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A PUBLICATION CELEBRATING THE WESTERN KENTUCKY UNIVERSITY

Spirit of Engagement

2010



A Leading American University With International Reach



WESTERN KENTUCKY UNIVERSITY



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

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Greetings,

As Western Kentucky University continues to grow as a key leader in public engagement among American colleges and universities, I am pleased to present the third annual edition of the *WKU Spirit of Engagement* magazine. You will find that this edition of the *Sprit of Engagement* highlights a few of the many ways that students here at WKU are developing the skills and capacities necessary to address complex public problems through their academic coursework and university experiences.

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 throughout our local and global communities. The opening article in this issue serves to address the philosophy and terminology of community-based scholarship here at WKU. The aim of this piece is to provide useful information to faculty, staff, students, and community partners who wish to address important issues in a collaborative fashion.

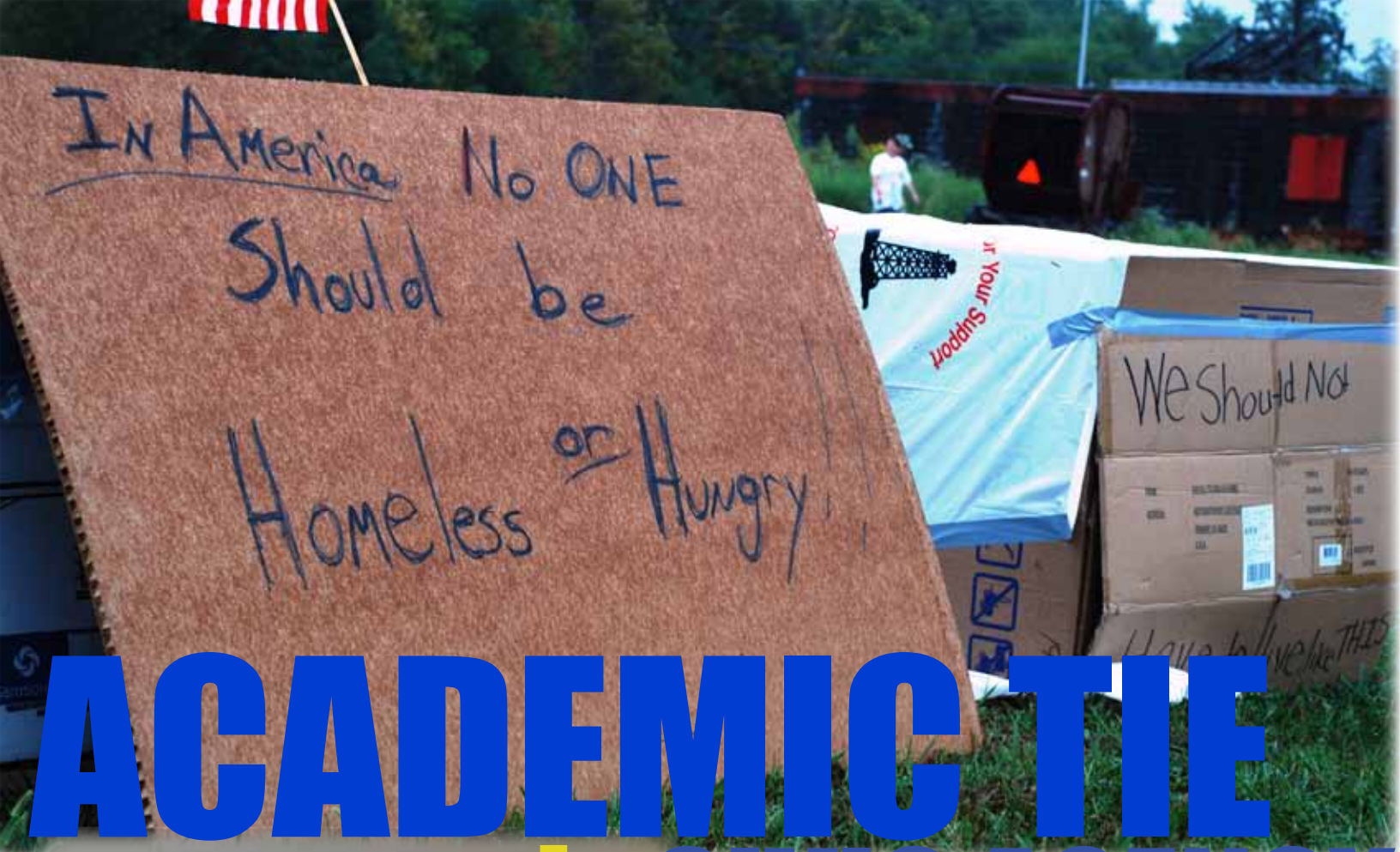
The articles on pages 6 and 18 in this issue highlight two incredibly innovative ways in which WKU is providing engagement opportunities for students through the \$100 Dollar Solution and the Hill House programs. Such initiatives truly serve as national models and provide a way for students across every academic discipline to impact lives and create positive change in our communities.

Furthermore, I would also like to thank the many faculty, staff, administrators, and community partners who have embraced a personal and professional commitment to engaged student learning. I am proud of the excellent faculty and staff of WKU, and I applaud their efforts and innovative means of challenging students to become academically prepared, socially responsible, and civically engaged.

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



ACADEMIC TIE to CIVIC AGENCY



By: Leah Ashwill

Since the earliest days of higher education, state colleges and universities have recognized their role in the development of leaders and effective citizens. A comprehensive review of higher education journals indicates that institutions of higher education have historically wrestled with what exactly their role is in serving the communities in which they exist, as well as in the broader world. There is an inextricable linkage between higher education institutions and communities, and this connection is often referred to as "engagement."

Institutions of higher education are in a distinctive position to work effectively with communities to address their needs. Colleges and universities possess various forms of technical expertise and an abundance of resources that can be combined with community resources in order to address needs. Furthermore, colleges and universities have the opportunity to create partnerships that span across all sectors of a community. This includes potential partnerships with local, state or federal governments, the business sector, nonprofit, education, and faith-based institutions.

The benefits of these partnerships can also enhance learning outcomes for students. This results in a deeper level of learning and develops skills that students may not have mastered otherwise when confined to the four walls of a classroom.

