

SERVICE-LEARNING CENTER

“Serving to learn...learning to serve”

The Calvin College Service-Learning Center Newsletter • Fall 2004

Service Learning Center
Calvin College
Commons Annex
1765 Knollcrest Circle SE
Grand Rapids, MI 49546
(616) 526-6455
(616) 526-6644 Fax

2004-2005

Staff Purpose Statement:

As an outpouring of our joyful obedience, faith, and hope in Christ Jesus, we, the Service-Learning

Center staff of 2004-2005 commit to:

Honest communication (expressing our frustration and appreciations,

listening to and

encouraging, and showing courtesy and respect for

one another); establishing, building, and maintaining *relationships* within the communities we are a part of; *educating* ourselves and others about the

importance of a lifetime of service and civic

engagement while actively participating in both; and

discovering, cultivating, and sharpening our gifts.

We commit to this in order to deepen our faith in God

to help us complete the Kingdom work he has called us to.

FROM URBAN PRODUCE TO KIDZ KLUB

JANELLE REKMAN, CPC FOR BHT

Over the past two years, I have been involved with service-learning through my Residence Hall. The organization that I worked with my freshman year was Urban Produce, and it was basically an after school tutoring program for kids who lived in the Wealthy Street neighborhood. Urban Produce went through a lot of changes throughout the year, including both an executive board change and a change of location.

This made it very difficult to form lasting relationships with the kids that came because the Calvin students that came from week to week never knew whether there were actually going to be kids at homework club (Urban Produce), or whether we would have to go and search the streets for them. Towards the end of the year, a new church plant called Mosaic Life took over the leadership and funding of Urban Produce (now Kidz Klub), and everyone involved agreed that in order for the program to continue and grow, it needed a more stable foundation.

This foundation was found at Southeast Academic Center (what was Sigsbee Elementary). This elementary school is actually just around the corner from the Wealthy Street Theatre and Community Centre that Urban produce used to be run out of, so the program did not actually have to leave the area. This was very exciting for everyone involved, because it



Painting at the former Sigsbee School, the new site for Kidz Klub.

is programs like Kidz Klub that are helping to support the Wealthy Street Neighborhood's development. Another exciting part of this year's new partnership for Bolt-Heyns-Timmer (BHT) is that Holly Padding, the BHT CPC from last year, is now working for Mosaic Life church. She has spent a lot of time at Southeast Academic forming relationships with the teachers and students there. When we walk

through the halls, kids yell, "Hi Holly!" from every direction. I think it is one of the best parts of the program this year to have a more permanent, representative face in the school. The principle, Mrs. Walker, has also been extremely supportive. We can tell that she cares deeply about her students and appreciates that we desire to help. So, for the last three months, five to ten students have been going to Southeast Academic four days after school for an hour to help out a very energetic group of kids with their math skills. The kids love the program so much (I think they especially come for the game and the snack), that they have started coming on days when it is not actually their grade's turn.

Kidz Klub has endless possibilities and with God's grace it will become all the kids and coordinators dream!



CONNECTING THEORY TO PRACTICE

HEIDI PFNISTER, ABSL COORDINATOR

This semester over 35 community agencies, schools, and businesses in the Grand Rapids area have partnered with Calvin College to provide environments in which Calvin students can work and learn. Along with these organizations, over 90 Calvin faculty members have made Academically-Based Service-Learning (ABSL) a priority in the courses they teach. ABSL is centered on the belief that community engagement is more than simply volunteering one's time, it is forming a reciprocal relationship in which all participants both give and receive. Most community partners rely on volunteers to staff their programs and at the same time, students who are studying theoretical concepts need real life, practical experience. ABSL facilitates



a link between coursework and community service, between theory and practice. Almost every department at Calvin College is currently working to link the students they teach to Service-Learning projects in the community.

Stephene Diepstra, a Social Work professor, incorporates Service-

Learning into two of her classes, Introduction to Social work and Human Behavior in the Social Environment. Students in the Intro class can serve at either North End Community Ministries or at Heartside Ministries. In both agencies, students staff daily programs such as a food pantry, a friendly visitors ministry for the elderly, or art programs for clients of the agency. Students are able to build relationships, experience other Grand Rapids communities, and at the same time learn more

about social service agencies and the populations that they serve. This experience, similar to many other ABSL opportunities, offers students insight into the fields they study and the careers they pursue.



Spring Break Trips 2005!!!

This year the Service-Learning Center will offer five trips to sites around the United States. We are hoping to have 15-20 students accompany 2 student leaders and 1 mentor to the different sites. Currently, trips will be going to Gallup, New Mexico, Knoxville, Tennessee, Kansas City, Missouri, East Palo Alto, California, and Port Gibson, Mississippi. Each site offers new and unique experiences for students ranging from working at a women's crisis shelter to working at a Habitat for Humanity site.

TUTORING AT IROQUOIS

TIM KONYNENBELT, STUDENT

Iroquois Middle School has changed my life in a way that I never would have imagined. Coming from a Christian, middle-class institution I had not experienced a lot of the diversity that America possesses.

For my education class I was able to do my service-learning at Iroquois Middle, a public school located in Grand Rapids. My first day was a total culture shock. First, I needed to sign in at the office. This was a new experience for me because security guards stood against the walls in the hallways, watching your every move. This was something that I had never seen before but eventually I became accustomed to the presence of security guards. I now realize that they are a necessity for keeping the students and staff safe during the school day.

