

Four Penn students selected as Philly Fellows

By ANNE DOBSON
Assignments Editor
 adobson@sas.upenn.edu

College senior Jenn Rineer has spent the last four years benefitting from the Philadelphia community, and now she's preparing to return the favor.

Rineer is one of four graduating Penn seniors to receive a year-long fellowship to live and work in the city as part of the up-and-coming Philly Fellows program.

In July, Rineer will attend a week of training with her peers before starting work as a public-relations associate with Women Against Abuse, a non-profit organization that assists victims of domestic violence and their children.

She became interested in the program last fall after attending an information session where she met and was impressed by the energy and enthusiasm of program founders Matt Joyce and Tim Ifill.

Joyce and Ifill, both graduates of Haverford College, founded Philly Fellows in 2003.

According to its Web site, the program brings together graduates from local colleges and universities with "the dual mission of encouraging young, educated graduates to remain in Philadelphia and empowering the city's cultural, educational and social service organizations."

Fellows receive a number of benefits from the program, including a \$950 per month stipend, health insurance and an about \$5,000 award upon completion. The benefits are awarded through AmeriCorpsVISTA, an organization that provides employees for non-profit community and faith-based organizations.

Despite being relatively new, student interest in Philly Fellows is rapidly growing: Applications were up 35 percent from last year, Joyce wrote in an e-mail.

"The selection process for the '07 to '08 fellowship was highly competitive," with 84 students vying for 15 spots, she wrote. "We had some of the area's most impressive student leaders apply."

The other three Penn students selected were College seniors Stephen Danley, Laura Nanni and Sara Strickland.

Joyce said he and Ifill looked for qualities in the applicants such as good academics and service and leadership experience.

"What tends to set students like Laura, Stephen, Jenn and Sara apart is their demonstrated commitment to their community," he wrote. "Each of the four was very involved in extra-curricular activities that showed a dedication to helping others and an outstanding ability to lead."



Toby Hicks/DP Senior Photographer

College senior Jenn Rineer discusses her upcoming year as a Philly Fellow. Rineer is one of four graduating Penn students to receive a fellowship.

The fellows will work 35 hours per week at one of a variety of non-profit organizations around the city, which they ranked in order of preference when they applied.

Strickland, who will be working as a development manager at MANNA, an organization that provides food to people suffering from life-threatening illnesses and their families, defined a Philly Fellow as someone with "a genuine interest in getting out to see the city ... and in giving back to the community."

Nanni will be working as a development associate at the Painted Bride Arts Center, which offers programs that promote the values

of all cultures. She said she is excited to see more of the city and to continue to pursue work in the non-profit sector.

Fellows live in one of three fully furnished houses provided in West Philadelphia, Northern Liberties or South Philadelphia.

Most Penn graduates seemed eager to live in and explore new parts of the city.

Nanni said she was intrigued by the "young, hip and artsy" Northern Liberties and the "neighborhoody" South Philadelphia.

"I came to Philly not knowing what to expect," Nanni added, "but I fell in love it."



Penn

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Best of luck, and thank you

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- Gail Gamab
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