Here at Western Kentucky University, we are not only motivated to provide engagement activities for our students, but more importantly we want those activities to build civic agency within our students. What is civic agency? Simply stated, it is the capacity to act cooperatively and collectively on common problems across our differences of view. So why is it that building civic agency within our students is so important? Obviously, the benefits for our local and global communities consist of having fresh, young minds directing their talents, energies, and academic expertise to real world problems in an effective fashion. However, the benefits for the students themselves are as important as the impact they are creating in the world.

For students, engagement activities build civic agency by:

- Offering a more significant connection between the theory and practice of their course content that may not otherwise be available in a traditional classroom experience;
- Providing the opportunity to develop critical thinking and problem-solving skills while addressing real world issues;
- Providing the opportunity to develop leadership skills that will help ensure a competitive advantage in the workplace, as well as in society as a whole;
- Integrating ethical issues into course content and classroom discussion;
- Providing the opportunity for meaningful class discussions about social responsibility and the nature and dynamics of healthy and successful communities;
- Strengthening service-learning activities; and
- Preparing students for lifelong commitments to informed and active citizenship.

Universities have a critical responsibility to create environments that aid in not only intellectual development of students, but also their ethical development and concern for the world around them. Building civic agency in a university setting is about helping the student understand how they can apply their academic knowledge to the greater good of society.

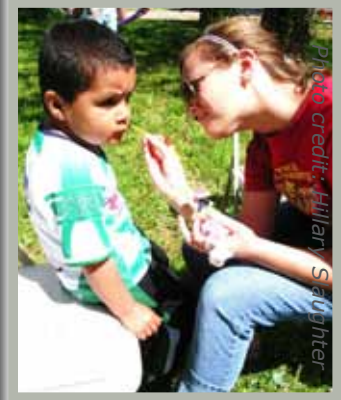
Building civic agency through engagement activities is typically categorized and defined in a multitude of ways. Engagement is captured on college and university campuses with terms such as civic engagement, curricular engagement, public engagement, service-learning, university-community partnerships, or community engagement. Oftentimes, significant energy is spent debating definitions and learning current terminology. While these conversations are valuable, we are committed to first identifying the goal we wish to achieve with our students and then to working together to equip faculty and students with whatever tools are required to achieve this educational outcome. For this reason, we celebrate the various forms of student engagement practiced by WKU faculty and staff. We press ourselves at each level whether it be classroom conversations, volunteerism, service-learning, or in-depth community-based research to find ways of cultivating critical reflection and constructive action.

Whatever the approach to engagement, we are deeply committed to the end goal of helping our students think critically about complex public problems and equipping them with the knowledge, skills, and values to co-create a better world. This goal necessarily requires participation across the campus and community from Student Affairs to academic colleges, to the business, nonprofit, and neighborhood partners that makes this work possible. In this way, we understand the complex nature of education and our role as collaborative co-educators.

We hope that as you read through the third annual *Spirit of Engagement*, you can conceptualize and appreciate the ways in which Western Kentucky University is committed to building civic agency within our students. As we work to further develop and operationalize the concept of civic agency at WKU, we will continue our commitment to be a leader in civic education among state colleges and universities with a focus on equipping our students to become socially responsible, lifelong change agents throughout our communities and our world.



What is civic agency? Simply stated, it is the capacity to act cooperatively and collectively on common problems across our differences of view.



One Hundred Dollar

By: Aurelia Spaulding and Lori Maddern

Last academic year, students in the Community Approach to Service Honors Colloquium at Western Kentucky University began a journey to create sustainable solutions with \$100. Using the \$100 Solution model, students addressed the issues of self-sufficiency and transitional housing in the Bowling Green, Kentucky area.

The goal of the \$100 Solution project is to teach students about partnerships, capacity-building, sustainability, cross-cultural understanding, as well as problem-solving skills. The \$100 Solution invites groups to identify needs and discuss ways to address problems using minimal financial resources.

WKU Seniors Kat Smith, Devin Bell, and Evan Gribbins, working as the *Blue Summer Nights* group, decided to develop a project for the Housing Authority of Bowling Green's *Reach Higher* program. According to the Housing Authority's website, *Reach Higher* creates opportunities for participants to enhance personal abilities, assists with overcoming barriers to self-sufficiency, move successfully into

the workforce, and retain employment, ultimately removing the participants from welfare.

Blue Summer Nights communicated with T.J. Shockley, Community Initiatives Director, regarding potential projects for the group. "We got to talking to Ms. Shockley, and her big thing is to help participants become more self-sufficient, and we just thought this would be a good way to help do that," Smith said during an interview on local television station WBKO.

The project incorporated a hands on lesson in the basic mechanics of car maintenance. The participants learned how to change their oil and tires, and they became familiar with other parts of the automobile. The students utilized the \$100 to purchase materials and incentives for participation.

Four other students focused on establishing transitional housing in Bowling Green. The group presented a strategic plan to the Board of Directors at Habitat for Humanity and HOTEL INC (Helping