I have worked with tons of students in my time at Iroquois and have heard many hard stories. One of the worst stories that I have heard was by an eighth grade boy. This particular boy started telling about his life and how he had been shot in the arm when he was younger and living in Compton. He explained the people who lived there as "angry" and then stated that Grand Rapids wasn't much better. This experience opened my eyes to the hardships that Grand Rapids citizens face everyday as well.

I believe that it is crucial to do service-learning for the education program not only for the sake of class experience, but also to be able to be a positive influence to the students.

SERVICE-LEARNING AND POLITICS?

AMY PATTERSON, PROFESSOR OF POLITICAL SCIENCE

I have used service-learning assignments in my introduction to American politics course for several years. There are many reasons I incorporate such assignments into my teaching. First, I believe such assignments get students, who often are very sheltered, to see how “real world” problems affect real people. For example, what are the implications of poor schools for children’s learning? What are the problems that refugees face when they resettle in the US?

Second, service-learning allows students to learn more about policies that seek to address societal problems. I always require students to complete research on what government is (or isn’t) doing

to address the social problem they have encountered through service learning. For example, if students are tutoring young people in poor schools, what are state or national policies to improve education?

Finally, I use service learning to challenge students to think about their roles as citizens in the political system. I believe that the encounters students have with people who are different from them and who face different problems can challenge students’ understanding of citizenship and the political community. These encounters can cause students to ask how Christians can use their

gifts to make the political realm more just and they can encourage students to formulate ideas about how to reform the American policy process.



THE IMPORTANCE OF GIVING BLOOD

TONI GOULD, MICHIGAN COMMUNITY BLOOD CENTERS

Hundreds of Calvin students are learning to make a habit of saving lives, and the Service-Learning Center supports them in a unique form of stewardship by hosting four multi-day blood drives each year.

The next drive is February 2-4, 11 a.m. – 6 p.m. each day, in the Library Lobby. Any healthy person 17 or older who weighs at least pounds may be eligible to give blood every 56

days – and the need for blood is never ending.

Every three seconds, someone needs blood. Each year, more than 4.5 million Americans would die without blood transfusions. Thousands of those are patients in Michigan hospitals – including all hospitals in Kent and Barry counties – that get 100 percent of their blood supply from Michigan Community Blood Centers, the nonprofit blood bank that conducts blood drives at Calvin.

“It’s impossible to overstate the importance of our college blood drives,” said Jamie Crockett, donor recruiter from Michigan Community Blood Centers. “Besides boosting the community blood supply, drives like Calvin’s help college students establish blood donation as a regular form of community service.

The need for blood is steadily increasing, which means we constantly need more people to give blood regularly.”

Each pint of donated blood can help 3-4 people. Calvin’s most recent blood drive, in September, collected 204 pints (including 66 from first-time donors). “Conservatively, that’s enough to provide lifesaving help for more than 600 people!” Ms. Crockett said.

Calvin held its first drive with Michigan Community Blood Centers in 1972 and has held 142 more drives since. Students, faculty, and staff are all welcome to donate. For more information on the coming drive, contact student blood drive coordinator Dorian Stith, 526-7117; or the Service-Learning Center, 526-8701. For more information on blood donation and the need for blood, visit www.miblood.org. It’s About Life.





WE ARE ON THE WEB!

www.calvin.edu/slc

Staff 2004-2005:

Director – Jeff Bouman, PhD.
 Associate Director- Lori Gesink
 Department Assistant- Christine Van Zanen

ABSL

Natural Sciences- Dietrich Bouma
 Education- Deborah Lim
 Spanish – Ryan Kruis
 Contextual/LLA– Ruth Dekker
 Social Sciences- Heidi Pfnister

SBSL

Federal Work Study – Nathan Tonlaar
 Big Brother-Big Sister Program/
 Blood Drive- Dorian Stith
 Community Partnership (CPC)-
 Rachel Meyer
 Communications- Rachel Jacobs
 StreetFest – Alaina Cronkright
 Spring Break – Linnea Butler
 Community Liaison- Grace Miguel
 Office Assistant-/Research–
 Janelle Vandergrift
 One-Time Opportunities/
 Research– Katie Timmermans

PUTTING THEORY INTO PRACTICE

RYAN KRUIS, S-LC SPANISH COORDINATOR

My adventurous road of Service-Learning began with a cafeteria full of noisy, rambunctious kids. A few hours before, I hopped in the car with my CPC and headed over to Burton Middle School, excited for the opportunity to get involved in my dorm partnership, Campfire USA after school program and even more excited that I would get credit in my Spanish class for doing so.

Little did I know as I walked into that cafeteria that a semester later I would be walking away with rich cultural experiences, many fun memories, and a new enthusiasm for Service-Learning.

At the end of that

semester, I learned that the S-LC had a job opening and I jumped at the opportunity to have a job in which I offered fellow students similar invaluable learning experiences. Thus, began my employment at the Service-Learning Center: visiting classrooms, entering student hours, contacting agencies, and so on. Because of my schedule, I could no longer work with the Campfire program, so I stopped

doing my own Service-Learning. This semester, however, I began service-learning at an elementary school for my education class. After a semester of not directly doing service learning and instead dealing with its theory, logistics, and history I realized I had forgotten why I had gotten involved with it and why it excited me. Through my work at Henry Paideia Elementary, I have already learned so much about

issues such as racial tension, social injustice, and education reform.

Getting out from behind my S-LC desk allows me to have a more complete Service-Learning experience. The theories and principles I have learned as a coordinator affect my attitude and actions as I service-learn, and my experiences inform and shape the theory and principles.

