



Mapping out polling locations for Election Day project.



Ellie's AP Statistics students.



Conducting "Get Out The Vote" calls in Miami.



Registering voters outside a grocery store in Las Vegas.

## Casting a Vote for Relevant Statistics Learning

Hispanics account for more than half of the U.S. population growth between 2000 and 2010, according to the U.S. Census. Yet, Ellie Terry's Hispanic students at Brooklyn's High School of Telecommunication Arts & Technology showed no interest in the upcoming presidential election. She designed a Fund for Teachers fellowship to engage them and fuel a real-world AP Statistics project at the same time.

"Sunset Park, my school's neighborhood, is predominantly Hispanic. Few residents are politically active and my students felt that the presidential election didn't involve them," explained Ellie. "I wanted them to realize that, as Hispanic Americans, they make up the most empowered group of voters. Being a math teacher, I decided to use numbers to prove it."

On her fellowship, she joined presidential campaign statisticians in the predominantly Hispanic swing states of Florida, New Mexico, Nevada, and Colorado to learn how they use statistical methods to research voter trends. She studied the design of surveys, conducted focus groups, and polled people by phone and in front of Walmart to gather data on Hispanic voters and their concerns. Political strategists used

this information to craft candidates' speeches; Ellie took the results back to Brooklyn to create math and civics lessons.

*"I feel as though I've earned a Master's degree in statistical analysis after this fellowship."*

"The whole school is adopting Common Core State Standards, so I'm enlisting teachers from every discipline to join a three-day election project: History teachers will introduce students to the electoral college; science teachers will review candidates' positions on the environment and health care; English teachers will show previous debates and assign students a side to argue," Ellie explained.

Both her fellowship and the cross-curricular unit lead up to a school-wide mock election in November. Additionally, with permission from the board of elections in Kings County and assistance from 17 student teachers from Brooklyn College, 34 AP Statistics students will canvass polling places around Brooklyn on Election Day. Students will collect

data using class-designed exit surveys that will fuel their coursework for the rest of the school year.

"I feel as though I've earned a Master's degree in statistical analysis after this fellowship. My mom was a teacher, as was her mom and her mom. I'll be a teacher for life, but finding this type of enrichment is key to keeping me excited and my students informed."

You can read more about Ellie's fellowship at [hstatistics.blogspot.com](http://hstatistics.blogspot.com).

THIS SUMMER

458 TEACHERS | 124 COUNTRIES

#1 MOST POPULAR DESTINATION – USA

This edition of *Odyssey* profiles teachers who stayed stateside for world-class, self-designed professional development.



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Kentucky	Saint Paul, MN
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Minneapolis	Washington DC
Mississippi	Wisconsin
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## Our Mission

Fund for Teachers enriches the personal and professional growth of teachers by recognizing and supporting them as they identify and pursue opportunities around the globe that will have the greatest impact on their practice, the academic lives of their students and their school communities.



[WWW.FUNDFORTEACHERS.ORG](http://WWW.FUNDFORTEACHERS.ORG)

## From the Executive Director



Traditionally, Kenya's Masai people greet one another with the question, "Kasserian Ingera" or "Are the children well?" The presumption: If the children are well, so is the community. Taking that greeting into the educational realm, the better question might be "Kasserian Olmalimui?" – is the *teacher* well? Sadly, the answer would be, "Not really."

In response to the recent report published by The New Teacher Project (TNTP) entitled "The Irreplaceables: Understanding the Real Retention Crisis in America's Urban Schools," a New York City Master Teacher said, "It should not be a surprise that people leave teaching. This report proves that most teachers are never acknowledged or rewarded and that no one seems to care if they are good or not. This really is about respect..."

Fund for Teachers started awarding preK-12 teachers grants for professional development 12 years ago in an effort to *acknowledge* exemplary teachers and *reward* them with opportunities to learn and grow. To reduce the "teacher drop out" rate of 50% after the first three years in the profession, we purposefully offer our grants to teachers only after that incredibly challenging period of time, hoping they'll stick it out and gain the inspiration to keep going after their fellowship. We also put virtually no limitations on what teachers want to learn or where they want to learn it, trusting that the teacher knows best what will impact their teaching and, consequently, their students.

