

2005

A Change of Focus

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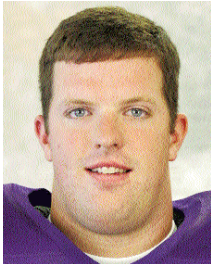
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Recommended Citation

Mileham, Mardi (2005) "A Change of Focus," *Linfield Magazine*: Vol. 1 : No. 3 , Article 12.
Available at: https://digitalcommons.linfield.edu/linfield_magazine/vol1/iss3/12

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A change of focus



Peter Gerber '05

Whether it's on the football field or on a hospital floor, Peter Gerber '05 likes being in the thick of things.

Don't be fooled by his size. Although he is a former offensive lineman for the Wildcats football team, Gerber is also soft-spoken, with a gentle touch. His life took a dramatic turn in January 2003

when he participated in a January Term course, Traditional and Non-Traditional Healing Practices in Mexico.

Gerber was simply looking for a chance to travel internationally and to experience another culture. The course seemed a perfect match with his exercise science major. But while becoming enamored of the Mexican culture and history, he also found himself drawn to nursing. After his return he continued to meet with Portland Campus faculty. Soon, instead of pursuing graduate work in physical therapy he turned his attention to nursing school.

"I kept weighing my options between nursing and physical therapy and I just saw a lot more opportunity in nursing," Gerber said. "I have always wanted a profession where I could actually help people. Nursing has that intense patient interaction that I really enjoy. I compare it to being on the offensive line. You're right there in front and in the action. You don't necessarily get the credit, but you have the satisfaction of knowing that you helped a person on that particular day."

Diane Welch, associate professor of nursing, said Gerber has demonstrated incredible sensitivity to what's going on around him and really understands the heart of nursing.

"Peter is able to see how nurses are engaged with people in their lives," she said. "Peter will be a great nurse because he has an amazing work ethic. He does whatever it takes to get the job done and he doesn't want to just get it done, he wants it done really well. He's a great team player. Nursing has a lot of team activities and he puts the work of the group above himself."



Gerber, who was raised in Portland, hopes to eventually return to Mexico or travel to Costa Rica. He found the Mexican culture rich and vast, as well as calming and very familiar.

"This was really a life-changing experience, culturally and professionally," Gerber said. "It rekindled something in me to be more open-minded. There was a different mentality, different than in the U.S. where everyone tries to amass as much money and property as possible. The point (in Mexico) isn't to amass so much stuff, it's about sharing."

He would like to learn more about the traditional methods of healing and learn Spanish.

"The Latino population is increasing throughout the country and it's inevitable that you will work with Spanish-speaking patients," he said. "I think being open to their culture and knowing more about it would help when treating them."

When Gerber graduates in December, he'll have a double major in exercise science and nursing. Linfield has been the perfect spot for him, on the football field and in the classroom.

"In football, the coaches treated you like a real person and listened to your ideas," Gerber said. "That's indicative of Linfield as a whole. People work really hard and listen to their students. Linfield is a nurturing kind of place. Faculty here aren't concerned about putting out nurses just for numbers. They want you to learn and grasp what nursing is all about."

— Mardi Mileham



Peter Gerber '05 switched his major to nursing after participating in a January Term course in Mexico. Here he helps Gloria Natsch at a diabetes support group that also served as a clinical site for one of his nursing courses.