



Inaugural Givens Fellows Elizabeth Kovar and Martina Hanulova (middle left and right) met Dr. Chris (left) and Ellen Dalton, founders of the fellowship, at a recent luncheon.

## **BGSU's first Givens Fellows to pursue passions in India, Africa**

Elizabeth Kovar and Martina Hanulova are BGSU students with a passion for peace. Kovar believes in the inner mental and spiritual, as well as physical, benefits of yoga, and would like to teach it to others. Hanulova's interest in peace is evident in her plans beyond BGSU: "My highest goal is to work for the United Nations." Both students have a new avenue to follow their dreams as the first recipients of a Stuart R. Givens Memorial Fellowship. Chosen from among eight applicants, Kovar and Hanulova will each receive \$6,000, with which Kovar will train in India to become an Ashtanga yoga instructor and Hanulova will travel to Ghana to work in a Liberian refugee camp. Dr. Chris and Ellen Dalton created the fellowship, named for the longtime BGSU history professor and University historian. Each year, the program will allow one or two undergraduates to pursue an intense interest in a self-designed experience not possible in a traditional classroom or even study abroad. "One requirement was passion, and they're obviously very passionate about their interests," said Chris Dalton, BGSU's senior vice president for finance and administration, after meeting Kovar and Hanulova earlier this month. Ellen Dalton, coordinator of budgets for the College of Musical Arts, noted their common theme of peace, calling them "very impressive young ladies." Both recipients are seniors who intend to undertake their projects this year—Kovar in the summer and Hanulova in the

fall—before returning to BGSU and graduating in spring 2008. Kovar, a sport management major from Willoughby Hills, said she has always been a health and fitness enthusiast and practiced yoga off and on for a few years. She “fell in love with it,” however, during a seven-month study abroad experience at Australia’s Griffith University. She has begun teaching yoga at the Student Recreation Center and, in India, will take a six-week course that will certify her to teach the Ashtanga philosophy and style. “I think studying it in India would be the most beneficial experience,” Kovar said, describing her project as learning from the discipline’s “founding fathers.” Kovar, who also wants to see the Taj Mahal and Bombay during her stay, would eventually like to follow in her father Larry’s footsteps as a business owner, opening her own yoga studio. Also the daughter of Monica Latosky of Willowick, Kovar credits her mother with teaching her the Ayurvedic yoga principles of curing illness by using particular ingredients in Indian cooking. A native of Slovakia, Hanulova came to the United States as an exchange student at Rossford High School, where she graduated in 2000. She returned to Slovakia to finish school there, too, but came back to northwest Ohio and spent two years at Owens Community College before transferring to BGSU, where she is majoring in French and international studies. Among her other travels has been a three-month stint last summer as an English teacher at a private school in Burkina Faso, Africa. “Despite the extreme poverty and harsh living conditions, I found Africa to be a little piece of heaven where I would like to return and to which I want to devote my education and future work,” Hanulova wrote in a statement accompanying her proposal for the fellowship. Looking online, she found the Liberian refugee camp project, which is organized by the Global Village Network, a private, nongovernmental organization based in Wellington, New Zealand. And last fall, she found a potential funding source through a friend who had learned about the Givens Fellowship. Ghana’s Buduburam Refugee Settlement, which houses about 43,000 Liberians displaced by unrest in their home country, caught her eye “because it was directed toward peace, education and reconciliation,” said Hanulova, whose future plans also include graduate study in international development. “I can talk to people and, thanks to my traveling abroad, I became more understanding of what people’s problems are,” she added. The Ghanaian government can’t support the refugees, who founded the camp in 2003, Hanulova explained. So Global Village Network works with the local community to understand and address their needs. “That was something that grabbed my attention,” she recalled, saying that while she’s still unsure of her role at the camp, it could involve teaching again or working, she hopes, with peace and reconciliation projects or with women on a microcredit program. “That kind of passion and engagement was what we were looking for,” said Dr. Simon Morgan-Russell, when Hanulova and Kovar were among the four fellowship finalists interviewed by the selection committee, composed of faculty from across campus. “They are from different colleges, which is nice, too,” he added, noting that the Givens award is open to students in any major. Kovar is in the College of Education and Human Development and Hanulova in the College of Arts and Sciences, where Morgan-Russell helps administer the fellowship as associate dean for curriculum and faculty advancement. Modeled after the Burch Fellows Program at the University of North Carolina, the Givens Fellowship “is a very special award because it recognizes students with passion, imagination and resourcefulness, and enables them to undertake projects that will help them grow personally and intellectually, thereby broadening and deepening their educational experience,” said Dr. Donald Nieman, dean of the College of Arts and Sciences. Kovar and Hanulova, he continued, are “very serious students who are thoughtful and curious, eager to learn as much about the world as possible, passionate about their projects, and willing to follow a road less traveled. It’s wonderful that, through the generous support of Chris and Ellen Dalton, we are able to help them pursue their passions.”

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