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Aurelia Spaulding

Western Kentucky University, aurelia.spaulding@wku.edu

Alive Center, Western Kentucky University

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Spirit of Engagement

2012



A Leading American University with International Reach



WESTERN KENTUCKY UNIVERSITY

“After doing the project, we have learned that service is not just about helping other people by giving them something that they can hold on to or a material object. Service is so much more than that; it is about connecting with people and building relationships in which both people can strive and reach their full potential.”

~WKU students Christian Edmonds, Jasmine Stockton, and Kenya Britt

The *Spirit of Engagement* 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 at WKU involving service-learning, community outreach, community-based research, and volunteerism.

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FROM PRESIDENT RANSDALL



WKU Mission Statement:

Western Kentucky University prepares students to be productive, engaged, and socially responsible citizen leaders of a global society. It provides research, service, and lifelong learning opportunities for its constituents. WKU is responsible for stewarding a high quality of life for those within its reach.

“To fulfill this mission—and to achieve the University’s vision to become A Leading American University with International Reach—WKU is dedicated to its responsibility to engage faculty and students in serious service-learning programs which serve people and communities within the University’s reach.”

~President Ransdell



SPIRIT OF ENGAGEMENT

Greetings,

As we gear up for the fall semester at Western Kentucky University, I am proud of the many growing accomplishments of our faculty and students in the areas of public service, engaged teaching, and research. It is with great pleasure that I share with you the fifth edition of the *WKU Spirit of Engagement* which highlights the many ways that our campus engages with communities locally and abroad to solve real world problems.

Students at WKU increasingly have the opportunity to engage in relevant public work and quality service-learning experiences through their coursework, internships, and study abroad experiences. More and more students are able to make the connection between what they learn in the classroom and how that knowledge is applied to the real world. This experiential type of learning will give WKU students an advantage over their job-seeking peers, as they fill their resumes with experiences in leadership, teamwork, critical thinking, and problem solving – skills desired by employers in the job market today. The projects in this edition of the *Spirit of Engagement* highlight these skills that students are obtaining while engaging in public work.

We invite you to join our efforts in growing in the areas of public scholarship and public work at WKU. I hope that you will find this publication both informative and inspirational. Connect with us and find ways to support the university programs that make this work possible.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Gary Ransdell". The signature is fluid and cursive.

Gary Ransdell
President

Public work advancing

“The most important thing learned is that if a person has a good idea, and is given the right opportunity and the right team, there is no limit to what they can accomplish.”

~WKU students Mario Nguyen, Mitchell Grogg, Chloe Brown, and Micah McClendon

By Paul N. Markham, Ph.D.
Institute for Citizenship & Social Responsibility

I remember my fifth grade teacher telling the class “Kentucky isn’t a state, it’s a commonwealth.” I can’t say that made a lot of sense to me then, but it has come to mean a lot to me personally and to the mission of WKU as a university with both international reach and a deep commitment to our place in Kentucky. Simply put, a commonwealth is a group of people that live together and work for the common good of the whole. A commonwealth is characterized by a shared sense of responsibility for one another and a willingness to collectively address tough public problems.

The stories in this edition of the *Spirit of Engagement* represent a wide range of interests as well as faculty, staff, and student involvement. In addition to the many volunteer and community service efforts at WKU, the ALIVE Center for Community Partnerships together with the Institute for Citizenship and Social Responsibility have the key goal of developing students’ commitment to public work.

Public work is defined as ordinary citizens working together to solve public problems and create solutions of lasting importance in our community, nation, and world. People think much differently about work

than service. While service is usually something that we commit to in our spare time, we all understand that work is necessary to maintain our way of life. No work means no food on the table! We believe that a commitment to democracy and a shared way of life requires more than service. It takes work – public work.

Public work is characterized by a deep commitment to partnership (we cannot address complicated public problems on our own), reciprocity (we do not fix things for other people, we fix them together), and sustainability (we do not want band aids, we want long-term solutions). The stories you’ll read in this issue of the *Spirit of Engagement* are examples of the ways we educate our students to understand that the problems of our commonwealth and world are not someone else’s problems; rather, they are problems that belong to all of us, and fixing these problems takes serious commitment. It doesn’t come as a surprise that this type of learning doesn’t happen automatically. A quick read of the newspaper reminds us that we have an ongoing need to develop the skills of democracy, which includes understanding differences, knowing how to work together when there is disagreement, and

being confident problem solvers when the solutions are not clear cut.

More Than Just Good Stuff

The kind of civic education I’m talking about here is more than just good stuff. While it is true that the good work of service is essential to a healthy society, research shows that deep civic learning has a number of positive outcomes such as students having an increased sense of personal and social responsibility. In addition, college students who participate in civic engagement learning activities not only earn higher grade point averages but also have higher retention rates and are more likely to complete their college degree.

Furthermore, in an economic environment where job skills are critical, a recent study reports that employers want colleges and



Photo by Abbey Oldham

matters in the commonwealth



universities to place more emphasis on essential learning outcomes including civic knowledge, cultural diversity, complex problem solving, ethical decision making, critical thinking, and application in “real-world” settings.

A focus on partnering with our communities to educate students on the knowledge, skills, and attitudes of public work holds great promise for strengthening the Commonwealth to deal with our present challenges as well as those that will come.

The Challenge We Face

The Institute for Citizenship and Social Responsibility is proud to be the author of the 2011 Civic Health Index (see the story on page 22 for details). One of the key indicators for civic health in the Commonwealth is participation in

public work. Although Kentucky as a whole fell below the national average for participation in public work, the most alarming finding was that no one under the age of 25 in the Kentucky sample met the criteria for public work. A central and shared goal among Kentuckians should be to enhance the level of public work and related civic engagement in Kentucky by increasing the quantity and quality of civic education and community engagement across the Commonwealth. To do this requires more than college courses and volunteer hours. It requires true partnership with schools, businesses, nonprofits, faith-based groups, government, and individual citizens. This publication is a celebration of the creativity and determination of the WKU campus and Bowling Green community to create a better world. Thank you for your support and look forward to growing the Commonwealth together.

Eg. Colby, Anne, et al. (2003) *Educating Citizens: Preparing America's Undergraduates for Lives of Moral and Civic Responsibility*. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass; Jacoby and Associates 2009.

Cress, Christine, et al. (2010) *A Promising Connection: Increasing College Access and Success Through Civic Engagement*. Boston: Campus Compact.

Hart Research Associates (2010) *Raising the Bar: Employers' Views on College Learning in the Wake of the Economic Downturn*. Washington, D.C.: Association of American Colleges and Universities.

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spiritofengagement.org



Community Partnerships: The driving force behind university outreach

Community partnerships are the driving force behind everything at the ALIVE Center. ALIVE is an acronym for A Local Information & Volunteer Exchange. For almost a decade, the Center has served as a nonprofit support center for Warren and the surrounding counties, providing free meeting space and serving as a clearinghouse for nonprofit service information and volunteer opportunities.

In 2006, the ALIVE Center became the WKU ALIVE Center for Community Partnerships, and the Center expanded its mission and vision to facilitate campus and community partnerships that address social challenges throughout the Commonwealth. The ALIVE Center serves as a connector between faculty, staff, students, and communities locally and abroad. The years of relationship building in the community created approximately

300 nonprofit contacts that partner with the Center's staff.

Through service-learning and community-based research activities, the staff at the Center teach people how to be public problem-solvers and active change agents in the communities in which they live and work. The Center provides funding opportunities and training to advance public work, and provides a mechanism for campus and community partners to connect, learn and serve together: the Campus & Community Network. During the year, faculty and community members may contact the ALIVE Center to discuss regional needs and ways in which they can address those needs through partnerships.

