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Recent Alumnus Hosts StreetFest Group

By Andrew Harmon

I took my first big bite of service-learning with my dorm’s community partnership during my sophomore year. I would open up time in what I thought was my “too busy” schedule every week to tutor, read with, and hang out with kids at the Cook Library Center. The library revealed a great truth to me: it takes not only passion but also acting out of that passion to serve a person, a community, or God.

Studying health as it relates to medicine at Calvin, I came to appreciate initiatives that promote prevention and awareness approaches to health. I started volunteering with Catherine’s Health Center in December of my senior year to plug into a neighborhood health clinic that brought health care to the low-income residents of the Creston area. I have now worked at Catherine’s for two months as an AmeriCorps VISTA member. I work a range of jobs including training front office volunteers, lifestyle counseling, medical assistant work, and planning events.



When I found out Catherine’s was to be a StreetFest host, my heart jumped in my chest. I knew I would love to be a part of the formation of service-learning values in minds of students who are stepping into the college life. I knew the new students would be having fun with Quest Orientation activities but also be wrestling with how to define themselves as college students. In the midst of those things, I wanted to show them a clinic that is founded on a commitment to the poor while working out principles that I had gathered in my involvement with service-learning at Calvin.

On StreetFest day, I was glad to see the students

having fun doing the tedious work together. I was able to connect with some of them, and they expressed interest and appreciation in the work that Catherine’s does. I also was excited to connect with the StreetFest leader who may volunteer with Catherine’s in the future. My work here will teach me many things, and I hope the StreetFest students could learn one or two ideas from me. With the StreetFest experience, I wanted the students to foster their passion and idealism which they will gain in and out of the classroom and then begin to apply it. I wanted them to see that the love, joy, lament, and justice that Calvin presents are not just feelings, but that they need to be actions.



Students wrote out their initial reactions and reflections after their StreetFest experience.

For the first time in StreetFest history, 1,050 first-year students served and learned on the same day in 2011.

Turn the page to see more on StreetFest.



Courageous Awakening

by Emily Wolffis

The theme for StreetFest this year was “Courageous Awakening: Opening Hearts and Minds to the City.” Following are excerpts from the speech that our StreetFest coordinator, Emily Wolffis, gave to the first-year students just before they went into Grand Rapids’ neighborhoods.

When I look back on my own personal life and reflect on times when I had to act courageously, one of those events was my decision to start service-learning as a freshman in college. I told myself that getting involved in Grand Rapids didn’t need to be high on my list of things to do because I am just living here temporarily while I get my degree.

I don’t know what got into me, but a few weeks went by, and I took a small step of courage. I finally let go of my fears

and excuses and started helping out by becoming involved in my dorm partnership with an after-school program for a few hours each week. I wish I hadn’t had such a problem waking up to opportunities to get involved in my community. I wish I had more courage. I wish I were more open-minded and willing to step out of my comfort zone. But the truth is: I did struggle with these things, and I still do. I have to constantly remind myself to be open-minded.

My experiences with the kids at the after-school program gave me a huge wake up call and led to what I call an

“aha!” moment. I would argue that more times than not, “aha!” moments are not instantaneous, but the result of a slow process of building up insights, conversations, and experiences that culminate into the realization of deep truths. For me, these truths were a direct result of the time I spent engaging in my community through service-learning. They were life lessons that I almost missed.

My prayer for every single person sitting here is that you won’t let the beginning of my story- the student who didn’t want to be involved - become yours. I challenge you today, and every day, to stop sleeping. Instead, wake up, and in that wakefulness, find the motivation to get involved!

Preparations are in full swing for our 32nd annual service-learning **Spring Break Trips**. With a record 15 groups slated to trek across the Eastern United States, we anticipate many students awakening to God’s Kingdom unfolding in new ways. Most of these groups will be “embedded” with established Christian communities worshipping and working within their particular communities. Each trip will be coordinated by one or two student leaders and joined by a Calvin faculty or staff mentor who demonstrates a life-long commitment to service-learning and join the group as a guiding participant.

