Dickinson College

Office of Religious Life and Community Services Year in Review 2010-2011

36,000+ Community Service Hours in 2010-2011

Dickinson College Office of Religious Life & Community Services

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In the 2010-2011 academic year, Dickinson college students have recorded 36,820 hours of community service through groups, teams, clubs, and organizations on campus.

CommServ (weekly service groups through the office) alone performed 15,655 of these hours. Approximately 250 of our dedicated volunteers spent this time serving different parts of our local community, including children's programs, adult education programs, rebuilding programs, and programs for people with special needs.

The organizations that make up CommServ are America Reads, Big Brother Big Sister, Carlisle Tutoring Program, C.A.R.E.S., Cub Scouts, Disaster Action Team, D.E.E.P., Dream-Catchers, Empower, E.S.L., Girl Scouts, Habitat for Humanity, Rotaract, and Special Friends. Each of these groups works with a community partner to meet their specific needs.

The total number of community service hours performed by CommServ alone increased significantly from last year's 14,000 hours.

Volunteer for a "Day of Service"

Throughout the year, Dickinson students and staff connected with local community partners to meet the most immediate needs in our community through Day of Service events.

For the first event 22 students, 1 administrator and a dog attended National Public Lands Day at Kings Gap Environmental Education Center on September 25, 2010. It was a perfect opportunity for students to learn about the Carlisle area, enjoy the beautiful weather and participate in a national volunteer event for public parks. Dickinson College had the largest volunteer group at the event and had to be split up into three different teams to work on one long trail. After the event, the volunteers enjoyed raffle prizes and lunch provided by Kings Gap and associated organizations. These unique opportunities expose students to the area, provide opportunity to give back, and meet new people on campus while benefiting our community in a myriad of ways.

After the event at Kings Gap, The Day of Service program has attracted more volunteers with each subsequent event – "Celebrate the Book" (First annual fundraiser with Bosler Memorial Library), Giving Tree for the United Methodist Home for Children, Painting project with Hope Station, Ribbon Tent for the Special Olympics, and Painting flower pots for Claremont Nursing and Rehabilitation Services.

By Luigi Fu

Student Reflection by Abbey Kalman

Throughout my volunteer work the past four years, I have learned the value of a truly dedicated volunteer. It often feels like volunteers, although enthusiastic in the beginning, quickly slip away. Many stop showing up, many will continue tutoring but deem the meetings not worth coming to, or even vise versa. It is very hard to find a genuine tutor—one who truly and fully commits to the very few requirements of the program.

The past week has been specifically troubling with regards to this particular problem, and, as a coordinator, it begs the question: when I look at myself, would I consider myself a genuine volunteer? What does it mean to be a genuine volunteer? Does it mean to simply meet all requirements in a timely manner? I am realizing that even though many of us struggle with that piece of the puzzle, to be a genuine volunteer goes beyond meeting commitments. I think being a genuine volunteer means to follow through with commitment. I would hope that our volunteers take joy in the mentoring that they do and feel good about knowing that their work is giving back to the community. I believe that I do this, but it is an eye opener to me.

As a coordinator, it is easy to feel discouraged about our student mentors not meeting simple requirements. But then again, it is important to look at my own level of commitment. Could I be doing more? Could my work be of higher quality, more efficient, and could I be more dedicated? Absolutely. We could always do more. The question is, then, how do we evaluate ourselves? As long as our self-evaluation is consistent with the way in which we evaluate others, I believe that is what makes a good coordinator. It is easy to get frustrated, but it is important to realize that sometimes we all come up short and need to be reminded of why we want to stay committed to the work that we do. Volunteer work is a whole different thing than most other work, as there is very little accountability. Since we are praised for doing almost any of it at all—it is up to us to commit to doing quality and consistent, genuine service.

CommServ Coordinators 2010-2011

Public Affairs Symposium: Day of Action

PAS Day of Action was a one-day event at Dickinson where different groups around campus were able to take action about issues or events that mattered to them. The Student Leadership team from the Office of Religious Life and Community Service had three separate stations. The Bonner Program focused their efforts on human trafficking awareness where they educated people about the severity of human trafficking and invited the students to make cards, decorate bags and make comfort kits for the Polaris Project. Another station welcomed the Dickinson Community to make their own Challah bread, learn about hunger world-wide, and give a donation to an upcoming meal packaging event. The third station was focused around needs at Sadler Health Center, a non-profit organization aimed to provide medical assistance for the less fortunate, located in downtown Carlisle. An assembly line was set up to make hygiene kits for their patients. This event was a successful way to get students involved who may not know a lot about serving the Carlisle community.