The Campus & Community Network is an informal gathering of students, faculty,

staff, and community members that work together on pressing issues not adequately addressed by any one agency; issues that are unique to our particular region of the commonwealth. Some of the work groups that have formed as a result of this network include Community Partnership for Immigrant and Refugee Issues, Amigos Resource Network, South Central Kentucky Coalition on Homelessness, and Senior Solutions. To get involved, visit www.wku.edu/alive.

The following pages share examples of partnerships between WKU faculty, staff, students, and community members. Readers can learn about community partnership projects that were funded by Community Partnership Incentive Awards as well as other notable WKU partnerships.



photo by Rodney Goodman

4 families received exterior home repairs in one week

household items collected for the families **500**

WKU brushes with kindness

Susan Barbour, WKU Building Services Attendant, is one of many homeowners who sometimes finds it difficult to complete repairs to their home. "Homes need maintenance," Barbour said. "If not, it will all fall apart."

Helping individuals improve their homes is the idea behind Habitat for Humanity's A Brush with Kindness program, and the WKU ALIVE Center for Community Partnerships and Student Activities' Leadership & Volunteerism offices partnered with Habitat to kick off the program during National Volunteer Week.

Through this program, local low-income homeowners are able to apply for assistance with necessary exterior home repairs and upgrades. "I think it will help them to make home repairs and small, energy efficient savings that they probably won't be able to do on their own," said Rodney Goodman, Executive Director of the Bowling Green/Warren County Habitat for Humanity.

Habitat for Humanity's office gets a number of phone calls from individuals

that need work done to their home. Removing the worry of how to make exterior improvements, like building a ramp or patching a roof, can make a difference and truly transform someone's life.

Approximately 130 students volunteered during the first week of A Brush with Kindness. In addition, faculty and staff joined the efforts to collect needed household items for the residents. Overall, four homes were completed during the first seven days, and more than 500 household items were collected.

"A Brush with Kindness promotes the true meaning of partnership...it is the type of project that allows for a connection to be made between the volunteers and the homeowners as they work together to make the home improvements. It's truly empowering for the homeowner and deeply fulfilling for the volunteers. Isn't that what making a difference is all about?" said Leah Ashwill, WKU ALIVE Center Director.



Students start college by blitzing

Every August, first-year students can participate in M.A.S.T.E.R. Plan activities the week before classes begin. M.A.S.T.E.R. Plan stands for "Making Academic and Social Transitions Educationally Rewarding" Plan. The M.A.S.T.E.R. Plan participants "blitz" Bowling Green, providing four hours of service to local nonprofit agencies during the campus' largest community service event: Big Red's Blitz.

Last year, volunteers known as "Blitzers" divided into groups to work alongside WKU leaders and fellow classmates to complete various service projects. Whether they were sorting items at The Salvation Army, cleaning up local parks

and wooded areas with Bowling Green Public Works, pulling invasive plant species at Lost River Cave, organizing building materials with Habitat for Humanity, or painting picnic tables at Potter Children's Home, Blitzers chose to engage in their community. In 2011, 308 students served at 28 different project sites.

Big Red's Blitz has been a partnership event between Housing & Residence Life (HRL) and the ALIVE Center for Community Partnerships since 2004. The ALIVE Center works with the partners to coordinate the projects while HRL actively recruits students and plans the schedule of events for the day.

1200 hours served in the community during Big Red's Blitz

WKU departments create partnerships

References and full stories of these partnerships available online at wkunews.wordpress.com.

Medical Center

The Medical Center is constructing a new facility to house the university's nursing and physical therapy programs and to provide educational space for the hospital. The facility will be named The Medical Center-WKU Health Sciences Complex. Eighty percent of the facility will be used to accommodate assembly, training, classroom, and business functions for WKU.

Community Children's Chorus

The WKU Department of Music and WKU Continuing Education partnered in 2011 to create the Southern Kentucky Children's Chorus. Founding director Dr. Jennifer Adam, an assistant professor in the WKU Department of Music, said the main purpose of the Chorus is to supplement programs offered through local schools and churches.

Durbin Estates Development

The Durbin Estates project will develop an integrated green infrastructure, green building, mixed-income, mixed-use neighborhood on a 14.3-acre site owned by the Bowling Green/Warren County Habitat for Humanity as a statewide demonstration. Durbin Estates will also be used as a learning laboratory for area schools and is located just across the street from where the new Dishman McGinnis Elementary School will be built on Glen Lily Road. The partnership includes the WKU Center for Environmental Education and Sustainability, Planning, Design and Construction, Landscaping, Habitat for Humanity, Bowling Green Public Works, and many more.

U.S. Squadron

The 6th Squadron, 4th Cavalry Regiment, 3rd Brigade, 1st Infantry Division from Ft. Knox is led by Command Sergeant Major John Brownell, a current WKU Master's student in the Department of Kinesiology, Recreation, and Sport (KRS). After learning about Sergeant Major Brownell and his troops, KRS decided to adopt the troops while they are deployed. KRS, Division of Extended Learning & Outreach, and the ALIVE Center partnered to collect items for the troops from the campus and local community.



WKU program helps students get GED

A few years ago a group of community members met with Associate Professor Jim Berger to discuss the need for GED & English as a Second Language (ESL) preparation in the Hispanic community. Berger sought out funding from multiple outlets including the ALIVE Center's Community Partnership Incentive Awards and worked with Pablo Nausa to coordinate the classes. From there, the first GED classes started meeting at the WKU ALIVE Center.

The GED program marked a 70% retention rate from the beginning to the end of the spring term, and eight students from the program went on to take the official practice test. The GED/ESL program was able to serve 38 households, and students gained knowledge in the English language as well as life skills.

In the spring of 2012, 23 students enrolled in the English as a Second Language classes. There was a total of 28 hours of instruction, distributed among 12 classes. Students took entrance and exit tests in order to evaluate how much was learned during the semester. The class focused on basic grammar, essential verbs, and life skills such as shopping at the grocery store and mall, and going to restaurants and doctor's appointments.

Students from WKU's Spanish Club volunteered in the classes serving as tutors and volunteers. This partnership allowed them to practice and further their knowledge in Spanish, while helping ESL students improve their English. Doctoral students in Educational Leadership conducted an assessment of educational needs within the Hispanic population in Bowling Green. They will also conduct

a program evaluation for the Hispanic GED and ESL classes to evaluate the effectiveness of the program by surveying the students that have taken the classes and utilizing previously collected assessment data. In addition, cultural diversity students were able to provide childcare as part of required service-learning hours for their class. They also gained intercultural experience and knowledge about people from the Hispanic community. They have also developed \$100 Solution service-learning projects for the ESL and/or GED programs.

In addition, funds for continuing both programs were secured through the City of Bowling Green's Community Development Block Grant as well as through a grant from the Dollar General Corporation.



PROJECT EMPOWER

Project Empower program bridges the gap

Project EMPOWER is a unique service delivery initiative that embodies the spirit of collaboration between the Suzanne Vitale Clinical Education Complex (CEC) at Western Kentucky University, the Housing Authority of Bowling Green, and the low-income community of Bowling Green/Warren County. EMPOWER stands for enhance, motivate, prosper, overcome, work, energy, and respect. This project seeks to restore the intent and strength of empowerment by providing services for residents of low-income areas. WKU students, faculty, community partners, and private practitioners engage local families and individuals to identify barriers to success and develop strategies to reduce limitations. Project EMPOWER fundamentally embraces the values of social justice, student engagement, and community service by employing the strengths of community partnerships.