Five thousand teachers and \$18M later, our Fellows consistently report that the personal/professional validation their grants represent exceeds the monetary value.

When a teacher completes a fellowship, we expect that they will return with a wealth of new content knowledge to share with students. What we have learned is that the personal transformation goes deeper and broader than simple content knowledge. Teaching practices, expectations and relationships change, as well. Teachers return with a renewed purpose and focus on learning and reinforced dedication to their professional vocation.

Hopefully, more top teachers will apply for FFT grants (beginning October 1 at [FundForTeachers.org](http://FundForTeachers.org)) and can then reply to the question "Kasserian Olmalimui?" with "Engaged, inspired, and still in the classroom, thank you very much."

Karen K. Webb  
Executive Director

## SAVE THE DATE

Celebrating 5,000 FFT Fellows  
Featuring Academy Award Winner Richard Dreyfuss  
Honoring Mary Lou and Walt Smith

Wednesday, October 17  
Hotel Zaza, Houston, Texas  
For tickets, call 713-296-6127  
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*“Robotics is the wave of the future for STEM education.”*



Rao learns ROBOTC computer programming language.



Remi navigates her Lego® / TETRIX robot.

## *Building STEM Skills with Legos®*

Most commonly, Legos® fill colorful buckets in pre-school classrooms. At The Rice School in Houston, the plastic building bricks construct Remi Willoughby's middle school robotics program.

“Robotics is the wave of the future for STEM education,” said Remi, an 18 year teaching veteran. “Carnegie Mellon University professors created the Lego® robotics curriculum I use with 155 seventh graders and 18 robotics club members. Since they're the ones writing the lessons, they're the ones who can best teach me how to use it. I wrote a Fund for Teachers grant proposal to go and learn from the best.”

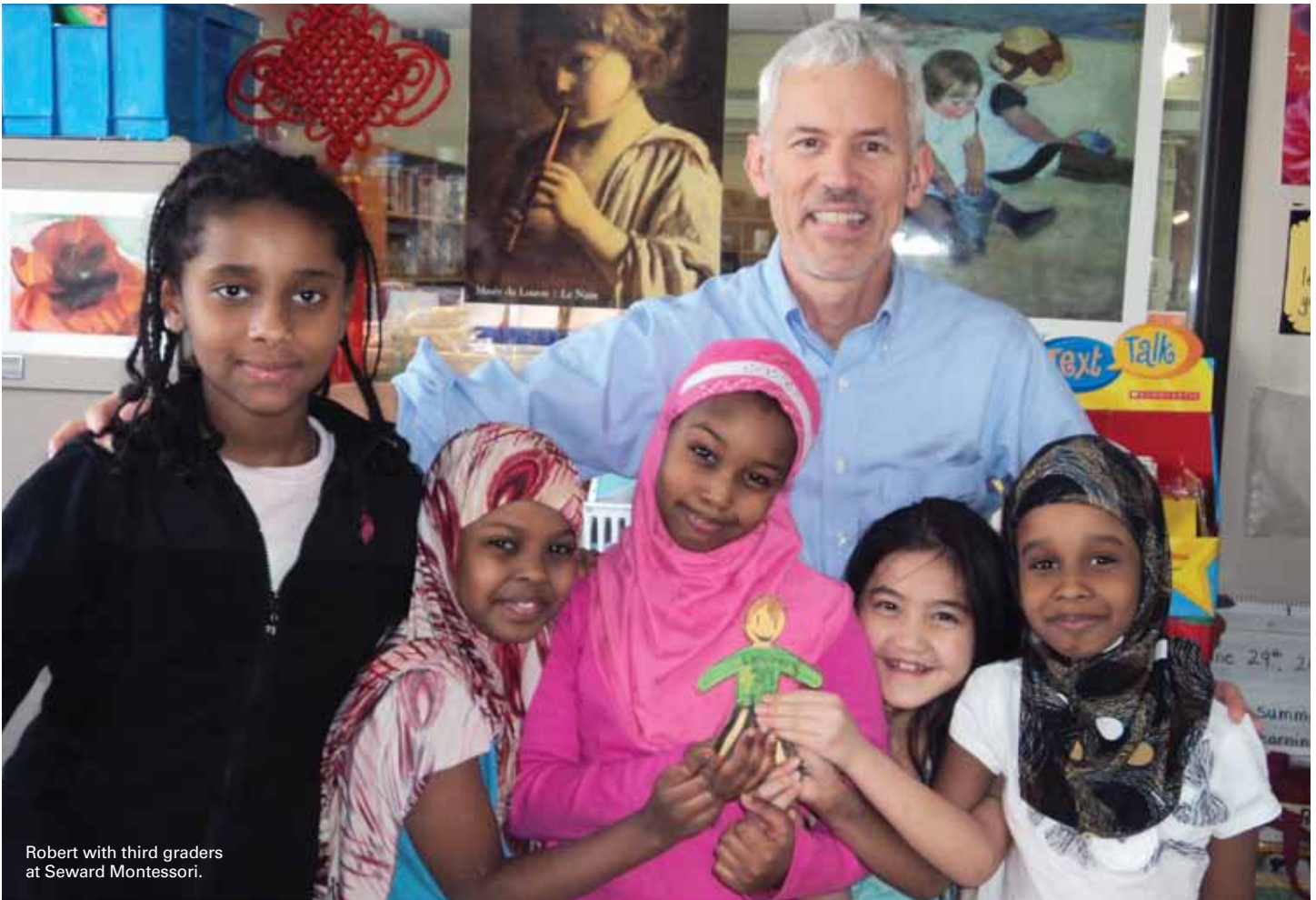
For two weeks in July, Remi and teammate Rao Olayeye, a teacher at

