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Fall 2008

## UA23 The Spirit of Engagement

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A PUBLICATION CELEBRATING THE WESTERN KENTUCKY UNIVERSITY

# Spirit of Engagement

FALL 2008



# Spirit of Engagement

Greetings,

As Western Kentucky University continues to grow as a leader in university-community engagement, I am happy to present this inaugural edition of the WKU *Spirit of Engagement*. This volume is intended to share useful information and practical stories regarding our involvement in various initiatives throughout our city, region, and world. As a public university, we understand that we have a responsibility to provide both a high quality education that will prepare students for their careers, as well as opportunities for students to develop into socially responsible citizens who understand the value of contributing to society on a regional, national, and international level.

The opening article in this issue deals with the basics of engagement philosophy and terminology. The aim of this piece is to provide useful information to both university faculty and staff interested in pursuing community engagement and to community partners who wish to collaborate on a variety of exciting initiatives. The central point here is that we recognize the voice of our communities and are committed to addressing important issues in a collaborative fashion.

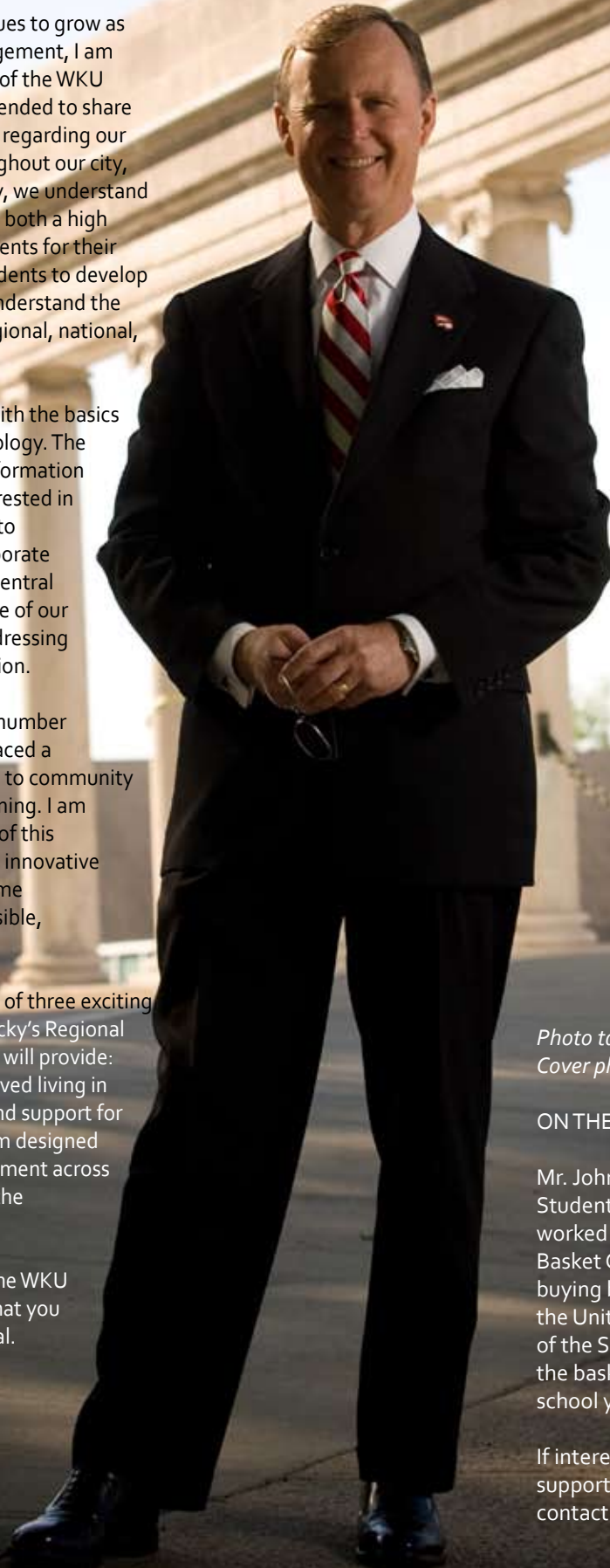
Furthermore, this issue will highlight a number of our faculty and staff who have embraced a personal and professional commitment to community engagement and engaged student learning. I am proud of the excellent faculty and staff of this university and applaud their efforts and innovative means of challenging students to become academically prepared, socially responsible, and civically engaged.

The article on page ten provides details of three exciting new initiatives made possible by Kentucky's Regional Stewardship Program. These initiatives will provide: basic medical services for the under-served living in rural counties, increased opportunity and support for adult learners, and an incentive program designed to increase the level of regional engagement across our academic departments and within the community.

I am delighted to share this edition of the WKU *Spirit of Engagement* with you. I hope that you find it both informative and inspirational.

Sincerely,

Gary Ransdell  
President



*Photo taken by Clinton Lewis*

*Cover photo taken by Cheryl Kirby-Stokes*

## ON THE COVER:

Mr. John Lamon, student with WKU's Students In Free Enterprise (SIFE), worked extensively with the Kasigau Basket Guild in Kenya in July of 2007, buying baskets which were then sold in the United States through the auspices of the SIFE Program. SIFE will continue the basket project through the 2008-09 school year.

