Calvin College changed me. Grand Rapids changed me.

My years at Calvin were formative like they are for many, except that my most transformative experiences happened off campus, trying to figure out how to connect my life to what I was learning on campus. A majority of those experiences were linked to a growing movement around sense of place and the importance of caring about one’s natural, socio-political, and historical landscapes. As a student, I developed a deep-seated passion to connect Calvin to its place and to increase its active participation in the redevelopment of the City of Grand Rapids.

Since graduating, that passion has grown and deepened through my work in Grand Rapids’ non-profit sector. I have seen how colleges and universities play a critical role to support the success and sustainability of a city, and vice versa. The resources and vision colleges and universities bring to the table can significantly influence the way we work together to solve some of the growing challenges facing our communities and regions. Academically-Based Service Learning (ABSL) has been a great connector between my work at Neighborhood Ventures and the resources and expertise Calvin has to offer.

Over the past two years, I have been able to partner with faculty in the Economics and Social Work departments, using students to assist with needed research and community organizing where resources otherwise lacked. Now more than ever, these kinds of partnerships are essential. Through the Service-Learning Center and interested faculty, Neighborhood Ventures has been able to expand its reach and increase its capacity to provide economic development services to Grand Rapids’ neighborhoods.

The learning side of the partnership is the opportunity that faculty and students have to use the city as a text for classroom purposes and beyond. But there is a deeper learning investment that the community can make in students, faculty and the college through ABSL. We have the opportunity to help develop a broader understanding of individual and institutional responsibility to engage in their immediate context. With that new understanding, it is my hope that service-learning will help create the next group of leaders and inspired visionaries who want to be involved in revitalizing our city and our state.

In the same breath, it is my hope that ABSL, and the connections that it fosters, will help fuel a larger conversation of making a comprehensive investment in Grand Rapids an institutional priority. Calvin College, as a Christian institution of higher learning, needs to be a leading partner in the work going on in the city, embodying a prophetic call for justice and renewal of the city. Calvin also must learn to see how its own health and success are intricately tied to the health and success of the place where Calvin resides. If Calvin is to graduate people of change, it must model this change in its own institutional posture towards partnering with and investing in the city of its birth. The Service-Learning Center does an outstanding job initiating those important conversations.
This fall marked the beginning of our new and improved ACT Excel tutoring program! Thanks to a grant received in May from Michigan Campus Compact, the Service-Learning Center and the Office of Pre-College Programs was able to make some exciting changes to the already existing tutoring program. Previously, Calvin tutors were required to travel to nearby Ottawa Hills High School to complete their tutoring sessions with the high school students. Although this allowed the Calvin students to become acquainted with the high school environment, we decided that it is equally as important for the high school students to see what the college setting is like. The tutoring program now takes place at Calvin. Also, the program has expanded to reach students from all of the Grand Rapids Public high schools instead of only Ottawa Hills.

Despite some glitches along the way, the program has gotten off to a great start. It has been wonderful to see the high school students’ excitement of being on a college campus. This was especially evident when one young lady walked into the Spoelhof Café and exclaimed, “I can’t WAIT to be in college!” The Calvin tutors have also enjoyed the relationships that they have formed with the high school students. Some have even taken the high school students to dinner at the dining halls.

This semester’s program concluded with a celebratory dinner for all of the students and their families. We can’t wait to start again in the spring!

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### 2010 Service-Learning Spring Break Trips

This year students will be traveling to nine different locations around the country to serve and learn in a community. This year’s trips are:

- **Knoxville, TN** - [Florence Crittenton Agency](#) - Ministry to at-risk women
- **Houma, LA** - Disaster relief for survivors of hurricane Katrina
- **Grand Rapids, MI** - Learn about the experiences of immigrant families in Grand Rapids
- **Boston, MA** - [The Boston Project](#) - Ministry to urban youth in downtown Boston
- **Chicago, IL** - [Sunshine Gospel Ministries](#) - Urban ministry and learning the roots of poverty
- **Kermit, WV** - [Big Laurel Learning Center](#) - Working against and learning about Mountain Top Removal and its effects on the environment
- **Providence, RI** - [The Steel Yard](#) - An organization committed to urban art rejuvenation and community development through creative means
- **Three Rivers MI** - [Culture Is Not Optional](#) - Exploring service, the arts and intentional faith communities in small town America
- **TBA** - [Christian Reformed World Relief Committee](#) - Reconstructing and assisting in disaster relief following a continental US natural disaster (predominately hurricane relief)

Spring Break trips are a great way for students to delve into a community for one week. Look for more information in the Spring Newsletter.
Book Review: Shop Class as Soulcraft: An Inquiry into the Value of Work