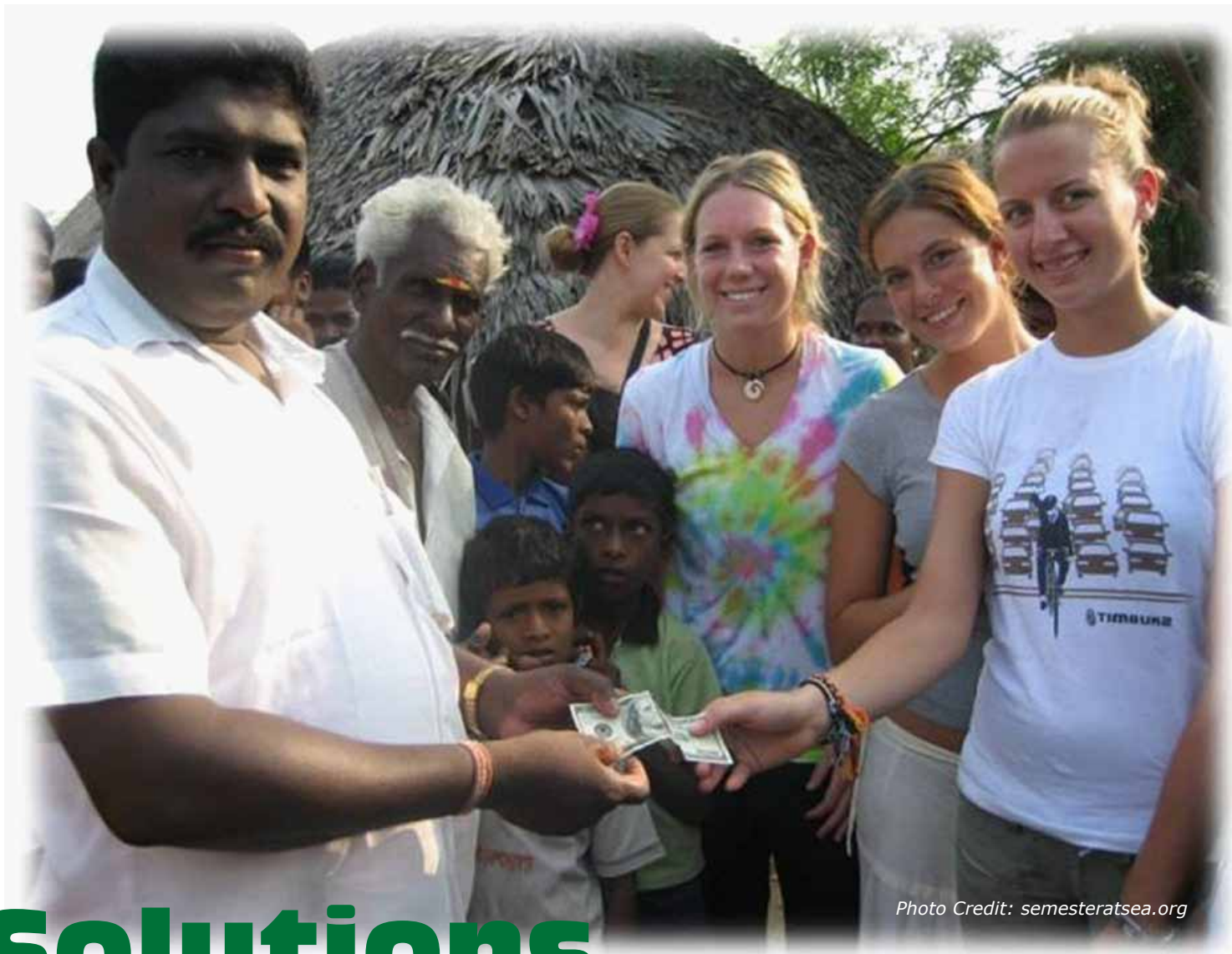


Photo Credit: semesteratsea.org

Solutions

Others Through Extended Love In The Name of Christ). Once approved, Junior Kathryn Crimm, Senior Anthony Cooper, Junior Virginia Martin, and Sophomore Hillary Slaughter created an asset survey to determine what resources already existed in the community for transitional housing.

The students were interviewed on a local television station to discuss the survey and encourage participation. The group used the \$100 to distribute the surveys and host a celebration in the community to present the results and community development ideas for a target neighborhood in Bowling Green.

The \$100 Solution program was brought to Western Kentucky University by Bernard Strenecky in the Office of Internationalization. He utilized the \$100 Solution during the Semester at Sea program at the University of Virginia. The \$100 Solution began when the Prospect/Goshen Rotary Club decided to provide their two Rotary Ambassadorial Scholars with a challenge that would help them

address the social needs of the people in the country in which they were about to live. In their new community, the students were asked to identify a social problem, study its causes, and with community leaders, determine strategies that could be employed to help address the issue. In an attempt to make the experience more concrete, the students were given a one hundred dollar bill and were instructed to utilize the money to address the identified problem. Through this experience, the students learned they can address complex social problems with small amounts of money.

The \$100 Solution program will continue at the WKU ALIVE Center for Community Partnerships in partnership with the Prospect/Goshen Rotary Club under the leadership of the Community Engagement Coordinator. Faculty, staff, and students may contact the Center to obtain the application and information on participation in the \$100 Solution program.



Investigating Agriculture from Farm to Fork

By: Aurelia Spaulding

Freshman Drew Mitchell felt lucky to take Special Project Reporting, a class for select Honors Students from different journalism areas sponsored by the Fleischaker-Greene Scholars Program. The class, which began in spring 2009, unites students to highlight a specific issue using each of their academic disciplines. The 2009 class covered American Refugees. This spring, Mitchell, along with eight other students, utilized photo, print, and broadcast journalism to produce what Mitchell calls a "magazine" on the American Farmer.

According to the course website (fgscholars.com/farmtofork), the class is designed for students to study and apply the freedoms promised in the First Amendment, especially freedom of the press. The class receives special support through the generosity of Jon Fleischaker and Kim Greene, noted First Amendment attorneys in Louisville, Kentucky.

Mitchell said the class is similar to real life where journalists may focus on one area during their careers. This class covers one topic, and this semester students investigated agriculture "from farm to fork." Topics highlighted through video,

audio, photo, and writing included organic foods, pork, Kentucky farmers, elementary school lunches, food-related legislature, fast food, and healthy eating on a minimal budget.

"Too many Americans don't know where their food comes from and what goes into it; that needs to change," Sophomore Sam Oldenburg said.

During the class, Oldenburg reported on school lunch topics and three area farms. He commented, "School lunch standards are considered inadequate by many activists across the nation."

At Dishman McGinnis Elementary School in Bowling Green, Kentucky, Oldenburg spent time with the youth, cafeteria workers, and Food Service Coordinator, Kim Simpson. He found that Dishman, along with other schools in the district, maintains a "garden patch," which consists of a fruit and vegetable cart for youth. Students make salads and eat as much as they want from the cart.

Ninety-five percent of the students at Dishman receive free or reduced-priced lunches. Oldenburg reported Simpson saying, "We've had kids say they

love the little orange things; they've never had a carrot before – a little carrot." One child even said that carrots are his favorite food at school.

"The sources I've talked to about school lunches have made me energized about the issue. Everyone I've talked to, no matter what side of the issue he or she is on, is very passionate about it, and that has made it exciting to report," Oldenburg said.

If children in the school district are eating more fresh fruits and vegetables, how is the agriculture industry being affected?

Jacob Hill shares the story of Bowling Green farmer Frank Stagner, who instead of seeing the rural countryside where he grew up, now sees rows and rows of housing. Stagner tells Hill that in the last two decades, the area has seen multiple developments bumping up against his property. Hill then finds that according to the United States Department of Agriculture's Census of Agriculture, in the last 30 years alone, the country has lost more than 92 million acres of farmland.

"I'd rather see corn growing than houses," Stagner said to Hill. Farmers like Stagner recognize the decrease in farmland, while other farmers are finding new ways to adjust.