Project EMPOWER is the result of a community partnership between WKU's Family Resource Program (FRP) at the Suzanne Vitale Clinical Education Complex (CEC) and the Family Self-Sufficiency Program at the Housing Authority of Bowling Green (HABG). Dr. Saundra Starks, WKU associate professor of social work and director of the Family Resource Program at the CEC, Vella Mae Travis, CEC Family Resource Program coordinator, and Shannon Sales, former director of the HABG Family Self-Sufficiency Program, were concerned by the shortages of services available in Warren County. Motivated by this community need, a grant from the Jessie Ball duPont Foundation was sought and awarded to provide behavioral health and case management services to the underserved of Bowling Green and the surrounding Warren County area.

The project intends to bridge the gap between people and services to empower individuals towards a life of greater

stability, self-sufficiency, and self-reliance. Additionally, the project attempts to identify families and children with disabilities who may benefit from other services within the CEC. It is projected that 200 low-income residents of the Warren County area will be served during the project's three year period. WKU social work and counseling students have been integral in the delivery of these services. Under the supervision of Starks, master's level student interns develop and facilitate orientations to recruit new participants, as well as provide psycho-educational groups to serve therapeutic needs. Both social work and counseling interns meet individually with participants and provide case management and behavioral health services. Additionally, Project EMPOWER utilizes behavioral health specialists who are trained professionals from the Bowling Green area, specializing in individual, couples, and family counseling.

Master's level social work students are documenting the project's progress using an integrated approach to data collection. Utilizing both qualitative and quantitative measures, students capture participants' journeys through the program with pre- and post-tests, screening inventories, goal assessment scales, and anecdotal data collection. Social work students are also involved in scholarly presentations of the project. This year, the preliminary results from Project EMPOWER were presented at WKU's Student Research conference, the Kentucky Association of Social Work Educators spring conference, and a special presentation was made to visiting professors from Jacksonville State University.

The relationship between the CEC and HABG has grown through the development of this project. The HABG supplied Project EMPOWER with an office in its Learning Center building and

collaborates with Project EMPOWER staff to provide transportation, childcare, and marketing. Sharing limited resources and communicating often, Project EMPOWER and its community partners are able to work together to provide a service to a segment of the community that is often overlooked, underserved, and underrepresented.

Daniel Naughton, who has his bachelor's in social work, is Project EMPOWER's case manager. He reported, "Since joining Project EMPOWER, I have had a chance to work with a variety of clients with similar challenges. Some of the most common issues include unemployment, parenting, and unhealthy relationships. As a case manager, it was apparent early on that establishing trust with this population was crucial." Travis shared a similar perspective, "It is easy to underestimate the amount of distrust in this population. Focus is needed more on developing relationships and building trust." Growing and learning, WKU students have found the project to teach them practical skills, which enhances their clinical abilities. Atana Grady, a social work master's student stated, "Working with participants involved with Project EMPOWER really spells out the word 'help' on another level. The major learning opportunity, still a work in progress, is gaining enough trust to know the full scope of the participant's issue to be an effective resource for him or her. But when trust is gained, the participant's success is above expected. It is a beautiful program."

Project EMPOWER held its first orientation on September 27, 2011. To date the project has served 47 participants individually and over 100 through group sessions and informational trainings. Project EMPOWER continues to outreach to the community and is projected to increase available services. For referrals to the program please call (270) 467-7132.



Service-Learning applies course content to service experiences

At WKU 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. Students 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 a greater interest and understanding of community life.

The ALIVE Center is available to assist with service-learning efforts on campus and in the community by:

- Scheduling one-to-one meetings to assist with coordinating service-learning projects in a classroom or organizational setting.

- Providing service-learning training, resources, and staff support for faculty who utilize service-learning in their classrooms.

- Connecting service-learning project ideas with appropriate campus or community partners.

- Facilitating \$100 Solution service-learning projects for secondary and postsecondary students.

The \$100 Solution™ utilizes course learning objectives combined with five principles of service-learning to answer a central question for students: with this \$100 bill, what can I do to enhance quality of life for others? It teaches students to ask what they can do rather

than self-determining the needs of others, and it demonstrates that many social problems exist that can be solved with small amounts of money. It presses students to think beyond monetary solutions to make a difference in their community.

\$100 Solution projects have been coordinated with local organizations and families, on the Semester at Sea global voyage, and with remote villages in various parts of the globe. Read on to learn more about what makes The \$100 Solution™ program so successful. Find out how you can support The \$100 Solution™ program or contact the ALIVE Center about implementing a \$100 Solution project!

Service-Learning WKU Course Examples

Cooperative Ed Nursing

NURS 369

Dr. Dawn Wright's students provided care for medically fragile children at the Center for Courageous Kids in Scottsville, KY. They also journaled about their experiences at camp including the professional and personal impact of the experience.

Flute Principal

MUS 153

Dr. Heidi Alvarez's students provided private instruction to public school flute students in south central Kentucky and northern Tennessee and prepared audition recordings. The students learned to write in their discipline through preparation of professional-related paperwork.

Students impact community by creating sustainable \$100 Solutions

Donate Now
see page 23

When registration opened for the spring semester, many students never imagined they would apply their coursework to make sustainable differences in the community through The \$100 Solution™ program.

"I had a friend who [the semester before] had done a \$100 Solution project with her communication class, and she was telling me about it," said Joanna Williams, a WKU English and philosophy student from Clarksville, TN. "I immediately thought of her and thought this would be something really great to do, not only to learn more about gender and women's studies, but to also give back to the community in a lasting way."

Many students felt the same way as Williams, which resulted in the 100th project developed for The \$100 Solution™ in only three years of the program at Western Kentucky University.

The \$100 Solution™ offers campus and community members an opportunity to use a small amount of money to make a lasting and sustainable difference. Based on the idea that small changes have a big impact, The \$100 Solution™ challenges students to ask the community to identify a problem, and then create a solution using no more than 100 dollars. The students' projects must involve a partnership between their group and the local community.

Instructors teach the principles and content of the course, as well as share

with their students how the incorporated service project must apply the course content work while also benefiting the community. Through \$100 Solution courses, students utilize the principles of reciprocity, partnership, capacity-building, sustainability, and reflection.

Similar to other student groups implementing \$100 Solution projects, Williams, along with group members Amanda Moody and Alyssa Turner, met with a community partner to talk about what they were interested in doing and to identify any needs the organization had. They found that a number of the youth at Parker Bennett Community Center were not reading at grade level. The three students created a reading and incentive program to help accelerate reading skills, used the \$100 to purchase books, and highlighted books with strong female characters.

In addition to the group working with Parker Bennett Community Center for their Gender & Women's Studies course, 43 other groups completed service-learning coursework by implementing similar programs or projects. Some of these included Community Development Through Service-Learning students' recycling program for Bowling Green High School, Cultural Diversity students' interactive driver's education board for refugees, and Healthcare Analysis students' gardening program for Magnolia Village, an Alzheimer's center. A group from Dr. Jennifer Mize-Smith's Group Communication class created sensory

boards for the Kelly Autism Program in order to help advance the educational development of autistic youth from elementary to college age, and a group from Dr. Paul Markham's Citizen and Self class established a volunteer network titled "Buddy Volunteers for Down Syndrome" for the Down Syndrome Support Group of South Central Kentucky.

"The \$100 Solution™ program has really benefited the youth at Parker Bennett Community Center," said supervisor Omar Rogers. The students look forward to the reading program at Parker Bennett, and many community partners agree about the benefit of the program. The \$100 Solution™ at WKU has been growing rapidly. Spring 2012 resulted in the most activity. Nine faculty members taught 18 sections of courses across seven different departments in four colleges and involved over 200 students in 45 different \$100 Solution projects. To read more about the projects from the fall 2011 and spring 2012 classes, continue reading on page 13.

