

Brought to you by the Center for Community and Civic Engagement



# Civic Engagement

AT ELIZABETHTOWN COLLEGE - JANUARY 2013

## Students 'Lend-a-Hand' in New Orleans



Photo: Sharon Sherick

Students work to rebuild a home in New Orleans, LA. Volunteers worked toward re-building homes for victims of Hurricane Katrina. The trip spanned the week of January 5-13.

During the week of January 5-13, Elizabethtown College students travelled to New Orleans, LA., to aid the St. Bernard's Project and work toward reconstructing homes that were destroyed during Hurricane Katrina, and have not since been repaired.

Students worked a total of 789 hours all together. The workload included time spent at the Addullum Christian Outreach Center, by helping a church pastor move supplies. Student volunteers also worked on re-building homes by installing insulation, drywall as well as taping and spackling at two different homes.

The trip was sponsored through the Lend-a-Hand organization, as well as the Center for Community and Civic Engagement.

Junior Marcella Jones weighed in on her experiences while on the Lend-a-Hand trip: "We learned about and experienced the culture of the area firsthand," she said. "Although our primary reason for the trip was service, I think this was another important component." Experiencing the community's distress firsthand aided in helping students to understand what life is like for victims of such natural disasters.

"I cannot describe the sorrow that I felt for these people who have been uprooted and are struggling to come home for so long," Marcella added. She explained that she, along with her fellow student-volunteers, have a newfound appreciation for the citizens of New Orleans, having experienced first-hand what they have been dealing with for the past few years.



Above, students gather for a photo in front of the St. Bernard charity. It was one of the two places assisted during the trip.

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120<sup>14</sup> PROJECTS  
STUDENTS  
11 community members  
17<sup>HIGH</sup> SCHOOL STUDENTS  
140 HOMES REACHED  
1 MLK DAY

The Annual MLK Day went off without a hinge at Elizabethtown College this past January. Volunteers worked for organizations such as the American Red Cross, Bethesda Mission, Brethren Housing, Elizabethtown Community Nursery School, Girl Scouts, Lend-A-Hand, Masonic Village, Water Street Rescue Mission, Winters Heritage House, CATRA, Central PA Food Bank, Conoy Church Food Bank, Cornerstone Community Ministries and many more.

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## Students participate in Heifer Global Villages Project

The Center for Community and Civic Engagement recently coordinated three first-year seminars to attend the Heifer Project: an experience designed to hone international relations skills as well as to raise awareness for the difficulties of being homeless, in poverty, hungry, etc.

The event took place at the Heifer Global Village at Shepherd's Spring Outdoor Ministry in Sharpsburg, MD. Currently, the organization has the countries of Guatemala, Mozambique, Refugee, Kenya and Appalachia set up as 'homes' where participants must act as they are from while trying to survive a night in 'poverty.' The Village is looking forward to creating a Thailand home as well as two additional homes for countries that have not been decided, as well as a kitchen for Mozambique, a canvas yurt and platform and a small stone home in Tibet. In addition, the Village hopes to eventually create a second composting toilet system, a pavilion and a two-story community center.

During the trip, students were given the opportunity to explore cultural identity by spending the night in a home that is designated to be a different country. Each home then becomes a "family" and that group has to work together to support themselves with food, shelter, etc. for the night. There are limited resources in the village, and language barriers are taken into consideration during the experience.

Dr. Hagan, Dr. Mapp and Dr. Kozimor-King's first-year seminars all participated in this experience. Each of their classes incorporated some element of lifestyle, cultural relations, etc. and so this project was a perfect real-life example of what they were studying.

The night was challenging: there were language barriers between the villages, and so students could not speak with one another to communicate their needs. They instead had to find other ways to express themselves to one another, a great skill to build when dealing with international relations, especially in the case of there being a language barrier.

Each village had to feed themselves dinner, and gather any other needs for



Photo: Sharon Sherick

Above, participants work together outside of the huts. Below, a "family" inside of their home. The Heifer Global Villages Project was coordinated by the CCCE in conjunction with the Heifer Global Village at Shepherd's Spring Outdoor Ministry in Sharpsburg, MD.

the night. The participants were left without anything.

