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### **GWU Alum Kristen Larimer Plans Missionary Trip to Jamaica**

Office of University Communications

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# GWU Alum Kristen Larimer Plans Missionary Trip to Jamaica

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Office of University Communications

April 16, 2014

## *American Sign Language Graduate to Work with Hearing-Impaired Individuals*

BOILING SPRINGS, N.C. – With a love for the hearing impaired and serving others, Gardner-Webb alumna Kristen Larimer ('13), has always tried to find a way to incorporate both of those passions into one ministry. This past year, Larimer has been serving as a manager in women's shelter in Westminster, Md., but will finally embark on the missionary opportunity she has for so long felt called to do.

On June 7, the Clyde, Ohio, native will begin a short-term mission trip to work with deaf children and adults in several poverty stricken communities throughout Jamaica. With a Bachelor of Arts in American Sign Language (ASL), Larimer believes the Lord has opened her heart to reach out to those in other countries and discovered this missionary opportunity through an organization called the Caribbean Christian Center for the Deaf (CCCD).

Larimer, who is currently enrolled in graduate school at McDaniel College in Westminster, Md., decided to investigate missions work after a discussion with one of her professors, who leads missions teams every summer. "I was talking about my interest in it and he invited me to go the Dominican Republic with him for a week but I just knew in my heart I was called to do something more," she said.

After doing research during her fall break, Larimer found the CCCD. Their mission is to teach the deaf a language, give them a basic education including vocational training, and promote outreach, community involvement, and worship. The CCCD operates three schools on the island of Jamaica, and each of the campuses also serve as residential facilities, which allow deaf people in the rural communities access to the gospel of Jesus Christ.

"It seemed like the perfect fit for what I wanted to do, so I put everything into my cover letter and application hoping for a positive response back," said Larimer, with excitement. "They contacted me and it seemed like I was just what they were looking for too!"

While Larimer is thrilled to be able to help people develop their ASL skills for better communication, she also is overjoyed for an opportunity to spread the Word of God and the importance of community engagement. She says her passion for both ASL and serving others stems from a good friend back home in Ohio, Kristy Miracle.

"I was nine the first time I met Kristy," said Larimer. "I was at softball practice and I noticed that one of the girls just stayed by herself along the fence. I was confused as to why she was not coming over until I learned she was deaf."

Larimer first began to finger spell in order to communicate with Kristy and the two became best friends. As a rising freshman in high school, Larimer was not interested in Spanish or French. She took it as a sign that she needed to continue her study of ASL when the school added the class as a foreign language that year. Larimer decided to attend Gardner-Webb for college because it offered ASL as a major. As a result, her love for the community and the people in it flourished.

“While I was at Gardner-Webb, I was originally going to minor in interpreting but I felt like I was being called in a different direction and that I needed to spend more time in the community and helping others,” said Larimer. “So I focused a lot of energy and put a lot of time in at the community engagement office.”

Larimer is scheduled to be in Jamaica for five weeks with the possibility of an extension. She says that she feels compelled to continue these short-term missions trips and hopes that she can continue to find financial support from friends, family and churches for airfare and a phone so she can stay in touch.

“This missionary trip is so important to me because I feel God is encouraging me to take this opportunity to give and grow,” she reflected. “It is allowing me to combine my passions at the same time. I’m excited about the opportunity and experiences that lie ahead.”

For more information on Larimer’s upcoming trip, or how to offer financial support, visit <http://www.youcaring.com/mission-trip-fundraiser/jamaica/149255>.

*Located in Boiling Springs, N.C., Gardner-Webb University blends a liberal arts core curriculum with more than 55 major and minor professional programs of study, a comprehensive academic experience that flows from our Christian commitment to intellectual freedom, service and leadership.*