



Connector

Inside this issue

Service in the Curriculum	2
Project Pericles	3
Grants Received	3
Alumni News	4
Hunger Hurts Food Drive	4
Change Leaders	5
Summer Service Reflections	6-7
Staff Spotlight: Luceara Cross	8

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Reflections on Eight Years of Service

Editor's Note: Betty will be retiring from Berea College in December at the end of our Fall Term. She will be greatly missed and we wish her well.

By **BETTY HIBLER**

In March 1998, while a graduate student at the University of Vermont, I attended the annual meeting of the American College Personnel Association (ACPA) in St. Louis, MO. Every keynote speaker at the meeting referred to a book published in 1996, *Common Fire: Leading Lives of Commitment in a Complex World*. The book is based on interviews that the authors, Cheryl and James Keen, Laurent Parks Daloz, and Sharon Daloz Parks, conducted with over 100 individuals who had sustained a commitment to work on behalf of the common good over a period of many years – in some cases a life-time. I quickly bought the book and it had a profound immediate influence and has had a continuing influence on my life and work ever since. The stories were of people who are true heroes in my opinion: women and men who work to make a difference wherever they find themselves; women and men who believe a better world is possible.

In my letter of application the following year for the position of Associate Director of the newly-established Center for Excellence in Learning Through Service (CELTS) at Berea College, I wrote: "I believe that all levels of education have a mutual responsibility to prepare students to be thoughtful citizens who are committed to the common good, because in addition to our personal and professional lives,



Betty Hibler.

we all share a common role as citizens of our communities, our nation, and our world. Caring about our lives together must be of primary importance." It has been my privilege – and a great deal of fun – to try to put that philosophy to work here at Berea College over the past eight and a half years.

To be part of something just coming into being is exciting. There were many decisions to be made: Which current service and outreach programs would be part of the new Center? What kind of renovations and floor-plan did we want? How could we best serve the community with the space allotted? What new staff positions should we request? Which traditions

CONTINUED ON PAGE 2

Service Learning in the Curriculum

Bridging the Gaps:

Berea College and Shannon Johnson Elementary School

What do Berea College students and students from Shannon Johnson Elementary School have in common? Well, thanks to two dynamic programs run by CELTS, students from both the college and elementary school have more in common than one might think. By teaming up with the Hispanic Outreach Project (HOP) and One World, the latest addition to the CELTS Freshman Bonner Program, the youngsters at Shannon Johnson are being enriched and are teaching the college students a few things along the way.

Since 2004, students from the Spanish 310 class, in conjunction with HOP, have been fulfilling their service-learning requirement by teaching basic Spanish to first graders at Shannon Johnson. Some college students also tutor the Spanish speaking youngsters in English to help them excel in their schoolwork. College students, like Sarah Leeper and Kellus Sanchez, create interactive lesson plans to engage these short attention spans. From playing “Simon dice” (Simon Says) to singing songs, the first graders enjoy spending time with these college students. Without a doubt, the feeling is mutual among the college students. Sanchez, ’11 admits, “I find myself thinking about the kids more and more every week and just waiting to see their faces and reactions towards learning.” This partnership has even opened the door to a possible career option. According to Leeper, “... [This experience] has me

thinking that maybe one day I’ll work with kids and/or teach Spanish.”

Introducing students at Shannon Johnson to a new language is only a piece of the bridge. This year the bridge has been expanded through the One World program geared toward the 3rd, 4th, and 5th graders. According to Ruthanne Roebuck, ’10, the student Bonner Coordinator for this program, “Our program is focused upon helping students learn what diversity means as well as how to interact with students different from themselves and recognize the value of those differences.” The One World team consists of five Freshmen Bonner Scholars and a Coordinator who create interactive programs for the children every week. Emily Cooper, ’11, emphasizes that, “[we] try to have programs that center around different types of diversity so they can see that the word doesn’t just refer to skin color.” The One World team values and appreciates the insight of these bright kids. This program has enabled the little kids to really enlighten the “big kids.” Brittany Stowers, ’11 and Phi Nguyen, ’11 both agree that “the kids are teaching us about patience.” CELTS and Shannon Johnson look forward to seeing these partnerships continue to grow and make an impact in the lives of all who are involved.