The \$100 Solution™ is an international program created by WKU Scholar-in-Residence, Dr. Bernard Strencky. To learn more about The \$100 Solution™ at WKU or to donate a cash gift for projects, please contact the ALIVE Center at 270-782-0082 or visit www.wku.edu/alive.



PR Management

JOUR 456

Vicki Bagwell's public relations students created a project designed to raise awareness within the college communities about the seriousness of texting while driving. The focus of the public relations campaign was to help Kentucky reduce driving fatalities and make others aware of the new texting-while-driving law.

Business Writing

ENG 306

Dr. Lee Spears' students worked in teams to create several writing projects for campus organizations and the local American Cancer Society. In another section, students created a plan for an afterschool homework help program at Dishman McGinnis Elementary School.

Museum Procedures

FLK 470G

Dr. Michael Ann Williams' graduate students planned and developed exhibits for an open house at the Historic Gardner House.

**"This assignment and situation
has changed the way we view the
world and each member of it."**

*~WKU students Helen Heines, Lauren Haynes,
Mitchell Hale, and Blake Neumann*



WESTERN
KENTUCKY
Established Dec
NINETEEN HUNDRE
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COURSES APPLY SERVICE-LEARNING THROUGH The \$100 Solution™ TURNING \$100 INTO A WORLD OF CHANGE.

By Matthew Summers
ALIVE Center for Community Partnerships

"We have learned how to help others in successful ways and to find out what they really need the most and the proper ways of getting them what they need."

~ Haley Edwards, Sarah Durham, Casey Porter, and Kristen Siddens

In the fall of 2011 and spring of 2012, students in the Honors Colloquium: Community Development through Service-Learning, taught by Dr. Bernard Strenecky, conducted \$100 Solution projects at Bowling Green High School. One group of students wanted to create a student-teacher advisory council to create an environment for greater dialogue between the faculty and students at the school. Two groups, one in the fall and one in the spring, sought to promote the recycling program at BGHS through posters, flyers, and kits for making crafts from recyclable materials. Two more groups worked to create mentoring programs at the school. These programs would work with students who were either at risk of not graduating or were lacking the motivation to finish school.

Students in Dr. Jennifer Mize-Smith's Small Group Communication classes in both the fall and spring participated in the \$100 Solution™. Two groups of students worked with the Kelly Autism Program to provide materials and sensory boards to help autistic children experience the world with all of their senses. A group in the fall worked with Hope Harbor to increase the awareness of sexual assault among college-aged students. Two groups worked with children to increase their physical activity and awareness of healthy lifestyles. These groups worked with children at both the Boys and Girls Club and Parker Bennett Community Center. A group from the spring semester worked with members of the welfare-to-work program to educate them on proper workplace behavior while they were employed at RePets thrift store. Another group from the spring did a project at Rosewood Kindred Healthcare giving their community courtyard a "makeover". This gives the residents at Rosewood the ability to both enjoy the courtyard and engage in maintaining the area.

Meanwhile, the students in Health Care Analysis, taught by Dr. Kathleen Abrahamson, applied course content while planning and implementing \$100 Solutions. Students completed projects in partnership with many local organizations such as Magnolia Village, Potter Children's Home, and the Bowling Green International Center. Other groups did projects with geographically further reach.

For example, one group went to Indiana and worked in partnership with the Evansville Children's Psychiatric Hospital to create a calming nature area for the children. Other groups provided health information on websites or in brochures.

Dr. Leslie North's Global Environmental Change class did two \$100 Solution projects in partnership with Western Kentucky University. These projects involved increasing awareness amongst WKU students and visitors about green initiatives on campus.

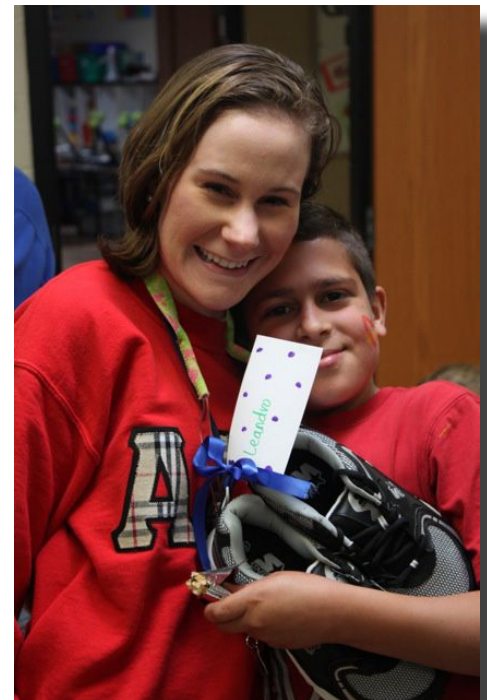
The Gender and Women's Studies class taught by Nadia De Leon did several projects incorporating knowledge they gained during their studies. One group increased awareness of BabyNet, an organization dedicated to helping new parents cope with many of their unique challenges. Another group collected toiletries and other items for BRASS, a local organization aiding victims of domestic violence. A third group provided reading materials for Parker Bennett Community Center. These reading materials featured female and minority protagonists so the children would have an easier time identifying with the characters. The group also provided an incentive system to encourage the children to read more.

Dr. Sonia Lenk's Spanish class participated in \$100 Solution projects aimed at the Hispanic community in Bowling Green. Two groups worked to help Hispanic high school students apply for postsecondary education. Another group created a potluck dinner where Hispanic families could cook some of their cultural dishes to share with members of the community. It built a greater bond within the community and allowed different groups of the community to get to know and understand each other in a setting they would not have otherwise had.

Finally, students from five sections of Cultural Diversity in the U.S., taught by Dr. Tim Evans, Nadia De Leon, Jennifer Jameson, and Molly Bolick of the Department of Folk Studies and Anthropology, partnered with refugee

families. Their goal was to learn about each other's cultures and complete \$100 Solutions to help the families in their integration process. There were six groups who focused on helping others learn English. Other groups worked with their families on budgeting, gardening, driving, learning about the western healthcare system, and education. Two groups aided local churches serving mainly Hispanic families. Other groups provided shoes, coats, and other items to help them transition into life in Bowling Green. In return, the students learned about the Hispanic culture and traditions.

All of these projects resulted in empowering solutions for the community while giving students the chance to learn while making a difference.



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Cultural diversity takes new approach

"I learned in this class like I haven't learned in any other."

In the spring of 2011 students in Cultural Diversity in the U.S., taught by Nadia De Leon, with an honors section of the course taught by Dr. Tim Evans, conducted service-learning projects with local refugee families. The project was coordinated in partnership with the Bowling Green International Center and the WKU ALIVE Center for Community Partnerships. Since then, the program has grown, added partners, and reached out to more than 30 local families and over 150 students.

The goal of the program is to create a meaningful interaction between the students and the families that would: 1) grant the students a multicultural learning experience, 2) allow the immigrant and refugee families to practice their English and learn more about American culture, and 3) directly benefit the families or the organizations that support them through student projects that would help in their integration process. Students are expected to take time to understand issues and work on community-determined needs.

At the beginning of the semester, students hear from community leaders who work with immigrants and refugees, such

as, James Robinson, former Director of the Bowling Green International Center, Jennifer Bell, Director of the Center for Development, Acculturation, and Resolution Services (CEDARS), and Heath Ray, from Community Action.



A student reported, "I learned in this class like I haven't learned in any other. Throughout the entire class it seemed like more than just someone telling us what diversity was like and how we should handle it. Through learning more about other cultures I have learned more about myself than I ever thought possible...I

have also had the experience to meet numerous people who have completely different backgrounds and views from mine."