An integral part of educating for service is educating for a universal world, one where peaceful relations can be maintained. There is no better way to encourage cultural acceptance than making the students part of the cultures themselves.

One of the professors involved, Dr. Hagan, noted that he hoped the project inspired students to realize that poverty is a very real issue. He also said that some of the participants had a hard time living under the conditions which they were required to. For example, there were spiders and mice in some of the huts and the groups had to "barter or beg" for resources to make dinner over a fire. They all had to sleep on dirt floors, were given a "meager" dinner of stew and a few vegetables, it was a challenge to even just get the fire started to cook the meal, and last but certainly not least, there was only one composting toilet available for use.

Dr. Hagan also spoke about the re-

lections he required his students to write, in which many of them claimed they had never viewed poverty as they do now. He also saw numerous students say they will be much more conscious of how much food they take at the Marketplace, don't eat, and just throw out. Others vowed to change their style of living, by taking just what they need in terms of food and other essential resources.

"For some, (hopefully many or most) of the students, it gave a very minute glimpse at what poverty entails. For a moment, they had the opportunity to wear a different set of lenses, or walk in someone else's shoes... someone whose life is dramatically different from theirs (from an economic perspective)" Hagan added.

The overnight project served as a great alternative to legitimately being out in language-barriered countries, trying to survive. This temporary experience serves as just the right kind of experience that students need to gather a better understanding of the world around them.

## Poverty simulation raises awareness, educates, inspires

Poverty statistics are staggering, and research from professionals such as Dr. Ruby Payne or Dr. Donna Beagle and Jonathan Kozol can tell you just that. In Lancaster County alone, there is an approximated population of 507,766 and 9.2% of them are living in poverty. That's about 46,714 people. Of that, 13.3% are children.

It's for this reason that the CCCE decided to create an event that simulates a state of poverty for students to better understand how urgent the crisis really is.

The simulation was supported by the Community Action Program of Lancaster County. The experience is aimed toward provoking insightful conversation about the realities of poverty and how communities can work together to address the problem. Throughout the experience, different participants take on different roles. For Senior Ka-

tie Mortara, her's was playing a young boy whose parents were incarcerated. Her siblings were taking care of her. Katie chose to participate in the simulation because of her major, Social Work, as well as her being in an SDLC that is themed with homelessness and poverty.

"Already knowing a great amount on the issue of poverty, my experience at the poverty simulation made it more real for me," Katie said. "I was aware of the multitude of forces that keep individuals stuck in poverty-- lack of resources, lack of transportation, lack of societal aid-- and the whole experience put it in a new perspective for me."

Student participants agreed - poverty is a "grave issue" that is "seriously under-looked," as Katie put it. The experience, however, shed light on this, and made way for more understanding and such for people who don't understand.

For Caroline Schuster, the experience proved a similar outcome. Caroline said she decided to participate after hearing about it through Mrs. Nancy Valkenburg and Dr. Coyle of the Education Department. She thought it would be a new experience, one she had never considered doing before.

During the simulation, Caroline had the role of girlfriend and mother, one who was trying to make sure that she was working with her "boyfriend" to take care of their daughter, and making sure that he was at work. She was also responsible for getting food, paying the bills and finding somewhere to live. She said that although the simulation utilized fake money, she never realized how challenging finances are, and how expensive things needed for living, are when you're starting out with nothing. She talked about realizing that some is-

ues, that are otherwise very important, take a back seat to basic survival needs.

"At the end of the simulation, everyone talked about what they realized. One person shared that afterwards, she realized she never asked her 'kids' how school was going or if they had any homework." The mother was so focused on making sure that their basic needs were taken care of.

For Caroline, that perspective was very interesting for a future-educator. "It made me think of why students may not be completing homework or handing things in on time, and other issues occurring at home that [could affect schoolwork]."