—Debra Bullock, ’09

Eight Years of Service

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 1

should we continue and what new ones should we begin? While each loomed large at the time, those questions got answered one by one and now seem far behind us. Our full-time staff of five and our more than sixty student staff members carry out the work of CELTS, connecting campus and community.

What I appreciated most when I arrived at Berea was the strong tradition of student leadership in all of the community service programs. An excellent team model was in place that provides carry-over of program management from year to year. The breadth of student commitment and interest from direct service to advocacy and activism is currently represented through thirteen on-going programs or projects, as well as a number of annual events. Many of these already existed when CELTS came into being. In fact, the tradition of student-led community service

that continues with several of our current programs dates back at least to 1968, when both *Students for Appalachia* and *People Who Care* began. I like to think of each new year at CELTS as another bead on a string extending back many years, that also has ample room for many more beads to be added. I remind students each year that they are part of a proud tradition that will be carried on by others after they graduate.

I believe the need for commitment to the common good is greater than ever. When I reflect on the students whom I have worked with here at Berea College and on the commitments that I know they are making as they leave these doors, I am encouraged in my conviction that they will contribute in many ways to greater peace and justice in our world, to stronger communities—working always for the common good. Our first CELTS Chaplain was Deborah Payne ’02, currently a PeaceCorps Volunteer in Uganda, and also a talented musician. I

leave you with her words in a song that she wrote not long before leaving for the PeaceCorps:

May we walk a just
walk, may we find a
truer peace,

May we hold the light
for love in our hand.

As the earth is carved
with water, and the rock
turned into sand,

May we work until we
slumber in God’s hand.

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Project Pericles Civic Engagement Courses Announced

CELTS is pleased to announce that four courses to be offered during the 2007-2008 academic year have received designation and funding as Project Pericles's Civic Engagement Courses.

Project Pericles, Inc. is a not-for-profit organization that encourages and facilitates commitments by colleges and universities to include education for social responsibility and participatory citizenship as an essential part of their educational programs, in the classroom, on the campus, and in the community. Courses submitted for Civic Engagement Grants from the twenty-two Pericles-member colleges were evaluated for creativity, connection to civic responsibility, academic rigor, an evaluation plan, and applicability to future years and other campuses. The Civic Engagement Course grants are funded by The Christian A. Johnson Endeavor Foundation, The Teagle Foundation, and Project Pericles. Professor Meta Mendel-Reyes, Director of CELTS, serves as the Director of Project Pericles at Berea College.



The selected Berea College courses, listed with the professors teaching the courses, are: COM 486: Political Communication, Professor Billy Wooten; WST 410: Politics of Food, Professors Peggy Rivage-Seul and Chad Berry; GSTR 110: Questioning of Authority, Professor Dave Porter; HIS 335: Seminar in Modern European History—Social Responses to Poverty, Professor Rebecca Bates.

Professor Wooten's *Political Communication* class partnered with the *League of Women Voters* on two community forums, one in Richmond and one in Berea, that focused on *U.S. Immigration: Exploring Myth, Fact and Values*. The class prepared issue boards located throughout the fall in the Madison County Public Libraries in Richmond and Berea and prepared publicity for the



Kirsten King, '08, Lovena Luna, '10, and Jessica Trout, '08, register fellow Berea students to vote.

two forums. In addition, during the week of September 17-21, class members conducted voter registration on campus and provided information about absentee ballots and how to register in home states. Materials were also distributed that related to the issues of immigration, the environment, and the gay, lesbian, and transgender/transsexual community.

—Betty Hibler

CELTS Receives Learn and Serve America Innovation Grant

CELTS has received a Learn and Serve America innovation grant for “Energy and Empowerment in an Appalachian County,” an initiative to study energy needs and assets in Madison County.

