

Service-Learning Center Newsletter

CALVIN
College

Fall 2003

Big Brother & Big Sister: A Formula for Learning

Any time we are encouraged to go beyond the bounds of our comfort, we will at least be challenged, and probably learn. This is certainly true for students who have participated in the Big Brother and Big Sister program at Calvin this year. It has been a blessing to hear stories from students who are mentoring and hanging out with kids from the Grand Rapids community. One student I spoke with about the program said that it is more challenging than she had expected, but she has grown as a person and would never trade the experience. Another said he was going to tell all of his friends to do it because of the great need for Big Brothers.

At the Service-Learning Center we have at least fifty profiles of children enrolled in the Big Brother and Big Sister program provided by DA Blodgett of Grand Rapids. Dorian Stith assists students as they select one child from these profiles and commit to spending five hours a week with him or her. It is an incredible way for the "littles" and "bigs" to learn by sharing with each other the difficulties and joys of life.



Senior Craig Campbell poses with his little brother Jalen.

A Look at the Service-Learning Center Staff, 2003-2004

The Service-Learning Center has changed a bit over the summer. Our back door has been converted into our front door and vice versa. However, the most drastic change is the loss of our administrative assistant, Carole Korfker. After 19 years of service to the Service-Learning Center, Carole decided that it was time to retire and spend more time with grandchildren and other important people. We miss her constant help and advice, but are thankful for her many blessings these past years.

Carole is irreplaceable so we changed around our staff a bit. Kary Bosma and Marilyn Davidson-Booker share administrative responsibilities. Marilyn also embraces the technical end of things here in the office. Deyni Ventura is our third new addition. She works as our Community Partnership Liaison, making sure that Calvin and its partnership agencies continue to mutually support each other. Deyni is the former project coordinator of the Calvin @ Burton Heights project.

Jeff Bouman continues his work as Director of the Service-Learning Center. With his vision for service-learning and passion for academically-based service-learning, we can expect more new programs and ideas. Lori Gesink, the Associate Director, uses her gifts with student staff development and aspects of other service-learning projects, specifically Spring Break trips. This team of five people make up only a part of the entire Service-Learning Center staff; twelve students assist these five. (Continued on page 3)

General ABSL News

Currently this fall, over 500 students are involved with a service-learning project initiated through a course in which they are enrolled. Academically-Based Service-Learning (ABSL) is a vital component of many course syllabi, giving students the opportunity to witness a first-hand connection between the theory presented in class and

practice experienced in the community. Several professors at Calvin have made it a priority to connect their course content with a service-learning project, and the result has been tremendous.

The Service-Learning Center divides its work according to the four divisions of the college: the Contextual Disciplines; Language, Literature, and the Arts; Sciences

and Mathematics; and the Social Sciences. ABSL is present in each of these divisions, and in virtually every department at Calvin. With the creativity and commitment of the faculty and the connections and organization of the Service-Learning Center, many successful projects have been created over the past years at Calvin, often continuing year after year. (Continued on page 2)

ABSL (continued from front page)

Language, Literature, and the Arts

covers the disciplines of English, Art, Music, CAS, and Foreign Languages. Spanish students of all ability levels participate in service-learning in a dynamic way. Students have worked with many Hispanic people of the Grand Rapids area, especially in Burton Heights. Students tutor bilingual students in after-school programs, translate at health clinics, and teach ESL (English as a second language). Interactive Music has a wonderful history in service-learning. Prof. Dale Topp's classes have always had positive experiences teaching people of all backgrounds and stages of life about interactive music and the power that it has. Students have done service-learning in organizations such as Campau Elementary, Alexander Elementary, Lincoln Developmental Center, and Holland Home.

Last fall, Prof. Debra Rienstra's English 101 class did a project in Burton Heights entitled "The Good City." The students interviewed residents of Burton Heights and put together a set of community reflections about life in the city, both past and present, along with their hopes for the future. Senior art student Melissa Keeley took photographs of the neighborhood and its residents, and the end product was a gallery exhibit and an exhibit publication.

Each semester in the **Science and Mathematics** division, ABSL continues with a collection of traditional service-learning opportunities for participating professors. In addition, the Calvin Environmental Assessment Program (CEAP) continues to appraise Calvin's handling of environmental issues on campus. Prof. Dave Warners conducts an annual fall CEAP project where students from Plant Biology weed out foreign weeds found on-campus. Prof. Jan Koop and Mike Myers continue to offer the option for her Math 222 students to tutor at local schools. The students tutor children of various grades at Iroquois Middle School, Oakdale Christian, and Madison Park Elementary. This past

spring, Dave Warners, Ken Bergwerff, and Don Verduin incorporated a CEAP project into their Biology for Elementary School Teachers class involving plant growth. Kathi Groenendyk worked with CEAP as well; her CAS 100 class made presentations to promote Calvin's Environmental Stewardship Coalition (ESC). Her student's project was displayed at the biannual CEAP keynote speaker and poster session that occurred in late-April.