If interested in purchasing a basket to support the Kasigau community, please contact the SIFE Office at 270-745-6174.

# Contents

*The Spirit of Engagement* is published by Western Kentucky University's ALIVE Center for Community Partnerships. The publication aims to highlight engagement activities by WKU involving service-learning, community outreach, community-based research, or volunteerism.

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Photo provided by Bryan Rearka

## Inside the Spirit of Engagement

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Does the university have a role to play in moral education? A comprehensive response to this question deserves more space than available at present; however, I claim that insofar as "moral education" is understood as the cultivation of personal and social responsibility, the answer should be an exuberant yes. Through this article, I will offer a brief rationale for this position and during the process will clarify terminology surrounding "engagement" in higher education and how it impacts a variety of commitments at WKU.

In 2002, the Association of American Colleges and Universities (AAC&U) released a report calling for higher education to develop responsible learners with a sense of social responsibility and ethical judgment. Personal and social responsibility denote a set of characteristics acquired through participation in activities that allow learners the ability to comprehend the interdependence of society, the systemic nature of social injustices, and ways in which democratic solutions can be achieved. This quality is therefore essential to the "learning students need to meet emerging challenges in the workplace, in a diverse democracy, and in an interconnected world" (*Greater Expectations*, p. vii). If this is the case, the primary task of the university is not simple content mastery; rather, effective education entails meaningful engagement with content and experiences that facilitate the development of complex moral judgment and understanding that connects him or her to the global society of which they are a part.

In an article by Hersh and Schneider (2005), the authors state,

We know we can teach students organic chemistry; we know we can teach them Keynesian economics and the history of the Italian Renaissance. But if that is all we do, then we have failed them. If, in the process, we don't also teach students about passion and the relationship between passion and responsible action, then we leave them dulled. Our students will have all the knowledge and skills they need to act, but they will lack the focus or the motivation or the profound caring to direct the use of their skills. For that, our students will need passion with a conscience, passion imbued with a keen sense of responsibility (*Fostering Personal & Social Responsibility on College & University Campuses*, p. 10).

While not all university faculty and staff will embrace this conviction, there are those who actively seek ways to promote this type of personal and social responsibility. A brief survey of the literature will yield a bounty of relevant resources; however, the abundance of concepts and terms can leave

the reader confused and overwhelmed. For this reason, I will spend some time clarifying terminology and drawing attention to concepts particularly relevant to WKU as we further our commitment to being a publicly engaged university.

**Community Engagement describes the collaboration between institutions of higher education and their larger communities (local, regional/state, national, global) for the mutually beneficial exchange of knowledge and resources in a context of partnership and reciprocity (Carnegie Foundation Elective Classification: Community Engagement, 2007).**

# In Terms of

At the most basic level, "engagement" and "outreach" are modes of interaction with individuals and communities outside the traditional university community of faculty, staff, and students. The goal of both is to meet local and/or global needs while at the same time increasing the level of social responsibility of those participating in the engagement and outreach activities. The critical difference between the two modes of interaction can be described as follows: *Outreach* is done *for* those outside the campus community and *engagement* is done *with* them.

The quintessential example of outreach is *volunteerism*. Here the primary emphases are on (1) the service being provided and (2) the primary recipient of the service. Another example of outreach is the various types of *community service* required by student organizations and some faculty members.

**Community-Based Research is a collaborative, change-oriented approach to research that equitably engages all partners in the research process and recognizes the unique strengths that each brings. CBR is research that is conducted with and for, not on, members of a community. CBR begins with a research topic based in the needs of communities, has the aim of combining knowledge with action and achieving social change on behalf of disadvantaged communities or groups (Community-Based Research and Higher Education, Strand et al., 2003).**

*Engagement* lends itself to a deeper level of interaction with those outside the campus community. The key feature of engagement is *collaboration* with community partners in order to address a recognized need. With

engagement activities, the primary emphasis is on the *process* of identifying and solving local and global problems. The role of “expert” does not lie solely with the university representative; therefore, the community partner is active in all aspects of planning and addressing the identified need. In addition, “engaged” faculty typically employ this ideology in the process of establishing their various academic endeavors – this is the case with both teaching and research.

Intimately related to this is the notion of *campus-community partnerships*. Partnerships of this nature develop out of relationships and result in mutual transformation between participants. They are motivated by a desire to combine assets that address common interests and ideally result in outcomes greater than that which any single organization could achieve individually. They create a sense of shared purpose that seeks to serve the common good. Campus-community partnerships can take place between a community member or organization and any of a variety of WKU units including colleges, departments, centers, student organizations, and individual faculty, staff, or students.

**Outreach**  
is done *for* those outside  
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effort to specify the type of engagement being discussed. For our purposes, *community engagement* and *public engagement* are considered synonymous terms. *Civic or political engagement* varies slightly in that it usually is associated with student work of a political nature, particularly focused toward promoting a just and democratic society (e.g. the American Democracy Project and the Political Engagement Project). All forms of engagement are encouraged at WKU through various avenues including course-based work, programs, centers and initiatives.

