Service Learning has been incorporated into courses at Lewis University for over ten years. To support this ongoing pedagogical activity, the Office of Service Learning (OSL) launched in January 2010. As it opened, numerous supportive structures and organizational activities were prescribed. In short order, the Service Learning Team (SLT), advisory group to the OSL, was gathered and the work of developing, growing, marketing, and assessing service learning really took off.

Some of the original members of SLT remain committed to the work of the OSL to this day. The original members still serving are: Dr. Julie Krahl, Chris Swanson, Bob Bergman (COB), and Jennifer Buss (COE). They have been consistent partners in this venture. Dr. Stacie Elder of CONHP served for over three years and produced some research processes that helped our office to enhance our data collection and analysis. We are grateful! This semester, Nanci Peek took Stacie's place on the Team. Dr. Gail Gehrig, along with Dr. Bonnie Bondavalli, was influential in the formation of the OSL and Gail served on SLT until her retirement in 2013. Dr. Tennille Allen sustains a Sociology presence in Gail's stead. Dr. Anne Rapp of SPCE brought extensive experience and expertise that graced SLT for three years. The beginnings of OSL were made far smoother and better by her advice and advocacy. Dr. Clare Lawlor (CAS) offered service to SLT for some time before Dr. Randy Venzke came on board to represent the CAS dean’s office. Wonderful new additions include Dr. Bill Chura and Mary Woods (both CAS).

What are all of these amazing people doing on SLT, you may ask. The OSL keeps them informed of activities, community partner networking, events, faculty development efforts, work on grants and awards, and marketing endeavors. They have been a source of wisdom and experience as definitions, forms, and processes have been developed to support growth and increase effectiveness of service learning across the university. By having representation from all four colleges, we are consistently reminded of the unique needs, structures, limitations and opportunities each set of disciplines brings to the service learning conversation. With the presence of Chris Swanson, Director of Study Abroad, we keep the possibility of International Service Learning in the mix as service learning continues to grow and deepen.

There are many ways that the Service Learning Team serves not only the OSL but also the entire university by living out the value of Association while also promoting greater Justice in our communities, and deepened Knowledge and Wisdom among our students. We are grateful for their steadfast dedication and ongoing service.
Exploring Neuroscience and Neurodegenerative Diseases Among Sunny Hill Residents

In 2005, the Association of American Colleges and Universities (AAC&U) launched an initiative called Liberal Education and America’s Promise (LEAP) that champions the importance of a twenty-first century liberal arts education. Inspired by this initiative, a new upper-level Biology course, Neuroscience and Neurodegenerative Disease (02-497-02), was created. This course presents high impact teaching and learning practices proven to be most beneficial to increase retention and engagement for students of all backgrounds. With the incorporation of the high impact practice service learning, it offers the opportunity to apply what is learned in the classroom to real-world settings and then reflect upon those experiences. This course represents the strategic plan of Lewis University, specifically community engagement, as a means to increase student success through intellectual engagement and increased social responsibility.

In the last 4 decades, life expectancy in the U.S. has risen nearly ten years (World Bank Group). Though the onset of neurodegenerative disease can occur at various points in life, there are direct correlations between aging and brain pathology. This course sought to expose students to both normal and abnormal brain anatomy and function in the classroom, as well as observing neurodegenerative disease in the community. The service learning component includes a partnership with Sunny Hill Nursing Home in Joliet, IL. Sunny Hill is a 238-bed, skilled-care facility, owned and operated by Will County. Currently, there are approximately 200 residents at Sunny Hill and nearly 70% of them have some form of dementia. Eleven Lewis University Biology students, all with aspirations to work in the healthcare field to some degree, learn neuroscience in the classroom and provide over twenty hours of service to Sunny Hill throughout the semester. Though early in its inception, the partnership has flourished. The students are amazed at their observations of these residents and the residents have responded wonderfully to the students’ presence. The service provided by the students includes companionship as well as an eventual assessment for what activities are most beneficial for the residents. The students reflect on their experiences and are seeing firsthand the drastic behavior and physical changes that accompany diagnoses like Alzheimer’s Disease, multiple sclerosis, and traumatic brain injury. The outcomes of this unique experiential opportunity include not only learning the material, but also reflecting on their interactions and individual roles in determining how this population of people can benefit from their presence. The ultimate goal is for students to give back to Sunny Hill in turn providing a good opportunity for increased citizenship, work ethic, and civic responsibility for those students.

-Dr. William Chura, Assistant Professor in the Biology Department (CAS)
Addressing the Marketing Needs of Easter Seals

During the fall semester of 2013, four students from Professor Robert Bergman’s Current Topics in Marketing class embarked on a service learning project for Easter Seals of Joliet.