Louisiana (Katrina Disaster Relief, hosting two groups)
Mendenhall, MS (Christian Community Development)
Americus, GA (Farming and Racial Reconciliation)
Boston, MA (Urban Ministry)
Kermit, WV (Mountain Top Removal)
Knoxville, TN (Work with At-Risk Women)
Grand Rapids, MI (Immigration)
Christian Reformed World Relief Committee (Disaster Relief)
Mobile, AL (L’Arche: Adults with Disabilities)
St. Louis, MO (Urban Revitalization)
Three Rivers, MI (Service, the Arts, and Intentional Communities)
Baltimore, MD (Housing and Arts as Urban Community Development)
Great Smokey Mountain National Park (Hiking and Trail Maintenance)
Chicago, IL (Urban Ministry)





Students took buses, vans, bikes, canoes, the city bus, and walked to their agencies.

We are grateful to all the agencies that hosted us!

StreetFest 2011

- On September 1, 2011, Calvin students served at 72 Grand Rapids community partner organizations
- 2011 was the first year all incoming students did StreetFest on the same day
- 2011 was the 19th annual StreetFest
- 1,190 students (first-year, transfer students, orientation leaders, and StreetFest leaders) participated
- 57 faculty/staff mentors participated
- 20 S-LC staff members coordinated



Following their experiences, students articulated their reflections and questions on a large “graffiti wall.” We hope this is the beginning of a tradition of community reflection as an integral part of service-learning.





Spring Break Trip Mentors

The primary role of the Spring Break Trip faculty or staff mentor is to build a relationship with the student leaders and the group members while supporting the leaders and their personal growth. Mentors serve as guiding participants: they serve and learn alongside students. While student leaders provide logistical and practical leadership of the trip, faculty or staff members provide support for student leaders. They could offer expertise in the project or topic explored through service-learning, facilitate reflection or cultivate strong group dynamics.

Dan Vandersteen Models Lifelong Service and Learning

by Maria Post and Anna Casto

Dan Vandersteen has long been personally involved in service-learning. As a Red Cross-trained first responder, he is used to being available when people are in crisis. He traveled to New York after 9/11 and helped with disaster relief in Iowa and in areas affected by Hurricane Katrina. Dan’s involvement springs from a deep-rooted belief in the value of service-learning. He says, “I’ve tried to do service-learning for years. For me, it’s part of a spiritual practice....I see that as one way your faith and works come together. They’re not meant to be separate anyways, but service-learning really puts them together.”

At Calvin, Dan has helped cultivate a similar

passion for service-learning in students by becoming their mentor. Dan has been a Spring Break Trip mentor for each of the nine years he has been at Calvin. One year he even went twice—a group of ten people went back to their service-learning site in June. Each of those years, he has also been a StreetFest mentor. Dan says, “I see my role as mentoring, so I try to get to know each student.”

Although there is often a frustration that students don’t feel like they are accomplishing much, he finds that often their presence is meaningful to the people they encounter. He says, “I encourage students to do a lot of listening, building relationships with the people there....Some of the relationships we build



last for years to come.” He witnesses students entering situations that are unfamiliar and uncomfortable, but he enjoys the discussions and reactions they have, which are often positive. In fact, Dan has gotten compliments on Calvin groups because they not only worked hard, but they had fellowship and group cohesion.

In short, Dan Vandersteen has found his experience with service-learning

incredibly meaningful. The mentoring relationships he has been able to build with students has contributed to their learning and growing. At the same, the students’ conversations about service-learning and reactions to being pushed outside their comfort zones has taught him many valuable lessons. In this way, his participation in service-learning has contributed to his own desire to live faithfully.



Food Drive

On behalf of the Service-Learning Center and ACCESS of West Michigan, we would like to thank Calvin students for their generous support of the county-wide food drive. As a whole, Calvin collected over 1,100 food items and \$500 for donation to food pantries throughout Kent County. Thank you for your assistance in helping to fight hunger in our own community!