The engagement activities mentioned above are intended to be the means by which WKU grows as a publicly engaged university. It is important to note that a crucial goal of these activities is the development of personal, social, and civic responsibility. It is the development of these

particular characteristics that bring about true qualitative institutional change (culture change) and predisposes the university toward sustained engagement. Furthermore, it is easy to overlook this vital issue when it is assumed that programmatic steps alone will ensure a culture of engagement at the university. Unless teaching and research are carried out with the intention of developing an increased sense of personal and social responsibility in ourselves and our students, service-learning and community-based research become “just another initiative.”

# Engagement

By: Paul Markham

**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 (Kentucky Council on Postsecondary Education).

There are a number of additional terms related to the notion of engagement. Since there is not universal agreement on the proper definition of these terms, each institution must sort the language that it will use in reference to engagement activities. The following terms are commonly used when discussing engagement work: civic engagement, service-learning, community-based research, community engagement, public engagement, and engaged teaching and scholarship.

In order to simplify the terminology, *service-learning* and *community-based research* can be considered types of *engaged teaching and scholarship*. Perhaps the most confusion surrounds the use of the term “engagement” itself. A qualifier such as “civic,” “community,” or “public” usually precedes the term in an



Graphic Art created by Matthew Tullis

*“If you kyaan’t hear, you haffu feel”*



Photo provided by Becky Tabor

## *Internationalization Reaches Belize*

By: Leah Ashwill

“If you kyaan’t hear, you haffu feel” is an old Creole proverb which literally means if you can’t hear, you have to feel. It can also be translated as experience teaches those who don’t learn in any other way. In Professor Daniel Carter’s own words, it means “experience is the best teacher.”

Carter traveled to Belize in January of 2008 with fellow professors Mary Kovar, Becky Tabor, Ron Ramsing, and students from Dental Hygiene and Nursing for their first international, interdisciplinary service project. Students and faculty partnered with two different communities in Belize to provide health and dental services to residents; the Mayan community, Redbank, and the Creole community, Gales Point.

The days began early as children and adults of all ages crowded into the makeshift health centers for services that ranged from dental extractions, sealants and cleanings to a variety of medical

screenings and treatments. Only a portion of each day was focused on activities from a faculty member’s own discipline. The main intention was engineering opportunities for students to step out of their comfort zone and try something new. For some that meant crowd control or patient intake; for others it meant assisting with pharmacy, medical or dental services.

Community members of Gales Point and Red Bank worked with students and faculty, assisting with patient flow, record keeping, and directing them to people who couldn’t physically come to the clinic. Ramsing notes, “We hope to achieve a true sense of partnership with these communities...to be able to make long term change. It’s not just us going down there and rendering services and then going to the next community. The challenge for the next few years is to find communities that will allow these partnerships to blossom and grow...we have done that at Gales Point.”

So what do students think of this experience of traveling to a Caribbean country, far from the resorts that you often find when you Google the country of Belize? "Our students would tell you about a whole different Belize," says Kovar. They never saw the resort. Students found muscles they didn't know they had, and at the end of the day, everyone was hot, crampy, and mentally and physically exhausted. "But it was a good tired," as Tabor put it. "Students would tell you it's a life changing experience with hard work and long days, but they thrived on it."

*"Students would tell you it's a life changing experience with hard work and long days, but they thrived on it."*

Students undoubtedly experienced lots of "firsts" in Belize; first extractions, first injections of anesthesia, first time sitting in a Mayan hut with a dirt floor eating chicken and rice with chickens running around beneath your feet.

Every night ended with a debriefing, and upon return to the States, students completed a PowerPoint and DVD project for course credit to use as a tool to recruit students and faculty.

Next year this winter term course will be cross-listed by discipline, open to all units in the College of Health and Human Services. Perhaps we will see a day that a course such as this is offered across academic colleges.

When asked what she tells her university colleagues about her experiences with interdisciplinary, engaged coursework, Kovar says, "For students in this time in the world, we do want to educate students to be thinkers, but thinking without action is

meaningless. Engaged student learning is where we teach them how to take what they know and apply for the betterment of not just themselves, but of their world."

In June of 2008, heavy floods damaged much of the community of Gales Point, Belize. How exactly this will affect the university's partnership with this community is yet to be determined, but there is little doubt that these four faculty members and their students will do their part when they return in January 2009.



Photo provided by Becky Tabor





# Learning Social Responsibility Through Study Abroad

By: Paul Markham

Debbie Kreitzer (Geography) has discovered that not every learning outcome appears in a student's course syllabus. Since 2002, Kreitzer has been developing and leading a variety of study abroad experiences. While students do earn course credit for participating in the study abroad program, they leave the experience with a deeper sense of cultural appreciation and social responsibility. Kreitzer notes, "A lot of students are first fascinated with whatever area that we are going to. They may not be so much interested in learning, but by the time they get there all of them are interested in learning about the culture around them. They want to see what life is like outside the United States and how things differ. I have never seen light bulbs go off in people's heads anywhere like study abroad."

Kreitzer and others who organize WKU's study abroad projects have been diligent in creating a learning environment that places an important emphasis on direct experience. When asked why students respond so well to the program, Kreitzer

stresses the "field-based" nature of the WKU program. When we acknowledge that the university serves the vital role of shaping both a student's career and sense of citizenship, experiences such as these offered by Kreitzer are indispensable. Educators have long understood that learning takes place on both explicit (classroom lecture) and implicit (contextual experiences) levels. There is a level of engaged learning that simply cannot be achieved in isolated classroom environments.

