



Center for Service and Social Action Bulletin

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Cultivating Community Day celebrates 125 years of service

This year, the annual Cultivating Community spring service event was greatly expanded and invigorated as part of the 125th anniversary celebration of John Carroll University.

Nearly 500 people from Carroll, St. Ignatius High School and the Hough neighborhood gathered to participate in spring clean-up activities and gardening projects.

St. Ignatius was a natural partner for this service day because both institutions share the same origin and birthday, and both wanted to demonstrate their commitment to service through this event.

The day began with a standing-room-only prayer service at St. Mary's Chapel at Ignatius followed by breakfast. Both Councilman Joe Cimperman and the Cleveland mayor, Frank Jack-



Volunteers take a break while cleaning-up St. Thomas Aquinas.

son, were in attendance.

After breakfast, teams of students grabbed their tools and boarded buses to various service sites in both the East and near West sides of Cleveland.

The University was able to nurture its long-time relationship with St. Thomas Aquinas as volunteers cleaned up the interior of the school and completed outdoor landscaping

projects.

Dave Nichting, a local teacher for 37 years, Carroll alumnus, and St. Thomas tutor, continued his dedication to the community through volunteering once again with the spring event. "I do this because I want to be a man for others," he said. "Plus I like seeing all the Carroll students and staff, alumni, and Jesuit community come together for this great cause."

Students also went to the neighborhood at East 95th

where they worked in the community garden to turn over the beds and on the exterior of 12 seniors' homes.

"The day is always such a great success because we are working so hard to build relationships between the folks of Carroll and the community members in the St. Clair-Superior neighborhood," said Ted Steiner, co-coordinator for the project.

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A farewell to the AmeriCorps VISTA program

It is with great sadness that we say goodbye to the OCC AmeriCorps VISTA program at John Carroll.

Beginning in July 2007, our grant allowed us to “hire” recent college graduates for a year of service to assist with the work of the Center for Service and Social Action. For the last four years we have had the pleasure of working with April Burko, Ashley Cadaret, Kate Arons, Christopher Kaczmarczyk, Kathryn Terrell, Raven DeVoll, and Julia Solow.

All the VISTAs have been instrumental in developing and administering the service component of the Ohio Access Initiative (OAI) program. OAI is a financial aid program that enables academically talented, low-income students to attend the University with no out-of-pocket cost.

In addition to supporting the OAI students, our VISTAs have been instrumental in supporting the growth of the office. They have contributed in many areas of our work, including the Civic Engagement Student Speaker’s Bureau, the JCU community garden, the Carroll Reads tutoring program, the Ohio Graduation Test tutoring program, marketing, and Immersion Experiences.

Not only will we miss all they have contributed, but we will really miss having each of them here. As they’ve come and gone each year, some staying for one year, some for two, it has been hard to see them leave. We have come to know each one, and enjoy their energy, talents, and gifts.

This year, Julia, Kathryn, and Raven, have followed the tradition of all the VISTAs to bring a level of caring, commitment, and generosity of time and spirit to their work with JCU students. Julia, so kind and gentle, always takes time to care for other’s physical and emotional well-being. Kathryn, whose intellectual talents, articulate expression of social justice, and deep compassion for those in need drive her work. Raven brought energy, enthusiasm, and unbelievable organizational skills. CSSA is so much richer for their contributions. Thank you!

~Dr. Margaret Finucane, Director of CSSA~

New partnership offers support to local high school students

CSSA embarked on a new tutoring partnership this spring with the Cleveland Metropolitan School District.

Father Niehoff was approached last fall in hopes that the University would adopt all, or a portion of, the CMSD schools. Efforts were focused on John Adams and Collinwood high schools and the struggles the students face when attempting to pass the Ohio Graduation Test.

Passing the OGT is a graduation requirement for all high school students. If all sections are not passed by senior year, graduating seniors do not receive a diploma, regardless of their class grades.

Unfortunately the students at John Adams and Collinwood high schools struggle to pass all five sections, especially math and science. To combat the low passing rate and to increase the rates of students graduating from high school, CSSA recruited 38 John Carroll tutors to visit the schools four days per week.

Trained by curriculum experts, the tutors are able to reinforce content covered on the test, help create individual test-taking strategies, and offer moral support throughout the process.



Tutors hang out with their tutees while touring JCU.

