



Connector

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Why Service-Learning?

Reflections from the Service-Learning Advisory Committee

By **ASHLEY COCHRANE**

The service-learning program at Berea College continues to grow, with new faculty and community organizations choosing each year to participate in service-learning partnerships and with more students each term becoming involved in the community through their service-learning work. The Service-Learning Advisory Committee (SLAC) is composed of faculty, staff, community partners and students who are involved in the service-learning program and who meet several times

each term to serve as a sounding board for the CELTS service-learning staff. The SLAC members provide insights that help guide the growth of the program. They also provide support for the program by participating in service-learning events and serving in leadership roles, including sharing information about service-learning on campus and in the community.

At a recent SLAC meeting, the members engaged in a reflective conversation about why we choose to participate in service-learning. The conversation was rich, and—ultimately—inspiring.

Service-learning provides a connection between theory and practice. Rob Smith, Assistant Professor of Psychology, observed that service-learning, “gives a sense of purpose to the courses that we’re asking students to commit half of a year to.” He went on to describe a Gerontology course that he taught during Fall 2007. He said that the partnership with an elementary school in Wallins, Kentucky (Harlan County) helped the Berea College students to, “make the connection between theories of aging and how those theories could be applied to help preserve a little bit of family history.” The Berea College



Business students present their service-learning project at the Spring 2008 Service-Learning Course Expo.

students worked with children at Wallins Creek Elementary School to produce a video documentary of some of the elders in the Wallins community, titled, “Aging in Appalachia.”

Tammy Clemons, the Sustainability Coordinator at Berea College, reflected that, “There is an interdependent relationship between theory and application, which service-learning addresses.” Tammy said that by incorporating service-learning into an Ecofeminism course that she taught in Spring 2006, students were able to explore and experience that interdependent relationship.

The community experience is valuable for students. Jerry Workman, the Volunteer Coordinator at the Berea Community Food Bank, observed, “The process students go through with the community is far more important than the product they produce.” After partnering with more than five service-learning courses in four different disciplines during the past few years, Jerry has plenty of experience on which to base this observation.

Several SLAC members agreed that often students perform better in service-learning

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Service Learning in the Curriculum

Energy and Empowerment: Opportunities for Energy Solutions in Berea

By **RODNEY WOLFENBARGER**

On February 25, 2008, more than 40 people, representing more than 20 community organizations, gathered at the Berea Baptist Fellowship Hall to share their inquiries, interests, and ideas with others in the community in order to help create a strategy for Berea's energy future. This community gathering, titled *Energy & Empowerment: Opportunities for Energy Solutions in Berea*, was sponsored by Appalachia – Science in the Public Interest (A-SPI), CELTS at Berea College, Ecological Sustainability Education (ESE) at Berea College, Kentucky Environmental Foundation (KEF), Kentuckians for the Commonwealth (KFTC—Madison County Chapter), Madison County Greenways and Trails, and Sustainable Berea. The gathering was funded through a Learn and Serve America Community-Based Research (CBR) Innovation grant recently awarded to CELTS to study energy needs and assets in Madison County. One of the goals of the gathering was to empower community members to become actively involved in transforming the policies, infrastructure, assumptions, and behaviors that drive energy use in Kentucky today.

Upon arriving, attendees mingled with others over drinks and snacks and exchanged literature. Everyone then introduced themselves to the larger group and shared the key projects they were either working on or interested in related to energy. For some community members these were personal ventures, while others shared goals and projects of organizations they represented. During introductions, facilitators grouped the ideas that emerged into topics and categories. Afterwards, participants were asked to break out into smaller self-selected focus groups. These groups were given one hour to discuss the chosen topic and were charged with the task of identifying the greatest need or opportunity in our community related to the topic. Groups were also asked to identify one or two community-wide goals, suggest concrete steps to achieve each goal, and generate a list of potential partners who are already working toward accomplishing these goals.

During the gathering, talk ranged from organizing community conversation to organizing human energy. Among the topics participants discussed were food, recycling, bike and walking trails, low-income populations and energy, ecological design, energy alternatives, and energy investment incentives and programs. Participants also discussed ways of connecting people to community education resources, as well as the role of local government as it relates to energy policy.



Community members collaborate during a break in the February meeting *Energy and Empowerment*.

Commenting on the success of the gathering, community member Elizabeth Crowe, representing KEF, emphasized the large turnout and good representation among community interests as positives upon which to build as the group moves forward.

“I was excited to see a cross section of interested individuals and community organizations. Participants got connected with new opportunities, and I think everyone saw similarities in their opinions and goals,” she said. “People were able to make connections and plug into existing community efforts.”