"Right now, we produce more food than can be consumed by the world," Paul Wiediger, Au Natural Farms, told Senior Amanda Loviza. "It's not a matter of production but distribution. America is the most overfed, malnourished place on the face of the earth...I actually believe that small, sustainable farming is the wave of the future."

Through her reporting, Loviza found Wiediger uses a "high tunnel" to grow crops during the winter months. The hoop-like houses make it possible to produce lettuces, spinach, arugula, and collards. In addition, Au Natural raises turkeys, chickens, cattle and sheep.

Farmers in Kentucky may also take advantage of the *Kentucky Proud* program to assist with food sales locally. Loviza found that Kentucky's Department of Agriculture created the *Kentucky Proud* program to label food made in Kentucky by Kentucky farmers. To be *Kentucky Proud*, a food item's main ingredients must be produced and/or processed in Kentucky, according to the *Kentucky Proud* producer application form.

"I would like for people to discover the declining world of agriculture."

~Regina Durkin

During the course, the students posted their articles, videos, and photos to their website at fgscholars.com/farmtofork. The website has since drawn interest from individuals across the nation. The students have been asked to speak at conferences, and countless advocates follow them on Twitter and comment on their blog topics.

"I would like for people to discover the declining world of agriculture. In our society, the agricultural community is decreasing at an incredible rate," Senior Regina Durkin said.

Through this Special Project Reporting class, the Fleischaker-Greene Scholars reported more than 30 food-related topics to share with the world.

"I believe we're experiencing a renaissance in journalism, and it's exciting to be in a class that is on the cutting edge of that renaissance, teaching us to be renaissance reporters," Oldenburg concluded.



Photo credit: Sam Oldenburg



Photo credit: Sam Oldenburg

organized for invisible children



Photo credit: Cassie Brooks



Photo credit: Kristin Guthrie

By: Kristin Guthrie

Being invisible is not usually something to brag about, unless of course you are a member of Western Kentucky University's chapter of Invisible Children. In this case, it is something to be worn as a badge of honor. In this organization, being invisible is a way of life, or at least in the lives of the thousands of children they are trying to protect. The WKU chapter is part of a national group of Invisible Children which works to raise awareness of and, ultimately, end the war and destruction going on in Uganda, Africa.

In 2003, three aspiring filmmakers decided to leave their comfortable lives behind and travel to Africa in search of an untold story. What they found when they got there was a tale of unimaginable horror; death as a way of life, children being made into weapons and no way to ease the pain besides a video camera and some kind words. They traveled back to the United States changed by what they had seen and created a documentary to show the

world the atrocities that were being committed. Thus, Invisible Children, Inc. was born.

"Our organization is trying to help the kids there whose families and lives have been torn apart by war."

-Kate Mischel, Invisible Children Secretary

At the age when children in the United States are learning to ride their first bike, children in Uganda are being snatched up to fight in the Lord's Resistance Army. This guerilla army is led by Joseph Kony, who uses violence and the capture of these children made into soldiers in hopes to overthrow the government in Uganda. When captured, many children are subjected to extreme violence and are at times forced to kill their own family and friends.

Currently, the war has moved away from Uganda, but the path of destruction left behind is still very real. Children have been left homeless and without schools. The WKU chapter of Invisible Children participates in the Schools for Schools program, which is a campaign to rebuild schools in Uganda, created by the national Invisible Children group. This program allows Invisible Children chapters to sponsor a school in Uganda that has been torn apart by years of war. With a challenge of raising money for these invisible children they have never met, WKU students hold a number of different fundraisers throughout the year.

One of the main fundraisers for their Schools for Schools campaign is a book sale where used books are sold with all profits being sent to the chapter's sponsored school. This year the WKU chapter raised \$400 to donate to their school in Uganda. Another large activity that Invisible Children hosts is a campus viewing of the Invisible Children documentary. Every year the documentary is shown to WKU students describing what is taking place in Uganda. This documentary goes into depth about what is being done for the children in effected areas and asks students to take a stand in this fight to end the violence.

When it would be so simple to worry about the next paper to write or social function to attend, it is tempting to dismiss the hope that college students can find the motivation to fight for children a world away. It is far easier to volunteer for a cause with instant results, instant gratification; it takes a special group of people to fight for a cause others would dismiss as a lost battle. However, this dismissal does not come easy to Invisible Children President, Paul Sanford. Sanford knows something can be done, and he is doing it.

Sanford and a few of his friends started the WKU chapter of Invisible Children from the ground up, with nothing but passion for serving others to guide them. Sanford heard about Invisible Children in an advertisement in the College Heights Herald, looked up the details, and was so touched by the cause that he knew he had to start a chapter at Western. Sanford says that he can sum up what Invisible Children is about in a few sentences, "We think globally but act locally. We believe that no people, especially innocent children, should have to endure the conditions that exist in northern Uganda and everywhere else the Lord's Resistance Army has been."

Sanford's passion for Invisible Children directly ties to his major at WKU and his future plans. He says that he wants to work with children in some way for the rest of his life, so his major and plans for the future were a strong motivator for starting Invisible Children at WKU. While studying Social Work and Spanish with a minor in Child Studies, Invisible Children gives Sanford an outlet to help others while increasing his knowledge on subject areas that will benefit him after graduation.

"Causes that involve children, especially orphans, are what really motivate me. In the future, I see myself working with orphans or in the adoption or foster care system in some way, here and abroad."

-Paul Sanford, Invisible Children President

How many of us can say that they have truly felt invisible? Invisible enough that our screams are not heard or tears not noticed? There are children in Uganda that feel this way. The WKU chapter of Invisible Children has made the commitment that they will be invisible no longer; that instead of constant fear, these children will find hope for a better future.



Photo credit: Cassie Brooks

Nursing in Rural COMMUNITY

By: Leah Ashwill

How many universities can provide an opportunity for their healthcare students to experience rural health practices alongside community members in real life rural health settings? That's exactly what WKU provides its nursing students, thanks to the hard work and dedication of WKU faculty and professional staff from South Central Kentucky Area Health Education Center (AHEC), who have spent years developing lasting, reciprocal relationships in our regional communities.

Drs. Susan Jones and Eve Main piled into Dr. Jones's truck with nursing students, Sarah Willis and Jessica West, and all the healthcare supplies needed for their monthly visit to a partnering Mennonite community in Allen County, Kentucky. Students from WKU's Nursing program travel regularly with faculty to utilize their clinical skills and develop their cultural skills through interactions with a community whose partnership is rooted in trust, respect, and mutual benefit.

