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An ALIVE Center Day

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Building Partnerships to Strengthen Communities Across Central Kentucky

ALIVE
WKU CENTER FOR COMMUNITY PARTNERSHIPS

September 2008 Volume 3, Issue 3

An ALIVE Center Day

Above, Leah Ashwill, Community Engagement Coordinator, participates in Bowling Green-Warren County Community Education's Annual Stand for Children Day.

It's the start of a new semester on the Hill and the beginning of a new school year for children and families across the region. The WKU ALIVE Center for Community Partnerships would like to take this time to remind the community who we are and what we do.

After five years, we feel it's important to share information about our services so that nonprofit organizations, the campus community, individuals and families throughout WKU's service region are aware of the services we provide.

Between 2000 and 2003, surveys conducted by the United Way of Southern Kentucky, the Bowling Green Area Chamber of Commerce and the Mayor's Task Force on Volunteerism indicated that citizens and agencies in Warren County would benefit from a centralized clearinghouse of information on human services. People with needs had trouble trying to access important services, and people interested in volunteering didn't know how to connect with the nonprofit organizations that needed their help.

(continues on page 6)

IN THIS ISSUE

2 Learning By Doing

2 Engaged Department Incentives

3 Student Engagement Exemplified

4 A Serving of Warm Blessings

6 An ALIVE Center Day (cont.)

7 Community Calendar

7 Kids Try-Athlon

7 Nonprofit Job/ Volunteer Fair

8 Bowling Green International Festival

Engaging Incentives

New Funding Encourages Campus-Community Partnerships

Funding from Kentucky's Regional Stewardship Program has allowed WKU to offer new engagement incentive awards. These awards will be used to address regional needs through campus and community partnerships. The WKU ALIVE Center for Community Partnerships will coordinate these collaborative campus-community projects as well as assist interested faculty in connecting this vital work to community-based research and service-learning opportunities.

The funds will be awarded on a competitive basis with special attention being given to the collaborative nature of the project and the degree to which it addresses a recognized community need. Funds will be awarded directly to units within the university for the purpose of providing faculty/staff release time and/or project expenses. Project ideas are encouraged from both WKU and the surrounding communities. ALIVE Center staff will be available to work with partners in order to prepare a proposal for the selection committee consisting of members from both the campus and the community.

Work is currently underway to establish specific guidelines for these incentive awards. Notification will go out to faculty, staff and community partners when these guidelines become available. If you have any questions, contact Paul Markham or Leah Ashwill for details.

Above, Kevin Kecskes from Portland State University speaks with WKU faculty at the Engaged Departments Conference last April.

Learning By Doing

Above, Art Deparment Professor and Gallery Director, Kristina Arnold, reviews with student while setting up for the 2008 Spring Student Exhibition.

Service-learning has been described as "learning by doing," and, at WKU it is considered a form of "experiential learning" in which students participate in an organized activity that meets identified community needs. In service-learning classes, students work in the community on issues that make education relevant and exciting. Course materials such as lectures and readings improve the quality of service, and in turn, the service experience enhances the classroom dialogue, student understanding, and student learning. Service-learning may take the form of community placements, projects, or community-based research.

At WKU we use the following definition: Curricular Service-learning is a course-based, credit-bearing educational experience in which students participate in an organized service activity that meets a community need and reflect on their service activity as a means of gaining a deeper understanding of course content, a broader appreciation of the discipline, an enhanced sense of social responsibility and/or a greater interest in an understanding of community life.

We now have service-learning handbooks available for faculty, staff, students, and community partners. If you would like a copy please contact Cheryl Kirby-Stokes. We look forward to working with you in this new academic year!

Student Engagement Exemplified

It's not every day you run across college students as engaged as Sara Miller, a 21 year old senior at Western Kentucky University majoring in Health Care Administration, minoring in American Humanics, and seeking a certificate in Leadership Studies.

A native of Shepherdsville, KY, Sara first began volunteering in high school through her work at Kosair Children's Hospital in Louisville, KY. As a teen volunteer, Sara worked with Child Life Specialists, visiting and playing with the sick children. Sara developed a passion for serving others during her summer breaks at Kosair and has continued giving back throughout her college career.

