HPER Reaches Out to Lebanese and Kyrgyz Youth

The Department of Recreation and Parks Administration at Indiana University’s School of Health, Physical Education, and Recreation (HPER) is collaborating with units at Purdue University and University of Notre Dame to provide a “peace-through-sports” initiative to certain Islamic countries. The aim is to advance understanding, appreciation, and cooperation between the United States and the Muslim world through culturally sensitive sports training that stresses tolerance, sportsmanship, and leadership. The hope is that such training can bring about positive change and eventually contribute to peace efforts worldwide.

Managed by the Indiana Center for Cultural Exchange (ICCE) at Purdue, the training of trainers program, called Unity through Sports (USPORT), includes a strong component of tolerance and conflict resolution training in addition to teaching the more usual coaching and officiating skills and techniques. This year, the program is bringing coaches and players from youth sports programs in Lebanon and Kyrgyzstan to Indiana. Department chair Lynn Jamieson says, “Our faculty are involved in researching how to address sociocultural issues in war-torn or otherwise stressed countries through recreational sports. In Islamic countries, the idea is that communities with large youth populations and high unemployment need intervention programs that will attract youth to sports opportunities and away from gang behavior and extremist ideology.”

Last December, four coaches and the executive manager of the Lebanese Basketball Federation—which coordinates leagues for players ages 8 to 24 in a country where basketball is the national sport—traveled to Indiana to learn best practices in coaching, sports management, and youth leadership at the three universities. At IU they learned how to be better coaches, participated in hands-on coaching clinics, observed game practices, and met with officials of the National Collegiate Athletic Association (NCAA). HPER lecturer Joby Wright, who has conducted coaching clinics abroad in eight countries, coordinated the activities.

At Purdue’s Department of Youth Development, specialist Jerry Peters trained them in youth leadership, communications skills, and community service training. At Notre Dame, they worked with Rashied Omar of the Joan B. Kroc Institute for International Peace Studies, which conducts research and education and outreach programs into the causes of violence and the conditions for sustainable peace.

The Lebanese delegation that visited IU in December are (left to right) Antoine Kara, a coach and physical education teacher from Fanar; Lubna Ghanem, an assistant coordinator from Beirut; David Der-Yeghiayan, a basketball player from Beirut; Michel Beyrouthy, assistant manager of the Lebanese Basketball Federation; and (far right) Dany Ammous, coach and teacher in Zahle. HPER lecturer and coaching instructor Joby Wright (second from right), had taken the group to a boys basketball practice at Bloomington South High School.

In early July, 12 Lebanese youth basketball players got the chance to attend summer basketball camp at IUB and receive leadership and sportsmanship training at Purdue and Notre Dame. Later that month, a group of 10 youth coaches and players from the southern Osh region in Kyrgyzstan attended a similar

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continents at four different sites.” Hutton concurs: “The wonder of it was how these young citizens could have so many animated conversations across the nation and across the globe.”

CASE plans to continue in 2005–2006, and the organizers are looking to add new groups of undergraduate students to these international discussions. The Global Center is working with the directors of the Global Village, Foster International, and Intensive Freshman Seminars to consider how the CASE program might be offered as a for-credit course within the curriculum for IUB undergraduates.

As for Claussen, she is already busy spending the summer as an intern for a parliamentarian of the European Union in Brussels. Before leaving Bloomington, she found out that she was one of two winners of the College of Arts and Sciences’ Palmer-Brandon Prize, which is given annually to outstanding full-time students majoring in the humanities at IUB. When she returns in the fall, she will complete a dual degree in comparative social policy and ideology through IU’s Individualized Major Program and in Spanish. She will also earn minors in political science and West European studies. Claussen will use her Palmer-Brandon Prize to conduct a survey and analysis of civil society in Latin America and Eastern Europe.

—RMN

For more information: www.indiana.edu/~global/case

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three-week coaching and leadership training course at the three universities in Indiana. Their goal was to create youth recreational sports leagues through the region that include strong youth development, leadership, service, and tolerance training components. The Kyrgyz program was partially funded by the Mercy Corps and Nike.

The overall ICCE program is being funded by a grant from the U.S. Department of State’s Bureau of Educational and Cultural Affairs, in addition to other sponsors.

—RMN

Left to right are Lynn Jamieson, professor and chair of the Department of Recreation and Parks Administration; Chafic Taha, a basketball coach and accountant in Nabatieh; Dany Ammous, a coach and teacher in Zahle; and Nazir Al Agha Al Saoudi, a coach in North Lebanon. They are attending a holiday reception at the department, which is a partner in the Unity through Sports Program.