The integrated three-year community-based research (CBR) project will bring together multiple community partner organizations and multiple academic departments with their specific expertise. This collaborative and coalition-based approach will produce data toward the goals of improving financial security of low-income families in Madison County; benefiting the environment by reducing demand for coal-based electricity; and empowering community members to become actively involved in transforming the policies, infrastructure, assumptions and behaviors that drive energy use in Kentucky today.

“Our community’s history and current situation call for a community-based approach to identify and develop strategies to help residents of our community save money and energy in the years ahead. A collaborative approach to researching energy needs and assets will bring together the resources of Berea College, the

skills of community leaders who have been working to address energy issues and to empower local citizens for many years, and the grassroots knowledge of community members,” says Meta Mendel-Reyes, Director of CELTS.

In being awarded the innovation grant, Berea College joins the National CBR Networking Initiative, a larger network of community-based research practitioners funded by Learn & Serve America and spearheaded by Princeton University and the Bonner Foundation. This Initiative is coordinated by Princeton University’s Community-Based Learning Initiative and will generate a range of best-practice tools and resources, including websites, manuals, and data valuable to students, faculty, and the community. As one of 30 other institutions expanding their CBR efforts through the Learn & Serve America grant, Berea College has the opportunity to grow and strengthen CELTS through funding, as well as share its work with other CBR practitioners

CONTINUED ON PAGE 4

ALUMNI NEWS

Virginia Senkomago, '07, is currently studying at Yale University. She is in the epidemiology of microbial disease master's program. Virginia says there are several volunteer opportunities she is interested in joining and currently is volunteering at the New Haven Free Clinic. You can reach Virginia at virseruth@yahoo.com.

Andrea Lowery Van Dorsten, '03, and **Jeremiah Van Dorsten, '02**, have recently had their first child, Isaac Edward. You may contact Jeremiah and Andrea at thevandorstens@comcast.net to wish them well. Congratulations Jeremiah and Andrea!

Jessica Heatherly, '07, is getting her master's degree in Early Childhood Special Education in the Department of Theory and Practice of Teacher Education. She is also working at an organization called Kids Place Inc. It is an educational and recreational community childcare/afterschool program for kids in K-5th grade. Jessica's address is: 701 Cedar Lane #22, Knoxville, TN 37912.

Audrey Trigg, '06, is a student in the Tulane School of Law in New Orleans. She is also currently a volunteer with the Student Hurricane Network, which is an organization that coordinates volunteer opportunities for law students. Audrey can be reached at: Audrey.trigg@gmail.com.

Former student director, **Patrick McGrady, '07**, is attending Florida State University where he is pursuing his doctorate in Sociology. Check out the wonderful article on Patrick in the current *Berea College Magazine*. For those of you that would like to contact Patrick he can be reached at pbm07d@fsu.edu.

'Hunger Hurts' a Success

15th Annual Food Drive was sponsored by Students for Appalachia

November 3rd was a crisp, clear autumn day, perfect for the 15th annual Hunger Hurts Food Drive sponsored by Students for Appalachia (SFA). SFA, currently a program of CELTS, has honed the process through years of experience in organizing a community-wide Food Drive to benefit the Berea Community Food Bank, currently located at 103 Parkway Drive, and the day came off without a hitch. More than a hundred campus and community volunteers helped collect, sort, and shelve the many cans, bags and boxes of dried goods for the Food Bank, which altogether totaled over 7,500 lbs.

Of course, preparation for the Food Drive began weeks earlier, and this year's committee was headed by CELTS student director, Stephany Whitaker. Early in the process, a phone call was made to Berea College Trustee, Vance Blade, at Kroger headquarters in Louisville, who quickly arranged once again for the 3,500 paper bags to be available for us at the Richmond Kroger store. Student groups were solicited to take on one of the eight routes throughout the Berea city limits for bag distribution the week before the drive and pick-up the day of the drive. Meanwhile, volunteer crews stapled flyers on both sides of the bags, advertising the Food Drive and another project, Bereans United for Utility and Rent Relief (BUURR). (A quick calculation suggests a total of 14,000 staples!)