-By Paige Hollenbeck

Volunteer Interest Surveys help students pick where to get involved

In the past we have struggled to get a clear, quick picture of students interests in community service as well as their availability to volunteer. Therefore, we created an interest survey that asks questions that aim to place the interested students in the appropriate program for their interests in service. This encompassed service working with children (specifying different age groups), ESL instruction, tutoring, disaster relief, service trips, and more.

From there we asked for the student's time availability in different time slots on each day of the week, that way we could direct them to which program meetings times correlated with their schedule.

We strove to give students a few options of programs with which he or she would be able and interested in being involved. Since using that initial survey, we have worked to revise it even more so it can be more specific and effective and help students work with community partners in a more efficient, effective manner.

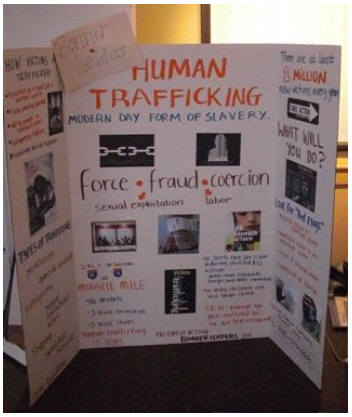
By Juliana Burdick

Bonner Human Trafficking Awareness

Each year, Bonner Leaders participate in an awareness campaign about a social justice issue. This year, Bonner focused on a semester-long campaign surrounding the issue of human trafficking. On PAS "Day of Action" Bonner handed out promotional postcards with human trafficking facts, assembled hygienic comfort kits for human trafficking victims, decorated canvas-style grocery bags that were given to women affected by human trafficking, and decorated inspirational cards that were given to all victims of human trafficking. All of these items were donated to a nonprofit organization in Washington D.C. that helps create awareness about human trafficking , known as the Polaris Project.

During the last week in March, Bonner held another awareness campaign which included arranging posters around the student union building stairwell with facts and pictures about human trafficking; encouraging everyone to wear navy blue (the human trafficking awareness color) one day; decorating more canvas-style grocery bags for human trafficked women; and lastly, ending with a viewing of a human trafficking documentary – all to spread awareness about this major issue that is very alive on the Miracle Mile just east of Carlisle.

By Samantha Nicastro



Awareness and Action were a part of Bonner's efforts to educate the campus about global and local human trafficking.

I was forced to confront people outside the college community and a very underprivileged community at that. The trip generated a lot of questions for me about how I view poverty and homelessness.

Service Trip Participant

Service Trip Restructuring

Although the destinations for Dickinson College Service Trips have largely remained the same as compared to previous years, the pre-trip and post-trip programming has changed greatly during the 2010-2011 academic year. With over 110 students participating this year, we experienced overwhelming applicant rates in which we could only accept half of the students that applied. More and more new and younger students find that services trips are a great way to be introduced to service at Dickinson College. After participating in any one of our service trips, many students become engaged in local community service organizations and take up leadership positions.

This past year we focused heavily on preparing students for the actual service trip experience, and for living with a team of new people in an entirely different culture. We expanded our pre-trip programming to include meetings for all teams that center on learning the importance of understanding the larger societal and international issues that come into play as we serve each community. Additionally, we did extensive work to educate participants on how to best manage team dynamics and understand that despite the fact that they are all Dickinsonians, they all come from interesting and dynamic cultures, which more often than not, will positively contribute to the overall team experience.

Beyond pre-trip preparation, the service trip program held post-trip meetings with all teams to discuss the transition back to academics and the Dickinson community. Although this may seem minor, most students find it difficult to transition back into their previous friend groups and activities because they have experienced something that is challenging to explain to others. These post-trip meetings helped to solidify the relationships formed on trips and provided a forum for students to share their new perspectives on service, community and sometimes their newly formed understanding of societal problems and solutions.