Dr. Jones has been working alongside students to provide health screenings and health topic presentations to the Mennonite community in Scottsville for thirteen years. Every year relationships are strengthened and experiential learning yields valuable lessons that cannot be

obtained from a textbook or even a standard clinical setting. The work in this rural Anabaptist community provides an opportunity for nursing students in the Bachelor's and Master's Nursing programs to work in a rural health setting to practice standard clinical nursing skills, while also acquiring life skills such as problem-solving, teamwork, and cultural awareness and sensitivity. Just imagine the opportunities that exist in this rich learning environment.

Staff and students from WKU work alongside local volunteer physicians and medical residents from the University of Louisville and Glasgow Residency programs. Dr. Carroll Brooks, a retired physician who volunteers his time and serves the Mennonite community in Scottsville on a regular basis, accompanied us on this visit.

Gathered at a central community home, a friendly group of men, women and children were obviously looking forward to clinic day. Dr. Brooks prepared a presentation on Uterine Fibroids at the community's request. Even the children listened for a spell before it was realized by us (the newcomers) that at their age they only understood Pennsylvania Dutch. How content the young girls seemed thumbing the pages of the familiar Golden Books storybooks.



As the community residents finished asking their questions, nursing students began taking their blood pressure and checking their cholesterol and blood glucose. Dr. Brooks and the medical residents followed up with anyone in the community who needed further medical treatment or attention. Aside from a short trip to the general store for batteries and local products, students, staff and residents tended to their work, which included conversations about their way of life.

As you think about the reciprocity we claim that occurs in such learning settings, you realize there is a difference between delivering services to a community in need and developing partnerships with a population to achieve mutual goals. As Dr. Jones so eloquently describes it, "This community has taught me far more than I've ever taught to this community." They have learned to address community healthcare issues together, identifying and addressing needs and pooling resources.

A most impressive example of such an innovative partnership in regional healthcare is the Burdock Leaf Burn and Wound Therapy (B & W Therapy) introduced to WKU Nursing faculty and the Medical Center in Allen County by the Mennonite Community.

Mennonite communities have a higher risk for burns due to their lifestyle. Dr. Jones recalls that she became interested in B & W Therapy after a burn occurred in the community. Dr. Jones was surprised by how effective the B & W Treatment worked to treat the burn.

Burdock Leaf Burn and Wound Therapy, a combination of B & W ointment and Burdock leaves, is commonly used to treat burns in the Anabaptist communities. Dr. Jones facilitated a meeting between The Medical Center at Scottsville and community residents to encourage dialogue and understanding concerning the use of leaf therapy and B & W ointment in the community.

The day concludes with a discussion of future meeting dates and potential educational topics. The conversation was very comfortable, practical, and warm. After taking a moment to reflect on the conversations and activities of the day, a WKU staff member asked a gentleman leader of the group, "What do you think are the ingredients of a healthy partnership?" He replied that "it's no longer just WKU as medical providers and our community as service recipients...it's developed into a relationship; a friendship. It's trust, respect, and mutual benefit."



Moving Beyond Sympathy

By: Terry Shoemaker

As students at Western Kentucky University prepare to be productive, engaged leaders in a global society, they will, no doubt, come across many statistics concerning poverty, homelessness and hunger. These statistics might build a sense of sympathy, but not necessarily empathy. Whereas sympathy is feeling sorry for someone because his or her situation is worse off than your own, empathy interacts on a level of equality.

As a matter of fact, empathy in college students nationwide is down considerably according to new research. "College kids today are about 40 percent lower in empathy than their counterparts of 20 or 30 years ago, as measured by standard tests of this personality trait," says Sara Konrath of the University of Michigan's Institute for Social Research.¹ This research is no doubt a daunting statistic for the future of our democracy, but how can this be reversed?

In the fall semester of 2009, eight Western Kentucky University students journeyed to Lexington, KY, and united with a group of students from Georgetown College to participate in an experience of poverty and homelessness designed to increase empathy. Students gathered at a local thrift store to purchase used clothing to wear for the entirety of the weekend and gave up extra, unnecessary items like cell phones, watches, and jewelry.

Arrangements were made for the students to sleep on the floor of an old warehouse that was being used to store toys to be given away during the holidays. That evening a gentleman who had spent two years homeless shared his story with the students about homelessness in Lexington and allowed time for questions.

"Realizing that someone with a Master's degree could be struggling with homelessness and poverty was eye-opening," said Noelle Johnson, a sophomore from Danville, KY.

Early the next morning, students were divided into groups and given a list of tasks to complete for the day with their only mode of transportation being walking. Some of the tasks included interviewing a homeless person, finding one hundred aluminum cans and where to cash in those cans, and visiting local service organizations to volunteer and eat.

Students realized quickly that they were at a huge disadvantage because they were not familiar with the Lexington area, but they quickly found a valuable resource.

"The homeless were so polite and resourceful," said Brandon Render, a junior from Bowling Green, KY. Render said that he was amazed at how willing the homeless population was to help them find their way around the city.

Many students also realized that being on the opposite side of the charity model was not always enjoyable. Kwabena Boateng, a junior from Ft. Mitchell, Kentucky, said of one organization that he attended, "The attempts to help out the homeless may have fed hungry bellies, but the way they went about it helped create more barriers of us and them."

After a long day of walking around the city of Lexington, students gathered together to reflect and process their experience. Collin Steiner, a senior from Bowling Green, KY, said, "I was challenged by what this experience asked of me. We were tired, both physically and emotionally, and then asked to think about serious issues in our world like homelessness and starvation."

After a long, stress-filled day, students were excited to hear that a "world banquet" was being prepared for them. But little did the students realize that the banquet was another planned experience to guide them in thinking about poverty and hunger on a global scale. As students entered the banquet, they were randomly divided into three groups. The

majority of students sat on the floor during the banquet and ate only shared rice. This group was representative of a large global population that lives in abject poverty. A somewhat smaller group of students dined on a meal of rice and beans. The smallest group, which only consisted of four students, had an elaborate Thanksgiving-style meal of turkey, dressing, vegetables, and dessert.

As students ate the meal that was provided to each of them, an awkward silence filled the room as those seated on the floor eating rice with their hands watched those with the turkey and dressing eat their

food. Eventually students started to openly question the fairness of the situation.

Christi Serafini, a graduate student from Lexington, said that she went on the trip to experience a day in the life of a homeless person so that she can be a better social worker. When reflecting on the overall trip, Serafini said she learned that "true change comes from creating relationships and sharing in the struggle." These WKU students discovered that breaking down barriers and creating relationships are the first steps for constructing sustainable solutions to global issues like homelessness and poverty.