The Berea Food Bank served more than 500 southern Madison County families last year and is sponsored by Berea Faith Community Outreach, Inc. (BFCO). Many individuals, churches, schools, businesses and organizations contribute food or money throughout the year. Donations collected during the Food Drive will supply the pantry for the winter and provide food to many families during the holiday season. The Food Drive Committee thanks all the volunteers for helping to make this year's event a huge success.

—Betty Hibler

CELTS receives grant

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 3

nationwide.

This grant has made it possible for CELTS to fund a VISTA position to provide support for the innovation grant and for other CELTS programs related to community partnerships, including monthly Networking Lunches. Beth Eaton is serving as the VISTA for the 2007-2008 year, and her experience with school-based programs and event organization has been a great asset for the work of CELTS. Beth states, "Serving at Berea College is proving to be very beneficial to me. Through my work with the Energy & Empowerment Grant, I have learned many important things about the environment and sustainability that have already affected the way I live. I truly enjoy the work I do here."

On Friday October 12, CELTS hosted a community-based research workshop for faculty, staff and community members. Participants heard presentations about community-based research from Meta Mendel-Reyes and from Roni Kerns, a new faculty member in the Nursing department. The participants then worked in small groups to brainstorm a list of people and organizations who should be involved in the grant and a list of ideas for research questions and CBR projects. Steve Boyce, of Kentuckians for the Commonwealth, attended the conference. When asked what part of the workshop was most helpful to him, he simply stated: "the stimulation of being asked to think about working together on moving toward and defining a better energy future for Berea [was very helpful]."

CELTS will begin to fund CBR projects related to energy and empowerment in 2008. If you have an idea for a project or would like more information about this grant, please contact Ashley Cochrane or Beth Eaton.

—Ashley Cochrane

Oxfam Change Leaders Program

- More than 40 percent of the world's population live in developing countries, yet they account for just 3% of world trade
- When poor countries export their products, they have to pay taxes that are 4 times higher than what rich countries would have to pay.
- If Africa, East Asia, South Asia, and Latin America were to each increase their share of the world trade exports by one percent, the gains in income could lift 128 million people out of poverty.

Oxfam America is a non-profit organization that works to end global poverty through saving lives, strengthening communities, and campaigning for change. Oxfam America is an affiliate of Oxfam International. Oxfam always partners with local communities in an attempt to create long-lasting solutions to hunger, poverty, and social injustice. Spending a week with this organization as a CHANGE Leader was one of the most enlightening experiences of my short life so far.

Oxfam's CHANGE Leader program is a national program that trains college students to become actively engaged in Oxfam America's social justice mission. CHANGE strives to develop capable leaders, who will become informed voices for positive social change, and who will

then attempt to inspire greater global awareness in others. Everyone is brought together for one week of intensive leadership training that equips you to become effective CHANGE advocates. You are introduced to social justice issues directly related to Oxfam America's mission, and are asked to work on one or more of these issues on your campus during the academic year. Oxfam assumes the cost of training, room and board, and travel.

CHANGE leaders are assisted throughout the year by campus advisers and the Oxfam America Outreach staff. All participating colleges and universities have a designated Oxfam CHANGE adviser, ours is currently Betty Hibler in CELTS. I was educated on four major issues facing our world today: Coffee, Metal Extractives, Make Trade Fair, and Hunger. Out of these issues I chose to focus on Make Trade Fair, Extractives, and Hunger. Every year the topics change but CHANGE never does; it is always a life-CHANGING experience.