Easter Seals is a nonprofit charitable organization that assists more than one million children and adults with autism and other disabilities annually through a network of more than 550 service sites in the United States, Canada, Australia and Puerto Rico.

Older generations of Americans grew up knowing the non-profit mission of the organization known as Easter Seals, just as readily as today’s generation knows the non-profit mission of Relay-For-Life. It has lost its identity and its “cool factor” among members of the Millennial generation. Easter Seals of Joliet requested that Mr. Bergman’s students study the problem and advise on a solution to raise awareness of Easter Seals to young adults ages 18-35.

These students—Holli Kirsch, Jazmin Huerta, Roberto Cuevas, and Carolina Pacheco—set out to study what young adults, ages 18-35, knew about Easter Seals. Based on over 250 surveys, they found that the vast majority knew nothing about this once well-known charitable organization. Many respondents thought the organization had something to do with marine life or a charity that distributes meals for Easter dinner. Respondents were also asked to plot their impressions of Easter Seals on a 2-dimensional grid measuring 1) the level of “coolness” of the non-profit, and 2) the level of knowledge of what the organization does. Easter Seals was compared to the top 25 non-profit charitable organizations in the United States and respondents scored only the United Way as lower than Easter Seals. Ronald McDonald House scored highest on the cool and well-known scale. Obviously Easter Seals had an identity problem with the audience of 18-35 year olds.

Based on the results of the data-gathering exercises, Easter Seals of Joliet asked for a solution to this identity problem. After significant research, study and comparison of marketing data on the top non-profit charitable organizations, Holli, Jazmin, Roberto, and Carolina recommended the creation of a Young Professional Advisory Board detailing membership and recruitment criteria and strategies based on marketing, consumer behavior, public relations and social science data, and best practices.

Deb Condotti, President and CEO of Easter Seals of Joliet, was so impressed with the results of this service learning project that she requested the four member team present their findings and recommendations to the Easter Seals of Joliet Board of Directors in January. As a result of the presentation, Board members recommended that the Lewis University service learning project findings be sent to their national headquarters for possible consideration as a complementary program to their National Associate Board. Mr. Bergman states that “these students will most likely see their recommendations implemented on a national scale – and that’s a pretty big resume builder.”

-Bob Bergman, Instructor of Marketing (COB)

Mr. Bergman’s students pose with Deb Condotti, President and CEO of Easter Seals Joliet Region (second from left) and Board members. Lewis students from far right – Roberto Cuevas, Jazmin Huerta, and Holli Kirsch.
I did my service learning project at Daybreak Homeless Shelter in Joliet, IL. The first night I volunteered, I helped serve dinner and led game nights for children. The people here loved game nights, especially bingo. I went to the dollar store and bought prizes for them, small items like toothbrushes, toothpaste, gloves, and hats. They were excited when they won and got to pick a prize. I also brought coloring books, crayons, markers, bubbles, board games, and books for the little ones. As a future educator, it was very interesting to read to these children and interact with them.

I feel like this experience strengthened my ability to be a better multicultural educator. Serving at an organization like Daybreak is something I have never experienced before. It gave me a completely different insight than sitting in my classes and talking about my potential prejudices, biases, and knowledge of other cultures. This showed me the importance of understanding where my students come from. Being knowledgeable about students’ backgrounds is essential to educators, because without it, we may think a student just doesn’t understand or isn’t smart; when in reality they have never been exposed to the information we are presenting. When I think about this and what I learned, I feel this reinforced my ability to be a more Knowledgeable Critical Transformative Educator, by assessing student learning, reflecting on professional experiences, and creating positive environments for that facilitate ideal student learning.

In addition, this experience has helped me to understand more about how I can be the best Social Justice Advocate for my students. If I can take this experience into my work as an educator, I can open up the eyes of other educators to really consider students’ lives outside of school. I think, as a teacher, sometimes we get caught up in student behaviors and attitudes, but we need to continuously try and understand where these attitudes and behaviors are coming from. Serving food to the people at Daybreak, entertaining them for a few hours, and providing them with prizes really helped me understand more about communities as a whole, because this is one part of a community I have never seen. When reading and interacting with the young ones, I tried to keep them positive and hopeful for the future and instill the importance of education to them. I can only hope that my advice will bring about change for some of them. It does make me believe that if I and other educators, or anyone in the community, consistently serve with institutions like this, we really can make a difference in the community.