Kreitzer recalls a recent trip to the Yucatan where students experienced local living conditions outside of the United States. Kreitzer explains, "The students were able to see poverty first-hand. When you think about poverty in the United States, it is totally different than poverty in Mexico or in Africa. You can't help but feel empathy and wonder why that is happening. If you just talk about it in the classroom, many students tend to think that everybody has the same opportunity and if they just worked harder they could fix it. They think that people have the

same opportunities that we have in America and when they get out and see the poverty they begin to ask why it is like it is." Asking "why" means that students can begin to grapple with the systemic nature of such important global issues.

At regular intervals throughout the study abroad trips, students are required to produce journal entries and/or reaction papers. In addition to these interesting reflection pieces, Kreitzer observes that when students return from the study abroad experience, many of them want to jump into any experiential learning experience that they can find – "They are not afraid. It gives them this confidence that they did not have before."

The study abroad projects also provide unique opportunities for interdisciplinary learning. Kreitzer has found that working with faculty members from disciplines outside of geography enhances the level of student learning. She has recently partnered with Holli Drummond from Sociology to explore issues in the Yucatan. Kreitzer notes, "Many of the issues that we discussed as a group were addressed from the perspectives of both geography and sociology. This made it much more interesting. For example, we discussed land use. In Mexico there are land issues because the colonizers came in. Sociologically

that makes for a lot of poverty. Geography is inherently about what is going on spatially, so this was also an important issue for geographers. We had really good talks around this issue."

For Kreitzer there is no substitute for the study abroad experience. While she recognizes that not every faculty member can participate in formal programs such as these, she encourages her colleagues across the university to test the benefits of experiential student learning – "You get so much closer to your students and I think that you lose some of that cynicism that you get from teaching and working with students who seem not to care. There are many students who do care, and many more who don't know they care until someone turns on the light bulb for them."

*"You get so much closer to your students and I think that you lose some of that cynicism that you get from teaching and working with students who seem not to care."*



Photos for this article provide by Debbie Kreitzer



# Service-Learning Gives a Hand-Up

By: Cheryl Kirby-Stokes

Dr. Bryan Reaka's connection to Habitat for Humanity began long before he reached Western Kentucky University. As an undergraduate at Eastern Illinois, his Residence Hall Director asked him to lead an Alternative Break Collegiate Challenge trip connected with Habitat. He later attended campus chapter meetings and discovered a true calling in the work of Habitat. As he explains it, Habitat is a hand-up program, not a hand-out. Habitat expects partner families to work in collaboration with the homebuilders, which brings about an unusual meshing of socio-economic classes, religious beliefs and ethnicities. He believes there is no other program like it in the world, and his support reflects what he feels students should learn; civic responsibility and engagement through co-curricular service-learning.

To Reaka service-learning provides students the opportunity to see the bigger picture outside their immediate world of friends and family. By providing service to others through Habitat, students give back to the Warren County community and begin to understand needs of the broader society. Reaka believes that offering any kind of credit for participation defeats the purpose of trying to make students understand why they should give back and therefore provides the Habitat experience as co-curricular service-learning, a community project opportunity offered outside a course curriculum.



*Dr. Bryan Reaka (above) working with a WKU student at a Habitat site, and featured in the photo on the right page, students with Dr. Reaka in Nagua, Dominican Republic.*

Community work profoundly impacts both students and those receiving the hand-up. Reaka has seen wealthy student participants brought to tears by the end of the Collegiate Challenge experience as they recognize the privileges they have always taken for granted. For homeowners, being surrounded by a completely different group from the norm can bring about unexpected collaborations. A home partner Reaka worked with in Carbondale, Illinois asked about the possibility of attending community college. After that initial conversation, Reaka provided the home partner assistance with application and financial aid forms and information about entrance testing. The woman is now a nurse and midwife.

The WKU Campus Chapter of Habitat for Humanity is a busy group. Currently they work on two homes on Woodford Street in Bowling Green and volunteer with the Habitat ReStore. The chapter also took part in three Winter Break building trips and four Spring Break building trips as a part of Habitat's Collegiate Challenge program.

The chapter's efforts in the community contribute to making WKU the leading university it wants to become. WKU students working with Habitat make an impact locally and globally. In May of 2007, five students accompanied Reaka to Nagua, Dominican Republic on

one of Habitat's Global Village trips. He plans to take more students to the Habitat Headquarters in Americus, Georgia and also to Biloxi, Mississippi to the Jimmy and Rosalyn Carter Work Project. At each work site, WKU not only leaves its mark with the completion of a new home but also on a plank of wood made and signed by the students for the homeowners.

The experiences with Habitat touch Reaka just as deeply as they touch his students. He takes them overseas and all over the country on Habitat projects, and he never fails to be awed by the change in students. Although he finds it difficult to see them graduate, he knows that is why he is here at WKU; preparing them to move on and make a difference. He sees his job as trying to build bridges between different communities and different cultures, and although it is easier to tear down a bridge, he says he will never stop building them.

An advisor once told him, "Just get the dang dissertation done because you're not going to change anything doing that dissertation. When you get out there and start working with young adults, that's where you change the world."

