Office of Service Learning Celebrates 5 Years!

The Office of Service Learning (OSL) opened its doors in January 2010 with a half-time coordinator (Dr. Christie Billups) and a shared office. Since that time, we have had three wonderful AmeriCorps VISTA volunteers (Rachel Burke, Beka Flanagan and Emilee Studley), and now have an exceptional Graduate Assistant, alumna Sarah Palya. We have doubled the number of community partners working with faculty and students, quadrupled active service learning faculty, and through them, enhanced and deepened the learning of hundreds of students across all of the colleges in various disciplines through the application of their learning in service to the community.

As we celebrate our growth and successes, we express our gratitude to a supportive administration, dedicated colleagues, amazing community partners and big-hearted students. As we continue to expand the Service Fair, officially designate service learning courses, offer new opportunities for students, community partners, and faculty to “Get Connected” (see p. 6), and deepen the collaboration of the Community Engagement Cooperative, we see continued growth for the OSL while also enlarging the capacity of all concerned to engage in transformative teaching, learning and serving. Thank you to everyone who has accompanied and encouraged us along the way.

**Important Reminder:** Anyone planning to teach a service learning course in fall 2015 must submit her/his syllabus for review to the Office of Service Learning no later than Friday, November 7, 2014.

Submission Forms with service learning course designation criteria are available on our webpage at [www.lewisu.edu/servicelearning/resources.htm](http://www.lewisu.edu/servicelearning/resources.htm) or by contacting the Office of Service Learning. (See contact info on p. 8).
Court Watch was, without a doubt, been one of the most meaningful experiences I have had at Lewis University. I was already interested in the topic of immigration; however, being a part of Court Watch, seeing with my own eyes what happens with detainees, refugees and immigrants from all over the world, made me think of how crucial immigration reform is to our society.

It all started as a project for Applied Sociology under the direction of Dr. Allen and Dr. Billups. As part of our service learning, all students in the class were required to partner with a service learning site; this involved 20 hours of service learning on-site at an organization of our choosing, and there were plenty of choices. At first, I thought that 20 hours were going to be very difficult to complete, however, by the end of my experience, I would have done 50; the hours went by so fast.

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Because immigration already had been part of my personal life and my main focus as an undergrad, I chose to participate in Court Watch. As the description on the service learning packet stated, Court Watch would allow me to observe immigrants as they go through the legal process. We were invited to witness the inefficiency of immigration laws. The ultimate goal of the program is to highlight these deficiencies and create awareness in our communities of the terrible injustices many immigrants face.

Contacting the person in charge of Court Watch was not easy. It took numerous calls, emails and the assistance of the professor to have the hours arranged. Although, after I was put in contact with Mary Naftzger, the Volunteer Coordinator of the Court Watch Program, the service learning experience went smoothly. I arranged my hours to fit my schedule during spring break. I was honest with Mary; I had never gone to Court and I knew it would be difficult for me to understand what was going on. Mary provided me with several pages of vocabulary and terms so I could familiarize myself with the legal language at court. After studying for a few days, I felt much more comfortable and at ease with the process.

The date had arrived: I was expected to be at Immigration Court located at West Loop at 525 W.Van Buren Street at 9 a.m. I met with another student and a priest in the lobby of the building and relocated ourselves to the 5th floor. Just like in every court, we had to go through a checkpoint, remove our coats and pass our belongings through a x-ray machine. The first few cases I witnessed were for detainees, which were by far the most crucial and shocking moments of my experience. I found myself sitting on a bench looking at a judge, a prosecutor, a secretary, and a TV! I could not believe it: all detainees were being prosecuted by teleconferencing. All I could think of was how inhumane and unjust the entire process was. I also witnessed immigrants deported to their country of origin, asylum seekers and immigrants who were allowed to stay with their families.

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The entire experience was intense and caused a tremendous impact on my life. After witnessing what happens at Court Watch, I decided to become an Immigration Lawyer. There are a lot of immigrants who have been treated unjustly. They are fighting to stay with their families and continue to adjust and live in our society. While laws are necessary to any functional society, they are also essential to the humanity and dignity of each person. In the future, I hope to bring greater justice, compassion and awareness to immigration courts.

