

## From The Daily Campus:

### Grad student reflects on Ghana trip

Meaghan Roy-O'Reilly

Issue date: 10/2/08 Section: [News](#)

After spending a summer in 2006 building a public library in a Ghana city, Sarah Guggino is looking forward to returning to the African country this summer, this time as a UConn graduate student.

Guggino first visited Ghana as a senior at the University of New Mexico in 2006. She worked with the head of the African American Studies Department, Shiame Okunor, and several other students to help organize a public library in Accra, the capital city.

"I was just fascinated with Africa, immediately jumped on the opportunity and it changed my life," Guggino said. "I've always been big into volunteer work and I had volunteered at an orphanage in Costa Rica. It's one thing to volunteer in the U.S., but traveling out of the country is just a whole different experience."

For Guggino, the most amazing thing about her trip was getting to meet the people of Ghana.

"Building the library was great because we got to work with the community and each other," she said. "We did visit a couple of schools, brought school supplies and got to work with the children, and that was the most exciting experience of my entire life. Even just receiving a pen and paper, they were so kind. I was almost in tears because I was so blown away by their generosity and happiness."

Guggino plans to return to Ghana during her winter break to talk to the villagers and research information for her graduate thesis on the economy market.

This year as a graduate student studying public speaking, Guggino is working as an intern for Universal Health Care Foundation of Connecticut.

According to the mission statement found on their Web site, "the Foundation works with residents and diverse groups, including businesses and health care providers, to achieve a universal health care plan that meets the needs of our state."

Lynn Ide, the campaign coordinator for the Foundation, said, "Sarah has a background of working on issues to help people, a keen interest in the area of health care based on personal and family experience and she is ready, willing and able to do anything it takes to empower and engage people in the call for health care reform."

Guggino was inspired to choose this internship by her own family's difficult experiences with the

current health care system.

"I grew up in a middle class family with a sister who had cancer and even things like a basic doctor's appointment were such a hassle because our insurance premiums were so high," she said. "It should not have been that hard, but there are problems with the current system and it needs to be reformed so families don't have to struggle for basic health care."