Just that affirmation proves that the simulation did what it was meant to: open minds and hearts to consider what people are routinely dealing with in terms of basic survival.

## Homelessness, hunger awareness trip serves, educates



Photo: livegreenlancaster.org

Above, the YWCA where the awareness trip took place.

The Homelessness/Hunger Awareness trip took place from Friday, November 16 - Saturday, November 17.

Students met in the Hoover parking lot on Friday afternoon to load their sleeping bags and donations. Each student received a boxed meal for dinner, which was to be eaten at some point during the evening.

From the Queen St. Lancaster bus station, students walked to their placements for the evening. After service projects at the shelters and centers, everyone met at the YWCA before 9 pm. This is because the doors close strictly at 9, and it's lights out by 10. This is a common ruling for homeless shelters.

The next morning, participants woke up and walked to the Water Street Rescue Mission for breakfast and a homelessness presentation.

Another service activity was done from 10:30-

12:30 that day.

Students had to bring their own sleeping bags, blankets, sheets and pillows, as none of that was available. Showers were also not available, and even a change of clothes was optional, as everything had to be carried with them for the whole weekend.

It was this combination of putting the students in the shoes of those who are homeless and hungry as well as providing those in need with service that gave the trip the element of education and awareness beyond just a service trip.

Living as the homeless did for a weekend was enlightening for many, and even difficult for some. Without access to the modern luxuries that many people are accustomed to, life becomes inextricably harder.

The trip was successful in getting students out into the community to see what our neighbors are facing every day of their lives.

## Donations collected for town of Belmar, NJ, post-Sandy

After years of volunteering with the CCCE to repair homes and communities after natural disasters like Hurricane Katrina, alumnus Laura Beckenstein never imagined she'd be the one in need eventually.

Unfortunately, that day did come to pass when she realized that her community in New Jersey desperately needed help after the events of Hurricane Sandy.

A notice was issued to the Elizabethtown College community that donations were being accepted in a variety of ways.

Groups could pull together funds or do some form of internal collection of donations to be submitted together. Of course, individuals were also more than welcome to donate monaterily or with any of the requested items.

There was a particular focus on children and the elderly when collecting items. Children who were out of their homes and school needed books, games and other educational or entertaining items to have something to keep them busy while in the shelters. The elderly needed items such as sweaters, socks, medical supplies and other toiletries to ensure that they were all warm and their immediate medical needs were tended to.

The collection was wildly successful, as



Above, Laura Beckenstein and Sean Sprance pick up donations that were gathered for the town of Belmar, New Jersey, after Hurricane Sandy demolished most of the area.

evidenced by the photo above. Laura came to pick up everything that the college was able to donate, and with her she brought Sean Sprance. She worked closely with a representative from Belmar First Aid. Laura also noted that "the town now looks like nothing

hit, with the exception of the boardwalk... Belmar was the first community in New Jersey to start rebuilding," an effort that wouldn't have been possible without the cooperation and involvement of the CCCE and the Elizabethtown College community.

Photo: Sharon Sherick

## CCCE pairs with Senate for 'Adopt an Angel' gift drive for children

With the help of the Student Senate, the CCCE collected and delivered over 130 gifts for children in the Lancaster Area. This was accomplished in collaboration with Tabor as well as the School District of Lancaster Homeless Student Projects.

Prior to winter break, students were able to sign up to "adopt an angel," where they

were given the age, gender and name of the child, so appropriate gifts could be purchased.

The gifts ranged from toys and clothes to school supplies and other things that children would want.

Giving back, especially during the holiday season, is a reminder of how fortunate the majority of us are.



Photo: Sharon Sherick

Juniors Emily Gockley and Adam Moore stand in front of a trunk filled with toys collected for local Lancaster County children in need.

## Volunteers rebuild homes from Hurricane Katrina

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While on the trip, student volunteers also helped community members such as Pastor Randy, who created the center for volunteers just months after Katrina hit. He told the volunteers stories of his experiences after Katrina, with his family, his parish and the government. He made it clear how severely the community was struggling after the natural disaster.

