

# today's students



**AN ORGANIZED MIND** Leah Bry's been devoted to social change for as long as she can remember. Today she's a lead healthcare organizer for Colorado Progressive Action, and she's using her Goddard studies to redirect her energies to a new cause: urban agriculture.

## Bry Organizes for a Better Future

**A**s an elementary school student in Denver, Leah Bry (SBC '10) had a real fondness for ecology, and she ended up reading a lot about the deforestation of the rainforest.

"It seemed so wrong to me," she says. "I decided I needed to do something about it."

So she organized her classmates and neighbors to help save the rainforest. What followed were a slew of fundraisers—bake sales, hiking trips, visits to the zoo—that raised enough money to save several acres of rainforest land through the Nature Conservancy.

After this first success at community organizing, Leah never looked back. Today a student in Goddard's Socially Responsible Business / Sustainable Communities Program (SBC), she is a healthcare organizer with Colorado Progressive Action, a Denver-based lobbying group that coordinates political action on a wide range of legislation.

"I think healthcare reform is a vital issue," Leah says.

her colleagues are optimistic this year, thanks to the new administration and President Obama's mandate for healthcare reform.

"We think this is the year it can happen," she says.

Leah has shaped her studies at Goddard around another issue that's close to her heart: urban agriculture.

"Urban agriculture is ... people growing food in cities," she explains. "It can look like farms on vacant lots, or vegetables growing in containers on balconies and rooftops, or chickens in people's backyards."

It's a move toward sustainability and food security for people who live in cities, she says. She's busy organizing a nonprofit called Greenleaf, which will promote sustainable ideals, especially to local youth. She's taking advantage of the SBC Program to think and reflect and write about her ideas before she puts them in place.

"I feel like Goddard has provided me a way to explore academically what I'm doing practically." CW

— BY KELLY COLLAR

## Rousseau Writes the Book on Florida

**W**hen he was 9 years old, Dan Rousseau (BFA '08) went with his father to his grandfather's ranch near West Palm Beach in southern Florida. They spent the day rounding up heifers and then branding them. At day's end, Rousseau's father put his horse into the trailer, then came back to lead his son's pony in there as well. The pony refused to budge.

"My father lost his temper," Dan recalls. "He took the tailgate rod and started beating this pony. He damned well nearly beat him to death. I was screaming and crying."

It would take around 60 years before Dan, now 72, could put pen to paper and describe the trauma he suffered that day, but when he finally did, he submitted it to a *Writer's Digest* magazine contest and won honorable mention.

It spurred him to pursue a dream he'd always had of becoming a writer. He'd dropped out of college after one semester to join the Marines and now decided Goddard was an ideal place to finally get his bachelor's degree. He chose to

study creative writing.

"I've always felt there's something lacking in my life because I didn't commit to get my undergraduate degree," says Dan, who now lives in West Palm Beach. "Goddard gave me that opportunity."

All of his work is aimed at young adults and focuses on the life he lead as a youth in Florida during the 1940s and 1950s. It was a place where ranchers raised cattle, rattlesnakes roamed freely, every kid knew how to shoot a .22-caliber rifle, and hurricanes regularly sowed disaster. The novel he wrote during his time at Goddard is about a young boy who accidentally burns down his family's house and is exiled by his father to a Seminole Indian reservation.

"Most people don't know anything about Florida except Walt Disney," Dan says. "I'm trying to change that." CW

— BY LAWRENCE GOODMAN

**GRUNTING GATORS** Dan Rousseau used raw material from his childhood when he wrote a book about the real Florida (sans Walt Disney) during his studies at Goddard. As a kid, he used to "grunt" alligators, or flush them out with a special call, when he was hunting them for money.