Tammy Clemons, Berea College Sustainability Coordinator, who was a member of a group that discussed the possibility of creating a non-motorized system of trails in Madison County, echoed Crowe's sentiments. She said the gathering served as an initial information-sharing, brainstorming, and strategizing effort to highlight both the energy-related work that many community organizations and individuals are already doing, as well as opportunities for ongoing community collaborations around these

issues. Clemons's group saw an opportunity to establish a comprehensive infrastructure for Madison County to support and connect alternative transportation options.

Following the gathering, Clemons took on the responsibility of creating an Energy and Empowerment (E&E) list-serve, which serves as a communication tool for organizations, activists, educators, and citizens involved in developing practical energy strategies and solutions in Berea. “The purpose of the E&E Yahoo Group,” Clemons says, “is to help

facilitate continuing discussions, information-sharing, and project collaborations.” As such, this tool is keeping community members connected until the next gathering, tentatively scheduled for June. Although the list-serve membership originated from the E&E gathering, anyone can join by signing up on the E&E site: groups.yahoo.com/group/energyempowerment. By signing up, members gain access to an online community featuring a photo-archive, a file sharing repository, and a community calendar for posting upcoming events and deadlines.

CELTS also continues to fund CBR projects related to energy and empowerment. If you have an idea for a project or would like more information on the Learn and Serve America Community-Based Research (CBR) Innovation grant for “Energy and Empowerment in an Appalachian County,” please contact Ashley Cochrane.

“The Impact Conference Truly Had an Impact on Me”

The Impact Conference truly had a big impact on me. Although it lasted for only three days, the information I gained from it was amazing. Not only did I have a chance to meet with and listen to extremely active youths from all over the US, I also had an opportunity to learn and improve some important skills through the many workshops offered.

I was surprised to learn about what other students could and can do. Students found and run great organizations such as The Better World Book, The Student PIRG, etc. Looking at what they have achieved, things they have done, and people they have served motivated me a lot. I now believe that young people can also make a difference and that students can change, especially right on their campuses. Coming back to Berea, I understand more the importance of community service and am ready to make a difference also.

The workshops (how to raise funds, how to recruit more volunteers) I went to taught me a lot about how to be active in what I am doing and how to contribute the most to the clubs of which I am a member. One interesting thing is that most speakers at those workshops were students. I really admired their confidence, experience, and skills.

I am glad that I had the chance to go to the conference. It motivates me to pursue what I have been doing, to become a leader, not only a volunteer, and to join in the changes that many people, students in particular, have been making.

—Phi Nguyen, '11



Phi Nguyen in Boston for the Impact Conference.

Why Service-Learning? CONTINUED FROM PAGE 1

courses because they are motivated by the responsibility they feel to the community. Chad Berry, Director of the Berea College Appalachian Center and Goode Professor of Appalachian Studies, remarked that interacting with the community is a motivating factor for students. He referred to the digital stories that his Appalachian Studies students create to document the lives of traditional musicians: “Who wants to just settle when you are creating a digital story about someone’s life? The product is important because of the process and the relationship. The product motivates the students.”

Service-learning makes a difference in the community. Gordon McKinney, Professor of History, told of his Appalachian Studies students’ work to research land use policies and then to present the results at a community meeting in Estill County. The students’ research impacted the County’s decisions regarding their own land use policies. Jerry Workman added, “Five students

working together as a group are able to do a tremendous amount of work in a short period of time!”

Service-learning experiences can help students apply their learning beyond the conclusion of the course, to other parts of their lives. Gordon McKinney said that following the land use project, several of his students commented, “After having done this, I’m going back to my home county to look at land use issues.” Godron added, “they came to those conclusions themselves, and when they can learn it themselves, it sticks with them longer.” Ehis Akhetuamhen, a first year Bonner Scholar originally from Nigeria, reflected that in service-learning, “it’s easy for students to see how the [academic] concepts affect the community work we’re doing, and then to make the connections to home.”

Service-learning can bridge the campus-community gap, sometimes in unexpected ways. Stephanie Beard, Career Counselor with the New Opportunity School for Women (NOSW), described the benefits that the NOSW participants receive from working with Berea College

students, “They get to know the college environment—walk it, feel it, and get the thrill of knowing that in mid-life they could be a student.” Rob Smith observed that the children his students worked with in Wallins, Kentucky recently came to Berea College for a tour. While on campus, they got to interact with some of his Gerontology students. Some of these children are now interested in attending Berea College, and perhaps they can more clearly envision themselves as college students because of the service-learning partnership they shared with these current Berea students.

Michelle Tooley, Eli Lilly Professor of Religion, concluded our conversation by commenting that service-learning helps all of us learn to be better participants in a civil society. “Service-learning is part of how we are citizens in the world.”