I will be working this year bringing about knowledge of world hunger and some possible long-term solutions to hunger. Much like the parable about teaching someone how to fish, my goal is that we can use our American privilege to alleviate the barriers that we set up to other nations' prosperity. It takes all of us working together to sacrifice a piece of

Oxfam is a non-profit organization that works to end global poverty.

our privilege, to use our political might, or monetary might, to bring about a more just world. I do believe that abject poverty does not have to exist. I do believe that we can bring an end to world hunger. I do believe that we can CHANGE the world. I do believe that you, who are reading this now, are responsible for this change. Just as you cannot steal and have a claim to equality, kill and have a claim to life, rape and have a claim to mutual respect, you cannot remain inactive while others die and have a claim to your own humanity. No, the sloth is neither alive nor dead, just in a limbo, confused about its own potential, and frightened to lose its own position, no matter how shaky the ground actually is beneath its feet.

During my CHANGE training I heard a question, "How much are you willing to sacrifice for a child whose name you will never know?" That, my friends, is what living is about. Let us join together and live in a world where JUSTICE matters!

—Alex Gibson, '08

Volunteer Dennis Scalf and HEAL Program Manager Liz Nolan, '07, handed out information and T-shirts on Mountain Day.



HEAL Provides Information on Mountain Day

Thirteen HEAL volunteers and staff members helped to make their table a success. Information was passed out about the candidates for the 2008 Presidential Election and their positions on climate change and other environmental issues. T-shirts were made with stencils to promote HEAL and the 10x10 Campaign, a HEAL project advocating for 10% renewable energy generation on campus by 2010. At the next booth the Appalachian Center displayed photos of mountaintop removal sites and shared information about the consequences of this practice on the region.

Service

A Deeper Appreciation

My experience in Verona, Italy was an eye opening one because Italy is not only a country that many people only visit in their dreams; it is also a country that few African Americans have the chance to visit. Being there and having the type of experience that I had abroad allowed me to learn a lot about my strengths, weaknesses, capabilities, and my character.

I performed service work involving activities such as picking up litter in a park, gardening, weed eating, cleaning pollution from streams in a local park, cooking for large groups of people, repairing benches, and correcting translated English documents. One of the most important jobs I did was assisting with the construction of an outdoor classroom made of cane and a chalkboard and benches that I helped to repair. I consider this job an important one because this outdoor classroom was being constructed to combat the growing aggression toward African and Eastern European immigrants venturing into Verona. The outdoor classroom is constructed in a manner that is intended to make its young pupils feel as if they are in an environment similar to the home countries of many of the immigrants. The organization I volunteered for is hoping that this will in turn allow children to build respect and interest in the cultures of local immigrants.

I enjoyed the chance to be constantly surrounded by different cultures—besides that of Italy. Though this was quite overwhelming at times, living and interacting with individuals from countries like Serbia and Japan forced my entire volunteer group to think of creative ways to communicate with individuals that spoke very little, if any, language other than their own.

I was able to build community with people from places like Mexico and Russia through the service work that we performed. This community building has led to great friendships and tons of cultural knowledge that I would never have received otherwise. In addition, I now strongly believe that all people should be encouraged to take on an experience that will challenge them and lead to a better understanding of their own character.

For me, the most important result of my experience in Italy is a deeper appreciation for the wings of protection that have always



existed throughout my life. For example, although my country and its leadership are not the greatest and my family is not the best, they are mine and have contributed to who I am as an individual. After all the searching of my strengths, weaknesses, capabilities and character I did this summer, I have come to know that I like the adult I have become and am forever grateful to everyone and every experience that has contributed to my development.

—Amber Meadows, '08

My Study Abroad Experience in Vietnam

I love Vietman! My study abroad program time is split between classes and community service. It is amazing. We volunteer weekly at a nursing home, an agent orange victims home, teaching English to local students ages 14-60 (twice a week), and visit agent orange victims in their home in rural areas and deliver aid. Through my experiences in Mexico and Vietnam I now know that I want to work internationally with non-profits. . . probably forever. I also have realized that I really do love working with kids. I am so grateful for all of the things I have learned through Bonners and all of the experiences I have had as a result of it. There is no way to put a price tag on all of the experiences and wonderful people I am meeting through my service. I am now truly starting to realize what I want to do with my life and there is a direct correlation between that realization and being a part of the Berea College and Bonner Scholar Family.

