

**The Class of 2002** includes many graduates with interesting and inspiring accomplishments. Here are a few of their success stories.

## Interpreter helps deaf students succeed

**G**rowing up with deaf parents, Maureen Jastremsky learned sign language at the same time she learned to speak. She does not consciously remember learning to sign, but her ability to interpret improved the learning experience for many Boise State students.

For more than four years, Jastremsky worked as an interpreter for deaf students at Boise State.

As an interpreter, Jastremsky attended classes with deaf students and signed, or transliterated, the professors' words. In turn, she helped the students participate in classes by conveying students' questions and comments for them.

Jastremsky says it was an exciting experience for her.

"I've learned so much from being in the classrooms," she

says. "Two days will be alike," she says.

Jastremsky's parents taught her and her four sisters Signed English (SE), a literal form grammatically different from the more conceptual American Sign Language (ASL). Using finger-spelling and linear phrasing, SE makes topics that are more technical easier to communicate as opposed to ASL's focus on an overall thought or message.

Jastremsky says her parents taught their children SE to ensure they would speak properly and succeed in the hearing English-speaking world. "Children growing up with deaf parents have vastly different experiences. My parents just wanted to assimilate us as best as possible," she says.

Jastremsky is proud Boise State offers these interpreting services. Her parents, Walter and Diane, who each lost their hearing in early childhood, watched their daughter receive her diploma at Commencement in May. They also saw her name signed by an interpreter at the event.

Jastremsky says her experience as an interpreter has given her valuable insight and appreciation of relating to and communicating with other people.

"I feel like I've learned alternatives to verbal communication. It's helped me to kind of think of different ways to express or communicate," she says. "I'm learning every day."

—Erin Willis



says. "It exposes you to so many different environments."

The English literature major sat in science classes, art history classes and upper-division courses from departments other than her own.

"That's what kind of makes it exciting — no

## Rupert resident named outstanding grad

**J**amie Ketchum never met most of her classmates face-to-face. Instead, she communicated with them through Internet discussion boards.

Ketchum, who was enrolled in Boise State's Twin Falls outreach program, graduated with a 3.84 GPA. She was named to the president's or dean's list every semester, received several scholarships and was named the outstanding general business management graduate.

Passion, focus and dedication may have something to do with her success. "I've always loved business. I've known it's what I wanted to do since I was young," she says. She is following in the enterprising footsteps of her great-grandfather, who ran a stockyard and raced horses, and her grandfather, who was in the real estate business.

Ketchum earned an associate's degree in management and marketing from the College of Southern Idaho in 1998. Afterward, she decided to pursue a bachelor's degree in busi-



ness administration. But with a 6-year-old daughter, a traditional education was not an option. So Ketchum enrolled in the outreach program, taking courses through the Internet and sometimes commuting from Rupert to Twin Falls, an 80-mile round trip, to attend classes.

The program allows students to attend classes at their convenience without ever having to set foot on the Boise campus. Most of the time, Ketchum conversed with professors and classmates via e-mail and discussion boards, a technology similar to instant messaging. "The teachers are very dedi-

cated and helpful. One of my professors e-mailed me on Thanksgiving," she says.

Although she admits that she missed opportunities such as belonging to student clubs, Ketchum is grateful for the outreach program. "It's a wonderful program," she says. "Without it, I wouldn't have been able to get my degree."

—Molly Griffin

## Compassion, commitment inspire Pedraza to make a difference

**F**rancisco Pedraza has a dream — and it began at Boise State. "I am passionate about evoking change in the community. I want to give back," he says.

He's off to a good start. Last year Pedraza was actively involved in the campaign to require that Idaho farmworkers be covered by minimum wage laws. He says he felt a sense of urgency to help. "I worked in the Marsing and Caldwell fields as a young teenager so I understand firsthand the hardship of farmworkers. And it's the least I can do," he adds.

Pedraza, born and raised in Nampa, was involved in many organizations during his five years at Boise State. He served as an Associated Students of Boise State University (ASBSU) senator for three years, was a resident assistant at Chaffee Hall for three years, was an active member of the political science association for five years and president of the Organizacion de Estudiantes Latino-Americanos (OELA) club.

Originally an engineering major, Pedraza changed direction his freshman year after taking a state and local government class taught by Stephanie Witt, now associate vice president of academic affairs. "For the first time, I saw a connection between career, community and classroom learning," he says.

For Pedraza, it was a defining moment. Not only did he decide to pursue a degree in political science, but he also began to feel passionate about pursuing leadership roles and public service.

