

## **Noted author Wangerin to give commencement address**

Valpo's May 17 commencement ceremonies for approximately 635 students completing undergraduate and graduate degrees will feature an address by nationally-known author and storyteller Walt Wangerin Jr., Emil and Elfriede Jochum University professor.

Wangerin came into national prominence as author of *The Book of the Dun Cow*, which won the National Book Award and was named "Best Children's Book of the Year" by The New York Times. He is widely known as a speaker, storyteller and author of more than 30 books, ranging from fiction to children's stories to practical theology and devotionals. Wangerin's work has garnered six Golden Medallion Book Awards, the American Book Award and the C.S. Lewis Award.

*Father and Son: Finding Freedom*, his most recent book, is a deeply personal story of brokenness, hope and reconciliation told by Wangerin and his adopted son, Matthew. His other books include *Jesus: A Novel*, which focuses on the life of Jesus from his early childhood through his death and resurrection; *Paul: A Novel*, an exploration of the life of the Apostle Paul; and *The Book of God*, which presents the Bible in novel form.

Wangerin gave the keynote address at the Festival of Homiletics last year, and was the featured speaker at a 2007 national conference of professional and aspiring writers shaped by the Lutheran tradition.

Wangerin teaches writing and theology at Valpo, where he has served on the faculty since 1991. Before coming to Valpo, he served as pastor of an inner-city Lutheran congregation in Evansville for 16 years. He was speaker for the Lutheran Vespers radio program from 1994 through January 2005.

Commencement ceremonies begin at 1:30 p.m. in the Athletics-Recreation Center. The graduates also will be honored at Baccalaureate Services at 10 a.m. in the Chapel of the Resurrection.

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## **Five students win Fulbrights for international work**

Five Valparaiso University students have won prestigious Fulbright awards – the most Valpo students ever to earn the fellowships in a single year – and will pursue international research or teach in Africa and Europe during the coming year.

Valpo is a national leader among master's level institutions in having its students selected for Fulbright awards, and this is the fifth time in six years that multiple Valpo students were awarded Fulbrights. Including this year, 17 Valpo students have won Fulbrights since 2004 to teach or conduct research in Egypt, China, South Korea, Germany and six other countries.

The University's 2009-2010 Fulbright winners, all seniors, are:

- Jonathan Eaton, a history and humanities major from Sequim, Wash., who will conduct research on cultural heritage preservation in Albania;

- John Dimmick, a history and art major from Indianapolis, who will teach English at a school in Germany;
- Elizabeth Coyne, a political science and international service major from Naperville, Ill., who will teach English and conduct research in South Africa;
- Jadon Nisly, a history major from Partridge, Kan., who will teach English in Austria; and
- Joy Gieschen, an art and German major from Fort Wayne, who will teach English in Austria.

Eaton said his fascination with cultural heritage began in the fall of 2007 while studying at Valpo's Cambridge Study Center in England. Intrigued by the Greek, Roman and Egyptian antiquities at the Fitzwilliam Museum, Eaton asked its keeper of coins and medals if he could work in the department – an offer that was accepted and soon had Eaton identifying Roman coins and brushing up on Attic Greek.

"I began to consider the impact of a nation's perception of its heritage, even back to ancient times, and how this shaping of the national identity can play a role in deciding the fate of regions, such as the Balkans, which recently have been violently conflicted over issues of ethnic and cultural identity," he said.

Next fall, Eaton will further explore his interests in Albania, a nation he said is enjoying growth and stability after decades of social, political and economic turmoil. He plans to visit museums and other cultural sites throughout the country, speak to museum officials and cultural scholars, and conduct interview with ordinary Albanians.

"As Albania stabilizes and plans for its future, many are looking to their country's past to rebuild a healthy and strong national identity," Eaton said. "Not only will this have implications for how Albanians reconcile themselves with their past, but also how they envision their future relationships with their Balkan neighbors and with the European Union."

Dr. Chuck Schaefer, associate professor of history and Fulbright adviser, said Eaton and Valpo's other Fulbright winners recognize the need for people equipped to take leadership roles in an increasingly global environment.

"The Fulbright commission is looking for people who will make the most of their nine to 10 months in a country, and Jonathan fits that profile perfectly," Dr. Schaefer said. "It's extraordinarily useful for the United States to send those individuals who are able to network and make cultural ties that are important parts of America's efforts in soft diplomacy."

Coyne's interest in international service began in high school, when she met a Burundian refugee and organized a fast to raise money for African children living in poverty. As a Valpo student, she has interned with the International Refugee Center of Heartland Alliance in Chicago and studied in Namibia, where she had an internship with the National Association for People Living with HIV/AIDS (Lironga Eparu).

In addition to teaching English approximately 20 hours a week, Coyne hopes to work at a legal aid organization in the community.