¹www.usnews.com. "Today's College Students More Likely to Lack Empathy: 'Generation Me' tends to be self-centered, competitive, U.S. Research shows."

IPS. 28 May 2010. Fri. 28 May. 2010.

<<http://health.usnews.com/health-news/family-health/brain-and-behavior/articles/2010/05/28/todays-college-students-more-likely-to-lack-empathy.html>>.



"I was challenged by what this experience asked of me."

-Collin Steiner



Reaching College





Bound

NG GREEN HIGH SCHOOL

By: Aurelia Spaulding

"I had people telling me I needed to go to college, but I didn't have any people giving me their experiences," WKU Senior Kenzie Jones said. "I thought back to when I was in high school, and I really didn't have anybody to step in and say 'Oh, I have been to college...this is what you need to do.'" Knowing how shared experiences from a college student would have helped her, Jones decided to take part in the College Bound Communities (CBC) program at Western Kentucky University.

Designed to assist low-income, first-generation students in preparation for college, CBC connects students in grades eleven and twelve at Bowling Green and Warren Central High Schools with a mentor from WKU or the community.

WKU Talent Search Director, Martha Sales, created the CBC program, which served fifty high school students during the 2009-2010 academic year. Sales said she tries to match students and mentors by taking into consideration the mentor and mentees skills and areas of knowledge.

Jones met her mentee, Warren Central Senior Destiny Waller, in February 2010 and immediately began a relationship that exemplified the goals of College Bound Communities and the dreams of Jones.

"I basically just want to help people in some sort of way," Jones said. When she met Waller, she

had already applied and gained acceptance into college and completed her financial aid. Therefore, one of their first discussion topics was selecting a college. Jones said they weighed the pros and cons of each school Waller wanted to attend, and she chose Kentucky State University. Jones and Waller discussed other topics such as financial aid, time management, campus involvement, and church away from home.

Jones believes her courses in Communications helped prepare her for being a mentor. "Communication is always going to bridge any gap. All of my classes have taught me the basics of relationship building and networking. I have had classes that have taught me goal-setting and different things like that." The two discussed goal-setting for housing (on and off campus), maintaining grades, and choosing a major.

Junior Jasmine Kelly talked to her Warren Central High School mentee, Ajsela Grahovic, about scholarships and even emailed her different for which to apply. "At first, she was discouraged, but after much encouragement, she worked hard and was awarded two (scholarships)." Kelly believes "most young people relate better to mentors their age."

The mentors are asked to communicate with the mentees monthly and meet the students at least once during the year. All but four of the students took advantage of having a mentor. A total of twenty workshops and sessions were provided at Bowling Green and Warren Central High School, and eight workshops were presented by WKU faculty, staff, and students.

One objective with CBC is to provide leadership skills and opportunities for students to give back to their community. According to Sales, all of the high school students participated in at least one community advocacy opportunity, such as Warren Elementary, Medco nursing home, Seventh Street Baptist Church, Housing Authority of Bowling Green, and the WKU Project AIMS (Activating Interest in Minority Students) program.

"I feel that it is very important to have someone who is there for you and to guide you throughout life or in an area that someone feels should be nurtured," Kelly said.

Approaching the fall semester, both Waller and Grahovic are registered to attend a college or university. The WKU students communicate with them regularly and intend to stay in touch during the academic year. With the assistance of the mentors, all 41 seniors graduated from high school. The official number of students attending college will be available during the fall of 2010.

Creating Climates for Sustainability

By: Terry Shoemaker

As Western Kentucky University students are working toward their degrees, many students are applying their academic knowledge to sustainable solutions to combat global issues. Accepting the idea that academic education demands social responsibility, students are creating intentional spaces to work collaboratively to make sure that food, community, and environmental sustainability topics are being addressed.

Food Sustainability

Matthew Vaughn, a junior majoring in International Politics and Anthropology, and other Resident Assistants from Pearce Ford Tower (PFT) created one of these intentional spaces with an idea they called the 100 Mile Dinner. Vaughn took Dr. Kate Hudepohl's Ecological and Economic Anthropology course last semester. He says that the discussions centering on local and organic food, in tandem with reading *The Omnivore's Dilemma*, had a big impact on this recent event.

The event provided a free meal of locally grown and produced vegetables, chicken, and milk to students of PFT and was designed to increase participants' nutritional literacy. Vaughn, PFT Resident Assistants, and other volunteers



Photo credits (top to bottom): Cheryl Kirby-Stokes, Rebecca Katz, and Terry Shoemaker

organized, coordinated, prepared, and served the meal in the second floor common area of PFT. The students made sure that all waste from the event was compostable.

Joe O'Daniel from O'Daniel Farm, a local organic farm located in Warren County, spoke during the meal, providing students with first hand knowledge about organic farming, local farmer's markets, and nutritional information. Cort Basham, who teaches *Images and Realities of Eating in America*, encouraged his students to attend the event. Basham said, "Hearing a bona fide organic farmer talk about real life implementation of many of the ideas he discusses made an impact on my students."

About fifty WKU students attended this event and stayed after for more discussion on food sustainability. Lindsey Filiatreau, who volunteered and participated in the event, said, "My favorite part of the dinner as a whole was having the opportunity to share the concept of local and organic food with other students in the WKU community."

Practicing shared ownership and community is a common thread of what students are weaving together in these intentional spaces.

Community Sustainability

"From cooking to setting up tents, students that are involved [in Collegiate Corps] are keen to ways of being engaged citizens," said Tracy Jo Ingram, a sophomore majoring in English/Literature, minoring in American Humanics and Women & Genders Studies at WKU.

Tracy and her friends coordinated a four day service initiative in the Red River Gorge area of Kentucky this summer called Collegiate Corps. The idea for this event was initiated from a previous service initiative that they participated in called Kentucky Y-Corps®. Wanting to continue their engagement in communities while in college, these students coordinated this event using social networking sites like Facebook®.

The students worked daily with Daniel Boone National Forest to do trail maintenance, park clean up, and various other tasks to ensure that this

space would be available for other communities in the future.

Through the Class Legacy Project and the Advanced Service Learning course at WKU, principles like partnership, capacity-building, reciprocity, sustainability and reflection were learned and utilized to guide this endeavor. Each night, students participated in a roundtable discussion that provided intentional time to reflect on the trip. The success of the trip resulted from collaboration from each participant.

