The tiny Indonesian village of Desa Ban is some 10,000 miles from Richmond, VA, where Juliet Wiebe-King '13 markets the cashews grown and processed in East Bali. However, a piece of her heart will always remain in that distant place that bears no resemblance to paradise.

Cashew trees grow lush in the sandy soil, but poverty also thrives. That has begun to change since East Bali Cashews (EBC) opened a factory to process the harvest that previously was shipped to Vietnam or India. In doing so, it created job opportunities where few existed, especially for women.

Only a year ago, however, the UNCW alumna, a double major in anthropology and international studies, was pondering her future as graduation loomed at the University of Virginia.

“I was only about two months from graduating from my Master of Commerce program. I had interviews for the more traditional consulting and marketing roles, but I just didn’t see myself fitting in or enjoying any of them,” she explained. Along came a unique internship opportunity with EBC.

Wiebe-King, who credits her parents and her professors at UNCW and UVA with encouraging her to explore the world, was drawn to the company’s commitment to social and environmental responsibility. She arrived in Indonesia two weeks after earning her master’s degree and was handed the task of building the market for EBC’s product.

In Desa Ban, life revolves around community, tradition and ceremony. EBC incorporates those values into the workplace culture, also providing day care that allows mothers to work while their children play and learn nearby. As she worked, she gained a second family.

“We not only worked together, but they were willing to share their families, their culture – everything – with me,” Wiebe-King said.

After her internship ended, she was offered the opportunity to continue on U.S. soil the work she began in East Bali. She joined EBC’s U.S. distributor, Red River Foods, in February, marketing the cashew company’s product. And she knows she has chosen the right career path.

“I’m anxiously waiting for the day when I can get on that plane back to Bali. In 10 years I hope to be doing something similar to what I’m doing now, but on a much larger scale, living all over the world and making as much of a positive impact as I can.”

– Tricia Vance

http://eastbalicashews.com