

SERVICE-LEARNING CENTER

2018-19 Newsletter

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A hand is holding a large, black, stylized letter 'M' frame in the foreground. Through the frame, a group of about ten people of various ages and ethnicities are posing on a sandy beach under a clear blue sky. The people are dressed in casual attire, and some are sitting on the sand while others stand behind them. The background shows the vast expanse of the beach and the horizon line.

Photo courtesy: Abigail Lutz
World Renew Service-Learning
Spring Break Trip in North Carolina



ABOVE: STREETFEST 2018, PHOTOS
BY HANNAH LARSEN AND HEATHER
SEIGNIOUS

RIGHT: 2018-19 SERVICE-LEARNING
CENTER STAFF



The mission of the Service-Learning Center is to engage and equip Calvin University students, faculty, staff, community partners, alumni and other friends of the college in and for the pursuit of God's shalom. We do this by learning together, primarily through community-based service-learning, social justice activity, and civic participation in Grand Rapids and other partner communities.

FOREWORD

FROM
DR. JEFF BOUMAN
DIRECTOR, SERVICE-LEARNING CENTER

In a forthcoming book on student experiences in Christian higher education I have contributed a chapter on citizenship and civic engagement in higher education, and in it, I make the claim that “one of our most urgent tasks in contemporary American higher education is to provide students with opportunities to develop, as human beings, into what poet-farmer-philosopher Wendell Berry calls “stickers.” Stickers, according to Berry, are the kinds of people who “settle, and love the life they have made and the place they have made it in.” Students who stick are a contrast from what Berry calls “boomers,” who, are people “who pillage and run,” and who want “to make a killing and end up on Easy Street.” I suggest that “service-learning, civic engagement, study and service abroad, and other forms of high-impact, hands-on, experiential learning hold great promise for better fostering these current and future prime citizens—of neighborhoods, local communities, cities, states, countries, and God’s kingdom.” *

This spring’s Service-Learning Center newsletter provides further evidence that the task of helping students develop into stickers has multiple dimensions to it, and that it requires paying attention to the many forms of diversity that exist in our community, and in the world. Reading about the work our students have done in intergenerational, interfaith, and reflective learning fosters hope, and confirms that our project is set in the context of a community more diverse than one might imagine upon first glance. Working alongside a team of staff, faculty and community partners on the Carnegie community engagement classification, we were reminded that our work has deep roots in partnership with strong collaborators around campus and around the city of Grand Rapids. And reading Brianna’s and Liliana’s reflections on the influence their work in our office has had on their own lives and development provides evidence that rooting student leaders in a caring, intentional community of practice helps accomplish the mission of coming alongside students as they learn to stick.

*[*The book is called, Reimagining the Student Experience: Formative Practices for Changing Times. Forthcoming in summer, 2019, Abilene Christian University Press.]*





EMBRACING OUR RELIGIOUSLY DIVERSE COMMUNITY AT CALVIN

BY MANATO JANSEN

In light of the terrorist attack on the Muslim community of Christchurch this past March, the tensions of religiously motivated hatred and division are hard to ignore. Along with the continued rise of Islamophobia, white supremacy, and racist, anti-immigrant rhetoric, the fracturing of communities and the exclusion of and division between peoples is an alarming threat to our collective sense of peace, belonging and understanding. As a majority Christian space, our call at Calvin is to be intentional about acknowledging the parts of our community that may feel excluded from Calvin's mainstream identity, and to bridge religious divides within and outside our campus.

As we continue to grow in becoming a more inviting and inclusive space for people of diverse backgrounds, identities and experiences, this year the Service-Learning Center's interfaith program began working with Calvin students of Muslim, Hindu and non-religious backgrounds, listening to the struggles and hurdles that they have faced as religious minority students on campus. We launched this initiative with our panel event, "Religious Minority Students on a Christian Campus" this past December. 120 Calvin, Kuyper, and Grand Valley students and faculty attended, listening to our students who have not previously had a platform to voice their concerns. Additionally, in February, Calvin student Tuba Jaherun had the opportunity to present as one of three keynote speakers at The Niagara Foundation's annual Abrahamic Dinner, sharing her experience as a Muslim student in a Christian culture.