By Jeff Bouman, Director of the Service-Learning Center

Bodies matter. Physical work is inseparable from mental reflection. Society forgets how to do stuff at its own peril. “Thinking is inherently bound up with doing.” Matthew Crawford, an oddly-blended philosopher/motorcycle mechanic and now author, defends these and other principles in Shop Class as Soulcraft. His book is a fascinating text to behold, even from a purely sociological point of view. Why would anyone in the trades want to read a book written by a philosopher about why manual work matters? Who from any self-respecting philosophy department would read a book written by a motorcycle mechanic about why manual labor has fallen from favor in contemporary society? Crawford (and undoubtedly Penguin Press) is counting on this juxtaposition to cast his argument into the public square. I think their gamble will pay off, and that readers will all be better off for it.

When my wife and kids gave me this book for Father’s Day last summer, I was intrigued. As I began to read, I immediately knew this was a book for my Dad to read as well. Together we represent Crawford’s two identities: the academic and the mechanic. This book could help us figure each other out! Turns out I was partly right. As you might suspect, I am manually challenged in every sense of the word. In 2002 my wife and I bought a house in an urban neighborhood that had been built in 1924. This 85-year old wonder is a beautiful specimen of a house, but it needs pretty regular care, most of which would be better given at a skilled level. I have no intuitive abilities to pull this off well. Enter my Dad. Recently retired from a forty-year career working with huge and complex mechanical presses at a General Motors stamping plant, he now spends three days a week working at our local hardware store, helping people figure out how to fix and maintain things, including 85-year old houses in our neighborhood. A perfect match.

Crawford explains why my Dad’s skills have been systematically devalued by society over the past two centuries. Using examples from his stock-in-trade of repairing and restoring antique European motorcycles, and drawing from his experiences as an academic, he reminds readers that the trades require a unique blend of intellect and skill, better known as craft. Our push in society in recent decades toward a near-universal expectation that young people with even the least hint of a professional inclination should expect to attend college has had the unintended consequence of forcing a false choice between head and hands. Crawford argues that for many, this has resulted in a set of career options that often precludes the manual trades, on the assumption that these do not require intellectual aptitude. Shop Class as Soulcraft stands as a testament to the contrary, and highlights themes related to human agency, and the importance of failure for true success. Shop Class as Soulcraft explores the idea of human community and work, and finally, sketches a picture of what the possibility of full human flourishing might look like through work, leisure, and full human engagement.

Giving to the Service-Learning Center through the Grand Rapids Community Foundation

Since 2003, the Service-Learning Center at Calvin College has been building an endowment of its own at the Grand Rapids Community Foundation. Begun with generous support from the State of Michigan, this fund enables donors who would like another way to support Calvin College while at the same time taking advantage of the Michigan 50% tax credit for gifts to community foundations (up to $400 for couples, $200 for individuals). This tax credit is in addition to the similar tax credit that accompanies gifts to institutions of higher education.

What does this mean for you and for the Service-Learning Center? After you make your regular gift to Calvin College, you can also make a gift to the Service-Learning Center through the Grand Rapids Community Foundation. In this way you qualify for two State of Michigan tax credits. All you need to do is identify the Calvin College Service-Learning Center on the memo line of your check to the Grand Rapids Community Foundation.

This fund now hovers around $40,000. It will begin to pay out usable interest when it reaches $50,000. These dollars will enable programs like StreetFest and Residence Hall Community Partnerships, as well as a wide variety of academically-based service-learning projects to grow and flourish.

If you are interested in giving to the S-LC please use the enclosed envelope or donate on-line at www.grfoundation.org, and help us reach our $50,000 goal.
He has shown you people what is good. And what does the LORD require of you? To act justly and to love mercy and to walk humbly with your God.

-Micah 6:8 (TNIV)

Editors Note: Every year incoming students begin their StreetFest experience with a chapel service. This year Karen VanDyke, StreetFest Coordinator greeted the class and challenged them to walk humbly. The following is an abridged version of her speech.

Today is meant to introduce you to the place of Grand Rapids. You will live here, learn here and worship here. You will contribute to the betterment of this place, but much more often you will take experiences and memories from it.

Some of you will ride the Rapid for the first time. You might overhear meaningful conversations, see friendly faces, and sit alongside hard-working, resourceful people. You might never take your car for granted again, knowing that thousands of people depend on the bus as their main form of transportation. You might find yourself in a neighborhood that you’ve only heard negative things about. You might be surprised to see kids jumping rope, neighbors talking, and people grilling. After today, you might never feel uncomfortable in those neighborhoods again. You might even want to go back!