With each student participant that graduates, Reaka is doing just that.



**“When you get out there and start working with young adults, that’s where you change the world.”**

# WKU REGIONAL STEWARDSHIP

WKU has a long tradition of campus and community engagement. Dedication to public engagement is deeply embedded in the fabric of the university. This commitment is clearly reflected in the university's mission statement, which reads:

*Western Kentucky University prepares students to be productive, engaged leaders in a global society. It provides service and lifelong learning opportunities for its constituents. WKU is responsible for stewarding a high quality of life throughout its region.*

WKU is pleased to participate in the Kentucky Regional Stewardship Program. The overarching goal of the program is to promote regional and/or statewide economic development, livable communities, social inclusion, creative governance, and civic participation, which resonates with WKU's longstanding commitment to "place."

WKU designated the ALIVE Center for Community Partnerships as the key coordinating institutional hub for the WKU Regional Stewardship Initiative. The ultimate aim of the WKU ALIVE Center for Community Partnerships is to promote community development across Central Kentucky through campus and community partnerships. We do that by focusing on four main areas: (1) service-learning, (2) community-based research, (3) volunteerism, and (4) information and referral for health and human services.

The staff of the ALIVE Center for Community Partnerships is happy to announce that Kentucky's Council on Postsecondary Education has approved our proposal for funding to support three initiatives that address the needs identified through the Regional Stewardship process. These exciting new initiatives will provide: (1) basic medical services for the under-served living in rural counties, (2) increased opportunity and support for adult learners, and (3) an incentive program designed to increase the level of regional engagement across WKU's academic departments.

## WKU Rural Health Institute Mobile Health Unit

The WKU Institute for Rural Health Development and Research (IRHDR) Mobile Health Unit provides student engagement opportunities and community services to the medically



Above, Nancy Givens, member of BG Green Partnership for a Sustainable Co

under-served and uninsured of rural Kentucky. The new Regional Stewardship funding has provided the opportunity to develop services provided by the WKU Institute for Rural Health Development and Research by allowing for the addition of a nurse practitioner (NP). This NP will supply the medical expertise necessary to create and maintain an adult immunization program, provide screening and treatment options for diabetes, high blood pressure, and heart disease, as well as develop lifestyle programs involving diet, exercise,



# STEWARDSHIP INITIATIVES

By: Leah Ashwill

## Adult Learning at Western Kentucky University

At WKU we are actively addressing the needs of adult learners through a variety of strategies and services. Regional Stewardship funding will expand and centralize these efforts within an overarching context. Adult learner counselors will provide adult students with special attention and consideration. They will introduce (or re-introduce) adult learners to the college environment in a risk-free, comfortable setting with other non-traditional, adult students like themselves. These counselors will provide an entry portal for adult learners, a “one-stop-shop” where they can have questions answered, get connected to the proper services and receive personalized support. Two staff positions are funded through the Regional Stewardship initiative and will be housed within University College. These counselors will offer both the academic and practical help required to ensure student success.

## WKU Engagement Incentive Awards

The WKU Engagement Incentive Awards will be a \$115,000 competitive pool established from the WKU Regional Stewardship initiative. These awards will be utilized to stimulate engagement and outreach efforts across WKU’s academic departments through community partnerships that address community needs and priorities throughout WKU’s 27-county service region. The university, with input from regional community members, will direct these funds toward initiatives that nurture communities and meet strategic needs identified through WKU’s Regional Assessment and Strategic Plan. A key strength of these projects is that they will address a wide variety of concerns ranging from basic human services to issues of economic development. The concept behind these awards pays particular attention to how regional grant funds can be used to collaboratively address needs throughout the region.

The ALIVE Center would like to thank all the citizens of Central Kentucky who participated in the WKU Regional Forums to identify and prioritize needs throughout the region. We also want to thank the WKU Regional Stewardship Advisory Council for their invaluable guidance in developing a strategic plan and regional grant proposal. We are excited about these new opportunities and are committed to facilitating vital partnerships between WKU and our region!



Photo taken by Stephen Pavey

Community, participated in the Bowling Green Regional Forum to assess needs.

and smoking cessation. The unit will be able to offer assistance with disease management or drug regimens, with a nurse practitioner that can diagnose, treat, prescribe and dispense medications. This unit will also attempt to decrease the number of uninsured persons by conducting intake interviews to determine eligibility for various programs and services and to provide assistance with completion of required forms.



# Building Relationships for



Photo taken by Dustin Strupp

Above, Dr. Bradley leads the Introduction to Gerontology course at Village Manor

Dr. Dana Burr Bradley (Public Health) came to WKU with a rich background in community-based teaching and understands the value of community engagement in student learning. In her current role as Director of the Center for Gerontology, she looks for ways to bridge the divide between classroom learning and practical issues concerning the nation's aging population. Bradley currently teaches an Introduction to Gerontology course that she refers to as a "co-learning" experience. Students in the course meet weekly with residents of Village Manor creating an intergenerational learning environment.

In this setting, all are students – both young and old (ages 17-91). Bradley notes, "The students worked on learning about aging together. What my students brought to the table was fresh theoretical knowledge and facts, because of their reading and because they are in a very questioning stage. The 'Resident Scholars' were also very fresh because they are asking questions about their own age." The class met at Village

Manor and the discussion was based on the week's reading assignments. The various levels of experiences created a truly unique learning opportunity.