The Woodlands Academy Preparatory School, spent long days at the National Robotics Engineering Center in Pittsburgh, part of the Carnegie Mellon University Robotics Institute. They learned how to use robotics programming software to teach STEM concepts and earned “instructor certification” to train additional teachers on the software.

Afterwards, the team flew to Hawaii for the Global Conference on Educational Robotics, where they interacted with the world's leading robotics engineers and learned about the latest advances using robots on land, air and water. When not listening to keynote addresses delivered by internationally acclaimed speakers, they helped judge a national competition

for students showcasing autonomous robots.

“I taught my students everything I knew and felt it wasn't fair that I couldn't give more. Now, I can teach the algebraic principles behind robotics, confidently start a Robotics 3 class, and encourage students to call Carnegie Mellon professors with questions that I can't answer,” said Remi. “The ultimate goal of any professional development is to enrich students' learning. With this fellowship experience, I can be sure that when they leave my classroom in June they can say, “Wow, I'm so glad I was in that class.”



Robert with third graders at Seward Montessori.

## Being Mindful of Student Stress Level

Children of refugees fleeing war-torn Somalia struggle with adapting to a new life, a new language. Robert Reed asks his students to literally take a deep breath and focus on the present. He believes increased self-awareness empowers regulation of thoughts and feelings, freeing students to learn.

To equip students at Minneapolis' Seward Montessori with these skills, Robert designed a Fund for Teachers fellowship to attend the Mindfulness Stress Reduction practicum led by faculty from the University of Massachusetts Medical School, followed by a Mindful Schools curriculum training in San Francisco. After developing techniques and acquiring new curriculum, Robert begins the school year better prepared to address immigrant students' emotional and physical outbursts and facilitate authentic learning.

"Students used to come to school with some social skills and an ability to pay attention," said Robert, reflecting on his 22 years working with English Language Learners. "Now, due in large

part to video games, electronic devices, and tragic personal circumstances, students are increasingly alienated from their own bodies, living only in their heads, with no impulse control. Mindfulness, or paying attention on purpose, puts students back into their bodies and increases awareness of their inner and outer world."

In addition to long-term benefits of self-discipline and emotional regulation, mindfulness impacts students' academic performance, according to research conducted by the Collaborative for Academic, Social and Emotional Learning. Statistics prove that instruction including components of mindfulness (yoga, meditation, deep breathing) increased achievement test scores an average of 11 percentage points while also reducing student aggression and disruptiveness.