—Lindsey Walker, '09

Reflections

The Strength of Mexican Women

One of the aspects of Mexican culture which truly struck me was the strength of Mexican women. These women worked from before sun up till long after sun down and still found the grace to remain always optimistic, welcoming and generous. They rarely let their exhaustion rob the smile from their faces, and never allowed it to hinder their incredible hospitality.

The women who worked at Mission Mazahua showed up by seven in the morning and worked until nine at night or later. They did everything from office work to washing dishes for over a hundred people. There were times when

the mission could not pay them until weeks after their pay check was due. And yet, for all this they found a way to make it, and make it beautifully.

The women who lived and worked in Plateros worked countless hours in their workshops making and processing silver jewelry. Despite their busy schedules, they always found time to talk to us and ask us how we were doing. I found out at the end of the summer that the women who came to our classes or volunteered to help us were making up the hours of work they missed late into the evening. They were willing to make great sacrifices in order to learn.

Poverty was written on the figures of the women of Rioyos, but not on their faces. They always greeted us warmly and took time to ask us about their children's progress in class. At the end of our three week English camp, they somehow found time to embroider us gifts and prepare a fiesta when many of them barely had enough money to feed their own families.

Interacting with these amazing women was at once inspiring and humbling. They sacrifice so much, and never forget the needs of others. I hope I can find the same quiet strength within me—to live a life of love and service to others.

—Ruthanne Robuck, '10

My Summer at the Aquarium

This past summer I volunteered at the Cabrillo Marine Aquarium in San Pedro, California. I wanted to volunteer there because I have always been curious about marine life.

From the moment I walked into the aquarium, I realized that this place was nothing like other aquariums I have visited. There were not many flashy and showy details around the place. All donations that were given would be used to find ways to educate the public about marine life and how to keep the animals and ocean safe. The focus was on education rather than making money and competing with other museums.

The aquarium firmly believed that children are our future. One of the goals of the aquarium is to get children interested. They believe that children think the ocean is a pretty cool place; but once they learn about something as little as a Sea Star or as big as a Blue Whale, they learn to appreciate that big, blue, wet thing. They end up not wanting to harm that Sea Star, so they go out of their way to recycle, pick up trash, or tell their parents about that cool animal in the ocean. It all starts with the children.

I was the coordinator of the junior docent program. The docents were seventh, eighth and ninth graders who also volunteered their time. They automatically felt they could relate to me because I was the youngest staff member. They respected me, and I became their role model. I needed to answer their questions about school, college and being a teenager. Hopefully, I got them excited about volunteering and their next couple of years before turning into adults.



—Ashley LePage, '10

Staff Spotlight: Luceara Cross

We would like to introduce you to our newest staff member, Luceara Cross. Luceara joined us in August as our Bonner Scholars Coordinator. She grew up in Atlanta, Georgia and completed her undergraduate studies in organizational management and human resource management at Midway College.

As Bonner Scholar Coordinator, Luceara's main responsibility is to make sure that all aspects of the Bonner Scholar Program are running smoothly and that the Bonner freshmen receive the support and training that they need in their first year at Berea College. Luceara is very skilled in this area coming to us as a Training and Resource Development Specialist. A former lead trainer for Kentucky Conference on Community and Justice (formerly NCCJ), Luceara has additional expertise in youth development and service learning. As a consultant she has worked with a number of Kentucky schools and organizations including UK, EKU, Lexmark and Fayette County Public Schools.

Luceara describes herself as a passionate advocate for young people and believes strongly in their ability to succeed. She also believes in our collective responsibility to contribute in meaningful ways to our community and those around us. One of Luceara's friends describes her commitment to service and volunteerism as both professional and personal stating that all of Luceara's professional positions have had a youth or service component. These service commitments have resulted in her recognition as a Kentucky Colonel.

Welcome to Berea College, Luceara!



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