

ON THEIR HONOR

A COMMITMENT TO SERVICE
DEFINES THE ST. OLAF STUDENTS
WHO LIVE IN HONOR HOUSES
ON ST. OLAF AVENUE AND
ELSEWHERE AROUND CAMPUS.



By Lauren Fischer '08
PHOTOS BY TOM ROSTER

MORE THAN A DOZEN HOUSES line the final block of St. Olaf Avenue, or “Ole Ave” as it’s known to campus residents. Once the homes of faculty and staff familiar to generations of Ole alumni, they now bear the names of those former residents: Mohn, Felland, Schmidt, Thompson and Ytterboe. These “Honor Row” houses are more than a place where undergraduates reside off campus. They allow third- and fourth-year students to live with peers who are working toward a common academic goal or service project.

St. Olaf has 17 honor houses in all. Although most are located on Ole Ave, others are on neighboring streets or tucked away on campus land near Norway Valley. Seven houses are affiliated with an academic department or special interest — Asian Studies, French, German, Norwegian, Russian, Spanish and diversity awareness — and offer all sorts of related events and homework help sessions. Ten service houses are filled with students who volunteer their time toward a particular cause, such as literacy, cancer research, community outreach and environmental issues. Some houses maintain a legacy project that is assumed each year by a new group of students.

“WE ARE ALL STRANGERS WHEN WE COME TO ST. OLAF BUT THEN, OVER TIME, WE BECOME A FAMILY. WHEN YOU SEE DIFFERENT PARTS OF YOUR COMMUNITY, IT’S EASIER TO SEE IT AS A WHOLE.”

— ANNA FREEDMAN '07

Honor house students are selected either by faculty in the academic department that supports the house or by Associate Dean of Students and Director of Residence Life Pamela McDowell, who approves house projects each year, creating an entire honor house program.

“Each year groups of students design a project to work with,” says McDowell, who looks for a good mix of projects. “Rather than have 10 houses working with schoolchildren, I try to put together a grouping of topics. Depending on what the students propose, I may try to create balance among global issues, religious unity, at-risk youth, and health and wellness topics.” She also strives for diversity within the topics themselves.

For the students, who typically don’t apply for the program until at least junior year, living in these residences is indeed an honor.

MOHN HOUSE

Art with Heart

In 1902, Anna Ringstad Mohn, widow of the first St. Olaf president, Thorbjorn N. Mohn, moved into this house on St. Olaf Avenue with her family. Today, it’s home to a creative group of third-year Ole women — Julie Boehmer, Rachel Carlin, Charlotte Darling, Katie Dobie, Jenni Haddy, Leah Klister, Molly Nelson, Natalie Spencer and Sarah Wallis.

These women make art more accessible and less intimidating to non-art majors at St. Olaf by hosting monthly events through the student-led art organization PICASSO (Passionate, Imaginative, Creative, Artistic Students of St. Olaf).

The women also work to support and improve art programs at Bridgewater, Sibley and Greenvale Park elementary schools in Northfield, where budget cuts “are leaving little money for art supplies,” says studio art major Julie Boehmer of McHenry, Illinois.

“Our love of the fine arts is behind all of our activities,” Boehmer says. “We want to provide more opportunities for students to learn about art,” and that includes students of all ages.

Leah Klister convinced a paper mill near her hometown of Kaukauna, Wisconsin, to donate \$1,300 worth of paper to Northfield elementary schools. In addition, the women of Mohn House hold small fundraisers for the schools and contribute money raised from selling artwork at the St. Olaf Artisans’ Bazaar.

“My middle- and high-school art programs were weak, and I didn’t become interested in art until coming to St. Olaf.”

says Katie Dobie, a native of Amboy, Minnesota, who is majoring in Asian studies and political science with a concentration in Chinese. “After seeing the effect we’ve had during the past year, I realize how important it is that children have an opportunity to participate in art programs, especially when these programs are struggling to remain in schools.”

“Children’s levels of creativity are so high. It’s vital that we encourage them to develop and use artistic skills as they grow up.”