ABOVE: RELIGIOUS MINORITIES ON A CHRISTIAN CAMPUS PANEL
(LEFT TO RIGHT): LEANNA KOSTER,
MATTHEW BRAMWELL BONE, TUBA JAHERUN

PHOTO COURTESY: LUKE ERICKSON

After a positive response from faculty and students, we were encouraged to work towards creating a student organization, the Calvin Interfaith Alliance (CIA), which is currently in its development stages. We are hoping to have the Calvin Interfaith Alliance work alongside the Service-Learning Center's interfaith program as a student-oriented division of Calvin's interfaith initiatives, to recognize and advocate for those on campus who feel as though they are underrepresented in their worldview, and to encourage interfaith dialogue across all religious divides. The alliance will work alongside the Student Senate in partnership with the Senate's new advocacy efforts for marginalized students.

As communities around the world continue to develop more pluralistic identities, embracing racial, ethnic, and religious social diversity, we are also striving to do the same at Calvin, reflecting the way Christ lived by recognizing that all are made in the image of God, with a sense of the divine. All are welcome to the table in the eyes of God, and our community at Calvin should be no exception.

GROWING IN COMMUNITY

BY LILIANA ESTRELLA

This is my third year working at the Service-Learning Center. I have worked with areas such as Spring Break Trips, International Service-Learning, the Language, Literature, and Arts departments, and the Special Olympics. All very different positions, but all have been opportunities for growth.

What I have enjoyed the most about working here is how personal the work is. I am a 21-year-old Latina, was born in the Dominican Republic, and have a little brother with down syndrome. These are all parts of my identity, the identity that has shaped the work that I do at the Service-Learning Center. An identity that fuels my passions.

One of those passions being inclusion, inclusion for my little brother and others who might face similar struggles because of the different perspective he brings to the world. I also love connecting with and learning from the Latinx community. I have been blessed to be a part of it and have seen its beauty first hand. My experience being Dominican-American has led to my interest in cross-cultural connections.

Through my positions at the Service-Learning Center, I feel that I have been able to explore and learn more about these different areas I am passionate about. I have been able to further understand what it means to be a part of those communities by learning from agencies and programs that continuously lift up, value and recognize them as important members of society.

I have also found this to be a workplace where I get to learn about different communities that I might not belong to but are just as important. We all come from different places, different communities and we have such different identities because of our diverse experiences. By working here and connecting ourselves to the work that we do, we each show parts of ourselves. We do this by conversations in the office, staff meetings, or even through the programs we coordinate. I learn so much from my coworkers as they develop into their positions when I see how their passions guide their work. I am challenged to reevaluate my ideas about the world around me and the people in it.



ABOVE: SPECIAL OLYMPICS 2019

BELOW: STREETFEST 2018



A PROFESSOR'S EXPERIENCE WITH SERVICE-LEARNING

BY DR. ABRAHAM CEBALLOS-ZAPATA

If you walked in into one of my Spanish classes on a typical day, you would see students speaking Spanish with each other, answering or asking questions, discussing readings, or even debating grammatical rules. I also teach language education courses, and if you visited us; there are good chances you would hear discussions and lectures about school and society, language policies, language teaching methodologies, or even have the chance to learn another language.

However, none of those activities would fulfill its purpose if students did not ultimately use Spanish to establish meaningful connections with the Spanish speaking world, or if language education students cannot experience the work of a language teacher. It is easy to lose the larger vision when you get busy managing the classroom. Service-learning plays an important role keeping me from losing such vision. I thoroughly enjoy reading or hearing students share about their conversations with Spanish speakers, or talk about their experiences in Spanish-speaking communities, or when education students come back

questioning if what we read is out of touch with reality.

I have seen two major benefits of integrating service-learning into my instruction. The first benefit is the opportunity to create “another classroom” beyond the walls of my classroom on campus, in other words, letting community become my curriculum. The second benefit is the cycle of classroom reflection that service-learning starts by providing spaces for students to think through ideas. When they return, students pose sharper questions and are more curious about what is happening in the classroom.

