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**RESUME DROP DEADLINE MONDAY, OCTOBER 8**

**Capital One**

Published: Tuesday, October 2, 2007  
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## Grads take RVs cross-country

Trip participants explore life nationwide

**Patrick Lee**  
Contributing Reporter

Many Yalies seem to know where they are headed, whether it is to investment banking or medical school — and then there are those who end up driving a lime green RV.

Roadtrip Nation, a production company affiliated with a PBS documentary series, gives young adults the chance to take a five-week cross-country trip in lieu of a traditional post-graduation career track. One of the trademark green RVs visited New Haven last Friday, where the promotional team sounded off the mission of Roadtrip Nation to interested Yalies. Each participant interviews a diverse array of people across the country who embody different notions of success in search of inspiration to pursue new passions in life, program representative Jared Loss said. Camera crews accompanying each two or three-person team on the RV ultimately produce a documentary series that captures the participants' experiences on the road.

Loss said Roadtrip Nation — whose motto is "define your own road in life" — was started in 2001 by four recent college graduates, and has since stepped onto the national stage, spawning a PBS documentary that airs every fall, a book series, an online community and even a grant program for "indie" road trips on which participants shoot their own footage. According to the Roadtrip Nation Web site, the principle of fighting against "the noise" of society drove the program's creation and still guides it today.

Yale Undergraduate Career Services said it supports Roadtrip Nation's message, UCS Associate Director John Bau said. Roadtrip Nation can be a good model for reflecting on one's career interests post-graduation, Bau said.

"One of the interesting things is that it formalizes the idea of networking as a career exploration tool," he said. "A lot of times, if I have someone who has no idea what they want to do, I'd encourage them to talk to the people in their life — their parents, friends, the people they come across — just to explore what's out there, because the standard occupations of doctor or lawyer are not part of a big plan."

Bau said Roadtrip Nation could provide Yalies with a flexible framework for networking beyond campus. Each team on the road is required to hold at least 30 interviews, and Roadtrip Nation's ever-growing library of footage includes a broad range of personalities, ranging from Pulitzer Prize winner Jane Smiley and self-employed farmer Gabriel Garcia to Playboy magazine mogul Hugh Hefner.

Representatives from Roadtrip Nation who visited Yale Friday came to campus to spread the word about the program. Melissa Loschy, a member of the Roadtrip Nation promotional team, said the experience of working for the program has taught her values that she could never have learned in a school setting.

"One of the things, the ideals, that they talked about was self-production rather than mass production — figuring out things for yourself and sticking your head above the water instead of going along with everyone else all the time," Loschy said.

Each road trip is designed to be unique and provide a different meaning for every participant, Loschy said. She said the only links between team members are their shared drive, authenticity, curiosity and interest in expanding their horizons.

Some of his most memorable interviews, Loss said, have allowed him to connect with his interview subjects on a personal level. Loss, who was raised in a Jewish family, said his favorite interview was with preeminent Zen master Genpo Roshi, who spoke to Roadtrip Nation about the connections between a Zen sensei's philosophy and a Jewish upbringing.

Still, some Yalies who have heard about Roadtrip Nation said the extremely unstructured nature of the program could pose some problems because it throws three college students together in a large, moving vehicle and requires them to take care of themselves for over a month. After studying the program's Web site, Daniel Spector '11 said he doubts that the program's advertised "freedom" is the best way to have a meaningful experience after college.

"Just because I'm not sure what I want to do with my life doesn't mean I don't have things I'm passionate about," Spector said.

The Roadtrip Nation philosophy, as expressed on the program's Web site, urges people to explore their options as much as possible regardless of their projected career paths. Bau said some college graduates need this kind of open-mindedness to broaden their perspective, but not all students have a loosely defined career path.

"It's not for everyone," he said. "There are certainly people who have a very clear sense of where they want to go."

But Loschy said Roadtrip Nation was exactly what she needed.

"It's different for each of us, but for me, this is giving me the ability to take risks," Loschy said. "I've been pretty sheltered for most of the time. It feels like it's time for me to step outside and see what I can do instead of staying in the bubble after college."

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COURTESY PATRICK LEE  
The staff of Roadtrip Nation poses in front of their trademark green RVs, which graduates can drive across the nation for five weeks.

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