The student projects to date have been a success and have helped meet some of the needs of the partner families, as well as the learning objectives for the students. For example, in 2011 students partnered with a Burmese family. The group learned about the very difficult refugee experience of this family, and the students taught them about American culture. They realized that transportation was a long-term issue for the family and decided to get them bicycles – a more sustainable solution than bus passes. The group helped the mother in the family study for her GED and donated bicycles. Then, they spent the \$100 on materials

to supplement the bicycles – including helmets, locks, pumps, and baskets so they can ride the bicycles to the grocery store. The partnership continues to benefit community members and offer WKU students an opportunity for cross-cultural interaction without leaving town.

Museum students open Gardner House

When the Upper Green River Biological Preserve started in Hart County, Kentucky, the Preserve directors responded to local community concerns that one of the oldest structures in the county, located on Preserve land, might be destroyed. The Department of Folk Studies and Anthropology was contacted by Drs. Albert and Ouida Meier, professors in the Department of Biology, and a partnership formed to implement various archaeological and preservation activities at the Gardner House, including the listing of the house on the National Register of Historic Places.

As a service-learning project, students in a Museum Procedures class divided into teams to prepare for the Open House. One team developed exhibits for the opening and the other arranged publicity and logistics. Students sent invitations, made contacts through local groups, created a blog, and produced a radio piece which was broadcast on WKYU-FM. The students surpassed their goal and 115 participants attended the open house.

"I have seldom seen a class so elated over the success of a group project before.

I think that we solidified considerable good will among the local population and students learned that their projects do make a difference," said Dr. Michael Ann Williams, Department Head of Folk Studies and Anthropology.

The aim of this project was for the Gardner House to serve as a center for the interpretation of the local history and culture of Hart County. Various groups have already visited the site, including the Hart County Community Scholars, a group of local individuals who are trained to document their own history and culture through the Kentucky Folklife Program (an interagency program of the Kentucky Historical Society and the Kentucky Arts Council).

Williams received \$1,000 from the WKU ALIVE Center's Community Partnership Incentive Awards (CPIA) program for the service-learning project. Williams partnered with Hart County Community Scholars, Friends of Mammoth Cave, Horse Cave Theater, Preservation Kentucky, and the Landmark Association.



DOES REMOTENESS MATTER IN KENTUCKY?

Amelia Harshfield



Community-based research projects benefit the community

The WKU ALIVE Center for Community Partnerships facilitates community-based research at Western Kentucky University. The Center provides funding through the Community Partnership Incentive Awards program to support innovative community-based research ideas. Staff at the Center also coordinates interdisciplinary graduate research through the Hill House program, where four students work together to address key issues in the region through applied research and neighborhood/community development projects.

These community-based research projects make an effort to:

- build upon community strengths, to identify community assets, and to empower community members as a byproduct of the research process;
- generally focus on meeting information and analytical needs of society's most economically, politically, and socially marginalized groups and communities;
- actively involve local residents as

co-investigators on an equal basis with university-trained scholars (and students) throughout the research process;

- promote social learning processes; and
- disseminate results and findings in multiple ways; for example, through academic journals, popular press, community meetings, foundation reports and publications, and university and community forums.

The 2011-2012 Hill House students conducted applied research in fields as diverse as economics, student affairs, social work, and sociology. Amelia Harshfield conducted a study that contributed to the understanding of economic hardship in Kentucky through consideration of geographical remoteness based on driving distance to highways. John Roberts conducted a comparative study of service-learning to assess WKU's readiness to maintain Carnegie Community Engagement Classification. Jacquelyn Skaggs partnered with HOTEL INC for a preliminary examination of

client data that would aid them in better understanding the characteristics of their client population. Finally, Elcin Celik conducted a qualitative study of the resettlement and integration experience of Bosnian refugees in Bowling Green. The students published and presented their work in various academic and community outlets.

The ALIVE Center invites readers to learn how to support community-based research at WKU – through giving opportunities via the Community Partnership Incentive Awards program or partnerships with the Hill House program. Partner locally or abroad; travel with our campus and community partners on research and service-learning trips to other countries. Think about the challenges in the south central Kentucky region and how to lend knowledge and support.

Donate Now
see page 23



Online tool used to assess karst environments

By Jason Polk, Ph.D., Geography and Geology Dept.
and Leslie North, Ph.D., Geography and Geology Dept.

Major flooding. Sinkhole collapses. Groundwater pollution. These are some of the phrases that come to mind when thinking about problems that arise from human-environment interaction in karst landscapes. The word "karst" often elicits confused looks, as much of the general public is unfamiliar with the term. However, most people are familiar with terms like caves, springs, and sinkholes, particularly in south central Kentucky, where they are fairly ubiquitous. These natural landforms occur in karst landscapes when limestone bedrock is dissolved away over thousands of years from carbonic acid (formed when rainwater mixes with carbon dioxide from the atmosphere and soil and becomes slightly acidic).

If one were to stop reading now, he or she would know more about the karst environment in which WKU and its surrounding communities are situated than most residents. Yet, this is only part of the story. Considering that karst landscapes comprise 15% of the

Earth's continents, population growth and development continue to pollute, destroy, vandalize, exploit, and heavily modify these fragile ecosystems. More importantly, karst aquifers provide over 25% of the world's fresh water supply, a resource that is easily misused and polluted. Everything from paving parking lots to applying herbicides and pesticides to withdrawing groundwater for industrial or residential use impact karst aquifers, sometimes beyond rehabilitation.

By now, alarm bells should be sounding for policymakers to address these issues with rigor. However, research indicates that few people living on karst terrain know about what is occurring within their own communities. Those who are aware often do not know how to evaluate and measure these occurrences. Supported with funding from the WKU ALIVE Center, WKU geography faculty Drs. Jason Polk and Leslie North initiated a venture to develop an online tool to assist community stakeholders in both learning about and assessing the impacts to their

karst environment. The tool's ultimate goal is to create an international online community of citizen scientists to share data.

In 2005, research efforts to quantify the total amount of karst disturbance from human impacts resulted in the creation of the Karst Disturbance Index (KDI) by Drs. Van Beynen and Townsend, which uses environmental indices to systematically evaluate and score indicators of anthropogenic karst impacts. Karst experts have applied the KDI in multiple international locations, with the primary revision being to refine its scoring criteria. However, it was not until 2010, when WKU geoscience alum Brandon Porter applied the KDI to Arecibo, Puerto Rico, that the difficulties in applying this assessment tool and its limitations for use by non-experts were documented. Porter suggested that in order to achieve its intended goal of use for land managers, policymakers, scientists, and members of the general public, "there needed to be more guidelines and education about both



“This online tool will be especially important to international communities who face challenges from human impacts on karst groundwater, yet often lack the expertise to address these complex issues - knowing which data to collect and where to find them is an important first step.”

~Dr. Chris Groves

the data collection and analysis processes, and that an online format would be most accessible to community stakeholders in karst environments.”

To further examine Porter’s conclusions, former WKU Gatton Academy student and a non-expert in karst science, Victoria Allen, began applying the KDI to Warren County, KY in early 2011. Through this process, and with the guidance of community partners including Mammoth Cave National Park, Lost River Cave and Valley, and the City of Bowling Green, she determined that a primary limitation in applying the KDI was knowledge about types and locations of data sources. Allen noted, “Karst is complex and data are not easily found unless you are familiar with what to look for and where to find it. Even then, scoring the KDI indicators is

tough without knowing a lot about karst science.”

After discussions with Polk and North, the direction of the online tool evolved to focus on describing karst landscapes and assessing available data for scoring indicators, both achievable through educational materials and a step-by-step guide to collecting and analyzing karst data. Through collaboration with website designer and WKU geoscience graduate student Taylor Hutchison, along with Hoffman Environmental Research Institute graphics artist Jonathan Oglesby, the “uKarst” online tool was developed.