Thank you to each of the members of the Service-Learning Advisory Committee who served during the 2008–09 academic year. If you are interested in serving on SLAC in the coming academic year, please contact Ashley Cochrane for more information.



Hibler, with Maya Benami, at her retirement party this past December.

Greetings from Betty

When I retired in January, many of you asked me about my plans. While I didn't know the specifics, I did know that I wanted a sabbatical of sorts—a time away from Berea to reflect on the past and think about the future. Now those plans have taken shape and I will be spending four months this fall at Jubilee Partners in Comer, GA. Jubilee Partners is an intentional Christian community that offers hospitality to refugees of all faiths when they first arrive in the U.S.—teaching English, providing cultural orientation, and offering a safe space to recover from what in many cases has been years in refugee camps. I have been delighted to learn about many folks in Berea who have been involved with Jubilee Partners in the past, especially with the “overground railroad” in the 1980s that transported Central American refugees safely to Canada. If you'd like to learn more about the organization, the website is www.jubileepartners.org. I told the volunteer coordinator that I had watched many Berea College students go off to exciting and challenging service opportunities over the years, and now I will follow in their footsteps.

Yours in peace, Betty Hibler

EMPTY BOWLS®

April 28 marked the sixth year of Berea College's Annual Empty Bowls event. The event is a collaboration between the Ceramic Apprenticeship Program and CELTS.

Many steps are involved in making this event a success. Students at CELTS and the Ceramics Department work hard getting donations of soup and also extra bowls from area potters like Teresa Cole and Tater Knob Pottery. Along with these donors, many students and staff worked hard cooking soups and setting up the event.

Adding even more excitement to the day, local musicians also donated their time and talent to the event. After the bowls and soups were chosen, diners found a seat beside old friends and new acquaintances and listened to the music. At the end of the evening \$2,790 was raised to benefit local food pantries.

Thanks to all of the volunteers who gave their time and energy and also to our diners! See you next year! —Sheila Lyons





Service

Waiting Out the Storm

Since the beginning of my college career I had been wrapped up in a whirlwind of service events and conferences. Most of which were aimed at changing and/or making a difference in the world. This is not to say that this practice is wrong, but my true intentions should have focused on what kind of difference I wanted to make. Consequently, I avoided the answer to this endearing question by filling my schedule with dozens of tiny service projects, that still left me searching for my “one” true call to service.

Then one day I landed at the Kotoka International Airport and everything changed. From my very first weeks in Ghana, I had repeated to myself silently, “I am going to take Ghana by storm, and it will never be the same after I leave”. Well, while it did storm a few times in Ghana, it was not caused by me or my actions. What did end up happening was the revelation of what service truly meant to me on this Earth. To sum up politely, service came to mean that I, Tianna Williams, am an individual and nothing more than that. However, it will be my mission to do what is right in every day situations and to live a life of good character. But the most important component of this revelation was my willingness to see that service is so much bigger than one person can begin to grapple with. Asking and believing anything more than that would be selfish and arrogant.

In the end, I have come to realize and understand that service has never been about me; I had to learn that the hard way while volunteering in Ghana. Instead, it has always been about that smiling face who stares back at you with a glint of happiness in their eyes. Even though I am still searching for that one cause that makes serving truly worthwhile, I understand that it takes time and a certain individual to wait out the storm. But as I continue my journey, I will always remember that whatever vessel of service



Learning how to weave with a Ghanaian woman (left).

I choose, disappointment is sure to follow, but true servicemen and women can rise above their own disappointment and realize there is work yet to be done.

—Tianna Williams, '09

A Senior's Prom at Berea Health Care Center

Residents at the Berea Health Care Center were surprised with a seniors' prom presented by the Adopt a Grandparent Program and sponsored by the DOROT Foundation on March 22. The prom's theme was Dancing under the Starlight and was attended by over 40 people (both residents and students).

Activities included entertainment provided by the Berea College Swing Dance Club, opportunities to have photos taken by student photographer, Jasmine Williams and chances to win prizes. Residents participated in games like Prom Bingo, Musical Presents, and Grab Bag. Two lucky residents were crowned Prom King and Queen and had their photo taken together under a giant star and lighted arch. AGP volunteers and other Berea College students acted as “prom dates” and assisted with the passing out of food and carnations.

Residents of the Berea Health Care Center truly appreciated the event. One resident remarked, “We've never seen anything like this around here!” The AGP Program and the DOROT Foundation sponsored a second Seniors' Prom at the Terrace Nursing Home on Saturday, April 12.



Prom volunteers at Berea Health Care Center.