"I plan to do research on the development of democracy and its relationship to reconciliation with South Africa," she said. "I am particularly interested in the issues of nation-building, reconciliation and restorative versus punitive justice."

Coyne said Valpo's Lutheran/Christian approach to education and personal development helped prepare her for the Fulbright program.

"My experiences, particularly within Christ College (Valpo's interdisciplinary honors college), the international service major and my time spent abroad, all have contributed to my character and intellectual development," she said.

Dr. Schaefer said the continuing success of Valpo students in winning fellowships is an indicator of the University's academic quality and commitment to international education.

In 2008, Valpo won the prestigious Senator Paul Simon Award for Campus Internationalization from NAFSA: Association of International Educators, recognizing it as a model for other institutions of higher education in preparing graduates with strong cross-cultural skills and global awareness. The University supports 13 international programs including faculty-directed study centers in four countries, hosts students from more than 50 countries and offers a variety of academic programs in languages and international studies.

Dr. Schaefer noted that the three students awarded Fulbrights to Germany and Austria this year are indicative of the University's excellent German studies program. Valpo opened Kade-Duesenberg German House and Cultural Center nearly a decade ago and recently has added new faculty in Reformation studies and modern German history, in addition to offering study programs in Reutlingen and Tuebingen for many years.

Dimmick took advantage of those programs, spending a semester at Valpo's Reutlingen Study Center to complement his German language studies and German history courses on campus.

"Valpo has honed my interests in German culture and history," Dimmick said. "My time in Reutlingen cultivated a love of southern Germany and a desire to spend more time there, which was instrumental in my decision to apply for a Fulbright."

Four of Valpo's Fulbright winners – Eaton, Dimmick, Coyne and Nisly – are enrolled in Christ College.

Approximately 1,200 American students were offered grants to study, teach English, and conduct research in more than 110 countries throughout the world beginning this summer through the Fulbright Program, which is sponsored by the U.S. Department of State.

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## **Small Town Lutheran Impacts World with Big Heart**

CHICAGO (ELCA) -- Maryn Olson grew up in an Iowa town of 300 people, but her world is anything but small.

Although not yet 30, many consider her a model of "faith in action" because of her tireless work battling social injustices rooted in a compassion for others.

At Olson's alma mater, Indiana's Valparaiso University, financial aid officer Phyllis Schroeder remembered the 2002 graduate's involvement on the prayer team.

"We could count on Maryn to keep us alert to those social justice issues that needed to be addressed," Schroeder said. "She knew what was going on in the world, the nation and on campus."

Over the years, Olson's worked to end childhood hunger in Vermont. She's rallied for battered women in Indiana. She's championed Lutheran HIV/AIDS ministries in Africa.

"If we believe that human beings are created in God's image, then the way we care for everyone is a reflection of how we care for God," said Olson, 28, a member of Peace Lutheran Church, Ridgeway, her hometown in northeastern Iowa.

Olson moved back to her hometown last year and now advocates for people affected by an immigration raid in nearby Postville. A year ago May 12, nearly 400 undocumented workers were arrested at a kosher meatpacking plant that employed more than 900 people.

The plant is bankrupt and several of its leaders arrested. Most of the arrested undocumented workers were deported. Several women caring for their children are still detained in Postville and dependent on charity for food, rent, medical care and other costs.

"People are deeply, deeply traumatized," Olson said. "Some children never got to say goodbye to their parents. Other children stopped talking for months. Yet, in the midst of incredible brokenness, there are experiences of profound faith. It can be a child finally speaking a word."

Olson is the third of five children born to the Revs. Ginny and Phil Olson, once missionaries in Senegal. They co-pastor three Ridgeway area congregations of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America (ELCA). All of their children work in service positions -- education, public health, medicine and ministry.

Maryn is passionate about justice," Ginny Olson said.

"That's her ministry."

Maryn Olson graduated summa cum laude from Valparaiso, but many best remember her drive to help others. "She was always caring for members of society under the radar of the rest of the world," said college roommate Laurel Seim, Aloha, Ore.

Olson moved from London to Iowa last fall after earning a master's degree in public health in developing countries at the London School of Hygiene and Tropical Medicine. She planned to stay with her parents only until she found a job in public health, ideally in Africa. Then Postville beckoned.

"We want her to come back. She brought comfort and hope. She taught people how to survive," said Rosinah Manthule, Soweto, Johannesburg, South Africa.

Olson serves as response coordinator for the Postville Response Coalition. In that role, she works with civic, religious and other organizations to help the hundreds of people who lost jobs or had families torn apart by the immigration raid.

"Maryn has certainly added energy and brought her skills at unifying and communicating, too," said the Rev. Stephen P. Brackett, St. Paul Lutheran Church, Postville.

Mary Klauke, Dubuque Catholic Archdiocese said: "It's in her heart to be helping people."

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