This tool engages communities all over the world by providing both a forum for sharing knowledge, data, and resources, as well as a user guide and methodology

through which interested stakeholders can assess the availability of karst disturbance data. Karst expert Dr. Chris Groves commented, “This online tool will be especially important to international communities who face challenges from human impacts on karst groundwater, yet often lack the expertise to address these complex issues – knowing which data to collect and where to find them is an important first step!”

A pilot version of the “uKarst” website and a corresponding smartphone app was launched for beta testing with the assistance of selected community partners, as well as international collaborators, through its unveiling at the National Speleological Society Convention in June 2012. For more information, please visit www.ukarst.com.

Students address county schools’ immunizations

To reduce the number of unhealthy days, decrease the barriers to acute and chronic disease prevention, and provide primary disease prevention through influenza immunization of Warren County schools’ faculty and staff, the campus and community joined together to create the “Vaccinate Your Staff” campaign.

In 2010, no school in the Warren County school district achieved 50% staff immunization for seasonal flu, according to L.I.V.E. coalition surveillance. Unlike personnel in traditional office work sites, it is difficult for teachers and school staff to leave the worksite for an hour or more to go to a preventative health appointment, such as an immunization. The “Vaccinate Your Staff” campaign addressed this issue with an innovative approach – bringing the preventative service to the staff.

Free flu shots were offered to the staff of the Warren County school system

in September 2011. The staff of the Institute for Rural Health gave the immunizations with assistance from WKU nursing students. This program involved a partnership between the Warren County school system, the Institute for Rural Health Development and Research, the South Central Area Health Education Center (AHEC), and the L.I.V.E. Coalition.

The objective of the campaign was to increase the immunization rates among the staff of the Warren County school system by eliminating the barriers of cost and time. A total of 1,187 staff members out of a possible 2,215 from the school system signed up to participate in the campaign. Of those that signed up, 974 received a free flu shot. This was a participation rate of 43%, a 2% increase from the previous year.

In order to determine what the motivating factors were for those that did or did not decide to participate in the campaign, an online survey was conducted in May

2012. A total of 366 people responded to the survey. Fifty-nine percent indicated that the free flu shot was their reason for participating. Thirty-seven percent indicated that the convenient location was their reason for participating. For those who did not participate, reasons included having received a flu shot prior to the contest and being medically unable to receive a flu shot.

This project addressed three goals of the United States government’s “Healthy People 2020” campaign: 1) Attain high quality, longer lives free of preventable disease, disability, injury, and premature death, 2) create social and physical environments that promote good health for all; and 3) promote quality of life, healthy development, and healthy behaviors across all life stages. The project also directly targeted the “Healthy People 2020” main goal to “increase immunization rates and reduce preventable infectious diseases.”



Hispanic Initiative Plan increases opportunities of students

By Sonia Lenk, Ph.D.
Modern Languages Dept.

The Hispanic Initiative Plan is a long-term commitment to increase the opportunities of Hispanic students in the south central Kentucky region to have better access to higher education. The first part of the plan was to research the obstacles that Hispanic students in middle and high school face that are keeping them from accessing higher education. The data was then analyzed. From this data, different projects were enacted to meet the needs of the Hispanic youth in gaining access to higher education by working with HOPE (Hispanic Organization for the Promotion of Education) and schools in Bowling Green and Warren County.

The project started as Dr. Sonia Lenk, professor of modern languages, noticed how the Hispanic population has increased in the region. Ten percent of many of the schools are Hispanic. This, in turn, was not reflected by the low percentage (2%) of Hispanic students at Western Kentucky University. As a public regional institution, WKU's mission is to serve the residents of the area, elevate their level of education, and improve their chances to be successful in the job market. Lenk shared her concern with Dr. Bernard Strenecky, Scholar-in-Residence, Dr. Holli Drummond of sociology, and Dr. Courte Voorhees of interdisciplinary studies and the Institute for Citizenship and Social Responsibility. After a few brainstorming sessions, the idea of working on a research project with WKU Honors students took shape. In the spring of 2011, this interdisciplinary faculty team met once a week with a group of students from Lenk's various advanced Spanish classes and from Drummond's Diversity in American Society class. In the fall of 2011, the students worked on data analysis in Drummond's Honors Colloquium. In the spring of 2012, the students in Lenk's Honors Intervention class created and developed projects

to meet the needs of the Hispanic community.

Beneficiaries of these intervention projects are adolescent Hispanic students, who were also integral in identifying the obstacles that prevent them from pursuing higher education. At WKU, Honors students (or students with Honors standing) who have been interested in gaining knowledge in field research and have a special interest in and/or commitment to the Hispanic population have benefitted from these service-learning experiences.

WKU students have been able to participate in every phase of this project, from conducting literature reviews to developing qualitative research instruments; from writing letters to school superintendents to conducting focus groups; from writing papers for the data analysis to developing and implementing the intervention projects. Along the way, the faculty has provided structure, coordination, and guidance. Each course has started with an introduction of the project and review of the process to-date so new students can easily join the project without having taken any previous classes.

The guiding principle is partnership with the target population. Furthermore, partners are essential elements to raise consciousness of the importance of the project's purpose, provide the opportunity to interact and learn from one another, increase capacity, and help ensure sustainability.

One of the most impressive aspects of student-learning during the implementation phase are the actual projects that were developed to address the research findings. The students were given project guidelines and

have reflected on the information and observations throughout the projects, but for the most part, they have come up with the projects on their own based on the needs assessment and have implemented the projects with the help of the community partners.

According to the students' reflections, they feel more connected to the Hispanic community as they have learned who they are and the needs they have. Students have improved their intercultural communication skills, as well as gained more confidence in their Spanish language and leadership skills. They also feel they can talk to people no matter how important or different they are. They have gotten a sense of self-efficacy. Furthermore, they have experienced a real application to what they have learned in class and have seen that they can have an impact on the world; therefore, they have gained a better understanding of the importance of being civically engaged citizens.

The Hispanic population has expressed that they feel the faculty and students from Western Kentucky University care about them. This will help them feel more welcome in the community, perform better at school, and are more likely to attend higher education. The faculty members who have worked on this project have learned more about the Hispanic community, have observed the far-reaching results that the students can accomplish if given the opportunity, and have enriched their research, teaching, and service by working with such a great group of students and community members. This project demonstrates how much a partnership between colleagues, students, and community members help to accomplish more comprehensive and sustainable projects.

CNC-101 empowers young African American males

By Aurelia Spaulding
ALIVE Center for Community Partnerships

Three times a year the WKU ALIVE Center for Community Partnerships distributes funding for projects that involve campus and community partnerships. One of the recently awarded community development projects supports a partnership between the WKU TRIO programs, Bowling Green and Warren County school districts, the Housing Authority of Bowling Green, and members of Community in Crisis. The project, titled Community in Crisis-100 (CNC-100), will empower 100 African American young men with the necessary skills to succeed and will educate the Bowling Green/Warren County community about the African American male student population's academic and behavioral plights. This project requires accountability from students, families, schools, and communities to assist in eliminating this crisis.

WKU TRIO's Talent Search Director Martha Sales works directly with the Community in Crisis organization mentors: individuals from the Bowling Green Police Department, General Motors, Bowling Green city government, teachers, parents, business leaders, and WKU faculty and staff. The CNC-100 project incorporates the "Why Try" program to improve student

retention, academic performance, school behavior, personal development, and life skills for African American males in grades 6-12 who attend Bowling Green and Warren County schools.

"The CPIA funding has assisted me with impacting the lives of individual [participants], their families, as well as their communities. Many educational opportunities are available to low-income, first generation students; however, this population may not have the skills necessary to take advantage of these opportunities," Sales said. "The CPIA funds provide activities, sessions, events, and educational workshops that assist in skill development and empowerment not only for participants but for their families and the communities in which they live."