The **Social Science** division had another surge of students sent out into social service agencies to serve and learn this past spring semester. Two new members of the Sociology faculty, Mark Mulder, delved into service-learning; his Urban Sociology students completed a range of projects including grant writing, working with WMEAC, and the Burton Heights COPC project. Prof. Kevin Dougherty is also working on incorporating service-learning opportunities into the Diversity and Inequality in North America class, now part of students' new 'core' options. Professors Amy Patterson and Robert DeVries required their Political Science 201 students to participate in service-learning, paralleling the areas of health, education, social welfare, housing, and employment from Ronald Sider's book, Just Generosity (used prominently in the course).

This fall, psychology continues to contribute service-learning students through a Social Psychology class taught by Prof. Martin Bolt; and the Developmental Psychology (Prof. Marjorie Gunnoe) course. Students work with a variety of agencies, including the Headstart program, Domestic Assault Response Team, and Safe Haven Ministries. The Social Work department sends students from the Introduction to Social Work class, the Social Work in Groups and Communities class, and the Social Research class into the community. Finally, students from Economics service-learn through opportunities with Junior Achievement, Goodwill Industries, and Jubilee Jobs. Once again, Calvin students from a number of social science courses add real-life

community experiences to their textbook knowledge through academically-based service-learning.

Strong ABSL components exist within the **Contextual Disciplines**, which includes the Education, Philosophy, Religion, and History departments. The Education department requires that every prospective education student complete twenty-five hours of experience in a classroom before entering the program, resulting in over 300 students working in diverse classrooms throughout Grand Rapids each semester. Programs like the Buchanan Science and Technology program and the Campau-New Hope After School Program rely on staffing support from students enrolled in these introductory classes each semester. In addition, a strong connection has been made between the teaching of reading courses (Education 322 and 326) and Alexander Elementary. Dr. Rooks and Dr. Post of the Education department engage their students in one-on-one tutoring sessions in the language arts each semester at this school of numerous at-risk youth. Recently, Alexander has named an empty classroom the "Calvin College Learning Center," evidence of the strong relationship between Calvin and Alexander.

One Final Word

One student reported in a recent ABSL evaluation that indeed, "There is no better way to learn than to experience it yourself." We believe that ABSL truly engages students in coursework—lectures and notes seem to matter more if they are connected to concrete situations, which ABSL provides. We also believe that ABSL will help students prepare effectively for their future vocations. By incorporating service-learning experiences into coursework, and by extending our classroom walls to encompass all of Grand Rapids, we seek to better understand how we can serve God in our chosen professions and in our daily lives both now and in the future.

Staff (continued from page 1)

Five students form the team that assists classes with service-learning. Deter Bouma helps faculty in the natural sciences, Katie Timmermans coordinates classes within the contextual disciplines (including Education), Angie Rotman is the point person for the language, literature and arts classes. Heidi Pfnister and Mary Beth Botts both support the professors of the social sciences. These five assist current faculty with their projects and also recruit new faculty for academically-based service-learning.

Maria Beversluis coordinates the federal work-study program, Dorian

Stith organizes the Big Brothers and Big Sisters, and Noah Kruis leads the seven Community Partnership Coordinators from the residence halls. Cicely Wiers successfully organized this year's StreetFest, and will organize the Spring Break service-learning trips. As communications coordinator, Hannah Hoogendam maintains communication with Calvin students, staff, and agencies. Deborah Walker coordinates one-time service-learning opportunities, as well as assisting with the blood drive here on campus. Greg Veltman and Mary Beth Boots serve as research coordinators.



Some of the student staff pose in front of a building they prepared for StreetFest.

Spring Break Service-Learning Trips to Tennessee, Missouri and New Mexico

The week of Calvin's most recent spring break, March 14-22, over 50 students, alumni and staff participated in service-learning trips. Students had an opportunity to put the Service-Learning Center's motto into practice: "Serving to learn, learning to serve." They traveled to 3 different states to work with three different organizations, and participated in service projects ranging from manual labor to sharing life stories with those they met at the sites. "I now have a bigger burden for the Native Americans, and have a larger heart for serving," said one participant who traveled to Rehoboth, NM. Another mused, "I now know what love really means. I felt surrounded by love all week in Tennessee, [and] I learned so much about serving God and others. Now I have a weekly Bible study with the girls from my trip. This has helped me grow in my

faith as I continue my life here at Calvin."