**"In my view, the purpose is to use the best of the corpus to help develop relationships between people - which are our students and the community, whomever they are."**

Bradley's approach emphasizes a critical aspect of community-based learning – the cultivation of relationships. According to Bradley, "I think that any kind of service-learning is built around relationships in our community, and the vehicle through which you do service-learning is often through a nonprofit agency. This is different than a one-to-one project because there is some kind of corpus there, but the purpose is not to serve the corpus. In my view, the purpose is to use the best of the corpus to help develop relationships between people - which are our students and the community, whomever they are."

Oftentimes, efforts toward creating service-learning experiences can be thwarted because of difficulties with communication, time constraints, logistics, and cultural

# Community-Based Learning

By: Paul Markham

differences. While there is no “quick fix” for such concerns, a focus on building sustainable relationships within the community is indispensable.

In this sense, Bradley considers herself a “match-maker” whose responsibility it is to create the space for students to interact with those outside the university environment. The residents of Village Manor were not looking for a one-time project; rather, they were interested in building relationships that allow them to contribute their experiences and continue their own learning.

Bradley feels that this experience has enhanced her students’ ability to process the scholarly material in new and exciting ways.

“Working side by side with our Resident Scholars allowed me to test my understanding of gerontological theories in real time. Readings are great, but going to the source made me think about things in ways I couldn’t possibly imagine.”

For Bradley, engagement not only addresses vital needs within the community but expands the impact of student learning.



Photo taken by Dustin Strupp

“When you engage the community, it immediately creates the possibility of the student understanding the value of the scholarly work that has come before them and allows them the freedom and the responsibility to create a new set of knowledge that relates to their experience directly,” Bradley said.



Photo provided by Dana Bradley

“Working side by side with our Resident Scholars allowed me to test my understanding of gerontological theories in real time.”

The above photo features Dr. Dana Bradley with WKU students and Resident Scholars from the Introduction to Gerontology course. In the top page photo, a student interacts with Resident Scholars at Village Manor.



# Cancer Information through Service-Learning

By: Cheryl Kirby-Stokes

Here's a riddle. How do you engage 200 students in a single service-learning activity? If you are in Dr. Cheryl Davis' class, be prepared to be part of the answer. For the past two semesters, Davis has successfully engaged students in Biology 121 labs with service-learning projects that educate the community about the dangers of skin cancer and cancers associated with smoking.

Because of revisions to BIOL 121 labs, it seemed like the perfect time for Davis to try something new she had been hearing about - service-learning. Simply put service-learning meets a community need through a course curriculum. One section of BIOL 121 labs is cell division, so Davis thought what better way to discuss this topic than by using cancer, a process of unregulated cell division, as an example. Davis also knew the general public needs constant education about the signs and symptoms of different types of cancer and their prevention. Service-learning, she realized, could be used to promote public awareness as well as course content.

The next challenge was identifying a way in which all 200 students in the labs could become involved. She instructed her Graduate Teaching Assistants to survey their labs for ideas about a single project they would like to undertake as a whole. Ideas were varied and consensus difficult, but it was decided that a one-day educational event would take place in which all the labs could participate. In individual labs, students broke into 3-4 person groups, and these groups designed informational brochures, pamphlets, posters, Podcasts and even a YouTube video (<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=TrvkEdIMLMY>). Some lab groups even went so far as to raise funds for programs like Camp Discovery for children with skin disorders, the Melanoma Foundation and the American Cancer Society. Although it was not a requirement for students to work the event, they were required to attend.

Both one-day events were held in front of Thompson Complex's Center Wing, where

*Biology 121 students passing out ribbons and suckers for cancer awareness.*



Photos provided by Cheryl Davis

Above, Dr. Cheryl Davis talks with students at the Spring Cancer Awareness Fair. In the photo below, Ashton Pyles (left) joins Katrina Bidwell in providing lung cancer information.

students handed out their informational material to passing students, faculty and staff. For clarification, skin cancers were addressed at the Fall semester event, and cancers associated with smoking were addressed at the Spring event. The skin cancer event provided a dermascan, which identifies thickened areas of skin associated with skin cancers, and the Spring event highlighted a petition people could sign supporting a no smoking ordinance in Warren County.

Although Davis attests to a high degree of “whining and grumbling” at the beginning of the projects, she was pleasantly surprised by student reactions afterwards. In a survey given at the end of the semester, almost all the students agreed the event had been a “good idea,” and Davis also noted the degree of pride students took in their completed informational materials and other educational media. Students felt they had truly contributed by distributing information and performing tests that alerted the public to the signs and symptoms of different types of cancers. Comments included, “It was a great project,” This gives us more active ways to learn rather than just reading information,” and “It was great and our group really worked well together.”

Davis supports service-learning in the classroom because of its ability to impart a sense of value and enhanced learning for the student.

“The time is right, and I think that the students, if they haven’t even thought about it before, never even considered giving anything to other people, it at least opens their minds to that, to how good it feels to do something.”