“It’s been really cool to see the students grasp the concepts. When one of my students starts to understand a certain topic, he starts getting excited and I can see him making the connections,” explained Amy Gunderman, senior biology major who tutors at each school one day per week.

Gunderman also gets excited when students ask questions related to John Carroll University

college.

“It’s good for them to have a personal connection with a college student. They ask us all kinds of questions about the process,” said Gunderman.

After students took the OGT in March, the tutoring program shifted into a college access program in which all 80 students visited JCU’s campus. They received a tour of the University, ate in the dining hall and even sat-in on a class with their tutor. “The tutors have helped show us the importance of time management, and we now understand the college work load,” explained Brian Roberts, a sophomore at Collinwood. “They’ve shown me that college isn’t all fun and games!” he said.

The partnership has been mutually beneficial for both the high school and college students involved. The principals from both schools have requested the program return next year, and CSSA has already started recruiting tutors for the fall.

JCU alumnus gives back to Cleveland through education

Scott Embacher, a 2001 JCU graduate, exemplifies the University's mission by becoming a "man for others" through countless hours and dedication to the children of East Cleveland.

Embacher was heavily involved in service while attending JCU. He began his journey with a Campus Ministry urban plunge.

"We basically lived on the street during the day and we were instructed to talk and befriend homeless people," he said. "This definitely got the wheels turning for what else I could do."

After helping out at soup kitchens and going to Alaska on a Habitat for Humanity service trip, Embacher soon fell into tutoring within the city. By that time in his collegiate career, he knew exactly where he wanted to teach – inner city Cleveland.

He continued to confront social justice issues by serving with AmeriCorps' Urban Catholic Teacher Corp for two years while earning a Master of Education degree from Boston College.

Both challenged and inspired "by friends who lived it," Embacher was drawn back to Cleveland to pursue a career in changing the world through education. For the past seven years, he has taught seventh grade at St. Francis Elementary School in Cleveland's Superior-St. Clair neighborhood.

"I have a keen sense for justice and I saw the inequalities inherent in our educational system," he explained. "I thought that teaching was where I could make the biggest difference."

Embacher's deep dedication to his students is evident not only in his teaching, but also by the many hours he volunteers beyond the school day coaching the school's basketball team and serving as its athletic director. He also created and supervises the after-school programming offered at St. Francis, runs a tutoring initiative, moderates a Social Justice Club, and manages *The Club of Distinguished Gentlemen*.

The *Club of Distinguished Gentlemen* is a unique 12-week program Embacher developed to address the need for male role models and mentoring among his St. Francis students. It includes weekly sessions with special presentations on such topics as attitude exploration, building teamwork, how to define values, listening and conversation skills, and professional business protocol.

Embacher brings in a personal trainer to discuss food and fitness regimens, mediates a critical examination of how black males are portrayed in the media, and invites professionals from the black community to speak on how to succeed in various career endeavors. This past year, club members were invited to a reception in their honor at the top of the PNC Bank building, where they dined with and received advice from business executives from one of the nation's premier financial institutions.

Embacher continues to stay connected to JCU after all these years. Before connecting with CSSA, he would bring some of his students to campus on mini-field trips to expose them to post-

secondary education. Chris Kerr, coordinator of social justice initiatives & Immersion Experiences, would secure meal and recreation passes for them. Kerr is the one that directed Embacher to CSSA for possible tutoring opportunities between his students and JCU volunteers.

Since the fall of 2007, Embacher has supervised JCU students at St. Francis on a weekly basis.

"It was been a tremendous experience, with great tutors who are well-organized and well-trained by Trace. I feel very blessed to have this valuable partnership," he said.



Embacher conducts a science experiment with his seventh grade class.

Student fulfills desire to serve while abroad

New culture, exotic food, and traveling Europe didn't keep sophomore Melissa Bresnahan from selflessly helping others through service while studying abroad in Madrid in the fall.

"I feel like service is an important part of my life," she explained. "I was over there and I was happy, but I just felt like something was missing."

While studying in Madrid, Bresnahan tutored seventh graders once a week at the El Centro de Educación Infantil, an afterschool program for low-income families. A 45-minute metro ride didn't deter Bresnahan, but helped her value her time even more with the students she tutored.

Smiling from ear-to-ear, she recalls a time when Maria, the tutee she became close to, ex-

plained a poem to her written in Spanish. She was amazed at how she benefited from the tutoring sessions as much as Maria.