Environmental Sustainability

Another local intentional space is the Baker Arboretum in Warren County, KY, which serves as a living and learning laboratory for WKU students. The arboretum is a place where plants are cultivated for scientific and educational purposes. The arboretum, located on Morgantown Road, is where Dr. Martin Stone takes students to grasp the value of conifers, Japanese maples, dogwoods and other plants. As such, Dr. Stone calls the Arboretum a "teaching paradise for a landscape horticulturist."

Students are active at the arboretum in cataloging plants in a database, mapping wildflowers, and doing long-term research on the growth of conifers. In the future, the database that the students are creating and maintaining will be shared with other arboretums and botanical gardens across the United States. This assembled data will inform others of any pest problems or susceptibility to diseases that plants might have.

This uniquely beautiful, intentional space, along with the data collected, organized and maintained by WKU students, will help ensure the sustainability of these plants for the next generations.

As our culture shifts its thinking to long-term, global solutions for the future, WKU is presently providing a climate for innovation and sustainability. Students at WKU are creating shared spaces to accumulate data to ensure environmental sustainability, taking action to educate each other on food sustainability, and working together to guarantee the vitality of community sustainability.

"From cooking to setting up tents, students that are involved [in Collegiate Corps] are keen to ways of being engaged citizens,"

NEIGHBORHOOD COLLABORATIONS



Photo credits:Joey Coe

By: Aurelia Spaulding

On any given day, recent Western Kentucky University graduate, Greg Capillo, will help his neighbor, Dave, carry bags inside or talk to him while he works out in the yard. They talk about life, as well as the community in which they live—the community around East 11th and 12th Streets in Bowling Green, Kentucky.

Capillo, along with three other students, moved into the house at 741 East 11th Street with the purpose of using their academics and interests to develop the community around them. However, as a result, they became a part of the community, a “common denominator” amongst the residents Capillo says. Since everybody in the area knows them, they can build and create a public space.

The public space now known as the Hill House used to be home to drug trafficking and domestic violence until Bob Basham purchased the house and made renovations a few years ago. He wanted the home to be used to better the community and brought the idea of a community engagement house to the WKU ALIVE Center for Community Partnerships.

WKU graduate students Phuong Vu and Thang Le, both from Hanoi, Vietnam, and Senior Joey Coe lived alongside Capillo in the Hill House during the 2009-2010 academic year.

The Hill House students communicate one-on-one to develop relationships with their neighbors, as well as host Sunday dinner at their home each week to share stories and give thanks. "There are people who would like to see the life of the community be different, and they have just as much stake in it as us," Capillo said.

Resuming this fall, the Hill House project will serve as an interdisciplinary graduate assistantship program that allows graduate students to live and work out of the Hill House, applying their coursework to real life community development opportunities.



Embarking on year two, Hill House residents will build upon the infrastructure developed by year one residents, which most importantly, in a previous student resident's opinion, is grounded in trust and relationship-building with neighboring students and community residents. Year one students laid the groundwork for future community development efforts.

During the first year, the Hill House students conducted asset-based assessments of the community they were becoming a part of through conversation and valuable interaction. They listened to neighbors and developed specific project ideas, while drawing on their different academic areas of expertise to address neighborhood issues and concerns. They served as connectors between the community's assets and residents' needs.

As year one students wrap up their year and year two students prepare for the year ahead, Hill House residents and coordinators will take part in a camping retreat scheduled to orient the students, work on teambuilding activities, and develop timelines for the projects that lie ahead. Thanks to

financial support provided by the WKU Graduate Studies office and alternately by the Deans of WKU's six colleges, four new graduate students will have the opportunity to start anew in the fall of 2010.

Hill House residents beginning in the fall come from Potter College's Departments of Communication and Folk Studies, College of Education's Department of Student Affairs, and College of Health & Human Services Department of Public Health. Year two students this fall will continue to develop the Neighborhood Network, an email and web-based neighborhood communication tool, as well as complete a neighborhood weatherization project initiated by previous Hill House residents in coordination with local homeowners, Broadway United Methodist Church's Craftsmen for Christ, and Community Action of Southern Kentucky. Year two students will also continue to report program activities through blogging at cehouse.blogspot.com.

As new Hill House residents connect with neighbors, they will utilize their academic graduate programs of study to develop new projects and programs that address neighborhood perceived issues and challenges. Ideally, such projects will be the cornerstone of their graduate research and theses projects. As described by WKU Institute for Citizenship & Social Responsibility's Program Coordinator, Terry Shoemaker, "Hill House works against the idea that students are simply citizens in deferral; rather it creates a framework for students to be presently active as practicing citizens."

The Hill House submerses students in a real life field placement that allows them to develop their civic agency through team building, problem solving, and critical thinking opportunities alongside active community members. Through vital campus and community partnerships, students learn the practical value of their academic training to strengthen communities locally and beyond.



Photo credit: Wendell Weathers II

A STEP OUT OF THE

A Student Reflection on Community Engagement

By: Kaitlen Osburn

As soon as I ended the phone call, I remember Apacing around my tiny apartment with a sense of anticipation, fright, and growing excitement. I had just accepted what would turn out to be the most challenging job I had ever had. I was officially part of the 2009 summer staff of the Center for Courageous Kids (CCK) in Scottsville, KY. I didn't know what to think about my job at first, and I wasn't even sure I could do it. How do I discipline kids who have come closer to death than I ever have? How do I talk to them? How should I deal with the "medical stuff?"

Over the course of my training and lots of conversations with my parents and friends, I had my questions answered, my faith in myself reassured, and the "medical stuff" covered.

I later realized that had I not had these questions before I went to CCK, I wouldn't have grown as much while I was there. The Center for Courageous Kids is an amazing camp for children who have serious illnesses and/or disabilities. These kids got to try things they were never allowed to do before, while we as a staff tried to make this the best camp experience they could have. The campers at CCK showed me what true bravery and courage was and taught me not to be afraid of death. By working as a counselor and a lifeguard, I was showing them how proud we all were of them for having the courage to come to camp. I loved being a part of a place where medical conditions did not cancel out the fun. While the kids we worked with had life-threatening conditions, camp was not a place where they needed to worry about that part of their lives – camp was for living. Many of my campers never had the opportunity to go canoeing, ride a horse, or shoot a bow and arrow, but at camp, nothing is impossible.

