



SPECIAL

Mountain Brook's Parker Goyer poses with students from An Dinh Secondary School in Vietnam's Ben Tre Province. It was the first site Duke students explored for the Coach for College program. Goyer says the group hopes to have a program at this location next summer.

# From Mtn. Brook to Vietnam

Busy athletes get chance to serve, thanks to brainchild of Alabama native

By **RAY MELICK**  
News staff writer

**A**s the provost at Duke University, Peter Lange encourages Duke students to think big. But he's used to seeing great ideas that produce limited action come across his desk every year.

So when Parker Goyer approached him with an ambitious plan to take athletes to Vietnam for a project Goyer was calling "Coach for College," Lange admits his first thought was, "She's 22 years old. She has a great idea. But who's going to do it?"

A year later, Lange found out the answer.

Goyer, a native of Mountain Brook, not only came up with the program to take college athletes to Vietnam to work with middle school children for two three-week camps this summer, she raised almost \$200,000 to pay for it. And she applied for an International Sports Programming Initiative grant from the U.S. Department of State that could be worth \$175,000 or more.

While many of her classmates spent their spring break this year on the coast soaking up the sun, Goyer was visiting Ho Chi Minh City and Can Tho in Vietnam, laying the groundwork to come back



NEWS FILE/MARK ALMOND

Parker Goyer, who played college tennis as a walk-on for most of her four years at Duke, will discuss her Coach for College program at next month's NCAA Leadership Conference.

this summer with two five-person teams of athletes from both Duke and the University of North Carolina.

"She comes up with this idea, goes out and gets people excited about it, gets athletes to commit, raises money from the NCAA, from UNC, from me and our athletics

department, and figures out how to make it all happen," Lange said.

And now, the NCAA has asked her to discuss her program at next month's NCAA Leadership Conference, in hope that other student-athletes will launch such a program at their schools.

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## GOYER: Has raised nearly \$200,000

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Changing the world isn't necessarily what Goyer had in mind when she entered Duke after graduating from Mountain Brook High School. Goyer was one of the top amateur tennis players in the state and the South, and helped the Spartans win the state tennis title as a senior.

Although she was recruited to play tennis by several schools, Goyer wanted to go to Duke for academic reasons. She played college tennis as a walk-on for most of her four years.

"My senior year, I was involved in a club called Global Grasp," Goyer said. "It's dedicated to raising awareness of different global problems. My faculty adviser had been to Vietnam, and she wanted to involve Duke in a project in Vietnam."

A preliminary trip to Vietnam last summer gave Goyer the idea to bring college athletes to that country to run camps for students with the idea of teaching not only sports, but the application of sports to science, entrepreneurship and English.



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Parker Goyer takes a break with fellow Coach for College members after the group participated in a cultural exchange activity that included crawling through the Cu Chi Underground Tunnels in Vietnam.

"I came up with a program for what I thought was a void in the student-athlete experience, because student-athletes at college are so restricted in their time, they don't have the opportunity to participate in projects like regular students do."

Goyer had to write up a proposal and present it as part of the DukeEngage program, a \$30 million initiative that enables Duke undergraduates to apply classroom theories to real-world issues.

Goyer, who had to give up

the last part of her senior year on the tennis team to accomplish the project, has received \$60,000 from Lange's office, \$60,000 from the office of Undergraduate Education, a \$10,000 grant from the Duke athletics department, a \$10,000 grant from the NCAA and a \$58,000 commitment from the University of North Carolina, including \$15,000 from the athletics department.

"It is remarkable," Goyer said. "I'm 22 years old, and I'm in frequent contact with the provost at Duke and the chancellor of the University of North Carolina (James Moeser). A year ago, I'd have never thought that would be possible. Fortunately, both men were nice to listen to me, both are willing to take risks for this project."

Goyer believes she could not have done this if she had not been an athlete.

"I had to set goals and be persistent, like I was in tennis. I had a lot of failure, but it made me get back up to make it work. Being a tennis player for 10 years really helped me."

"There were times when Pete Lange said it wasn't worth it, there was too much bureaucracy. But it worked."

Said Lange, "If it wasn't Parker saying that, I'd say, 'Oh, that's nice.' But it's Parker. She might actually pull it off."

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