None of these realizations are possible, though, without an attitude of humility, and without being humbled by the fact that your education, your background, even your connections to Calvin, make you no closer to God than anyone else.

The phrase “walk humbly” is from Micah 6:8. In the same verse, “do justice” and “love mercy” are also required, but I don’t think either of those is doable without walking humbly.

As an example of this I’d like to share a story about my family: my parents moved into the Creston neighborhood 28 years ago. They understood the importance of supporting the place in which you live, so as a sign of respect and commitment to the neighborhood, they sent their children to the schools closest to our house.

I attended Palmer Elementary, Riverside Middle, and Creston High School, each a Grand Rapids Public School. My parents thought that our stable family’s involvement in the schools would make a positive impact. They knew it was a just thing to do. It turns out that instead of us going in and changing the schools, we discovered strong schools full of committed people. The cultural and social learning I received there shaped me, and continues to influence how I view this world, what paths I take, and how I interact with others. That’s what being humble does—it changes the way you think, the way you interact with the place in which you live. It influences the way you serve.

I encourage you to consider this story in whatever situations you might find yourselves today. Empty yourselves of opinions and stereotypes and instead be ready to learn and receive just as much as you give. Walk humbly. Let yourselves be changed.
“I love that this day of service-learning is incorporated into the student’s lives from the first weekend they are in college. Though the other aspects of Quest at Calvin are equally important, StreetFest is a unique experience. Nothing bonds a group of people better than working together. It provides a means to understanding the city of Grand Rapids where they can hopefully feel at home. Students love being out in the community and physically working towards a common goal. Whether playing with kids, painting a house, or pulling weeds, students work side by side to better our community.”

-Kate Hill, Orientation Leader

“StreetFest and Bikes, A Great Combination

By Don DeGraaf, Streetfest Mentor

This year marks the fifth year that the Urban Bike Tour has been a part of Calvin’s StreetFest. The Bike Tour takes students on a twenty-five mile ride throughout Grand Rapids and surrounding communities. The purpose of the ride is to acquaint students with the City of Grand Rapids and the myriad of service-learning options that exist in the city.

Ultimately Calvin wants students to feel comfortable and connect with the Grand Rapids community as well as recognize the assets and challenges that make up our city. As John Muir, the great American naturalist, once stated: “when we try to pick out anything by itself, we find it hitched to everything else in the universe,” and so it is with many of the social and community development issues in the United States. The bike tour gives students a context to recognize these connections and work to find ways to become personally involved in the life of the city.

In this way the bike tour connects well with StreetFest’s long tradition of encouraging students to embrace the city, recognizing the connections that exist and finding ways to become personally involved in the life of the city. The bike tour provides yet another option for students to see these connections first hand.

“I was impressed how easy it was to find good things in each community we rode through. I plan to apply this to my life in that next time somebody tells me that a certain community is a bad section of town or is trashy, I want to take the time to visit the actual place before casting my own judgment. It is far too easy to believe what people tell us just based on stereotypes. I have learned that there is beauty everywhere in all sorts of different forms and I plan to be more skeptical next time someone tells me something bad about a community I’ve never been to.”

-Bike tour participant

“I really enjoyed biking through areas I have not been, even though I have lived here 11 years. It was good to get more background about the areas and see what changes communities are making to draw people back in. I really like how old buildings and houses are not being torn down as much, but rather remodeled keeping the architectural features that are so unique. I want to remember how important community is and how there are clear ways to encourage it”

-Bike Tour Participant
Two Employees—One Job

By Matt Dekker, edited by Savannah Gruesbeck

For Noah and Megan Kruis married life includes working together—at the same job. On June 1, the Kruises began sharing the job of Associate Director of the Service-Learning Center. "Job-sharing is an opportunity in this stage of life to live a more balanced lifestyle," said Noah, "where we are both involved in the raising of our children and we are both able to contribute to the community through our work."

"We really see this job as being the perfect meld of our professional experiences," said Megan. "We didn’t go looking for a job share. It was just this job opened, and the needs of the position seemed perfectly fit for us.” Noah previously worked in Admissions and Financial Aid at Calvin, and Megan worked in community development in Grand Rapids. The couple worked with Creston Christian Reformed Church to start the Nizhoni house (meaning beautiful in Navajo), a Project Neighborhood house in the Creston neighborhood. The position works well with their personal experience, professional skills and their interests.

Noah is happy to be at home more with their two kids, Jonah and Eden, and Megan enjoys the challenges of working outside the house.

Currently, Noah comes into work Monday, Wednesday, and Thursday for a total of 24 hours a week, and Megan comes in Tuesdays and Thursdays and Friday, logging 16 hours weekly. As Associate Directors in the S-LC, the Kruises supervise several of the centers’ student workers. They mentor the special events coordinator, community partnership coordinator and students who work on communication and technology. The Kruises are among several couples sharing one position at Calvin. The couple has learned quickly that sharing this job requires them to communicate well.