Sara has been actively volunteering in the Bowling Green community since her first week on the Hill during Master Plan. Since that time, she has been involved with Up Til Dawn, a student-led, student-run fundraising project for St. Jude Children's Research Hospital, as well as Bowl for Kids Sake, benefitting Big Brothers Big Sisters of South Central Kentucky.

Sara also volunteers at Revolution 91.7 FM, the student-run radio station at WKU. There she serves three hours a week as a student DJ. Sara says she loves working there because everyone is so passionate about the music. She says, "It's rewarding to have someone call in to request a song and be able to play it for them. Sometimes they call back to thank me. That's why I love it… even if it's just for a few moments, I've brightened their day by playing the song they want to hear, and I feel it's been worth my time."

Last semester, Sara volunteered for the United Way Allocations Committee, which is a team of community members who make site visits and review the grant applications for nonprofits applying for United Way funds. Aiding in the process of deciding which organizations will receive funding and how much is a responsibility that Sara took very seriously and is yet another example of how much she values her role in this community.

When Sara's not busy studying, volunteering, or engaging in other campus activities, such as student organizations for her Major and Minor, you may find her working on a national pilot project funded by the Institute of Medicine that supports a healthy foods campaign for middle and high school students in Bowling Green. Sara is working with faculty and staff from three different departments on campus (Public Health, Nutrition, and ALIVE Center) to implement the "Smart Bites" project, which ties in with her Honors Thesis on Childhood Obesity. Sara was awarded "Outstanding Undergraduate in the Social Sciences" at the WKU Student Research Conference last Spring for her research and poster presentation on Childhood Obesity.

Sara exemplifies engaged student learning here at WKU. Both her classroom and real world learning experiences are preparing her for a lifetime of impacting lives and creating real change in the world.

A Serving of Warm Blessings

Warm Blessings meal kitchen in Elizabethtown, KY prepares meals three nights a week for individuals and families in need. Of course, it takes the work of many caring individuals to provide for the growing number of persons living in poverty or with threat of losing their home in Hardin and adjoining LaRue County. Linda Funk, Executive Board Chair of Warm Blessings, along with many other dedicated individuals, organizes resources to provide a warm meal every Monday, Tuesday and Thursday night. The program is able to operate with a manageable overhead due to the low cost of foods made available at America's Second Harvest of the Heartland, and in July, Warm Blessings celebrated its second anniversary. College Heights Church generously provides space and van transportation, and gas is donated by Mr. Roger Ball, a local resident. Countless volunteers, both young and old, dedicate their time preparing and serving meals for Warm Blessings' guests.

Anyone who works intimately with Warm Blessings and the population that they serve recognizes the need for homeless services beyond the meal kitchen. The meal kitchen program itself needs more space and more nights, but an even greater need is an emergency shelter for people trying to find employment. It's a poverty issue.

Linda and the Board of Directors for Warm Blessings is working with faculty in the Social Work Department at Western Kentucky University and Elizabethtown Community College to conduct research on poverty, homelessness and housing conditions in Hardin County. Although some data collection has taken place through the Point in

A Serving of Warm Blessings

Time Homeless Count conducted by the Kentucky Housing Corporation, more research is going to be necessary to establish a need and expose the structural issues that will garner support for an emergency shelter in Elizabethtown. In most cases a person seeking services due to being homeless is provided a bus ticket to another city where there is a shelter. This moves them away from the community in which they are familiar. It is a disruption to any other program or service they may currently be applying for or receiving services from and puts them into a big city setting that they are not familiar with.

With service men and women returning to the Fort Knox area in the near future, the homeless situation in Elizabethtown will get worse before it gets better. Warm Blessings wants to be prepared and equipped to support the service men and women who often have difficulty adjusting from military to civilian life, in addition to the families, single women with children, and disabled persons who are already a focus.