Through the "Why Try" program, the CNC-100 mentors will address an identified crisis and offer solutions during their weekly mentoring meetings with the 100 participants. The mentors will also participate in educational meetings with the Bowling Green and Warren County school districts' superintendents, faculty and staff members, community members, and leaders.



Look forward to learning more about the progress of this project in next year's *Spirit of Engagement*.





Partnership uses theatre as diversion

By Leah Ashwill
ALIVE Center for Community Partnerships

Imagine you are a teenager again, navigating your way through junior high or high school. Maybe you are missing a parent. Maybe kids at school are being cruel and callous. Maybe you are having trouble finding your niche or perhaps have just a little too much free time on your hands. Such circumstances can lead to engagement in risky behavior, so imagine that you have gone too far off course and committed a minor juvenile offense — shoplifting, truancy from school, or underage drinking. Herein lie the questions: Where do you go from here? What is your best course of action to turn your life around?

Youth charged with minor offenses are assigned a Court Designated Worker who guides them through understanding their options when they first come into contact with the juvenile system. Typically, a young person who commits a minor juvenile offense is responsible for completing a diversion program. Diversion programs may involve the completion of community service hours or the completion of a program designed to address issues and problems the youth may be experiencing. Diversion agreements must include elements to address prevention, education, accountability, and treatment (if appropriate) while working to divert the youth from formal involvement in “the system.” While it seems ideal to require youth to “give back” as a consequence of their actions, some diversion projects consist of menial tasks that every

organization must have done, but may not result in the young person having the opportunity to feel that he or she has made a real difference in the community. Moreover, typical community service projects without a service-learning component are often inadequate in helping youth develop positive peer interactions, building critical thinking abilities and communication skills, and establishing pro-social bonds with members of the community.

“I think this program has given the diversion students an outlet to use the energy that they have and the creativity that they have in a positive way that lets them see that they can accomplish things.”

~Mallory Ward

It is because of a long-standing relationship between Western Kentucky University and the Administrative Office of the Courts that such a new program exists for south central Kentucky youth: the Patricia Minton Taylor Theatre in Diversion program. This program works with the local Court Designated Worker’s office to offer theater training as a diversion experience instead of the normally assigned community service.

Crystal Bohlander, who works under the Court Improvement Program, approached Dr. Carol Jordan from the Department of Theatre and Dance and Dr. Jerry Daday

from the Department of Sociology about creating this theatre in diversion program at WKU last summer. During the spring semester of 2012, 11 college students from Jordan’s Theatre 461 practicum course and six students from Daday’s Sociology 346 evaluation research course worked with 18 area youth to complete the first semester of the Theatre in Diversion Program at Western Kentucky University. Bohlander stated, “This was a truly successful partnership. From Dean Lee’s office to Department Heads Drs. Smith and Young, we had the support we needed to make this come together. While some people are reluctant to work with our population, Jordan approached it with a joy and enthusiasm that was a much-needed boost to the confidence of our program participants. Daday’s students overwhelmingly expressed that this was also a deeply meaningful experience for them personally.”

Students in Jordan’s theatre course developed their own lesson plans for the middle and high school students participating in the theatre class. After two weeks of class preparation, Jordan’s students provided four weeks of theatre instruction and six weeks of theatre training that culminated with an end-of-the-semester showcase of plays written by the diversion students themselves. Parents and friends gathered at Gordon Wilson Hall on Saturday, April 28 at 7:00 p.m. as the theatre in diversion students performed their productions and

"With teaching, in particular, you don't learn it until you do it. You can sit in the classroom and talk about it all you want, but until you actually get in there with the kids, you don't really understand how it works. I think it's been very positive to have that hands-on aspect."

~Dr. Carol Jordan

showcased all they had accomplished during their time in the program.

Mallory Ward, theatre student and senior at WKU stated, "I think this program has given the diversion students an outlet to use the energy that they have and the creativity that they have in a positive way that lets them see that they can accomplish things; that they can set goals and achieve them. Because that's what this was about, showing them that they can get somewhere. It's just about them knowing that they can make things happen."

Daday's sociology students initiated the exploratory research portion of the Theatre in Diversion Program, laying the groundwork for a formal evaluation of the program in the future. Sociology students used a mixture of research methods such as participant observation and in-depth interviews with the youth participants as well as the development of quantitative survey instruments. Future Sociology 346 classes will track youth who have participated in the program for five to six years to evaluate the impact and determine program effectiveness.

Jessica Ziegler, senior and sociology major at WKU stated, "I'm going on to grad school after this so I can get my Ph.D. in sociology and become a professor, and this has definitely impacted the type of research that I'd like to continue. I've liked working with youth...it's been really exciting to do that; to have the chance to experience that."

When asked what change they have seen occur in the WKU students as a direct result of their involvement in this theatre diversion class, faculty shared that it had been rewarding to watch their students develop bonds with the kids and further develop their skills by applying what they have learned while increasing their confidence. Students do not get this type of experience in a traditional class on campus.

Jordan said, "With teaching, in particular, you don't learn it until you do it. You can sit in the classroom and talk about it all you want, but until you actually get in there with the kids, you don't really understand how it works. I think it's been very positive to have that hands-on aspect. Real life teenagers! Here you go!"

Daday agreed that the same principle applies for his research course. He said, "You don't fully understand the research process until you do it, so I've purposely had a hands-off approach with my students." Daday's students conducted the literature review and developed the interview and survey questions and then came to class to talk about them. "They're not my research assistants; they are doing the research," Daday added.

Another goal of Jordan's and Daday's is to inspire other departments on campus to offer a diversion project for youth in the community. Virtually any academic department could think of a way to work with diversion youth. For instance, the Department of Kinesiology, Recreation,

and Sport could coach youth or teach refereeing; the Art Department or Floral Design Department could work with kids on diversion projects. Bohlander concurs, "It is easy for me to see the fit between diversion and these examples. Youth need adults who love what they do to inspire them and connect to them. Most of this is really about problem solving and that is what our kids need to learn. At its core, diversion is about having youth find out how to be a part of our community successfully."

Daday shared, "It's the most fun course I've taught since I've been at WKU, and one of the most positive aspects has been the cross-disciplinary collaboration. I've met someone new, and it's been fun to team-teach. I think it would be useful to challenge our colleagues to do more interdisciplinary, community outreach classes like this. We have WKU students who are hungry to provide extracurricular activities to at-risk youth in departments all over campus; we should be urging them to do it."

The more the university reaches out into the community, the more they are investing in future students; the theatre diversion students from the inaugural Theatre Diversion program reportedly believe in their futures. WKU faculty and staff who had the opportunity to work with them also believe in their futures. Jordan concludes, "It's an opportunity to really change your community one kid at a time."



2011 KENTUCKY CIVIC HEALTH INDEX



By Terry Shoemaker,
Institute for Citizenship & Social Responsibility

On March 1, 2012, WKU's Institute for Citizenship & Social Responsibility in partnership with National Conference on Citizenship, the McConnell Center at the University of Louisville, Kentucky Advocates for Civic Education, and the Kentucky Secretary of State released the 2011 Kentucky Civic Health Index. The release was marked by a public event led by Secretary of State Alison Lundergan Grimes held at the Kentucky State Capitol Building with former Secretaries of State Bob Babbage, John Y. Brown, and Elaine Walker in attendance.

The report details citizen engagement in the Commonwealth by analyzing voter registration and turnout, political activism, social connectedness, charitable contributions, and group membership. The findings place Kentucky higher than the nation-wide average in several areas, including social connectedness. Specifically, Kentucky is third in the nation in the area of eating dinner with family. Kentucky is also slightly higher than the national average in voter registration and turnout, although Kentucky's percentages have decreased since 2006.