— MOLLY NELSON '08

Boehmer believes that participation in the arts is essential for young people. “Some of us came from schools with a dwindling arts program, and we don’t want to see that happen in Northfield,” she says.



LINCOLN MANOR/FARME HOUSE

Good Stewards

FARME House stands for Friends of Agriculture and Resources Meeting the Environment, and that's exactly what the residents do. Nearly every member of the house is pursuing either a major or a concentration in environmental studies.

The friends of Lincoln Manor include Kelsey Bauer '09, Day Burtness '07, Amber Collett '07, Katie Handler '08, Becky Kleive '09, Allison Madison '07, Elsa Marty '07, Nan Onkka '08, Amanda Rubasch '09, Kate Sheridan '08 and Mary Sotos '07.

The primary focus of the house is STOGROW, the student-run organic farm that supplies fresh vegetables to the college's meal plans. But the women of FARME House also work closely with the Environmental Studies Department and the student-run Environmental Coalition, an advocacy group with an exciting array of events, speakers, projects and educational opportunities.

"We must take care of our homes, use our resources wisely and be innovative in eco-friendly technology."

— KATIE HANDLER '07



They recently bought clothes-drying racks for each campus residence hall and are weatherproofing the windows of Lincoln Manor to reduce heat loss. These women are passionate about the environment, ecological literacy and education.

"We're not trying to raise environmental awareness solely to end global warming or deforestation or corporate agriculture," says Burtness, whose self-designed major through

the Center for Integrative Studies combines environmental studies, history and political science with a focus on farming. "Another big part of it is that eco-friendly habits, like growing vegetables or walking to work or turning off the TV, usually make us healthier and save us money.

"It's about building community and adding to the richness of life. We just want to share that," she says.

AAKER HOUSE

Sharing Traditions

This former boarding house for St. Olaf students is now the college's newest honor house and home to the Jewish Student Outreach (JSO) project. It was co-founded this year by St. Olaf Choir President Anna Freedman '07 and Hayley Wender '07. They hope Aaker House will serve as a religious and cultural

resource center for Jewish students and others interested in Jewish life, and that it will contribute to the religious plurality of the St. Olaf community.

"As one who identifies culturally but not spiritually as Jewish, I've discovered that people want to experience Judaism and touch base with the roots of their Christianity, but may not understand that the Jewish people have a rich cultural and religious tradition that extends beyond Christianity," says Wender, an

English and education major. "St. Olaf encourages intentional reflection on faith that extends to everyone, even to those who don't identify with an organized religion."

Given that the closest synagogues are in the Twin Cities, the women of Aaker House use the space to observe traditional Jewish holidays and also devote time every Friday night to the Jewish Sabbath, holding a Shabbat service.

Visitors are always welcome.

"It really is wonderful to share your own

traditions with other people who are interested," says Freedman, who would like to attend graduate school in Israel and pursue Middle East studies and a career in conflict resolution.

In addition to Freedman and Wender, house members include Katherine Oyster '08, Camryn Reynolds '09 and Catherine Wheeler '07.

"We are all strangers when we come to St. Olaf but then, over time, we become a family," says Freedman. "There's power in sharing your traditions with the whole community. I believe it brings everyone closer together. When you see different parts of your community, it's easier to see it as a whole."

"There is a remarkable advocacy for the religious minorities on this campus."

— HAYLEY WENDER '07



ST. JOHN'S HOUSE

Fighting for a Cure

It's known as the St. Olaf Cancer Connection (SCC) house, the place where residents work with the American Cancer Society to provide cancer-related education, outreach and fundraising for the St. Olaf campus, as well as for residents of Northfield and surrounding areas.

Motivated often by their own personal experiences with the disease, SCC housemates



— Britta Aadland, Katie Balfanz, Amy Hammers, Brianna Nordstrand, Erika Reid, Kristen Roys and Jennifer Tulman, all seniors — are tireless organizers for the Northfield chapters of the American Cancer Society's national events.