I am not saying I have it all figured it out. What I want to say is that my collaboration with the Service-Learning Center at Calvin has challenged and improved my instruction.

WHAT IS ACADEMICALLY-BASED SERVICE-LEARNING?

Academically-Based Service-Learning (ABSL) is service-learning in the context of course work. There are four divisions of ABSL in the S-LC: Natural Sciences and Mathematics; Language, Literature, and the Arts; Social Sciences and Contextual Disciplines; and Education. Each coordinator works with interested faculty to connect what students are learning in the classroom to partnerships in the Grand Rapids community and beyond.



INTERGENERATIONAL CONNECTIONS

BY DR. KRISTEN ALFORD
AND HEATHER SEIGNIOUS

The handwritten note on a registration form urged, “Hopefully no exams or grades, right??!!” This plea came from one of the twenty older adults who attended and participated in Dr. Kristen Alford’s Human Behavior and the Social Environment courses this academic year. These students were invited from the Grand Rapids community to learn alongside current Calvin students, the only caveat was that they be 55 years of age and older.

Throughout the semester, the older adult learners attended five class sessions covering the life span, with special topics including Trauma in Childhood, Harm Reduction Among Adolescents, Chronic Disease and Psychosocial Well-Being, and Grief and Grieving. The class structure included short lectures, case studies, small group discussions, and videos to enhance learning.

The hope of the intergenerational partnership was to provide opportunities for generations to share experiences, more effectively apply and understand course content, and promote greater appreciation between generations.

ABOVE: PHOTO OF THE SOCIAL WORK 350 COURSE

PHOTO COURTESY:
CALVIN COMMUNICATIONS & MARKETING

This class is part of a larger intergenerational connections project, generously supported by the Council of Independent Colleges and the AARP Foundation. The goals of the national project include serving the needs of older adults in college communities, develop new skills and knowledge among students, promote service-learning, and recognize the mutual benefits of intergenerational connections.

CALVIN REAPPLIES FOR CARNEGIE

BY ANDREW HAGGERTY

“Community engagement describes the collaboration between institutions of higher education and their larger communities (local, regional/state, national, global) for the mutually beneficial exchange of knowledge and resources in a context of partnership and reciprocity.”

So says the Carnegie Foundation, which oversees the Carnegie Community Engagement Classification. It is an elective classification intended to identify institutions with a strong, systemic, and sustained commitment to community engagement, as well as encourage effective systems of assessment. Roughly 375 institutions currently hold the classification, including twelve in Michigan, such as Hope College, Michigan State University, and University of Michigan-Dearborn. The classification lasts for ten years, and Calvin received it in 2010, putting us in the reapplication process for 2020.

To this end, the staff of the Center for Community Engagement and Global Learning gathered a working team comprised of 17 staff, faculty, and community members to gather monthly over the course of the year to complete the 68-question application. The end of this process has yielded a 66-page document, but more importantly, it yielded deep, thoughtful, collaborative, and challenging discussion about the state of community engagement at Calvin—including celebrating the breadth and depth of initiatives such as the Nursing Department’s community nursing

curriculum and the Plaster Creek Stewards, as well as wrestling with some missed opportunities and declining participation in activities like service-learning.

And this sort of discussion was exactly the point. While we certainly hope to receive the classification and be recognized for the good work that has and will continue to happen among Calvin and its partners, it is the process, not the outcome, which has driven our commitment to this task. This process has been affirming, inspiring, and instructive, and I hope will create a more open, a more engaging, a more hospitable, and a more just Calvin for the next ten years, when we will get to do this all over again.