"Megan and Noah bring a rich set of complementary skills and experiences to the table," wrote Bouman in an email. "Megan and Noah's obvious commitment to life beyond Calvin - to church, to neighborhood, to family - these are commitments that will enhance their work at Calvin and better enable all of us to fulfill the larger Calvin community's vision for transformation in all of these areas.”

In addition to career aspirations, the Kruis family is happy be at Calvin while investing in their community. "Sharing this position gives us the flexibility to be able to take on projects, other things that are interesting to us,” said Megan. Noah is an elder at their church and Megan is interested in starting a farmers’ market in their neighborhood.

"I would love to see job-sharing be an option for people so that they can live a more balanced life," said Noah. “I think that America’s 40 hours a week or more is not the most balanced way. I think a lot of things that I learned at Calvin about pursing shalom, and being in right relationship with all of your life—I think this is one way of coming closer to that.”

For more information, visit: http://www.calvin.edu/news/2009-2010/jobshare/

Giving Blood—Saving Lives

Our September and December Blood Drives sponsored by the Michigan community Blood Centers were very successful! The Drive moved from its previous location in the chapel undercroft to the new Spoelhoef Fieldhouse. The results were outstanding, 571 donors, 308 pints of blood and 140 first time donors.

Thanks to all those who contributed!
An important person passed away in September. Eunice Kennedy Shriver, the sister of former President Kennedy, was the founder of Special Olympics. She began the event in Chicago in 1968 because she believed that those with cognitive disabilities should have opportunities to participate in athletic events and be granted dignity and acceptance in the process. Since then Special Olympics has grown into an international organization. It facilitates various events for athletes with cognitive impairments.

This past spring I had the pleasure of being the Service-Learning Center representative helping organize the Special Olympics Spring Games hosted at Calvin College. The Special Olympics Spring Games have been taking place at Calvin College many years, except for Spring of 2008 because of the construction on the Spoelhoef Fieldhouse. This past spring was the first time that the Spring Games took place in our new facility.

The Spring Games brings together about 400 athletes with cognitive disabilities as well as about 400 volunteers. Of that number, 200 volunteers are Calvin College students who serve as chaperones for the athletes. The students are paired with one or two athletes and are responsible to ensure that the athletes are in the right place at the right time to compete in their events. Events that the athletes participate in include bocce ball, ball throw, long jump, sprinting and walking races, gymnastics and various aquatic activities.

Every year the day begins for us at the Service-Learning Center at 7:00 a.m. as we prepare to register all of the chaperones. The chaperones sign in and then try to find their athletes. This tends to be the most chaotic part of the day. After the athletes and chaperones are paired up there is a large opening ceremony including a band, singing of the national anthem and comments from representatives of Special Olympics and Calvin College. After this the athletic events begin and last all morning.

Other people involved in the Spring Games include staff members from the Special Olympics organization, East Kentwood high school, a Calvin College Social Work class, and about 150 volunteers from the Amway Foundation. The Spring Games committee included members from all the above groups and began meeting together in February to plan the event.

I had been warned that recruiting chaperones for the Spring Games can be difficult because it requires committing a whole Saturday morning at the end of the semester. However, I was incredibly touched by the overwhelming response of Calvin students who were enthused to be involved in the Spring Games. In fact one Calvin College student even said that May 2nd, the day of the events, was her birthday and she couldn’t imagine a better way to spend it.

The way that I felt at the end of the day was amazing; to see all of our hard work pay off through the smiles and in the laughter of athletes and volunteers. It was so wonderful that I am already looking forward to this coming spring’s Special Olympics Games.

By Kelly De Vries, One Time Opportunities Coordinator
Fall 2009 S-LC Staff

Front Row: (from left to right): Noah Kruis (Associate Director), Jeff Bouman (Director), Becca Timmermans (CPC Coordinator), Rebecca Garofano (ABSL Natural Sciences), Scott Hofman (ABSL Natural Sciences), Savannah Gruesbeck (Communications Coordinator), Tina Bolt (Transportation/Data Entry)

Middle Row: Elise Ditta (Research), Tu Danh (Technology), Rachel Young (ABSL Education)

Back Row: Karen Van Dyke (Pre-College Programs Liaison), Megan Kruis (Associate Director), Kelly DeVries (Special Projects), Danielle VanderEnde (Spring Break Trips), Angela Svaan (ABSL Languages), Christina Crider (ABSL Social Sciences), Chris Van Zanen (Department Assistant)

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