Erika Reid's maternal aunt is a breast cancer survivor. It was a "scary experience for our whole family," says Reid, president of the house and a biology major with a concentration in biomedical studies. Reid's experience prompted her decision to attend medical

school, either at Northwestern in Chicago or Columbia in New York City. "Learning the biology of cancer, the genetics and cellular-level processes has made the disease more concrete," she says. "And knowing that there are things I can do to fight it gives me hope."

In addition to

raising awareness about cancer issues that 1.4 million Americans face each day, these housemates coordinate Relay for Life and Daffodil Days events, and Cooks for Kids, which serves meals at the Ronald McDonald House in the Twin Cities. Other SCC projects include leading the campus campaign against skin cancer, planning fundraisers related to lung cancer and serving as the college's cancer liaison for area churches.

"The time I spend volunteering is little to give in exchange for the happiness I feel when I see the survival statistics getting better every year."

— JENNIFER TULMAN '07

Last year, the St. Olaf Relay for Life was the second-largest college-sponsored program in the nation and brought in record donations for the American Cancer Society.

"Cancer's grasp on so many lives is both daunting and terrifying," says Balfanz, a dance and English major from Eden Prairie, Minnesota. "It creates a community among students, faculty, families, friends and strangers. I'm grateful that St. John's House allows me to spend time with those whose lives have been impacted by cancer and who want to develop awareness, research and support to fight this terrible disease."

THOMPSON HOUSE

Positive Role Models

Thompson House residents volunteer four afternoons a week and at least one Saturday a month at the Northfield Middle School Youth Center (MSYC). Most of the children there have parents who work full time, making the companionship even more important.

The men of Thompson House — Joel Christenson '08, Brendan Golle '08, Stephen Lindley '08, Ben Manning '08, Mark Menning '07, A.J. Meyer '08, Eric Tvedt '08, Davis Wille '08, Mike Witte '08 and Eric Wilson '08 — help the youngsters with homework or sometimes just "talk about life over a game of soccer or foosball," says Golle, a music and education major from Mason City, Iowa.

As a child, Golle was involved in an after-school program where adults "encouraged me to exercise my creative thinking and where I found fun activities and games to play, as opposed to going home to an empty house where I would just sit around and watch TV."

"This volunteer project is vital to Northfield Middle School, and we really hope it continues after we graduate."

— ERIC TVEDT '08

He adds: "It's easy for kids to fall between the cracks without a safe environment where they're surrounded by positive role models. That's where MSYC comes in."

The middle school students are energetic, playful and full of surprises. "The most enjoyable part about volunteering is helping the kids realize that we're not there just to discipline them," says Eric Tvedt, a history major from Town and Country, Missouri. "Of course we enforce the rules of the youth center, but we also encourage them to be kids at a time in their lives when they might feel pressured to act otherwise."

The Ole men recently received an Intergenerational Youth Event grant from the Northfield Healthy Community Initiative. The money will make it possible to transport MSYC children to St. Olaf to spend a day with their college mentors and have some fun in the Lion's Pause.

"The practical effect we can have on the lives of these kids is amazing," says Stephen Lindley, a Northfield native who is majoring in political science and religion with a concentration in Middle Eastern studies.

The early teen years can be difficult. "But when we help them get that math problem figured out or see their excitement when they win a game of Connect Four,"

says Joel Christenson, a biology and biomedical studies major, "we've made a difference in their day."



HUGGENVIK HOUSE

Raising Awareness

Four years ago Huggenvik House took on a new name: the Diversity Awareness (DA) House, thanks to Associate Dean of Students LaRue Pierce and Angelica Torralba '05, a student leader in the St. Olaf TRiO programs. Today this honor house is home to Nicole Jin '09, Senay Matewos '07, Irene Mineoi '07, Ananya Mukhopadhyay '09, Ashley Radke '09, Carolina Rueda '07, Anna Steel '07 and Vicente Vasquez '08.

"Each house member brings a unique cultural and educational background that enhances the work we do at the DA House," says house president Anna Steel, a social work major with concentrations in Latin American and Latino studies. "We lend each other support and assistance both when coordinating our own events and working on events sponsored by other multicultural organizations."

Ananya Mukhopadhyay, who grew up in the Boston suburb of

"The heart of diversity is in our personal experiences, perceptions and ideas."