The following people who served on the working team deserve our thanks, and the thanks of the University for their time, effort, openness, and intellect:

Jeff Bouman, Service-Learning Center
Debra Buursma, Education
Neil Carlson, Center for Social Research
Bob Crow, Student Life
Paul Haan, Healthy Homes Coalition
Andrew Haggerty, Service-Learning Center
Gail Heffner, Office of Community Engagement
Will Katerberg, Provost’s Office

Joe Kuilema, Social Work
Nygil Likely, College Access Programs
Emily Perton, Ready for Life
Cynthia Slagter, Spanish
Bob Speelman, Physical Plant
Rick Treur, Alumni & Community Relations
Kate van Liere, History
Dave Warners, Biology
Gail Zandee, Nursing

STREETFEST 2018: SEEK JUSTICE // LISTEN, LEARN, LOVE

BY BRIANNA RUTGERS

When thinking about how to guide new students in engaging with new communities and individuals, I was struck by a quote from Wendell Berry. He said “the name of our present society’s connection to the earth is ‘bad work’ – work . . . that enacts no affection and gives no honor. Every one of us is to some extent guilty of this bad work. This guilt does not mean that we must indulge in a lot of breast-beating and confession; it means only that there is much good work to be done by every one of us and that we must begin to do it.” There is good work to be done on this earth and one way for this to be lived out is through seeking justice. Bad work cannot exist if justice reigns.

Although justice must be sought, it is not the whole picture. Justice is an end goal, but there are things that must be done for us to get there. Listening, learning, and loving are basic skills we must employ

in order to properly seek justice. It is important to recognize the place of each skill and to see that each cannot exist without the others and still produce the same result. Listening to others is the only way to learn what needs to be addressed, and addressing issues well can only happen if love is present.

We hope that through this day and beyond, students will learn how to seek justice and see the importance of listening to, learning from, and loving community members and the communities themselves. Although Seek Justice // Listen, Learn, Love is not the perfect way to do good work, it is a great place to start. There is good work to be done – we must begin to do it.

*They will rebuild the ancient ruins
and restore the places long devastated;
they will renew the ruined cities
that have been devastated for
generations. --Isaiah 61:4*



SEEK JUSTICE // LISTEN, LEARN, LOVE

Design Courtesy: Shannon Mack



ABOVE: BRI - STREETFEST COORDINATOR
2018 WITH FELLOW S-LC MEMBER LILI

LEFT: STREETFEST 2018 LOGO, DESIGNED
BY LOCAL ARTIST SHANNON MACK

LISTEN, LEARN, LOVE: A COVENANT

BY: EMMA CHUNG

Our student staff adopted the StreetFest theme of Listen, Learn, Love to create our 2018-19 covenant. This covenant is used to remind us of our collective vision and why we do what we do as well as sets the tone for the year. This year was the tone of these three things:

Listen

We recognize that we fail to *listen* to each other, others and the world well.
Forgive us when we listen to respond, rather than listen to understand.

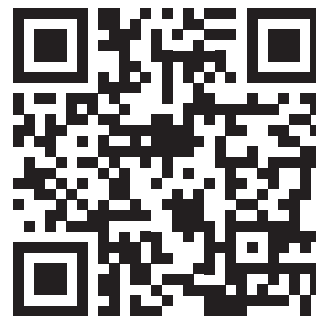
Learn

We recognize that we fail to *learn* from each other, others, and the world well.
Forgive us when we choose comfort and ignorance over openness and growth.

Love

We recognize that we fail to *love* each other, others, and the world well.
Forgive us when we fail to love, to fulfill our calling, when we exclude, when we forget.

**This is only a small excerpt of the covenant that the 2018-2019 staff chose to follow. You can read our entire covenant on our blog: servicehyphenlearning.blogspot.com or scan the QR code below:



Visit our website at:
calvin.edu/slc/

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Meet Lindsay, the 2019 StreetFest Coordinator!

Lindsay Owens is a rising junior majoring in social work. She is originally from West Alexandria, Ohio. Lindsay is very excited to coordinate StreetFest this year and is looking forward to learning about and working alongside organizations in this great city!

This year's theme is *Choose Wholehearted Living: Care About Place*. StreetFest will take place on Friday, August 30. If your organization is interested in participating in StreetFest, please email Lindsay at slc@calvin.edu.



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