He explained how after the storm, there was more than just destruction to the buildings and neighborhoods

*"If they can come out of that experience with faith and hope and love, I can take every challenge I face and come out with something positive."*

that Katrina passed through, there was a lot of personal wreckage to be dealt with as well. After the storm, he had to go search for his deceased family members' bodies, with the knowledge that they did not survive the storm. He estimated that for every person that did survive the storm, they probably lost at least half of their family and friends. He could also think of about 100 people he never saw again, unsure if they were deceased or if they just left and never came back.

Amanda Pluta was able to meet Miss Rosemary, a homeowner that the volunteers worked for. Amanda described her as "joyful," despite her circumstances. It was unanimous that her outlook on life was inspiring. "She kept telling us to wake up everyday happy that we're alive and healthy, to treat everyone we meet like they were our family, and that she may not re-



Photo: Sharon Sherick

Above, community members at the unveiling of their newly-renovated home. Below, student-volunteers hard at work to rebuild community homes that were destroyed in the hurricane but never repaired. The trip took place this past January.



member all of our names, but she would remember our faces," Amanda said.

And the experience proved to be like no other: "You hear a lot of people say, 'it'll change your life,' but I didn't think it would until I was going to bed at night and I'd have these racing thoughts about the courage and strength these people had," Amanda added.

The volunteers were profoundly affected by the stories, the courage, and the destruction they witnessed, even so many years after the disaster. To see people have such faith in God and other human beings "changed the way I face my everyday struggles," Amanda said. "If they can come out of that experience with faith and hope and love, I can take every challenge I face and come out with something positive."

# What's coming up next for the CCCE

## *Events, service trips, opportunities for upcoming semester in the works*

### **College 101:**

Coming this February, select high school students will be invited on campus for "College 101." The program is an introductory day to collegiate life. With the help of professors that have volunteered, the day will consist of a number of interactive activities and classes aimed to introduce high school students that are participating in CCCE Mentoring Programs to our admissions, registration and academic classes. The event will take place on Tuesday, February 26 from 9:00 am - 3:30 pm.

### **Rural Poverty Experience:**

The CCCE is planning yet another experience that will raise awareness for those living in poverty. This trip will be aimed toward exploring poverty in rural areas, as the issue is commonly associated with more urban areas. However, this isn't the case-- and this experience was created to show just that. Students will be leaving on Friday, and returning on Saturday, and in that time, they will be interacting with and helping out families in need. There will be opportunities to feed the hungry as well as to communicate and develop relationships with them. There will also be a Family Fun Night, to further develop relationships and to give families something to do in a warm, friendly environment. The trip will take place April 12-13.

### **Thistle Farms Trip:**

Participants will be travelling to the Nashville area to visit Thistle Farms, an enterprise run by the women of Magdalene. The women create natural bath and body products that are good for the earth as well as the body. While working at the farm, the women learn skills in manufacturing, packaging, marketing and sales, or even administration. It is a supportive

workplace where women learn skills needed to earn a living wage. The trip will take place during Spring Break.

### **Give Kids the World:**

Participants will travel to Kissimmee, Florida, to visit Give Kids the World: a non-profit organization that exists only to fulfill the wishes of all children with life-threatening illnesses and their families. The organization provides the opportunity for ill children and their families to enjoy a cost-free visit to the Central Florida attractions as well as the Give Kids the World Village.

### **Senior Week Service:**

Although space is limited, volunteers are welcome to sign up for a rural poverty service trip to West Virginia from Sunday, May 12 - Thursday, May 16. The cost is \$185 to participate. Forms will be outside the office Nicarry 237 or <http://www.etown.edu/centers/community-civic/>. Students will be staying in cabins at Grand Vue Park located in Marshall County, West Virginia. During the day, students will volunteer at a local soup kitchen where they will prepare and serve meals as well as socialize with the community.

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### **SAVE THE DATE:**

CCCE Reflection Dinner  
Susquehanna Room - Wed. April 24, 5:00  
RSVP will be required  
*-details to follow-*

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