I liked to think of myself as someone who always gave back to the community, but I never truly understood what that meant until after my summer at CCK. In high school, I spent a few hours working at Graceworks or volunteering at church, but there was always an aspect of self-improvement while I was there. At CCK, I had no time to be selfish or self-absorbed when I was surrounded by the bravest kids I had ever met. Everything is about the kids, and that is why I continue to go back to

volunteer at CCK during the school year for their Family Weekends – it's always a gentle reminder that giving back provides such a beautiful reward.

When I learned that I was going to be training as a hospice volunteer for Dr. Dana Bradley's Honors Colloquia class, I experienced much of the same feelings as I did after I accepted my job at CCK. How do I interact with the dying? Or with "old people?" What about the "medical stuff?" I was a bit nervous about how it would all turn out. One day during our training session, our instructor, Julie Pride, explained to us that Hospice is not about death – it's about living. I remember the moments after her comment being similar to a slow-motion movie montage. Everything I had learned about dealing with death, medical conditions, and my campers came flooding back. Hospice provides the same sort of care for older patients (though not always elderly) that CCK does for its campers. Both facilities celebrate life. Like with my training at CCK, all of my questions were answered in our training with Julie and at our visits to the Hospice of Southern Kentucky on Scottsville Road.

Over the course of the last few months, my availability to volunteer at CCK was minimal. Once I enrolled in this class and realized I would be trained to be a Hospice Volunteer, I was excited about another chance to volunteer closer to home. I had never been 100% comfortable working with the elderly, but training with Hospice is helping me overcome any fears I might have. I feel like I have the potential to learn as much from Hospice as I did from CCK. Later in Dr. Bradley's curriculum, we will be writing an Ethical Will for someone. It is my love for outreach combined with writing, and I am sure it can only be a positive combination! I am looking forward to this opportunity as another way for me to extend my reach outside of my college bubble in order to connect with someone in need of love and support.

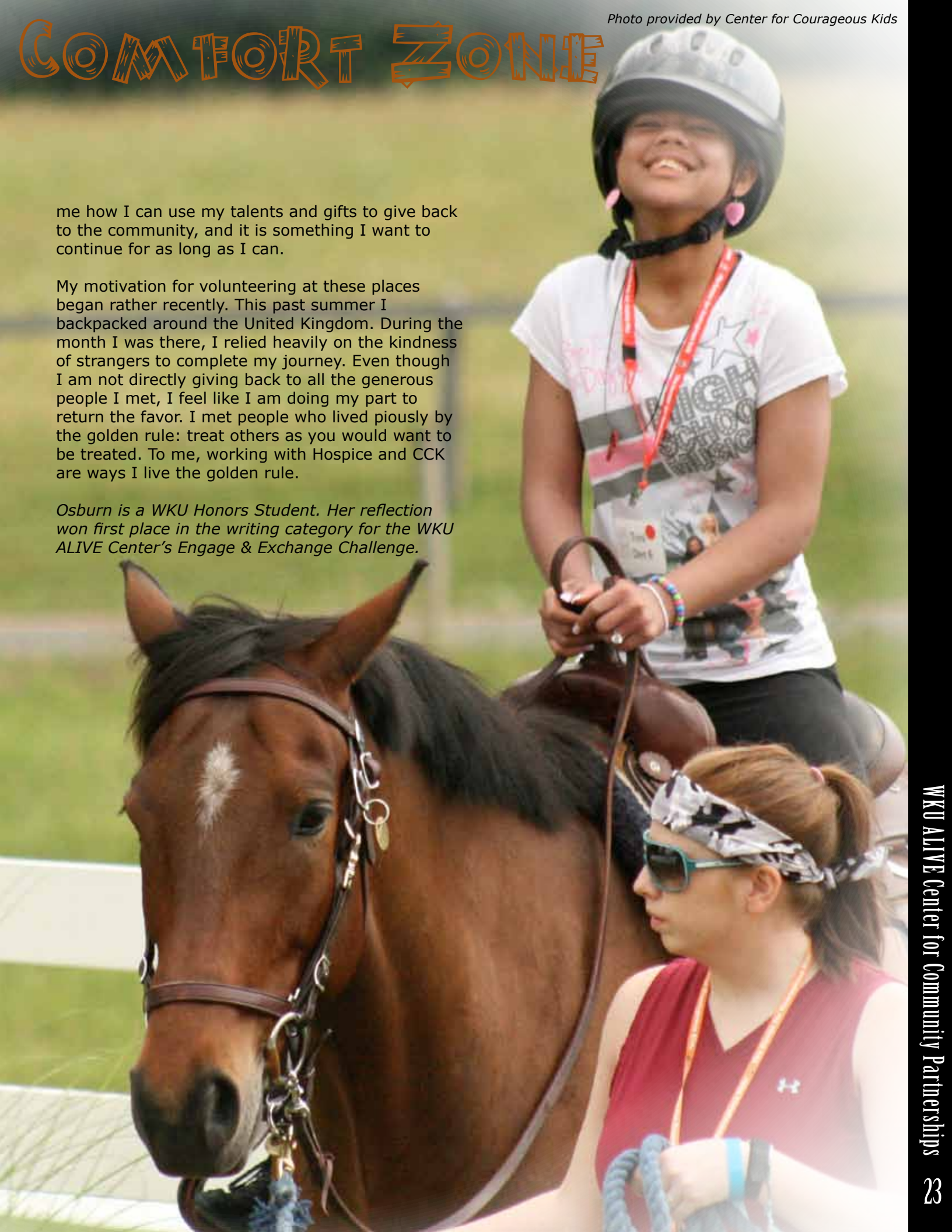
The Center for Courageous Kids and the Hospice of Bowling Green are only 30 minutes apart – too close for me to call my interactions with both these centers a mere coincidence. Becoming involved with both of these places has made me a more giving, caring, and open person: ready and willing to deal with what life has to offer. Volunteering has shown

COMFORT ZONE

me how I can use my talents and gifts to give back to the community, and it is something I want to continue for as long as I can.

My motivation for volunteering at these places began rather recently. This past summer I backpacked around the United Kingdom. During the month I was there, I relied heavily on the kindness of strangers to complete my journey. Even though I am not directly giving back to all the generous people I met, I feel like I am doing my part to return the favor. I met people who lived piously by the golden rule: treat others as you would want to be treated. To me, working with Hospice and CCK are ways I live the golden rule.

Osburn is a WKU Honors Student. Her reflection won first place in the writing category for the WKU ALIVE Center's Engage & Exchange Challenge.





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