This experience was very moving and taught me a lot as a future educator. It is essential to see the life some people live. Serving at places like this really helped me put my own life in perspective. It made me realize how lucky I am to have so much and how to better recognize how precious life is. Like I have mentioned, understanding where our students come from and where they go home to each night can really impact the way we teach and the way they learn. As an educator, I will think about these things when planning lessons so that my students are all beginning with the same schema, because we don’t know what students already know and don’t know. It’s also very important to establish trust with students. When they feel like you really understand them and get what they are going through, they are more likely to open up and want to learn more and engage in lessons.

-Caitlin Finnegan, student (COE)
Nursing Students Participate in Community Education

Lewis University’s College of Nursing and Health Professions strives to embody the Lasallian core mission values of Knowledge, Justice, Association, Fidelity, and Wisdom. Knowledge and Justice are implemented in the nursing curriculum through various methods that include clinical components with a service learning element. As part of the Promoting Healthy Communities course, Senior II nursing students are expected to take an active leadership role by participating in programs and activities that address health promotion in diverse communities. In an effort to provide this opportunity for the students, service learning is incorporated into the course through several community education projects. Several of my nursing courses every semester incorporate the rich idea of outreach to vulnerable populations. Service learning, through the nursing curriculum, gives us the opportunity to apply direct knowledge and share it while promoting health and improving awareness in communities.

On March 21st, 2014, Senior II nursing students offered several Tar Wars presentations to 4th and 5th grade students at Troy Heritage Trail Elementary in Joliet. After the Will County Health Department could no longer fund the Tar Wars program to 4th and 5th graders, Lewis’s CONHP took on the responsibility, and continued to provide the important program. Tar Wars is an initiative developed by the American Academy of Family Physicians that brings health promotion, disease prevention, and education to students regarding tobacco use and its negative effects. Tar Wars focuses on the short and long-term health effects of tobacco, discusses the images associated with smoking, its high expense, and the methods that are used by tobacco companies to attract different populations. The presentation includes several interactive activities and tools that are used to impact the youth, such as “Mr. Yucky Mouth” and a set of pig lungs that show the physical and mechanical changes that occur to lungs after tobacco usage. In the U.S., tobacco use is the number one cause of preventable disease, disability, and death. There is a great need for education and prevention of tobacco use in the youth due to the early and high exposure of tobacco use in communities. Providing this type of education to students is essential because by bringing this knowledge to the students, they will be better aware and educated to make good decisions about their health. This semester, additional presentations are planned for Bolingbrook schools: St. Dominic, Independence, and Jonas Salk.

Aside from providing education to a vulnerable population, as nursing students the Tar Wars program also gives us the opportunity to reflect. After participation in Tar Wars, we are expected to reflect on the experience through a journal and a client-focused paper. The client-focused paper allows the opportunity to assess, analyze, and reflect on the intervention of education provided, as well as the outcomes that were realized through education of the student population. Reflection of the service learning project gives us the opportunity to consider the impact that we can have on individuals, families, communities, and on our own lives as students and future nurses.

-Ivette Manzo, student (CONHP)
Getting to Know the New CEC Member: Multicultural Student Services (MSS)

Reflecting the Lewis Mission Multicultural Student Services believe that every individual at Lewis University plays an invaluable role in the educational evolution of the multicultural experience. In the Office of Multicultural Student Services, our mission is to empower students through campus education on issues of race, ethnicity, sexual orientation, gender identity and expression, socioeconomic status, and religion. Our mission is aligned with the Lewis University Mission Values, specifically in the philosophies of our practice of Advocacy, Leadership, Academic & Social Enrichment and Community Engagement.

Currently, we are preparing to carry out the first MSS Student Action Series where students will be offered two opportunities to learn about community engagement and two opportunities to put their knowledge into practice. The MSS Student Action Series will be launched with the event What to do at Lewis U?: An Invitation to Community Engagement; in which, students will come together to learn about prominent figures of the Civil Rights Movement and how their positive contributions directly contribute to each person’s mission of social justice. Furthermore, the students will discuss practical ideas for supporting one another’s activities and progress at Lewis University. The second event of the series will take place at a nearby theater as students come together to enjoy the opening night for Cesar Chavez: History is Made One Step at a Time. This film is a biography of the late civil rights activist and his story of advocacy for minority communities. These two events will take place the last week of March and serve as the learning piece of the series.

In part two of the MSS Student Action Series, students will put their knowledge of community engagement into practice. Gratitude in Action will serve as a platform for students to collaborate and demonstrate their appreciation for an individual or a group of people within the Lewis University Community. Creatively, they will develop their plan to give back to someone they believe has positively impacted their experience at Lewis University through service and association. In the second event, Community Engagement, the students will spend time meeting with members of different community outreach programs in Chicago, Illinois. In addition, they will have an opportunity to actively serve throughout their full day experience with urban community advocates.