- Norma Cecilia Arias-Kahoun
Current Topics in Marketing is a course that examines marketing strategies, tactics and trends incorporating critical thinking and analysis of various marketing topics. Instructor Pat Sidler has incorporated service learning as a significant aspect of the course to provide real-world application. Students in the fall 2014 class explain the benefits of service learning:

Lauren Stitz and Stephanie Aguas will be completing a project for MorningStar Mission whose programs are designed to show the love of Jesus Christ to homeless families by providing shelter, food, clothing, case management, classes and support groups. Their safe environment restores dignity and healing. Lauren explains her hope to serve this agency, stating, “We will be making an informational board to promote MorningStar Mission’s programs for those in need and those who may need future help. We are very eager to help MorningStar Mission.” Stephanie adds, “Many people are unaware of all the programs they offer. Our marketing project will hopefully result in an increase of volunteers, donors and individuals who can utilize their services.”

Devan Szopinski and Eric Butch hope to serve the Harvey Brooks Foundation. HBF partners with other social service agencies to provide programs in character building, life skill development, scholastic/educational achievement, and economic opportunity to a diverse community. Devan explains, “Eric and I plan to create new brochures and flyers for the foundation, as well as assist them with social media and possibly their website.” These students have great creativity and knowledge to share. Eric noted that they will “work with Executive director Tempie Bates,” and “look forward to using our creative marketing skills to help them achieve their goals.”

Life Directions’ director Van Bensett was grateful to hear of Lewis’ service learning plans for marketing students. He had multiple projects for the students to consider, including recording videos and managing a social media campaign. Bryce Stratton and Bryan Commissio were impressed. Bryan appreciates their focus on “developing youth, ages 13-35, who live in violent communities in the cities of Detroit and Chicago.” Bryce continues by explaining the peer-to-peer mentoring: “They focus on ‘helping student achievers to motivate, mentor and lead their peers to take charge of their Life Direction.’” Bryan is focusing on writing a script for a video that would help attract and recruit Auxiliary Board Members for Life Directions. Bryce will manage email blasts for the Life Directions blog.

Kayla Garcia and Matt Bacinich have plans to work with Will-Grundy Medical Clinic in their desire to educate the community about services provided.

Pat Sidler is pleased with the process and results and is especially hopeful for the learning potential beyond the classroom. Stephanie Aguas sums it up well: “Service learning projects allow students to engage in their community, donating their time and expertise. This not only benefits the community but it also benefits the students themselves. We are able to meet new people and deepen our knowledge. Assignments like these motivate students to continuously get involved in the community past graduation.”
I started working with Tony Ndoca and Lexi Miller in the spring of 2014 when Jennifer Buss introduced my Foundations of Teaching and Learning course to them. Lexi and Tony had come to talk to our class about writing lesson plans for teachers that bring the students to their farm for field trips. They wanted the students to have some background knowledge before they came to the farm. Topics included: bees, seasonal eating, chickens and nutrition. Tony had us align these lessons to the Common Core Standards, which allowed teachers to incorporate these lessons into their curriculum.

I have always been interested in the freshest ingredients and healthy eating, so when Tony asked if anyone was interested in coming to the farm to do field trips, I emailed him in August (2014) and set up a few dates to come and volunteer. At the farm, we talked about composting and how to compost. We walked up to the fields and talked about how plants grow, what is available during certain seasons, how to pick fruits and vegetables, and why bees are important. We even allowed students to pick some fruit and vegetables. I love volunteering at Garden Patch. It is so fun to watch students learn all about their food and learn where it comes from. I am so grateful to Jennifer Buss for bringing Tony and Lexi to our class, and to Tony and Lexi for allowing me to come to the farm and work with students.

-Aileen Henneberry

Lewis University education students helped our farm by collaborating to build a common core based curriculum for our students. In separate groups. The students worked with myself (Farm Owner, Tony Ndoca) and our field trip coordinator and guide (Laura Christensen) to build lesson plans on each of the four topics we think are important to the students when they visit our farm. As a result, the lessons, aligned with common core standards, will be posted to our website to make it simple for teachers to prepare for their day at the farm as well as add more educational value to every field trip.

