

But the trip's most impactful moment came when the group traveled into the mountains of Tisey to visit Alberto Gutierrez. Upon arriving at Alberto's very small home, he retrieved a spiral notebook for each of the students to write their names. Alberto has many of these notebooks filled with thousands of names of people who have trekked the mountain to visit "the man with dreams." The hermit artist carves amazing murals into the side of the mountain with subject matter ranging from Christ-filled figures to large elephants to New York City's Twin Towers. He explained that each piece of art came to him in a dream and even now in his seventies, he continues his work.

Gill said that the strength and determination of a single man that she witnessed that day is a memory she will carry with her the rest of her life.

Gill and other students majoring in rural studies at ABAC have the choice of concentrating in areas such as writing and communication, business and economic development, rural arts and culture, rural social and community affairs, and starting fall of this year will have the opportunity to major in rural studies with a concentration in politics and world cultures. The rural studies program offers customizable degrees that fit each student's interests and needs while providing the students with practical knowledge and the opportunities for internships that will benefit them when it comes time to enroll in graduate programs or when looking for a job.

The rural studies program at ABAC will take students to rural areas in Nicaragua and Greece during the 2013 summer break. Students will receive college credit for the study abroad trips and have the chance to return to these places for internships in the future.

Study abroad and global internships are just a few of the opportunities available to rural studies students, but it is one of the most important opportunities ever provided, according to Gill.

"Nicaragua changed my life. The things I experienced and the people that I met there will forever alter my outlook on the world," Gill said.

For more information on rural studies, contact Dean Bobbie Robinson of the ABAC School of Liberal Arts. She can be reached at (229) 391-4949 or by email at [brobinson@abac.edu](mailto:brobinson@abac.edu).