— ASHLEY RADKE '09

Sharon, Massachusetts, has long been involved in diversity awareness and most recently participated in the Minnesota Inclusiveness Program "SEED For Youth," a diversity training workshop for students who strive to be multicultural leaders in their communities.

"True diversity awareness extends beyond basic issues of body image, sexuality and socio-economic status," says Mukhopadhyay, who is majoring in dance and psychology with a neuroscience concentration. "It allows people to share how they are unique and individual beyond all of the basics."

DA housemates host monthly events, including discussion nights and dances that feature international music. All are designed to raise awareness and stimulate conversation on any topic, including civil rights, sexual orientation, religion and disability.

"Each of us is passionate about issues related to diversity," says Steel. "We believe very strongly that such issues need to be raised within the broader St. Olaf community."



FELLAND HOUSE

Bridge Building

Ole G. Felland, who joined the St. Olaf faculty in 1881, moved his wife and family into this private home on St. Olaf Avenue in 1901. Today, the young men of Felland House carry on the spirit of service in a number of ways,

most notably the Bridge legacy project.

These third-year Ole men — Jared Brandell, Sean Casey, Bill Dokken, brothers Matt and Mark Everhart, Brenden McGibbon, Peter Ouchakof, Sam Ostrander, Mark Werner and Jackson Williams — volunteer four times a week at the Northfield Community Action Center's food shelf.

"The Community Action Center always

needs volunteers, and the food shelf is dependent on its volunteers for timely and helpful service," says Brandell, a biology major who likes talking to food-shelf customers.

Casey, a Minnesota native and studio art major, enjoys making a difference in the lives of Northfield residents. "The Bridge House project has really allowed me to live up to St. Olaf's mission of leading lives of worth and service and putting our 'ideals to action' slogan to work," he says.

Other Felland House volunteer activities include Hurricane Katrina cleanup in New Orleans and in Biloxi, Mississippi, as part of Ole Spring Relief during spring break. Many of their activities focus on raising money and awareness about homelessness.

"We all take for granted everything we have," says house president Brenden McGibbon. "It's a good feeling to get out into the world and volunteer our time."

"Serving Northfield through the Community Action Center is what our house is all about: creating a bridge between the St. Olaf student body and the larger community."

— SEAN CASEY '08



[CONTINUED ON PAGE 51]

"I came to St. Olaf because of Rebecca Judge," says Stull-Lane, referring to the associate professor of economics and environmental studies. As a first-year student in Judge's course in environmental policy and regulation, Stull-Lane learned about sustainable development, defined by the United Nations as "meeting the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs."

Stull-Lane initially wanted to pursue seven different majors. Judge, who became the ambitious student's academic adviser, helped her formulate a realistic plan. "Chloe's approach is so interdisciplinary," Judge says. "She tries to see the interconnection of everything. The hardest thing for Chloe sometimes is narrowing those interests down."

With Judge's help, Stull-Lane created an individual major in sustainable international development through the Center for Integrative Studies. She also is majoring in American Racial and Multicultural Studies, with concentrations in Africa and the Americas, and environmental studies. All of those pursuits feed her interests in the connections among economics, politics, and social and environmental issues in community and international development.

Her friendship with Claire Mpagazihe '07, from the Democratic Republic of Congo, influenced Stull-Lane's decision to study in Africa. The practical experience she had abroad was a vital counterpoint to classroom time on campus.

"My attention was first turned toward issues of water access during my internship with the Southern African Institute for Environmental Assessment in Windhoek, Namibia," Stull-Lane says. Namibia's landscape is primarily desert, and its government gives international organizations and multinational corporations subsidized access to water while Namibian residents struggle to find clean water for daily use, she explains. The scenario showed her how race, economics and environmental concerns can clash on a global scale.

Stull-Lane created an e-mail alias that allowed her to send messages to dozens of people simultaneously: urging them to get involved in her work, congratulating them on progressive political victories in the United States and asking for donations when a region she was working in was flooded.