Davis will continue to use service-learning in the classroom and hopes that as time goes by and as graduate assistants and professors become more familiar with the philosophy and its application, the impact of service-learning projects like these will reach further into the community.



# Candidate Report Card

# AMERICAN DEMOCRACY PROJECT

*Kaleidoscope  
Gardening Project*

# TAKE BACK THE NIGHT

# Earth Day

# Service-Learning Projects Offer Practical Application

By: Aurelia Spaulding

***D**r. Molly Kerby believes applying service-learning to class projects offers a practical application of her course topics to students. Before coming to WKU, Kerby volunteered or worked for various nonprofits such as Kentucky Partnership for Farm Safety, Hope Harbor, Barren River Area Safe Space (BRASS), and the Humane Society. Her experiences in education through service made her aware of the importance of service-learning. "People (employers) want prepared people," Kerby said.*

"If you do a practical application of what you are going to be doing (when you graduate), which is what you will do when you get out in the real world, I think it makes your education make sense. And until you put those two things together, it doesn't."

In Kerby's Introduction to Women's Studies classes, students examine topics such as women and work, violence against women, family, social construction of gender, sexuality, race, and class.

To reach the goals of the class, Kerby requires each student to perform a service-learning project before the end of the semester either as a group or individual.

Examples of class projects include a student from a Spring 2008 class who completed a multi-media project for Hope Harbor's Take Back the Night, an event highlighted by an awareness march against rape and abuse. A group of Kerby's students also went into the local school system to register high school seniors to vote.

In another project, three students interviewed the City Commissioner and Mayoral candidates, and they created an online candidate report card from the responses and additional research. The students asked the candidates questions related to social justice issues like fair housing, hate crime bills, smoking bans, bicycle friendly communities, and Humane Society issues with pets.

Another group of three students in Kerby's Introduction to Women's Studies class volunteered with the Kaleidoscope Youth in Arts Program's Gardening Project. The students created a video presentation highlighting statistics and additional information related to class, race, and poverty using discussion from some of the youth in the area. The video showed photographs of the students volunteering with youth gardening, while presenting their statistics.

Although not everyone agrees with education outside the classroom, Kerby commented, "I think they are more prepared when they graduate. We talked about race, class, gender, poverty, all of these things. And until you go and actually see what's going on, I think it's an eye-opening experience for them to see what we're talking about in the book."

As an instructor at Western Kentucky University, Kerby has included service-learning projects as part of her course work in Women's Studies courses for years. Aside from the previously stated projects, her past students also worked with Rock the Vote, the American Democracy Project, and Earth Day events. Kerby also talks about her desire to take a group of students to Costa Rica to work in the rain forest.

Jane Olmstead, Interim Director of University College, said, "As an instructor, Molly inspires students to get involved, and a large number have helped with numerous projects, both in and out of class, from the American Democracy Project conference, to Rock the Vote, to Diversity Rocks, to voter canvassing, to imagining their own grassroots organizations and setting them in motion."

Kerby admits she teaches her Western Feminist Thought students how to start their own nonprofit because many Women's Studies students end up in the grassroots organizations or the nonprofit sector.

**"As an instructor, Molly inspires students to get involved, and a large number have helped with numerous projects, both in and out of class..."**

*The photo below features students at the Earth Day festivities at Western Kentucky University during the Spring 2008 semester. The students below volunteered by bagging trees that were later given away for free.*



*Photo taken by Aurelia Spaulding*

# Mobile Unit Reaches the



When it comes to community outreach at Western Kentucky University, few know it better than Beth Whitfield, RN, Bonny Petty, RDH, and the Dental Hygiene and Nursing students of the Mobile Health and Wellness Unit.

The Unit is a traveling dental and medical clinic intended to provide students the learning experience of practical and social service. Students and staff travel four days a week during the school year to deliver medical and dental assistance to schools and communities throughout Western's service region. Nursing students are trained on the Mobile Unit to check blood pressure, perform glucose testing, cholesterol, and bone density screenings, while Dental Hygiene students are trained to perform dental exams and dental sealants.

As Petty states, "We're not only giving students an opportunity to learn a skill, but we're also providing a service for the community at large, so it's a responsibility that Beth and I take very seriously...it's of dual importance. It's important for students to get the experience, but it's also important that a high quality of service is provided to the person receiving the service."

Dental Hygiene students and staff work very closely with schools throughout the ten-county BRADD region to perform dental exams and sealants on 2nd and 7th graders. The Unit has worked with dentists and dental students from University

of Kentucky and University of Louisville at the Kentucky State Fair, as well as local health fairs to provide dental sealants and restorations for children. Whitfield remembers, "One of the kids we saw two or three summers ago was a little boy with a broken permanent tooth in front, and the dentist restored that tooth. The look on that little boy's face when he saw his new tooth in the mirror...that was a good day!" Likewise, nursing students and staff partner with various agencies and businesses throughout the region to perform health screenings for individuals who encounter roadblocks that would prevent them from receiving services, such as money or transportation.

