in the center of the town was refurbished and presented at the annual Harvest Festival.

“As someone so involved in the art of communication, this gesture speaks volumes to me,” Snyder said. This fountain stood for much more than just aesthetic appeal, it was a symbol of a town coming together after more than a decade.”

Snyder intends to stay involved with Purdue Peace Project until she graduates in 2015. She hopes to carry the opportunities and experiences gained in PPP throughout her career and continue to make a difference for others in the future.

By Sarah Whiteside
Junior, Public Relations/Political Science