She joined the steering committee of SustainUS: The U.S. Youth Network for Sustainable Development and attended the United Nations' Fifteenth Session of the UN Commission on Sustainable Development in May 2006, encouraging delegates from around the world to pledge their commitment to renewable energy.

QUICK FACTS ABOUT ADDITIONAL ST. OLAF HONOR HOUSES

Tucked inside Norway Valley behind the emerging Science Complex is the **Forest Inn**. Members of this hideaway are all seniors, and they promote literacy on campus and around the community. Each Thursday at 7 p.m. they host the "Adventure Girls Book Club" for girls ages 9 to 14 at Northfield Public Library.

The women of **Haldorsen House** are carrying on the Nightingale legacy project. In its 10th year, the project provides personal, academic and social support for Northfield Middle School girls.

Lincoln Inn is home to St. Paul's Outreach project, whose mission is to provide a place where Christian college students can experience growth and support in their faith. In addition to working with national chapters of the St. Paul's project, these housemates are active at St. Dominic Catholic Church in Northfield.

All seniors, the residents of **Schmidt House** volunteer at the Northfield Care Center through Story Circles International, an organization that connects college volunteers with seniors through storytelling.

Affiliated with the Asian Studies Department, **Flaten House** is home to six housemates who coordinate weekly and monthly educational events and collaborate with other Asian multicultural groups, including the Asian Cultures Association and Korean Cultures Association.



German is spoken routinely at **Holstad House**, and homework help is easy to find. The residents host *Stammtisch*, a weekly discussion group that allows students to practice their language skills outside the classroom, and monthly educational activities about the German culture.

Better known as *maison française*, **Lee House** serves as a focal point for French culture and activities that range from lectures and films to baguette-and-cheese night and *soiree crepe* (crepe night).

Nothing but Spanish is spoken in **Rose House**, a.k.a. *la casa hispánica*, home to five residents who coordinate cultural events intended to promote cultural and linguistic awareness of the Spanish-speaking world. They also hold weekly Spanish conversation tables.

Swanson House, a.k.a. *Norskhuset*, is a home away from home for four housemates who speak Norwegian and incorporate Norwegian culture into their daily routine. They organize co-curricular activities for St. Olaf students as well as larger events, such as the *Syttende mai frokost* (May 17th breakfast) for the entire Northfield community.

Affiliated with the Russian Department, the Russian language tutorial house, **Ytterboe House**, is home to five Ole juniors who have a passion for the Russian language, people and culture. Housemates hold twice-weekly study sessions for students majoring in Russian or in Russian Language and Area Studies and host weekly dinners that help Oles hone their language skills.

LAUREN FISCHER '08 is an English major from Princeton, Minn., with a media studies concentration.

"Chloe is a remarkable young woman who has used her college years to put her education to work for a better world," says Anthony Lott, an assistant professor of political science who worked with Stull-Lane on the water privatization issue. "She seeks to expand on the classroom setting by locating opportunities to participate in international civil society."

Stull-Lane participated in Kenyan culture without fear and without flouting her difference, two problems that sometimes plague international aid workers. In the late fall, she worked with Womankind Kenya, or Wokike, an organization started by two women in Kenya's northeastern province. Stull-Lane had been warned not to visit because of reports of violence against aid workers. Equipped with cultural sensitivity, however, rather than the recommended two armed guards, Stull-Lane lived in the area without incident.

She covered her head with a shawl, as many women of the region do, and wore a *diraa*, a local form of dress. "I wore the clothing with much respect for the choices these

women have made to continue wearing the clothes despite outside pressure to change," she explains.

This fall, Stull-Lane will begin a two-year master's program in international development and management at Lund University in Sweden. The program includes a year of study in Sweden and one year of fieldwork in a developing country. After that she's considering international development work, followed by a career working to influence U.S. development policy in Washington, D.C.

"St. Olaf fosters a space for students to think about vocation, rather than just our passions or professions in isolation of each other," she says. "This focus has motivated me to move my ideals into action and seek all the opportunities I have been privileged to be a part of throughout my time at this college." 🦄

Lisa Gulya '07 is majoring in English and Russian and plans to pursue a career in journalism or media analysis.