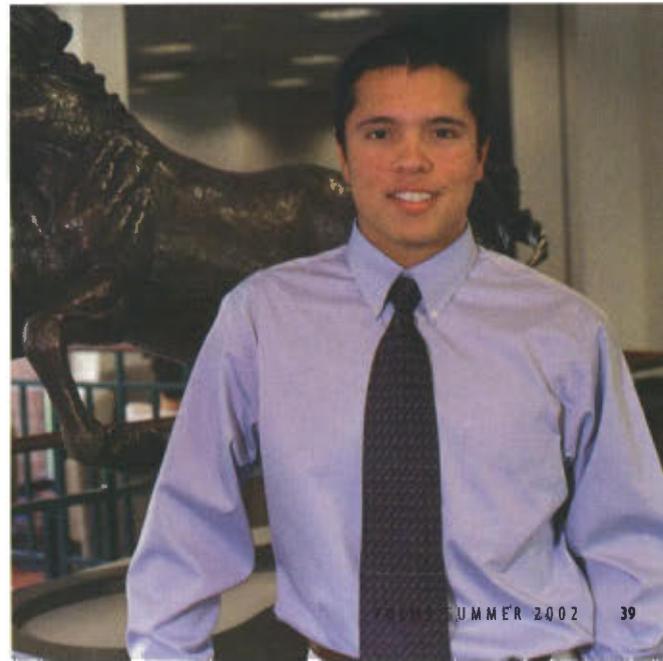
His service to the university and the community hasn't gone unnoticed. Pedraza has received numerous awards

including an award for outstanding service within ASBSU, the Hewlett-Packard Human Rights scholarship and the Idaho Minority At-Risk scholarship, which he says helped put him through school.

Currently, Pedraza is focused on international issues. Under the guidance of Ross Burkhart, political science assistant professor, he is conducting research on trade in East Asia.

After receiving his diploma, Pedraza plans to continue his independent research and spend time with his family before pursuing a doctorate in political science. And after that? "I plan to return to Idaho to teach," he says, "This is my home."

—Molly Griffin



## Grad's software aids academic planning

**F**inding your way through the maze of academic offerings can be daunting, to say the least — especially for a new freshman just starting out. Trying to project those classes out to create a four-year academic plan that integrates graduation requirements with the realities of course schedules can be downright overwhelming.

Rather than wring her hands and give up, Megan Sorvaag decided to do something about it. Lying in bed late one night contemplating the problem, she came up with an idea to simplify the confusing advising process — a computer software program that would be an interactive tool to help students and advisers create an individualized academic road map.

More than three years later, that concept is finally becoming reality. With the help of Peter Agras, Boise State's senior software developer, Sorvaag's idea, aptly named E-Planner, has been piloted with psychology students, receiving rave reviews. It's also been presented at the National Advising Association Conference in Canada, where advising professionals clamored for its release.

"We were bombarded with questions like 'When can I buy this? I need it,'" Sorvaag says. "It's so exciting for me. This was my baby — it started from an idea I had and now others



can see the need for it."

A psychology major, Sorvaag plans to incorporate even more technology into her future plans. She'll spend the next year at Stanford as a research assistant working with body image issues, then begin her graduate studies in technology and psychology.

"It's a program that works with technology to combat internalization of the thin ideal," she says. In short, her research will utilize computer programs to collect and sort data on how people, particularly young women, view themselves in light of their body type.

Sorvaag became interested in psychology when she took Psych 101. "It was an 'aha' experience," she says. "Dr. [Eric] Landrum was the teacher and I just loved it." A later class from Keli Braitman, an expert in body image research, helped hone her focus.

Sorvaag, a northern California native, hopes to eventually become a psychology professor and researcher.

—Kathleen Craven

## Moldovan pianist polishes her artistic style in the United States

**I**t's not a story you hear every day. Russian-trained pianist Svetlana Nagachevskaya from Moldova decided to learn English and move 6,000 miles to Boise to refine her artistic interpretation of European composers. In 1999 Nagachevskaya was living in Russia after earning a master's degree in piano performance from the

Russian Academy of Music. On a visit home to Moldova, an Eastern European nation about one-sixth the size of Idaho, she told her former teacher, renowned pianist Alexander Paley who now lives in New York, that she would like to continue her piano studies.

"He told me there is a wonderful teacher [in the United States] — Del Parkinson," she

says. Parkinson is a professor of piano at Boise State and a colleague of Paley, who has performed in Boise several times.

Nagachevskaya spent eight months learning enough English to get by and earned a scholarship to Boise State.

With Parkinson and other Boise State music professors, Nagachevskaya, now 28, has delved into the backgrounds of famous composers, studying their lives to help her interpret their music. Recently she has been reading about French composer Maurice Ravel's piece *Le Tombeau de Couperin*, which he wrote about six friends who died in World War I.

"It helps me to understand more precisely the intimate mood of the piece," she says in English as polished as her playing style. "When you are reading the book [about Ravel], Ravel's friends become your friends and when you read about them dying you feel like your friends are dying."

Parkinson said working with Nagachevskaya on her artistry has been "like putting icing on the cake" because her Russian-trained style was already technically excellent.

On her way to completing a master's degree in piano performance this May, Nagachevskaya learned to use a computer (she had seen one only once in Russia), won several piano competitions, became a member of Phi Kappa Phi Honor Society and enjoyed every minute at Boise State, which she calls a paradise. She plans to continue her studies in the doctoral program at the University of Arizona.

—Pat Pyke

