

# Nurturing Heart

By Gina Logue

To Jeanie Pham, believing in outreach means reaching out as far as possible.

That's why the senior community development major at Portland State University applied for and won a 2014 Study Abroad Grant from Phi Kappa Phi.

Pham used the funding to help underwrite enrollment in courses on community engagement and on poverty and development at University of Cape Town in South Africa last summer.

"It was the perfect fit to analyze a developing and progressive country such as South Africa," Pham said in an email interview. "I wanted to interact with the community and work with nonprofits/NGOs."

In addition to taking classes, Pham volunteered at the Ark City of Refuge. The shelter assists homeless people whose lives have been affected by domestic violence, drug and alcohol addiction and poverty.

Pham is a first-generation Vietnamese-American from Salem, Ore. Her parents, who work at a frozen foods factory, emigrated from Vietnam in the late 1980s and became naturalized Americans. Her older sister is a nurse in Bellevue, Wash., and completing her nursing degree at University of Washington. Her younger brother is a sophomore business major at University of Oregon.

Pham's experiences at home laid the groundwork for her personal growth abroad, in what marked her first international trip. She has conducted fundraising and database work with Rose Community Development, a nonprofit that supports low-income communities in southeast Portland. She also is



Courtesy of Jeanie Pham

Jeanie Pham (above) visited Signal Hill, a scenic spot in Cape Town, South Africa, in July during her summer study abroad at University of Cape Town. Pham and fellow college students studying abroad at University of Cape Town brought coloring books, Hula-Hoops, balls and additional toys and games to children (below) who reside at the Ark City of Refuge, a nonprofit shelter for adults and minors in Cape Town.

involved with the Student Leaders for Service Members program at her school and the campus diversity scholars peer mentor program.

To Pham, community development "represents a sense of togetherness and human dignity, a well-known virtue in the South African community known as 'ubuntu' — that we are all after the same resources, need a helping hand, and, essentially, need to

unite and depend on one another as we fulfill our own lives," she explained.

Upon graduation in June 2015, Pham hopes to attend graduate school and work in the Peace Corps. If that doesn't pan out, she intends to sign on with AmeriCorps, which

provides national and community service, or another nonprofit in the Portland area.

"The route to success for my family and the Vietnamese community as a whole will come from my accomplishment of graduating college as well as creating a positive impact on the community around me," Pham wrote on her Study Abroad application. ●



**Gina Logue** (Middle Tennessee State University chapter secretary and public relations officer and former president) is an award-winning producer and media representative in the Office of News and Public Affairs at MTSU, her alma mater. She entered academia after more than 20 years of covering politics as a broadcast journalist at regional radio stations and networks. Logue writes frequently for the awards edition of this magazine. Email her at [odahleen@gmail.com](mailto:odahleen@gmail.com).