Bresnahan explained that she had to work through the students' homework slowly in order to fully understand the material and the questions being asked. Essentially, Maria and the other students became teachers to the tutors, enabling them to digest and understand the information they were going over.

Bresnahan's interest and devotion to alleviating poverty began early at JCU. She participated in an Immersion Experience to Louisville, Ky., and is an active member of Labre, the campus organization that builds friendships with those experiencing homelessness by offering meals to them every Friday night.

She also was selected for the Poverty and Solidarity internship program for the summer of 2010. She



interned at Mental Health Services, a transitional housing residency program for young adults 18-24 with mental health issues, where she continues to volunteer.

Bresnahan is currently launching a new program at MHS called Yappers, a dual mentoring program between the young adults living at

MHS and JCU students. After writing a research paper for one of her Poverty and Solidarity classes, she learned that the effects of mentoring relationships can be beneficial to both people involved. Bresnahan believes this will be great for JCU students who sometimes get stuck in the "JCU bubble."

"After my summer internship with MHS, I felt such a connection to the different realms of poverty. To go over to Spain and just lose all of that – I couldn't do it," said Bresnahan.

Traveling to Spain helped Bresnahan recognize the things that are most important to her.

"Just because I was in a different culture, I did a lot of the same things. I realized what the core parts of myself are," she explained.

Bresnahan plans to attend graduate school for psychology. She's interested in either becoming a clinical psychologist or a social worker.

New work-study positions offer students leadership and experience

As the Center for Service and Social Action continues to expand its efforts in the community, students have been recruited to take on leadership roles to help support the office. These new work-study positions engage students' unique vocational interests, giving them the opportunity to gain experience within their potential career field.

"Photography has always been a passion of mine," explained work-study photographer junior Matt Crow. "There is something exciting about the idea of capturing a moment, then showing others the beauty of a subject."

Crow has captured moments of JCU students serving and building relationships with community members at more than 14 different service sites during the spring semester. His work, along with the interviews and footage taken by junior videographer Brian Devers, will be featured on the office's website, helping students understand the community partners they have the opportunity to serve with during their time at JCU.

Junior Jenn Holten will also contribute her talents as the public relations coordinator. Crafting the e-newsletter, promoting events, and producing this newsletter will be her responsibility as of next year.

Work-study students like Crow, Devers and Holten will continue to take on an expanded role in marketing and administration of programs in the years ahead.

According to CSSA Director Dr. Margaret Finucane, "Students add great energy and fresh ideas to our work at CSSA. We are excited to offer them expanded leadership roles in our office."

Sleep-Out for homelessness draws dedicated students despite weather

Labre's Boxed Out! event was held on JCU's main quad on Feb. 25, the night of one of the largest snow storms in Northeast Ohio, bringing approximately 16 inches of snow. That didn't stop 21 dedicated students and staff who slept outside in the cold weather to help raise awareness for those experiencing homelessness.

"We had a lot of dedicated and creative people who made themselves at home on the quad. The combination of thought-provoking fireside reflections while trying to sleep when you could see your breath, created one memorable night!" exclaimed Sara Jane Kukawka who organized the event as her Arrupe Scholars Capstone project.

Katie Trausch and Kate Pifer huddle inside their make-shift homes to try to stay warm throughout the night.



Annual Take Back the Night week creates dialogue on sexual violence and assault

When junior Courtney Miller attended the 2010 Take Back the Night (TBTN) rally, march, and speak-outs, she witnessed a powerful display of John Carroll students, faculty, staff, and administrators coming together to take direct action against sexual violence.

TBTN, an international grassroots march and rally, functions as a community response to sexual violence, creating opportunities for people to come together in opposition to sexual violence.

Though JCU students have organized annual TBTN events in the past, this year marked the first year the University has recognized TBTN as an official student organization.

Inspired by her experience as a participant in 2010, Miller took on a key role in planning this year's events.

"The experiences I've already had, classes I've taken, and service sites I have participated at, led me to become involved," said Miller. "The ways in which I wanted to grow really fit in with a leadership position."

Miller worked with 15 core members of the new organization who were joined by students in Dr. McWeeny's Philosophy of Love and Sex course, as well as additional student volunteers.

Together, the group planned a week of events intended to foster dialogue and understanding, motivating students to take action against sexual assault.

"We really want to spread the word that this is something people cope with every day. We also want to educate students on the ways we can prevent it, ways we can help, and the resources out there," Miller explained.