-Tony Ndoca
Nursing Students Participate in Pediatric Health Promotion Experiences

A partnership between the College of Nursing and Health Professions and the Catholic Charities Diocese of Joliet, Early Childhood Division was initiated in 2001. This federally funded Head Start program serves infants, toddlers, preschoolers and their families. Experiences at the agency enhance the pediatric focus of the health promotion clinical for our nursing students. Understanding the importance of the continuum of care for vulnerable children with chronic illnesses and the promotion of health for all children are central clinical goals.

Each semester, our students develop and conduct child health education projects that are developmentally and educationally appropriate. They participate in child health and developmental screenings. In addition, they teach families about promoting the health of their child. The informative sessions vary and often include topics such as common childhood illnesses, when to seek medical attention, safety concerns and newborn care. These presentations provide students with opportunities to work with vulnerable families who typically have limited access to health care resources. Through these community engagement activities, they gain first-hand knowledge of health disparities among the low-income children and families.

"Through these community engagement activities, [the students] gain first-hand knowledge of health disparities among the low-income children and families."

This ongoing relationship is due in part because faculty serve as consultants to the agency. One example of collaboration is a former initiative that developed from a needs assessment of Head Start families and caregivers funded by the Doherty Center. The “Health Outreach: Improving Outcomes for Children with Asthma and Allergies” presentations were conducted by nursing faculty, Anne McShane and Sheila Berkemeyer. Additionally, these faculty presented “Health Risk Assessment, Management and Health Promotion for Head Start Children” at the annual Health Institute conference. Recently, students Janelle Gaines, Bryan Hernandez, Meg Konzelman, Lisa Miles and Colleen Mitros had the opportunity to present with Anne McShane. Head Start staff and administrators were appreciative of the interactive activities. They were impressed with the knowledge and level of professionalism demonstrated by the students.

As students reflect on the service learning experiences, they identify the connection to the Lewis University mission values of wisdom, justice and association. They are able to distinguish how knowledge of the CDC Healthy People 2020 objectives and the Society of Pediatric Nursing position statements are vital in this type of setting. The nurse’s role and that of other health care members becomes evident when they interact with Head Start staff. Students often acknowledge that these service learning experiences are unexpectedly rewarding on a personal level.

- Anne McShane, Assistant Professor
College of Nursing and Health Professions

Professor McShane and students Chelsea West and Jennifer Tade use equipment purchased with grant money for continuing education on behalf of families and caregivers.
In July, Dr. Christie Billups of the Office of Service Learning (OSL) was approached by Galaxy Digital about an exciting new online networking program they have created called “Get Connected.” This program is enabling us to do a number of important things, not only in the OSL but within the other offices of the Community Engagement Cooperative (CEC).

Some of its capabilities:

- Invite community agencies and small businesses to post who they are and the needs that they have which volunteers, service learners, and interns might be able to fulfill.
- Enable students to search for service and civic opportunities which will enhance their learning, resume, college experiences, organizational participation and more.
- Facilitate faculty efforts to understand what community partners may need in anticipation of providing relevant and meaningful service learning opportunities to their students.
- Track student hours and the nature of their involvement in the community for class requirements, student organization expectations, possible year-end awards, and various surveys, applications, and grants which will aid the maintenance, assessment, and development of the offices in the CEC.

We are very grateful to have this new tool to augment what we do. We’re in the process now, with the noteworthy help of Sarah Palya (G.A. to the OSL), of populating the community partner database, personalizing the entry page of the site, and preparing other aspects of Get Connected so that it will serve our needs and the needs of our partners. Once we are more familiar with it and have things situated for wider use, we will begin to educate stakeholders, particularly community partners, faculty and students, so that everyone can take advantage of this wonderful opportunity to network, communicate, and serve community needs. As with all new programs, there’s a learning curve, but once Get Connected is fully functional, we believe it will be an excellent tool for the Lewis University community and the community agencies, churches, schools, and organizations who are serving the needs of our neighbors.

Stay tuned for updates and opportunities for Get Connected training sessions in the near future.

