

### Studying in Scotland, Summer 2008

*This past summer, 3 BSW and 5 MSW students studied comparative social services for a month with Scottish students at the Glasgow School of Social Work. The course was co-taught by Dr. John Rife and Dr. Betsy Lindsey of the UNCG Department of Social Work and Prof. Graham McPheat of the Glasgow School of Social Work. This International Educational Exchange Program has been ongoing for about 20 years. Here is one student's reflections on her experience.*

Going to Scotland this summer was my first time abroad, and my experience could not have been more positive. The Scottish students were warm and welcoming. It was if we known each other for years.

On our first day of class we were asked to get into groups and discuss what stereotypes we had of each other. The Scots thought Americans were loud, violent, vulgar, and overweight. The Americans thought that the Scottish students would have red hair, be drunk all the time, and not own a car. It was a good lesson to hear other people tell you their perceptions of America and to learn where they come from. Not one Scottish student had red hair, and none of the American students were packing a gun. Most of the stereotypes were burst, while others seemed somewhat accurate.

On our first weekend there we took a cross country trip to Northern Scotland. It gave us the opportunity to see the country in all of its majestic beauty. We had the opportunity to hike through the Highlands and meet some of the locals. Time and time again we met friendly welcoming strangers. Even now I struggle to put into words how breathtaking Scotland is and how amazing the people are.

Just a few things I learned while in Scotland. ***We are more alike than we are different.*** A big portion of my interest in studying abroad was to find differences between the United States and Scotland. As it turns out, I found many more similarities than differences. For example, while visiting different social service agencies around Glasgow and Edinburgh, we examined how systems differ. The most striking thing I took out of those experiences were how every system, no matter how perfect it seems on paper, is not without its own flaws. Though Scotland's systems of health care, juvenile justice, child welfare, and immigration differ from our own, citizens and employees alike talk about where the system is failing and how frustrating the system can be. ***The Scottish are the most helpful people I have come to find thus far.*** Several times we would get lost and just stop and question where we were and how we get to where we were going. Oftentimes these questions were not directed at anyone but more of question put out there to the world. More times than not a Scot would answer, as if we had directly asked them the question. ***The cost of the trip pales in comparison to the experience I had.*** I lived in Scotland doing every day things such as washing dishes, reading the paper, going grocery shopping, and griping about having to get up for school. For four weeks I became a part of another culture. For four weeks I never stopped learning, never stopped experiencing things I had not experienced before. The experience I had in Scotland was absolutely priceless.

*Angela Mays, JMSW Student*