You may find the Mobile Health Unit set up to serve patients at the Family Dollar Store in Brownsville, the National Guard Armory in Tompkinsville, or the Wal-Mart in Russellville. Imagine the feeling students and staff get when a patient they screened

# Region

By: Leah Ashwill



*Photos for this article provided by Lisa Durham and Matthew Hunt*

the Institute will now have separate units for dental and health. This grant will also fund a portion of the salary for a Nurse Practitioner to work with the new Medical Mobile Health Unit. The remaining portion of the Nurse Practitioner position will be funded through WKU's new Regional Stewardship initiative. This will allow the Mobile Health Unit to not only provide health screenings, but also treatment and education programs.

Durham agrees the Mobile Health Unit is a very unique university program, as it is the only program in the state of Kentucky that works with students in Nursing and Dental Hygiene. At other schools, it is only medical and dental students who get exposed to this type of mobile clinical setting. The Unit provides a non-traditional clinical environment that students may never get to experience again after they finish school. Petty loves that students are offered this challenge and says, "You have to think outside the box, utilize a lot of skills, be able to plan, be detailed, and work with a variety of people."

The Mobile Health Unit will continue to grow and provide meaningful student engagement activities at Western Kentucky University. It is community outreach at its best!



for diabetes comes by the next time the Unit is in town to report her diagnosis, treatment, and to say thank you. "We ARE doing something to make a difference...it may not change the world, but in our own little world, we are making a difference. We are educating students, we are providing free community service, and it does make a difference," states Whitfield.

While out serving adults and children on the Unit, Dr. Lisa Durham, Director of the Institute for Rural Health Development and Research at Western Kentucky University, works behind the scenes to ensure that the Mobile Health Unit is not only sustainable but growing by leaps and bounds. Started in 2001 with federal grant dollars secured by Senator Mitch McConnell, The Mobile Health Unit was picked up by WKU in 2006. Durham secured a \$300,000 grant from Anthem Health and Medical and Wellpoint Foundation to purchase an additional mobile unit, so

*Featured on the left hand page above, WKU Nursing student assisting a patient with her registration forms. Featured below it, a second grader gets dental sealants. In the center photo, a nursing student provides a health screening. On the current page, above the photo of the Mobile Health & Wellness Unit, a middle school student receives dental sealants.*



Photo taken by Aurelia Spaulding

# Engagement Brings Experience

By: Aurelia Spaulding

*Engaging students every semester through varied experiences, Art Department faculty member Kristina Arnold promotes student learning through service to fulfill "a real desire and a need to influence people's lives in a positive way."*

Finishing her third year at Western Kentucky University, Arnold reflected on engagement activities her students participated in through her classes and through her position as director of the WKU Art Gallery. An example included her Fall 2007 3-D Design Class.

Arnold's 3-D class designed and decorated Garrett Ballroom to look like a French Villa for the President's Gala. While the decorations could have been completed by an outside designer, Arnold approached her class to carry out one stage of the scenery.

"It took me a while to figure out how we could make this a learning experience because we don't want to farm our students out as free labor, but then I realized this is a good learning opportunity," Arnold said. The project gave the 3-D students real world experience where they had to be the experts.

Students used their creativity to make master copies of experimental pieces such as weathered wood. They perfected skills in faux



Photo taken by Aurelia Spaulding

“They realized that you can have an impact on something larger than yourself. You are capable of doing something in the ‘real world’.”

painting and experienced the multiple steps it takes to complete a scenery set piece. Most importantly they learned a project evolves in the real world using many of the same problem solving principles as a project in the classroom. In addition, this approach emphasized the necessity of team work.

“They realized that you can have an impact on something larger than yourself. You are capable of doing something in the ‘real world’,” Arnold added.

Over the years, Arnold, along with Art Department students, participated in many projects such as chewing gum for an exhibit for Nashville artist Libby Rowe, Habitat for Humanity workdays, and the Flatstock conference in Austin, Texas.

In 2006 Arnold was tasked with coordinating collaborative work between students, the Capitol Arts Theatre and nationally-known artist Carol Ann Carter for the WKU Centennial Project, a visual arts interpretation of 100 years at WKU and 50 years of desegregation. This true interdisciplinary effort brought together student participation from photojournalism, anthropology, folk studies, and art. Students were involved in all stages of the production from conducting and editing interviews, splicing video and premiering the screenings at Helm Library and the Capitol Arts Theatre.

“You develop a need, you have students with interest, and you sort of pair the two together,” Arnold said.

Each project presented students with the opportunity to learn aspects of art which may not necessarily be captured in a classroom.

Arnold also encourages student learning through internal and external internships. Internal projects involve researching and creating an art department history/archive, as well as a virtual gallery on the Web. External internships are offered with local art organizations like RetroGrade Studio and Gallery in Bowling Green, VSA arts of Kentucky, which serves individuals with disabilities, and Capitol Arts Alliance.

Arnold said, “Anytime you have a real life experience coming from a community need, you are doing engaged work.”

Through each engagement opportunity, Arnold’s students are using their interests to meet a need that brings experience for future opportunities.



Photo provided by Kristina Arnold

The photo on the left page features Larisa Chavarria-Smith installing her work for the 2008 Spring Student Exhibition in the Kentucky Museum. At the top of the page, Kristina Arnold assists graduating senior, Summer Bolton, in hanging her work for the Student Exhibition. Above, Annie King and Michael Thaman work to transform Garrett Ballroom into an outdoor garden for the President’s Gala.





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## Building Partnerships To Strengthen Communities Across Central Kentucky