If you would like to learn more about the MSS Student Action Series and the Office of Multicultural Student Services, feel free to email me at rochama@lewisu.edu or visit our Facebook page at Multicultural Student Services at Lewis University.

-Mariza Rocha
(Coordinator of the Office of Multicultural Student Services)
Community Partner Spotlight

Every year the Office of Service Learning host community partners who have been part of service learning (SL) courses for many semesters at a service learning luncheon. This gathering functions as a way to show our appreciation for our dedicated community partners and produces a forum to discuss OSL improvements, dissect the possible complications of a SL course from a community partner perspective, and generate new SL course or program connections. In addition, this luncheon provides a unique opportunity for varied organizations to gather together and network with one another. We value the relationships we have with our community partners and understand that without their motivation and passion, service learning would not be as meaningful. This luncheon is our way to show them that OSL appreciates everything they do!

Through the event, we met a new community partner: Heart Haven Outreach (H2O). H2O serves high school teens in the greater Bolingbrook area who are experiencing challenging times. As a faith-based organization, they reach out to the hearts of youth and facilitate life transformation. Their programs build caring and supportive relationships, while offering teaching that equips and empowers individuals. Service learning courses in Sociology and Theology have successfully partnered with H2O this semester creating strong relationships with the youth who attend their programs.

April Ballinger is the Director of Volunteer & Internship Development at H2O. She actively seeks out new partnerships and ways to get students and adults into their mentoring programs. For more information on ways to get involved at H2O, please contact April Ballinger at aballinger@hearthavenoutreack.org or 630-226-8494 or feel free to contact the OSL.

Pictured here are two Lewis Students, Kristine Kozak (left), and Kathy Marek (Right) after helping with H2O's tutoring program, "Snack, Track, & Tutor".
May Institute Workshop: Promoting Transformation through Service Learning Pedagogy

Interested in developing your service learning course(s)?

Join us on Wednesday, May 21st

Rooted in AAC&U High Impact Practices and the Lewis University Strategic Plan for Vision 2017, participants will engage questions and concepts around making service learning courses truly transformative for students who take them. Attendees will review those High-Impact Practices that pertain specifically to variations of service learning and explore the ones that best fit particular courses, disciplines, and teaching styles represented among attendees. Learning assessment tools, reflection techniques and processes, as well as the role of growing leadership and teamwork skills will be discussed. Best practices for measuring learning, engagement and transformation in service learners will be presented, and workshop attendees will work collaboratively to develop additional creative responses and ideas that can be applied to specific service learning courses. These discussions will align the program, course and service learning outcomes.

During lunch, Sabrina Poulin and Sean Fagan of the Community Engagement Cooperative (CEC) will share the work we are doing to collaborate on high-impact practices of curricular and co-curricular community engagement. This discussion will further clarify terms related to volunteering and service while considering transformative potential of a breadth of service experiences and varied applications of high-impact practices which lead to deeper academic and personal investment by students in the learning process.

**Service Learning Team Members**
- Dr. Tennille Allen (CAS)
- Robert Bergman (COB)
- Dr. Christie Billups (OSL)
- Jennifer Buss (COE)
- Dr. Bill Chura (CAS)
- Dr. Julie Krahl (Provost’s Office)
- Nanci Peek (CONHP)
- Emilee Studley (OSL)
- Chris Swanson (Study Abroad)
- Dr. Randy Venzke (Dean’s Office, CAS)
- Mary Woods (CAS)

**Community Engagement Cooperative**
- Sophia Barakat (SD&L)
- Dr. Christie Billups (OSL)
- Sean Fagan (SD&L)
- Kristi Kelly (Career Services)
- Sabrina Poulin (UM)
- Mariza Rocha (OMSS)
- Emilee Studley (OSL)

Dr. Christie Billups
Coordinator of Service Learning
Phone: 815-836-5829
Fax: 815-838-4614
E-mail: billupch@lewisu.edu

Emilee Studley
ILCC AmeriCorps*VISTA
Assistant to the Office of Service Learning
Phone: 815-836-5023
Fax: 815-838-4614
E-mail: studleem@lewisu.edu

The Office of Service Learning is located within LARC
Benilde Hall BE- 181
1 University Parkway, Unit 270
Romeoville IL, 60446-2200

www.lewisu.edu/servicelearning
www.facebook.com/lewisuservicelearning