By Cate David

Students working with Habitat for Humanity in Miami, FL over spring break

Religious Life Reorganization

Last summer a group of faculty, administrators, community leaders, and students met to explore what religious life on campus should look like. After a day retreat, the following was laid forth as the mission of the Office of Religious Life:

The Office of Religious Life at Dickinson College provides support for students during a time when decisions about life's meaning, living in community of pluralism, and religious beliefs are explored and shaped. The Office provides space for students to learn about other faith traditions, provides a place for questioning, and opportunities to articulate hopes, decisions, and meaning.

The Office supports students to explore:

- *What do I believe?* (meaning making and awareness of one's own values and beliefs, space for safe questioning and exploration)
- *How do I articulate what I believe?* (ability to share beliefs and live in respect and understanding with people of other beliefs)
- *How do I live out my belief?* (capacity to respond in ways that continue spiritual learning and understanding)

How did the office live out this new vision in 2010-2011?

What do I believe?

- Hosted What Matters Most Dinners, a time of dinner and reflection by a Dickinson staff person about what matters most in their lives then asking students to share from their personal experiences
- Posters of all the religious holidays with explanations and traditions celebrated throughout the academic year decorated the cafeteria during the Holiday Dinner in December
- Hosted Million Minutes of Peace

How do I articulate what I believe?

- Hosted a Women's Retreat for women of all faith traditions to come together to discuss what they believe and how they live that out on campus.
- A small group looked at *Let Your Life Speak* by Parker Palmer, exploring how our faith and vocation intertwine

How did I live out my belief?

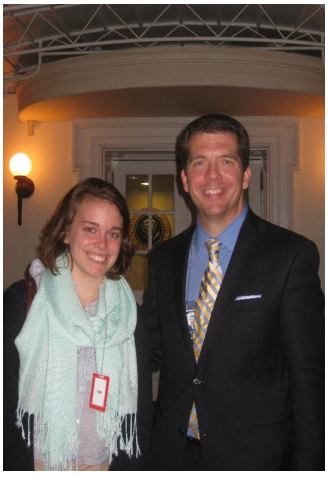
- Partnered with Hillel (Jewish student group) to raise funds for Stop Hunger Now. Then hosted a meal packaging day with over 200 volunteers to package 25,000 meals for those in need of food world-wide.
- Held a Tom's Shoe Style Your Soul Party where over 40 people from campus learned about the Tom's Company and decorated their shoes while in turn giving one pair to a child in need.
- 5 people participated in the Young Life Leadership Training Program in conjunction with Messiah College to consider leading a Young Life Club at a local high school throughout college.

Interfaith Conference at The White House

This past November, my supervisor and I attended an interfaith conference hosted by Interfaith Youth Core at Georgetown University and The White House. Efforts of the IFYC were focused on bringing people of all faith traditions together to work for the common good.

A major component of the Dickinson College Religious Life Office's goals is to articulate and live out students' faith and religious traditions. As part of an effort to create interfaith relationships and live out our beliefs at Dickinson College, the Office of Religious Life hosted an all-campus STOP HUNGER NOW Meal Packaging Event. On April 9, 2011 over 200 students, staff, faculty, and community members gathered to package 25,000 nutritious meals to be sent abroad to those in need. Each day, 25,000 men, women, and children die of hunger-related causes; we pray that our efforts allowed for one day without suffering.

By Sara Boyer



Sara Boyer '11 with alumni Brian Kamoie '93, senior director for preparedness policy and White House National Security staffer. After the conference Brian was able to take us on a private tour of the West Wing!

What Matters Most Dinners

Each semester the Office hosts dinners based on a lecture series at Carnegie Mellon called the Last Lecture, one famous last lecture being Randy Pausch's. Randy Pausch was diagnosed with terminal cancer before being asked to give his lecture, making his appearance literally his last lecture. The series at Carnegie Mellon was meant to give professors the experience of relaying knowledge that they have learned through their life. For Randy Pausch, this was all too true.

The What Matters Most dinner series hosted at Dickinson College follows a similar but more intimate format. Instead of having a lecture, we aim for a dinner with around 12 students who are recommended by the speaker or by their resident advisors, who are randomly picked from the student body, or who sign up. We serve dinner and gather in the living room of an on-campus house and allow the speaker to share what matters most to them in their life. We also have opened this dialogue beyond students and professors, having administrators and staff speak as well.