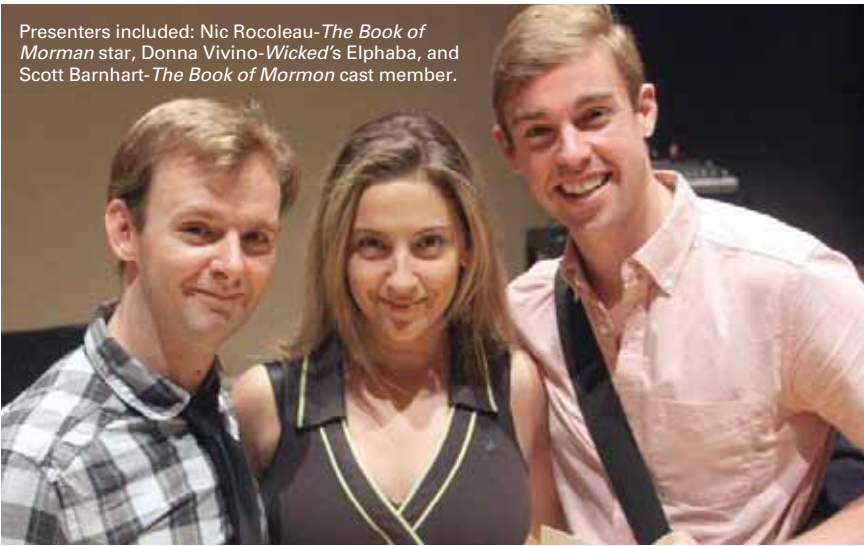
Although meditation practices are rooted in Asian philosophy, Robert chose to remain in the United States for his mindfulness training. "The world's experts on the topic are right here," he

explained. "Professionals journeyed from four continents to participate in the oldest and largest medical center-based stress reduction program in the world, which has been featured on *Oprah*, NBC's *Dateline* and ABC's *Evening News*."

Robert plans to extend his fellowship learning beyond his school by working to establish mindfulness as a respected curriculum throughout the Twin Cities.

"Mindfulness is profoundly beneficial for helping teachers create safe and supportive classrooms that optimize engaged, intentional learning. We all want students to pay attention, and evidence-based programs prove that it's possible to train and improve this critical faculty."

Presenters included: Nic Rocaleau-*The Book of Mormon* star, Donna Vivino-*Wicked's* Elphaba, and Scott Barnhart-*The Book of Mormon* cast member.



Dawn picks up a souvenir at the Gershwin Theatre during intermission.



Foxwood Theatre, home of *Spider-Man*, *Turn Off the Dark* and the Broadway Teachers Workshop.

## Giving Their Regards to Broadway

"We don't build stars. We build confidence," said Gale Post, director of performing arts at Augustine Christian School in Broken Arrow, OK.

In partnership with drama teacher/choreographer Dawn Redden, Gale built a thriving program that replaced the school's athletic department and involves 75% of its students. "Performing arts is our niche," she said. "As leaders of the program with minimal professional experience, we chose to attend the Broadway Teachers Workshop in New York City with our Fund for Teachers grant so we could learn from THE professionals staging, directing, producing, costuming and starring in Tony award-winning productions."

During the day, workshop speakers included the director of *Peter and The Star Catcher*, composer for *The Book of Mormon*, musical director of *War Horse*, choreographer of *Newsies* and director of *Godspell*. In the evenings, teachers attended many of these performances, moving backstage after the curtain call to continue learning from stars and stage hands.

After the workshop, Gale and Dawn spent three days touring places their students dream about: The Apollo Theater, Lincoln Center, Carnegie Hall, Radio City Music Hall and the High School for Performing and Visual Arts. They believe the entire fellowship ("Going there, seeing the sites, talking to the people making it happen," as Gale says) validates their teaching with students and parents.

The teachers' fellowship impacted their school even before the first day of class. In the process of drafting their proposal, they realized the performing arts program lacked vision. Working with the principal and school administration, the team created a five-year-plan for where and how they want the program to grow. Returning from the fellowship, they shared their learning during in service training, encouraging peers to use creativity and innovation with their lessons, as do set designers for *Peter and the Star Catcher* who use only recycled items to create every scene.

"We know students gain more from teachers with broad personal experience in an area of study," said Gale. "To have someone invest money in you to gain that experience, as Fund for Teachers did, means they have confidence in you as a teacher – and confidence breeds competency."