A few students rest from their work in Rehoboth, NM

The purpose of spring break trips are to engage students with a different community for a week with the hope that this model of service will continue in their lives both back at Calvin as a student, and in their future communities as well.

Community Partnership Coordinators

Each residence hall on Calvin's campus has a partner agency in the Grand Rapids community. Through the Service-Learning Center, one Community Partnership Coordinator (CPC) organizes service-learning for his/her dorm. This year partnership agencies include Roosevelt Park Community CRC, Grandville Avenue Neighborhood Library, Urban Produce, Baxter Community Center, the Hispanic Center programs at Burton Middle School, Camelot Woods and the Christian Learning Center. Every CPC has a responsibility to recruit 10 to 15 students to service-learn at their partner agency on a weekly basis. In addition, the whole residence hall supports the agency by raising money at an annual service auction and by hosting children from the partnership programs for events such as Trick-or-Treating and Siblings Weekend. The Community Partnership program provides dorm residents with a chance to learn more about the Grand Rapids community, while providing agencies in the community with a lasting connection to Calvin College.

Blood Drive

Tuesday, September 30 marked the beginning of this year's blood drives. Partnering with the Grand Valley Blood Program, the Service-Learning Center hosts four blood drives every school year. This first one was a success! After three days, we collected 220 pints. Eighty people who signed in were first-time donors! Since each pint of blood can help 3-4 people, in just three days, the Calvin community helped out almost 900 people.

Last year (2002-2003) we recorded our highest number of pints donated: 711 over the course of four blood drives. Just think of what you can do the next time the blood drive comes around. Our next blood drive occurs December 2-4, 2003. Three or four people will benefit from just an hour of your time.

StreetFest!!

So, what was the highlight of freshman orientation? “The volunteering day.” “When we painted that lady’s house.” “Definitely when we hung out with the elderly people.” “StreetFest.” Almost every student at Calvin agreed that StreetFest was the best part of their freshman orientation program, Quest. Why is it that when all memories of the first week of college fade, most students remembered StreetFest? StreetFest was a chance to leave the close-knit community of Calvin and venture out to see a different part of Grand Rapids. Even students born and/or raised in Grand Rapids discovered something new about this beautiful city. But what made StreetFest such a memorable success?



StreetFest Participants at the Hispanic Festival

Perhaps it was the more than 50 agencies who stepped in and offered a place for a group of students to service-learn. These agencies willingly arranged projects for either 12 or 24 students to work at for four hours or so. If buses ran late, they patiently waited for the students. Before any work happened, they gave a tour and a synopsis of what they do in the neighborhood, when and

why they started, and who they serve. Sometimes the agencies provided refreshments, they welcomed questions and conversation, and every time they were hospitable to everyone. There are a number of agencies who have hosted StreetFest for a number of years, and will continue for awhile. Huntington Bank and the Alumni Association of Calvin College both underwrote these events and supplied mentors for many of the student groups. Without the cooperation of all these agencies, StreetFest would not exist. Everyone at the Service-Learning Center offers a huge thank you.

There was another group of people who were an integral component of StreetFest: **the students**. Calvin designed the freshman orientation program to incorporate an entire day of service-learning. Almost every single participant contributes a bit to the Grand Rapids community. Some students socialized with residents at Ransom Towers, others painted the outside of a house for an elderly woman who lives near John Ball Park. A large group of students assisted with the Hispanic Festival, while a number of others escorted people in wheelchairs through John Ball Zoo.

StreetFest was designed to give a small-scale idea of what service can look like. One day is definitely not enough to bring about a significant change in our society, but it is a start. Four hours of manual labor can be the beginning step toward a life of service. Cornelius Plantinga, President of Calvin Seminary, said, “According to God’s intelligence, the way to thrive is to help others thrive; the way to flourish is to cause others to flourish; the way to fulfill yourself is to spend yourself.” So, as we glance back at StreetFest, let us also seek ways to bring about a flourishing society. For more pictures of StreetFest, please check out the Service-Learning Center website at www.calvin.edu/slc.

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Service-Learning Center
Commons Annex
1765 Knollcrest Circle, SE
Grand Rapids, MI 49546-4404