- Dr. Christie Billups

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**Growth in Service Learning**

**Number of Student Service Hours**

- 2010-11: 1500
- 2011-12: 1600
- 2012-13: 1700

**Monetary Equivalent of Student Service Hours**

- 2010-11: $32,000.00
- 2011-12: $34,000.00
- 2012-13: $36,000.00

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“We are very grateful to have this new tool to augment what we do.”
Introduction of the New Graduate Assistant

Graduation can be a very exciting event, but at the same time it can be intimidating and frightening. Individuals who have spent the past 17 or so years of their lives attending school and being dictated by its schedule are faced with the unknown. Simultaneously, they are confronted by the ever-increasing pressure to get a job, a great job, in the field in which they earned their degree. It was for that reason that I was initially inspired to apply for Graduate Assistant positions at Lewis University. I simply was not ready to move on and leave this incredible institution.

When I was contacted in regards to a position with the Office of Service Learning, and later offered the position, I was thrilled. Service learning is a pedagogy that several of my undergraduate professors incorporated into their classes. Most notably was the first Public Relations course I ever took. Public Relations Writing provided numerous opportunities to enhance one’s education and resume by integrating a partnership with a community organization of each student’s choice.

My go-to organization was the Will County Humane Society (WCHS), because I adore animals and had already volunteered as a dog walker for a few years prior. PR Writing required that I make a deeper connection with the WCHS because of the large volume of information I needed in order to develop a Public Relations Plan and various other PR tools for them. This meant that I studied everything I could, from demographics they target to facility operation to financial realities and more. By the end of the course, I not only knew the WCHS inside and out, but I also created an entire portfolio of public relations material that I personally sent to actual newspapers and radio stations and posted on Patch websites. All the work I produced throughout the semester was used, appreciated and greatly needed by the Humane Society.

As a result of working directly with several influential individuals at the animal shelter, I was asked to become a board member when I was only 21-years-old, which is a position I continue to maintain. Furthermore, I can proudly mention that my work as the Graduate Assistant to the Office of Service Learning has allowed a group of Lewis University students to engage with the WCHS as well.

Leadership in Service, a service learning course within Organizational Leadership, has partnered with the shelter to provide a fundraising plan and assistance with activities and events. This is a vital need considering that the Will County Humane Society is a 501(c)3 organization that operates solely on donations and funds raised by shelter events. I was filled with such joy when the entire class, including the professor, Dr. Rich Walsh, attended and participated in a fundraising event, the Whisker Walk 5k, on Sept. 27. As the Assistant to the Office of Service Learning I was proud to see full class participation at a community event. As an individual, I was ecstatic to see so many friendly Lewis faces supporting a cause I have been deeply passionate about for several years. That moment solidified the gratitude and enthusiasm I have to be a representative of service learning at Lewis.

As my time in the office progresses, I look forward to seeing how service learning develops and how it can help other students excel in their future endeavors. My hope is to inspire and encourage current Lewis students and faculty to incorporate this transformative method of teaching and learning and the social responsibility it inspires into their curricular, career and life choices.

- Sarah Palya
Service Fair 2014

Each fall, since 2011, the Community Engagement Cooperative (CEC) teams up to offer a Service Fair for the Lewis community. The fair brings together students, faculty and organizations from the Joliet and Chicagoland areas to explore ways to collaborate effectively to serve our communities and offer meaningful experiences for students. Organizations are given the opportunity to tell Lewis students and faculty about their upcoming plans while simultaneously acquiring volunteers for an event, connect with faculty to discuss the option of service learning, and/or obtain an intern.

According to record, the first two Service Fairs welcomed 14 unique community agencies. Last year, in the fall of 2013, the Service Fair welcomed 17 agencies. The most recent fair held on Sept.4, witnessed substantial growth with 29 organizations. The attendees featured a wide variety of services ranging from homeless shelters and animal shelters to schools, tutoring and mentoring to healthcare and more.

Despite the presence of storms and wet conditions outside, the fair brought in a hundred or so visitors including students, faculty, staff and administrators. The event’s success spurred the CEC to add a Spring Service Fair to be held on Jan. 22, 2015 at 10:30 a.m. in the University Dining Room, in addition to the annual fair organized each September. Be on the look-out for more information!

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