## Additional Fellows choosing America as their fellowship destination include:

**Diane Dribell** (15th Street Elementary School - **San Pedro, CA**), who examined weathering and geologic formations across Utah and Nevada to instill in largely immigrant students an understanding of science and social studies as outlined by state standards while building an appreciation of America as a country worth exploring and appreciating;

**Rebecca Collins** (Classen Middle School of Advanced Studies - **Oklahoma City, OK**), who studied arts and culture of the First People along the Pacific Northwest coastline to create projects comparing these Native Americans and Canadians with those comprising Oklahoma's tribes;

**Rebecca Flom** (Murphy K-8 School - **Boston, MA**), who explored the history of immigration by conducting research at Ellis Island and the Tenement Museum on New York's Lower East Side to help students gain an appreciation for family members who immigrated to America and to create an interdisciplinary unit that engenders awareness and pride in family histories;

**Maggie Kendall** (Chicago High School for Agricultural Sciences - **Chicago, IL**), who obtained therapeutic riding instructor certification to create the school's first therapeutic riding program, and provide service learning opportunities that encourage friendships between special and regular education students.

**Patricia DeSanti** (L. P. Monteleone Junior High - **Mandeville, LA**), who participated in Colonial Williamsburg's Teacher Institute, learning from mentor teachers, museum staff, and character interpreters to enhance teaching skills and develop an interdisciplinary approach to creatively teaching this era in American history; and,

**Michael Thomas** (Schmalz Elementary - **Houston, TX**), who participated in the Musician's Institute's Contemporary College of Music summer program in Los Angeles, CA, to hone arrangement and digital recording skills and help students compose and record their original music.

## 2013 Online Application

**Opens:** October 1 at [fundforteachers.org](http://fundforteachers.org)  
**Deadline:** January 31, 2013

# Curating Art and Technology at the Smithsonian American Art Museum

Transitioning to 21st century learning was vital for Michael Key, as was exposing students to art in the absence of an art specialist at Milwaukee's Garland Elementary School. A Fund for Teachers' fellowship to the Clarice Smith National Teacher Institute at the Smithsonian American Art Museum in Washington, DC, solved both conundrums. For one week in August, Michael discovered strategies for teaching art and technology in a way that aligns with the Common Core State Standards.

"Trusting that everything I would learn was already tied to the Common Core really drove the decision to remain stateside for my fellowship," Michael explained. "And, I didn't need to go abroad to study famous works of art – many of the world's masterpieces hang in Washington DC."

Using galleries as their guidebook, conference participants learned from museum educators, curators and content

experts to think critically about art and use specific pieces to teach history and literary skills. In a classroom setting, technology specialists led hands-on workshops teaching how to bring art alive using VoiceThreads® to capture and display images, Audacity® to edit voice recordings, and Prezi® to present both to peers. Evenings provided opportunities for technology tutorials, a reception at the Renwick Gallery of the Smithsonian American Art Museum, a Kennedy Center performance and a monument tour.

"Professional development is not about me moving up the pay scale – I don't care about that," said Michael. "But every time you get professional development, you gain something more for students. If you use what you learn with students, you create a contagious chain reaction. Then, we all become better learners."



Michael (lower right) takes gallery tour.

Photograph courtesy of the Smithsonian American Art Museum.

# Finding Common Core Strategies in the Crescent City

Scarce doesn't *begin* to describe the lack of resources available for teachers in Tuscumbia, AL: No professional development since 2007, school budgets cut mid-year, and a \$125 stipend to cover annual classroom expenses.

"We were desperate," said Nancy Rogers, referring to Deshler High School's math department that includes Caacie Dixon and Debbie Thompson. "Alabama implements the Common Core State Standards this year and, frankly, we were a little overwhelmed. I opened an email from our local chamber of commerce about Fund for Teachers and said, 'We have to give this a try. We have no other options. If we don't get this grant, we'll walk into the new year basically blind.'"

Their determination paid off and the "Math Visions" team spent one week in July at the "Advancing Mathematics Achievement" section of the High Schools That Work conference in New Orleans. Professional development specialists led seminars on transforming math lessons into hands-on, interactive

activities aimed at increasing the thinking level for every student. Peers from around the country experimented with new teaching techniques. And, most importantly, Nancy, Caacie and Debbie developed a solid foundation for teaching the Common Core State Standards this fall. "Now we see the

magnitude of the challenge before us," Caacie said.