Warm Blessings is hosting its first annual "Cardboard Nation" event on Friday, September 5th at the Elizabethtown Community and Technical College campus. Money raised will go towards the establishment of an emergency shelter and the Warm Blessings meal kitchen. Participants will sleep in a box overnight with only a couple of necessities. Box rental is a minimum of $50. Other event activities will include an ECTC Culinary Department sponsored "soup line", Silent Auction, and a Corn Hole Tournament. If you are interested in renting a box, providing sponsorship, volunteering, or would like more information about the upcoming "Cardboard Nation" event, please contact Linda at lindafunk@aol.com. We hope to see you there! For more information about Warm Blessings meal kitchen, visit www.warmblessingsinc.com.

Donations are appreciated and may be mailed to:
Warm Blessings, Inc.
P.O. Box 2384
Elizabethtown, KY 42702

Site Location: 710 College Street Road, Elizabethtown, in the College Heights United Methodist Church

An ALIVE Center Day (cont.)

Photo by Clinton Lewis

The ALIVE Center started as a part of WKU's Juvenile Delinquency Prevention Project, funded by a federal appropriation through the United States Department of Justice. Senator Mitch McConnell believed in the value of this good idea, and he assisted in securing a federal appropriation to Western Kentucky University to fund the ALIVE Center.

In early 2007, WKU was awarded state funds to establish a Regional Stewardship Program. Regional Stewardship builds on the idea that we all have a role in making our communities good places to live and work. Through partnerships, we can enact creative solutions to the social, economic, and environmental challenges facing our region.

Given its strong ties to community partners, the ALIVE Center was chosen to coordinate this program. With its expanded geographic reach and mission, the Center was renamed the WKU ALIVE Center for Community Partnerships. The ALIVE Center serves as a matchmaker, bringing together university and community resources to turn good ideas into sustainable initiatives that vitalize communities across Central Kentucky.

So what exactly does the ALIVE Center do? Currently, the ALIVE Center still provides information and referral for nonprofit services throughout Warren County. ALIVE Center staff field calls, emails and walk-in traffic from both community members and nonprofit organizations. This may be the single, working Dad looking for a support group for single parents. It may be a school teacher who is trying to find a program for children of incarcerated parents. It may be a nonprofit organization looking for the latest statistics on Youth Development, or a nonprofit wanting to post a job opportunity on the ALIVE Center website.

We serve as a connector for nonprofit organizations seeking volunteers and individuals or groups who want to volunteer. Student organizations, faith-based groups, and individuals young and old contact us in search of opportunities to serve, and nonprofit organizations call on us to find volunteers for them when they are in need. Our role is to provide the information to both sides. We are currently looking for ways to further meet the volunteer needs of this community, as the need for volunteers has historically surpassed the capacity of our volunteer resources. It's one of our biggest challenges.

More recently, our role as a hub for campus and community partnerships has taken shape, as we are seeing service-learning projects and community-based research opportunities emerge from the Kentucky Regional Stewardship program. Specifically, our role in WKU's Regional Stewardship program is to match WKU faculty, staff and student resources with community needs throughout WKU's 27-county service region. For example, Dr. Melissa Stewart's Spanish class translated brochures for the Bowling Green Public Library and WKU Childcare Resource & Referral.

This semester, Dr. Jan Peeler's Social Work class will develop a comprehensive manual of homeless services for the entire Barren River Area Development District. Also this semester, the ALIVE Center will facilitate a community-based research component for the undergraduate students in the Honors College at WKU. We are currently seeking project ideas from the nonprofit sector.

The ALIVE Center is proud to support the nonprofit community and the many individuals and families that utilize our services. For more information, call (270) 782-0082, email alivebg@wku.edu, or visit www.alivebg.org. We look forward to serving you!

Come out to the Kids Try-Athlon and Fun Run on **Saturday, September 6th**.

Events take place at Russell Sims Aquatic Center, 2302 Tomblinson Way, Bowling Green, KY 42101. Check-in will take place from 7:00am to 8:00am beginning promptly at 8:30am.

Registration forms can be downloaded at www.healthyweightkids.org.

Try-Athlon sponsors include: Institute of Medicine in partnership with Healthy Weight Kids Coalition, Bowling Green City Schools, WKU ALIVE Center, Bowling Green Parks & Recreation, BG Road Runners, Warren County Public Schools, and Barren River District Health Department.

