

STUDENTS

Addressing All Nations, All Faiths

WESTMONT SENIOR FOUNDS ORGANIZATION TO SERVE THE POOR AND ENGAGES IN INTER-FAITH CONVERSATIONS WITH MUSLIMS, BUDDHISTS AND JEWS

Josh Daneshforooz '08 has attended four different colleges during his undergraduate career. The 23-year old senior says the other institutions didn't challenge him academically like Westmont does.

"Westmont is the ideal combination of academic excellence and character and spiritual development," he says. "It's holistic. My professors teach their respective disciplines with a high level of rigor and a profound depth of spiritual insight. Westmont has been faithful to its Christian roots while never losing sight of academic excellence."

Josh, a philosophy major, is an advocate of the Christian liberal arts. Through his professors, he has learned to love the world intelligently. For example, he cites the way Greg Spencer, professor of communication studies, defines rhetoric: "loving appropriately through speech." Historian Alister Chapman teaches students that in order to love the world, they must understand where it came from. "Westmont has awakened in me a strong desire for broad learning," Josh says. "Now I'm able to discuss intelligently a broad spectrum of topics."

Last year, Josh joined the staff of the *Horizon*, Westmont's student newspaper, as Thinktank editor. This year he manages nearly 30 student writers as editor-in-chief. "I deeply appreciate the fact that Westmont's administration treats me like a colleague, respecting my opinion and allowing me to make executive decisions," Josh says. "This experience has fostered confidence in my leadership abilities for the future."

Watching a leader in action has also helped Josh. During the summer, he shadowed Dean Hirsch '69, president of World Vision International and a Westmont trustee, sitting in on executive meetings, lunches and conference calls. Josh also traveled with him to Tanzania, Africa, to confront issues such as HIV/AIDS, poverty and exploitation, and he visited Kenya to see a WorldVision water project there. "My time with Dr. Hirsch taught me that good intentions are futile without efficacious organization," Josh says.



Senior Josh Daneshforooz is the *Horizon* editor.

Josh was born in Las Vegas. His mother is a Christian, his father an Iranian Muslim and his step-father a Jewish Buddhist Moroccan. His diverse background motivated him to found the World Religions Club at Westmont. Their activities include visiting a Buddhist temple in Oxnard, Calif., and engaging in interfaith dialogue with the UC Santa Barbara Muslim Student Association, a Buddhist nun and a Jewish rabbi.

"I believe that interreligious dialogue is essential in promoting peace among individuals, families, cities and civilizations," Josh says. "One of the highest human callings is to listen authentically to people who are different. There is no way a follower of a different faith is going to convert to Christianity merely because I beat them in a religious debate."

Raised by a single mother, Josh recalls a series of financial struggles throughout his childhood, such as losing electricity whenever they couldn't pay the bill. He has founded All Nations, a non-profit organization that helps the less fortunate in local communities. Last Christmas, All Nations gave grocery gift cards to Westmont Dining Commons workers, paid a portion of the rent for low-income families in Santa Maria, and donated 500 postal stamps to the Santa Barbara County Jail in collaboration with the chaplain so inmates could send out holiday cards.

"Every time I gave a family a grocery card or a Christmas gift, I said, 'I give this to you in the name of Christ,' because He is the One providing All Nations with the funds to help others" Josh says. "God has blessed me by bringing me to Westmont, so it's my turn to bless others with the things God has given me."

After graduating, Josh plans to go to graduate school to study religion, philosophy and business. "I'll continue to run All Nations, and I hope one day it will become a world-class organization like World Vision," he says. "As a long-term goal, after graduate school, I plan to speak at city-wide evangelistic events. I believe it's my calling."