"We needed basic, every day skills to improve how we teach, what we teach and to prepare ourselves for this increased load of standards," said Debbie. "We got what we needed, along with the fortitude to teach smarter."



Nancy (center) introduces precalculus concepts to a student using an iPad.

# I AM A FUND FOR TEACHERS FELLOW

**Name:** Rachel Skerritt

**Profession:** High School Principal  
Eastern Senior High School  
Washington, DC

**Honors:** Former Chief of Staff for Boston Public Schools, two-time White House Fellow finalist, National Harry S. Truman Scholar

**Best asset in the classroom:** My ability to make literature relatable. I once taught *The Scarlet Letter* as an episode of *The Maury Povich Show*: "Babbling Brook in the Woods" made a surprise appearance and described to the studio audience details of Hester and Dimmesdale's illicit affair.

**I always wanted to be:** A writer. Fortunately, teaching gave me the opportunity to engage with such amazing young people and colleagues that I accumulate rich material for novels I write during my time off.

**Before teaching:** I was a student. I started teaching at 21 years old.

**I entered the field of education:** After realizing that the education I took for granted during my childhood was a privilege only afforded to some.

**Best lesson I've learned:** Teachers are often eager to leave the classroom to pursue leadership/administrative positions; but, one never feels closer to students or makes a more direct impact than in the classroom.

**Most influential person:** Grandma. As a teacher's aide to developmentally disabled students, she devoted her life to serving others. She's the first person I call for sound leadership advice.

**Favorite teacher:** My 10th grade Honors English teacher, Ms. Johnson. She asked us to do things that seemed impossible (like reading *Their Eyes Were Watching God* in three nights), but that made us feel incredibly accomplished when we fulfilled them. Mrs. Johnson worked us to the bone, but made us love the work.

**Biggest inspiration:** Our students. They inspire me through their openness to being inspired, which motivates me to deliver.

**I'm reading:** Students' open response questions on their last paced interim assessment. We're constantly working to improve their writing and persuasive argument skills.

**I teach:** Teachers and support staff how to work together to turn around an underperforming school. And they teach me lessons right back.

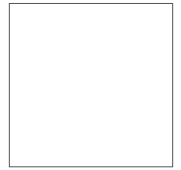
**With my 2005 Fund for Teachers fellowship, I:** Videotaped interchanges with teenagers in Beijing, Shanghai, and Hong Kong, to bridge a cultural divide within our school community, which was more than 30 percent Asian American. We visited the home of a student's relative, toured a small city a few hours outside of Shanghai where our own English teacher lived and worked, and documented high school students' life stories and impressions of America.

Rachel consults with Secretary of Education Arne Duncan.





Fund for Teachers  
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*Naomi Brown (Houston) cycled 200 miles from the “Secret Annex” in Amsterdam to Germany’s Bergen-Belsen Concentration camp on her Fund for Teachers fellowship this summer. Her goal is to create a documentary of Anne Frank’s legacy that provides a compelling framework for comparing current discriminations with the past and improve rapport with students on current human rights issues. She sent this message upon visiting Bergen-Belsen...*

“The death camp had an extensive database of those consumed in the Holocaust. I brought my maternal grandmother’s passport with me so I would have the family information about her mother, father, sisters and brothers who died, with relevant dates and correct spelling of their hometowns.

I typed their names into the database, including every manner of spelling and, most importantly, their home towns. I did not expect much to generate as so many lives were wiped out. However...

The database was both cruelly precise and amazingly comforting, for

there – in neatly penned handwriting – were the names of every family member from our home town lost during the Nazi occupation. The depth of loss is absolutely profound.

When I read their names, it was as if lightning struck my very core...it was both ineffably sad and astonishingly joyful. I had finally found the lost members of my family. I don’t really have a vocabulary to convey my sentiments. Maybe there isn’t one. Please know how appreciative I am of this opportunity.”



Naomi at Bergen-Belsen, near the commemorative headstone for Anne Frank and her sister, Margot.