The report also indicates that Kentucky is far below the national average in several key areas. For instance, Kentucky ranks 50th in group memberships, with only approximately 26% of the Commonwealth's residents reporting belonging to a civic group. In addition, Kentucky ranks 46th in charitable giving, attending community meetings, and working with neighbors to solve or improve community problems.

Kentuckians are also very unlikely to contact their elected officials with more than 90% of citizens stating that they did not contact an official in 2010. Demographically, those that did contact

their elected officials were typically white, elderly, educated, and upper income, which is not an adequate reflection of state demographics. The report cited several civic educational programs like the Political Engagement Project on Western Kentucky University's campus and projects of the McConnell Center at the University of Louisville that provide students and citizens opportunities to develop their civic capacities.

During the release, Secretary of State Grimes stated, "The report gives us a starting point and a yardstick against which we can measure our progress. This information gives us a great opportunity to shape where we, as a state, are going."

Continuing with the sentiments regarding the value of the newly released report's findings, Dr. Saundra Ardrey, a co-author of the Civic Health Index, states, "For perhaps the first time, we were able to assess the health of our political and civic involvement. It was a great opportunity to highlight our strengths and to recognize some of the challenges we still face."

Dr. Paul Markham, another co-author of the report, feels that the report will "bring much needed attention to not only Kentucky's shortcomings, but the great potential we have to work together to address problems across the Commonwealth." Markham stresses the importance of civic learning in kindergarten through 12th grade, as well as in higher education, "Our young people need to learn they are not citizens in deferral, but present citizens of the Commonwealth who can learn now to be problem-solvers."

The authors of the report have several suggestions regarding the improvement of Kentucky's civic health. First, more

educational programs that build civic skills and capacities are encouraged. Western Kentucky University's own Public Achievement program was highlighted as an innovative way of building the civic capacities of the next generation of Kentucky's citizens and leaders. Second, the report recommends a restoration of the higher education funding that has been cut in recent years. College graduates are more likely to be civically involved; therefore, more higher education funding could have positive impacts on the civic health of the Commonwealth. Third, mechanisms to make voting easier for the citizens of Kentucky are urged. Voting by mail and same-day registration are a couple of suggestions. Last, the report supports policies that encourage poor and marginalized populations to be more civically active. A healthier, more civically-involved Commonwealth is dependent on all Kentuckians participating, and policies that address inequalities can lead to higher participation from those on the margins.

Ardrey continues to emphasize the future work that needs to be conducted in the Commonwealth, "It was extra special to be able to partner with other groups around the state. But our work is not done. As we enter into the 2012 presidential election it will take all of us working together to make sure that all Kentuckians have full access to participate and to contribute to the democratic process."

A free copy of the report is available online at www.ncoc.net/KYCHI. To learn more about Western Kentucky University's Institute for Citizenship & Social Responsibility, visit www.wku.edu/icsr.

More WKU offices doing engaged work

Office of Sustainability

The WKU Office of Sustainability works to educate about sustainability on campus and in the community. The WKU Green Tour demonstrates best practices modeled in campus operations, such as rainwater harvesting, energy conservation, and efficiency initiatives. WKU Sustainability organizes and hosts sustainability-awareness events and activities that are free and open to everyone, such as the annual Earth Day Festival, sustainability skills workshops, and expert guest speakers. WKU Sustainability partners with community organizations such as the Community Farmers' Market to provide support, engage students, and promote a sustainable community.

Confucius Institute

One of the missions for the Confucius Institute in 2012 is to spread its program every community in the state of Kentucky. In doing so, CI has partnered with the Housing Authority of Bowling Green and will send seven of their academically gifted students to China. In addition, they have started a partnership with the Crane House in Louisville and sent one of their students to China in July 2012. Throughout the year, CI has also partnered with Barren River Adult Daycare, Warren Regional Juvenile Detention Center, and SkyPAC. These partnerships will not only enhance future collaborative efforts, but give their program visibility within the community it resides.

Gatton Academy

The Gatton Academy hopes to help develop young people into well-rounded, global citizens. One of their major focuses is community service. If a student wishes to be an honors graduate, they are required to do at least 60 hours of service in the two years they attend Gatton Academy. Students of Gatton Academy have been directly involved with

programs such as Habitat for Humanity, Relay for Life, Amnesty International, and campus sustainability projects. One of their biggest emphases has been reaching out to younger students through Big Brothers Big Sisters and directly in local elementary schools. Gatton Academy students certainly embrace the idea that they need to give back in return for all that they have been given.

Gender & Women's Studies

The Book Club for women inmates of the Warren County Regional Jail entered its eighth year. Meagan Harris, an English major, led the group until late spring 2012, and then Hilary Harlan an English and Gender and Women's Studies student took the helm. Harlan meets with the women every other week, leading discussions and providing the books. The women typically have a less complete library than men, so they appreciate the books and the opportunity to discuss them.

Institute for Citizenship & Social Responsibility (ICSR)

The ICSR focuses on academic programming with the goal of developing citizen-leaders. A key component of this effort is a deep commitment to the community as partners and co-educators in the work of building a high quality of life for the south central Kentucky region and beyond. A prime example is ICSR's youth civic learning program, Public Achievement, which partners with local K-12 schools to empower young people to be active citizens of their schools and community.

M.A. in Social Responsibility & Sustainable Communities (SRSC)

During spring break 2012, graduate students from the SRSC participated in an ongoing community-based research and service-learning project in Gales Point, Belize. Students worked with members

of the village to set up a store for native crafts to support the school lunch program for approximately 70 children. The Gales Point Craft Cooperative was established in January 2011 and continues to grow. With the help of WKU students, funds have also been raised to purchase a stove for the school's kitchen.

Leadership & Volunteerism

The WKU Leadership & Volunteerism office strives to provide ample opportunities for students to be engaged in the community both locally and throughout the southeast United States. Students have the opportunity to participate in service projects during fall break, spring break, and beginning in January 2013, they will be making a winter trip to serve in other areas. The Leadership and Volunteerism office also holds monthly drives for local nonprofit organizations to help meet their tangible needs. Once these items are collected, a day is set aside for students to deliver the donated items and volunteer for the day with the organization.

Study Abroad

WKU Study Abroad and Global Learning strives to take the WKU student experience "from the Hilltop to the World™" by identifying opportunities for hands-on learning in classrooms defined by borders rather than walls. In programs ranging from semester-long exchanges to winter term faculty-led programs, students have left bits of the WKU Spirit in all corners of the world. In recent years, Study Abroad and Global Learning has supported Hilltoppers who have contributed to medical, dental, environmental, and economic enrichment of the Gales Point village in Belize, Autism research while studying developmental pediatrics in China, communication and marketing for the Instituto Lorenzo de' Medici international institute in Italy, and community development in the Akatim village in Ghana.

MAILING ADDRESS

WKU ALIVE Center for Community Partnerships
1906 College Heights Blvd. #21095
Bowling Green, KY 42101-1095

PHYSICAL ADDRESS

1818 31W ByPass
Bowling Green, KY 42101

PHONE NUMBER

270-782-0082

FAX NUMBER

270-782-0922

WEBSITE

www.wku.edu/alive

EMAIL ADDRESS

alivebg@wku.edu

COPY EDITING

Leah Ashwill
ALIVE Center Director

Brittany Ryan
ALIVE Center Office Associate

GRAPHIC/PAGE DESIGN

Aurelia Spaulding
ALIVE Center Communications & Marketing Coordinator

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ALIVE Center for Community Partnerships
1906 College Heights Blvd. #21095
Bowling Green, KY 42101-1095

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