—Maranda Brooks, '09

Reflections

A Semester of Service Learning in Central Vietnam

Last semester I had the privilege of studying abroad in Danang, Vietnam. My semester abroad program had an emphasis on community service work. My days in Danang were split between Vietnamese language, history, politics, culture classes and volunteering within the city. It was through my volunteering that I really learned the most about Vietnam. I did volunteer work at various places. I taught conversational English two nights a week, volunteered at a nursing home, visited Agent Orange victims in their home to deliver aid, and volunteered at an Agent Orange group home.

Before going to Vietnam I knew little about Agent Orange. I knew that it was a defoliant sprayed during the America/Vietnam war. I also knew that it had made some of the U.S. Veterans of the war sick as a result of exposure to it. What I did not realize was that some U.S. veterans' children were born with birth defects as a result of exposure to Agent Orange. I knew nothing about the ongoing effects Agent Orange is having in Vietnam, especially in central Vietnam near the city of Danang.

In central Vietnam there are many children being born with disabilities as a result of Agent Orange even today. In Vietnam they are now seeing the effects of Agent Orange three to four generations after the war. There has been a movement in the city of Danang to begin providing services to these agent orange victims; some of these include agent orange victim group homes. These group homes allow Agent Orange victims and their families to obtain a better quality of life. Sometimes when families have a child that is somehow disabled by Agent Orange, one of two things tend to happen. The child's parent or parents either stay home with the child and aren't able to work or they leave the child alone in the home all day long. Neither one of these options benefit families.

The Agent Orange group homes function as daycare of some sort for Agent Orange victims. The children are able to come and spend the day at the group home. This benefits the children and the parents. Parents are able to once again work and better provide for their



Enjoying a rainy day with some of the older boys at the Agent Orange Group Home.

family. The children are able to interact with other children. This helps them build their self confidence and begin to feel comfortable interacting with others in their own communities.

Volunteering at the Agent Orange group home was one of the most unbelievable experiences of my life. It is hard to put into words how inspiring these children were. Regardless of what their disability was they always found ways to adapt and continue on. I felt like I was blessed to be able to know these children. I watched day by day as the kids we worked with became more and more comfortable interacting with other children. I also tried each week to design activities that helped the kids challenge themselves and build up skills. For example, some children had malformed hands. This presented problems with basic manipulation and fine motor skills. Instead of using the affected hand; they would resort to dependence on one hand. I would try to create craft activities and games in which they had to use both

hands thus improving fine motor skills. We would do this by using clay, making paper mache, and once we made macaroni necklaces. I was amazed at the growth I saw in the children just in the four short months I was there.

The kids created their own community in which they all looked out for one another. Also all children were communicating with one another even children who didn't have the ability to audibly speak aloud. The group homes are a wonderful thing and are greatly improving the lives of Agent Orange victims all over Danang. I feel that these types of centers should be encouraged and supported especially by the U.S. I will never forget the children I met during my semester and can't wait until I get an opportunity to see them again. For more information on assisting programs for Agent Orange Victims in Danang visit www.danangquangnamfund.org and for more information on the devastating legacy of Agent Orange visit www.Dacam.org.

—Lindsey Walker, '09

Community Partner Spotlight: **Lisa Gay, '92**

During her time as Director of the South Madison Family Resource Center (FRC), Lisa has become a valuable community partner, whose participation has become critically important to programs sponsored by CELTS. Lisa works with the staff and volunteers of the Hispanic Outreach Project, the Bonner Scholars Program, Berea Buddies and One-on-One Tutoring. She approaches her interactions with students as a mentor and a colleague. She holds high expectations for the students and respects their experience and knowledge.

Lisa's position at the FRC keeps her busy all day long, addressing the school and home needs of the children who attend Shannon Johnson Elementary School and Silver Creek Elementary School, as well as the needs of their families. As the Berea College spring term began, Lisa added to her regular school-based tasks meetings with Berea College student staff for four different programs.

These meetings centered around identifying children to participate in the programs; matching these children with volunteers; coordinating schedules of children, their families, elementary school teachers, and Berea College students; figuring out logistics of transportation, trainings, and programs; and finalizing content of programs.

Lisa stays busy with her work and her family life, and yet she is consistently and enthusiastically willing to meet with, talk with, and work with Berea College students. Her passion for serving children and helping children to become healthy, whole and loved individuals is always apparent, in her interactions with both children and adults.

Lisa is a Berea College graduate and was an active leader in Students for Appalachia while she was a student; this experience gives her a unique understanding of Berea College students who choose to dedicate their labor positions, time and



Lisa (left) receives the Volunteer Service Award from Darlene Stocker at the April, 2008 Labor Awards Banquet.

skills to serving our community. Through Lisa's generous gifts of time, attention, patience, respect and professional mentoring, she is helping to develop a new generation of Berea College graduates who will be "service-oriented leaders for Appalachia and beyond." We at CELTS are privileged to have Lisa as a colleague and partner in our labor program.

—Ashley Cochrane

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