This year's events bridged art, academics, and personal experiences. Slam poet Carla Thompson performed her work, the film "Speak" was screened, and faculty and students answered questions during a panel discussion on rape as a weapon of war.

Approximately 185 people participated in the traditional rally, march and speak-outs.

"We had one of the best turnouts in years," said Alix Audi, a senior involved with TBTN all four years.

Take Back the Night History

1800s England: "Jack the Ripper" raped and killed prostitutes in London, sparking the infamous alias.

1975 Philadelphia: First rally in the U.S. took place after a woman was stabbed to death while walking home.

1976 Belgium: 2,000 women representing 40 countries marched at The International Tribunal on Crimes Against Women.

1976 Italy: After a reported 16,000 rapes in Rome, *Reclaim the Night* rallied thousands of women to take a stand.

1977 England: The women of England held their first *Reclaim the Night* in response to the many Ripper copycat murders.

1977: "Take Back the Night" slogan was introduced by Anne Pride for a memorial she read at an anti-violence rally.

2001: Katie Koestner established "Take Back the Night" as a charitable foundation.

Outstanding senior ready to pursue her passion of educating others

When Jamie Filicko entered John Carroll University, she did so as a sociology major eager to participate in the Leadership and Social Justice Learning Community. Four years later, Filicko is still passionate about leadership and social justice, but has turned her attention from sociology to education.

As a freshman, Filicko had the privilege of serving with We the People, a unique program that places JCU students in area classrooms to teach students about the U.S. Constitution and their rights and responsibilities as a citizen.

Filicko's experience working in a fifth grade classroom at Oxford Elementary with the program introduced her to the joys and challenges of serving as an educator. It inspired her to change her major to education, and she continued to participate in We the People throughout her sophomore and



junior years.

As a tutor, Filicko worked with fifth and eighth graders in four different schools. Teaching in both public and parochial schools offered her the chance to interact with a diverse range

of students and teachers.

"Seeing students' growth is amazing," Filicko said. "Being in the classroom every week to watch them learn and grow is such a powerful experience. Sometimes you don't realize just how attached you've gotten until the year ends and you realize you probably won't be seeing your students again."

Though Filicko's student teaching obligations for the education program have prevented her from tutoring this semester, she will still assist with planning and supporting the annual Mock Congressional Hearing that invites We the People classrooms to demonstrate their knowledge in a friendly competition.

"The competition is where you really get a chance to see how close the kids and their tutors have become," Filicko explained. "It can be a stressful event to plan, but it's always worth it."

Student leadership helps Carroll Community Garden grow

The Carroll Community Garden is getting a little greener this spring with the help of junior Catherine Distelrath, recent Champion Service Award recipient. Distelrath will apply \$500 of her award to expanding the garden and creating awareness of food insecurity in the local area.

Distelrath became involved with the garden last year when she served as the Center for Service and Social Action's AmeriCorps Summer Associate. Tending the garden all summer, the project has shown her how urban gardening not only combats food insecurity, but also helps build community.

"Community gardens have the capacity to bring family, friends and community members together to participate and work toward a common goal," said Distelrath.

The garden, located behind the University's Counseling Center, grows

more than 300 pounds of fresh produce each summer, all of which is donated to the Heights Emergency Food Center. Many students, faculty, staff and administrators weren't aware the garden existed before Distelrath got involved with the project, tapping its full potential.

Distelrath continued her commitment to the garden this spring by engaging more organizations and people dedicated to its success.

Working closely with AmeriCorps VISTA Julia Solow, the team collaborated with Aramark Dining Services and received funding to build a new compost bin for the garden. Aramark will help collect food scraps for the bin in the dining hall, encouraging students to toss their leftovers in the bin to be reused.

Distelrath and Solow also plan to increase the garden's plot size before prime planting season begins. The gar-

den will undergo construction, adding two additional beds. Donations of seedlings from Gali's Garden Center and soil from the Food Center will be used.

Construction will take place on Carroll Community Garden Day, Saturday, May 7. The event kicks-off with volunteers building beds for a nearby garden in Collinwood at 9am. Construction for the new Carroll beds begin at 1pm, and from 2:30-4pm, volunteers will plant seeds, eat locally grown snacks, and have the opportunity to talk with Bob Vitolan from the Food Center.

The Carroll Community Garden Day invites all campus and community members to get involved! Volunteers are needed for all projects. Visit CSSA's announcements at jcu.edu/ service to sign-up for Carroll Community Garden Day.