The next Nonprofit Job/Volunteer Fair will be held in the Downing University Center on the 3rd Floor on October 14th. If your agency is interested in participating, please contact Cheryl Kirby-Stokes.

Nonprofit Community Calendar September-November

9/5 Warm Blessings *Cardboard Nation*

9/6 Delafield *Homecoming Festival*

9/7 *Bowling Green Sprint Triathlon*

9/13 Run for Autism

9/13 *Disaster Preparedness Summit*

9/13 Shaker Museum *Hoedown at Shakertown*

9/13 Lost River Cave's *Get Down at Lost River*

9/16 *South Central Kentucky Job Fair & Business Exhibition*

9/17 VISION meeting

9/20 American Heart Association Heart Walk

9/20 Potter Children's Home *Fall Festival*

9/27 Bowling Green International Festival

10/3 Riverview at Hobson Grove *Antique Show and Sale* (runs through 10/5)

10/11 NAACP *Freedom Fund Banquet*

10/14 Warren County Public Library features landscape artist Jon Carloftis

10/14 WKU Nonprofit Job/Volunteer Fair

10/17 VISION Meeting

10/25 Angel Food Ministry *Distribution Day*

10/25 The Medical Center 10K Classic

10/30 Bowling Green Symphony Orchestra *Accomplished Alumni*

11/1 Western Kentucky University Homecoming

11/6 Riverview at Hobson Grove *Tea with Mary Todd Lincoln*

11/9 *Stephen Rose Ensemble*

11/22 Angel Food Ministry *Distribution Day*

Please vist our website for more community events! www.alivebg.org

Bowling Green International Festival

The Bowling Green International Festival dates back to 1986. But after several years, the event, celebrating the diversity of our community, almost faded away until 1994 when the nonprofit, Bowling Green International Festival, Inc. was formed to oversee its organization.

The organization's mission is:

• To celebrate ethnic and cultural diversity in the region and around the world.

• To educate area residents about the value of the international cultures.

• To promote appreciation of the various international cultures and people within our own community.

• To empower international residents to fully participate in the life of the community.

It has since grown into one of the region's premier events, honored in 2003 and 2006 as one of Kentucky Tourism's "Top Ten."

The festival is made possible through community donations and volunteers. Festival day requires the help of many essential volunteers, and many more are needed for the upcoming event.

This year's festival will feature authentic international food booths, an international bazaar, cultural displays, edu-tainment activities and a wide variety of performances.

Celebrating Diversity in Our Community

The Bowling Green International Festival is an event where old and new community members come together to share their unique heritage. While primarily a traditional celebration, in recent years the festival has attracted a new generation by offering samples of modern artistic hybrids. This year's event features Alma Gitana (Gypsy Soul) from Kentucky and HuDost from New York.

Alma Gitana's music can best be described as Flamenco-Arabic fusion. HuDost's original work ranges in style from 'Alternative World Music' to their own 'Country and Eastern' fusion, and atmospheric, experimental sound. This is mixed with the rich, eclectic blending of traditional Sufi music, Bulgarian, Croatian, Macedonian and Balkan folk music, Farsi, Turkish, Arabic, Folk, Pop, Rock and Southern Gospel.

Many local talents are included to showcase traditional music and dance from Scotland, the Philippines, Israel, the Middle East, Bosnian, Ireland, Spain, Burundi and other lands as well as Native American dance and storytelling.

Children are a major part of the Bowling Green International Festival. The focus is on education and cultural enrichment through entertainment! Children will become acquainted with the customs of their counterparts in far away lands by playing their games, adorning their traditional costumes and experiencing how they celebrate.

The weekend before the festival, the Downtown Gallery Walk will kick off the event. Area galleries will feature internationally themed exhibits with receptions from 5pm-9pm on Friday, September 19.

For more information about the festival or to participate in any way, visit www.BGInternationalFest.com. The participation application is at the bottom of each page, and our volunteer shift schedule can be found in the volunteers section of the website.

COME OUT TO THE

Bowling Green International Festival
Saturday, September 27th, 9am-7pm
The gallery walk receptions are Sept 19, 5-9pm

www.BGInternationalFest.com

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