One dinner this past semester was hosted by Vickie who works at the Union Station (a dining option on campus). Vickie spoke about Family, Friends, Faith and lastly making an impact. Most of the guests at the dinner did not know each other well before this, but after introduction and sharing their dreams and passions, they were all on a first name basis. Vickie also shared her poetry with the group then she spoke about making an impact and the importance of working at a college where she can interact with students and impact their lives. She said that students don't think she listens or cares about their problems but she said that as much as possible she gives them advice and impacts their lives, just being there, hearing their stories and feeding off their energy that they impact her life as well and her poetry .

Although the dinners are small, they make a big impact on the students, faculty, and staff that are involved.

By Emily Rincavage

25,000 Meals for Hunger

What if Dickinson students, faculty, staff and community members came together one day to do something to raise awareness about hunger globally? Each day 25,000 people die of a hunger-related illness. Could we do something together across religious, class year, and background lines?

In April, over 200 people gathered to participate in a Stop Hunger Now Meal Packaging Event.

The day was filled with rice being weighed, vitamins added, everything sealed and packed onto a truck to be shipped through the Philadelphia office. North Dickinson Elementary School helped support the event with some volunteers and raised over $300 towards the $6500 contribution to buy all the supplies.

Our work together in Carlisle can lead to a better world as we together care for one another.

Packing meals for Stop Hunger Now!
By Sara Boyer

Women of Faith Retreat

Women of three different faiths (Jewish, Christian, and Muslim) gathered to discuss what it means to be a woman of faith on the Dickinson College Campus. Participants started out the discussion with an "I am..." activity which involved each participant writing down words to finish the sentence I am... The point of this activity was to show each other how we differ in our faith traditions and backgrounds, but more importantly the commonalities that we have as women, especially women of faith on campus.

As the night progressed, and we continued to eat, we also continued the conversation after watching a few movie clips from "Bend it Like Beckham," a movie set up to represent two girls from different faith traditions who end up becoming best friends despite their differences. We went into discussions about expectations of our family, faith, and friends. All participants were actively engaged and it was a really great time to hear how other women of faith on campus feel about their lives here at Dickinson and what they have gone through/ struggled with while adjusting to and then living on a college campus.

By Sara Boyer

On the Web

There have been new and exciting changes to the web pages of Religious Life and Community Service. On the Commserv page you can now view weekly service reflections written by Commserv Coordinators as well as Serve the World service trip reflections. Both reflections are written by service volunteers in the interest of sharing their experiences and the way service has transformed their lives.

Also, new picture galleries have been set up on both the Religious Life and Commserv pages displaying images of students engaging their communities through service.

Check it out at: http://www.dickinson.edu/about/administrative-offices/
Choose Religious Life or Community Services

By Esme Alvarez

"It really made me see how important it is to engage in the community you live, whether it is just for a short period of time or several years, there is so much to learn and acknowledge in the world around you that it is powerful and important."

Service Trip Participant

By the Numbers

6 service trips this year
9 office student staff to keep us on our toes
9 What Matters Most Dinners
7 Service trip coordinators
14 weekly service groups through the office
15 women at the Women of Faith Retreat
31 weekly service coordinators
109 people on service trips
115 people involved in Day of Service
200+ participants at Stop Hunger Now event
265 weekly volunteers in Spring 2011
$26,277 raised in donations on campus
36,820 hours of service this year by Dickinson

Office Staff Gives Back

One of the struggles of doing the administrative part of community service and religious life is missing the hands-on adventures when one is tasked with organizing volunteers, connecting with community partners, covering details, and making sure participants are always busy.

In March the office staff participated in a day of service in Harrisburg. We visited Loaves of Love, a food bank for HIV/AIDS patients through Harris Street UMC. There we stocked shelves and stored goods. After a tour of the state capital building (many of the students were from various states beyond PA), we combined our skills and cooked a dinner of BBQ ribs, macaroni, veggies, salad, and rice krispie treats for women and children at Bethesda Mission. Many of these women need a hand up as they face a variety of challenges to get back on their feet and find permanent jobs and housing. The day ended with a Hershey Bears game and lots of laughs.

During this time we were all reminded of the need to balance administrative service and hands-on service. Each staff person (student and professional staff) was reminded of the impact on those we serve even if at times we are a few steps removed from the actual hands on service. To our community partners: Thank you for all the administrative stuff you do to make it possible for our students and community to benefit. We hope that you find creative ways to have the opportunity to work hands on with those you serve and find this balance in your own lives.

The office staff having a team moment at Bethesda Mission as we prepared dinner for the women and children in Harrisburg.