Farm workers in Florida leave lasting impression on JCU student

Immokalee, Fla. is a place not everyone has heard of, but once you leave, you will never forget it.

This year, our spring Immersion group was truly touched by our time together in Immokalee. We volunteered at a wide variety of places, including two of the local elementary schools, Habitat for Humanity and The Coalition of Immokalee Workers.

Our group instantly connected with the children of Immokalee that we worked with every afternoon. Their potential and willingness to overcome the obstacles their families faced was more than enough to inspire our group. Not only did we learn how lucky we are to have the opportunities we do, but we also opened our hearts to the impoverished people of Immokalee and were inspired to reach out in any way we could.

Immokalee is a farming community in southern Florida whose population doubles during the growing season. Although Florida produces many different agricultural products each year, our educational focus was on the tomato crops and the injustice farm workers face there. Our group quickly learned that slavery is still alive today, and that we are benefitting from that labor as consumers.

Personally, this was my second time in Immokalee and my experience continues to influence the choices I make in my day-to-day life. After I returned from Immokalee last year, I came across the opportunity to become a Fair Trade Intern at Carroll. My experience in Immokalee and the slavery I witnessed there, inspired me to take action to combat slavery, or at least become an advocate for education of these issues in my community.

In less than one year, I was able to experience progress in the fight for workers' rights in Immokalee during this second trip. I was truly inspired by the progress the



Faculty adviser Jimmy Menkhaus '03 helps a young boy read at Pinecrest Elementary School.

Coalition of Immokalee Workers continue to make, and am proud to be a part of the movement.

It's important to know you don't have to journey to Immokalee in order to fight for the rights of the workers there. Grocery stores and restaurants we often enjoy may be sustaining the slavery occurring in Immokalee. Trader Joe's is an example of a chain that refuses to pay a fair price for the tomatoes they purchase, making them a direct supporter of modern-day slavery.

We as consumers have the power to change the slavery taking place in Immokalee in a very direct, peaceful and effective way. The Coalition of Immokalee Workers provides many options, including emailing or sending a postcard to these establishments, kindly asking them to pay a fair price per pound in order to better the lives of Immokalee workers.

We don't expect you to boycott Trader Joe's or other such establishments, nor do we expect you to never eat a tomato again. But, I am asking you to log on to the Coalition of Immokalee Workers' website and read about their movement. If you feel outraged by the injustices of modern-day slavery, click the *Take Action* tab and see what you can do. Please visit ciw-online.org or the Campus Ministry office for more information. ~Andrea Hess, 2013~

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Thank you to our community partners

Churches: Church of the Covenant, Our Lady of Lourdes, St. Monica, St. Paul's
Community Centers: Boys and Girls Club of Cleveland, Fatima Family Center, Goodrich-Gannett Neighborhood Center, Hijos De Borinquen Spanish American Center, Rose Mary Center, St. Martin De Porres, Thea Bowman Center
Hospitals: Huron Hospital, Marymount Hospital, The Free Medical Clinic of Greater Cleveland, Rainbow Babies and Children's

Non-Profit Organizations: Boys Hope Girls Hope, Cleveland Food Bank, Cuyahoga County Juvenile Detention Center, Domestic Violence Center, Interfaith Hospitality Network, Koinonia Homes, L'Arche, Light of Hearts Villa, Malachi House, Mayfield Adaptive, Montefiore, Quantum LEAP, Richmond Heights Public Library, South Pointe Hospital, Ss. Robert and William, Youthability
Schools: Boulevard, Buckeye-Woodland,

CHAMPS, Caledonia, Canterbury, Chambers, Collinwood, E-Prep, Fairfax, Gearity Professional Development, Heritage, Holy Name, Intergenerational, John Adams, Many Villages, Mayfair, Monticello, Noble, Open Doors- Cleveland Heights and Shaker, Oxford, Prospect, Roxboro Elementary and Middle, Shaw, St. Adalbert's, St. Francis, St. Thomas Aquinas, Superior, Warner Girls Leadership Academy, Wiley

Center for Service and Social Action Mission Statement

The Center for Service and Social Action seeks to educate for justice by offering opportunities for learning through service. Growing from a rich Catholic intellectual tradition, we promote service that inspires a deeper commitment to those most in need. The Center connects the campus with the local, national, and international communities through sustained partnerships that enable John Carroll community members to become "men and women for and with others."