Giving to the Service-Learning Center through the Grand Rapids Community Foundation

Since 2003, the Service-Learning Center at Calvin College has been building an endowment of its own at the Grand Rapids Community Foundation. Begun with generous support from the State of Michigan, this fund enables donors who would like another way to support Calvin College while at the same time taking advantage of the last year of the Michigan 50% tax credit for gifts to community foundations (up to \$400 for couples, \$200 for individuals). This tax credit is in addition to the similar tax credit that accompanies gifts to institutions of higher education. 2011 is the last year that this tax credit will apply.

What does this mean for you and for the Service-Learning Center? After you make your regular gift to Calvin College, you can also make a gift to the Service-Learning Center through the Grand Rapids Community Foundation. In this way you qualify for two State of Michigan tax credits. All you need to do is identify the Calvin College Service-Learning Center on the memo line of your check to the Grand Rapids Community Foundation.



This fund now hovers around \$50,000. It is on the verge of beginning to pay out usable interest. These dollars will enable programs like StreetFest and Residence Hall Community Partnerships, as well as a wide variety of academically-based service-learning projects to grow and flourish.

If you are interested in giving to the S-LC please use the enclosed envelope or donate on-line at www.grfoundation.org.

An Adventure in Community Development

by Todd Cioffi, Assistant Professor, Department of Congregational and Ministry Studies

This semester the Department of Congregational and Ministry Studies at Calvin College offered a one-credit course on urban ministry, taught by Nate Bradford (Campus Ministries) and Todd Cioffi (Congregational and Ministry Studies). The framework for the course was built around eight principles of community development as initiated by the Christian Community Development Association, an organization founded by civil rights leader John Perkins. A significant portion of the course included attending the CCDA's annual conference, a gathering which draws approximately 3,000 people

working in some form of community development. This year's conference was held in Indianapolis, IN, and took place over the course of a week. Calvin's group was comprised of undergraduates and students from Calvin Theological Seminary. They represented a variety of academic departments, and exhibited an impressive zeal for fostering Christian community development.

The students' time at the conference was nothing short of amazing. They attended workshops, training sessions, lectures, and also engaged in informal conversation with other students, professors, pastors, and community lead-

ers. Each student returned to Grand Rapids better informed, encouraged, and eager for the task of community development in service to God's kingdom.

Perhaps most noteworthy is that each student must complete a final project which will involve getting more deeply involved in the city of Grand Rapids. Each student must choose a local organization in Grand Rapids which is attempting to foster a vibrant sense of community in the city and to engage that organization around the eight principles of CCDA, seeking to assess what it means to build community as Christians in a city like

Grand Rapids. Many of the organizations that will be assessed by students are ones already connected to Calvin through the Service-Learning Center. Here, then, is a great opportunity for students to deepen key relationships within Grand Rapids already established through the Service-Learning Center. At the same time, many students have targeted organizations not previously connected to Calvin, and so here, too, is an opportunity to forge new ground.

It's been a good semester for Christian community development and service-learning. In fact, it's been quite an adventure!



Service-Learning Center Student Coordinators

Meet this year's student coordinators of the Service-Learning Center! Each year, about a dozen students run essential programs, conduct research and accomplish administrative tasks of the Service-Learning Center. The student staff members participate in intensive training and mentoring throughout the school year, which contribute to their professional and personal development. Here, read their own words about the impact of service-learning on their college experience.



What do you like most about Grand Rapids?

Kelly Larsen, CPC Coordinator: I love the bus. Maybe it's because I grew up in a town too small for public transportation, or because on my semester abroad I grew fond of it, but I really love riding the RAPID from place to place. I love encountering other people on it, or simply staring out the window as the different neighborhoods roll by. It's a practice that makes me feel like a resident of this city, not just a student on a college campus.



What is something you would like partners to know?

Jack Organ, Partnership Development Coordinator: I would like partners to know that when I did my first service-learning, even though I knew it was a good, meaningful thing to be doing, it was still hard. I didn't expect that difficulty, and for a student to be able to communicate that to a supervisor would be wonderfully honest and encouraging, I think, for both of you.



What is a vocational inspiration you've had through your work in the S-LC?

Marie Vogel, Communications Coordinator: Through my work at the S-LC, I have become more interested in both Grand Rapids and in being rooted where I am. My interest in community development has increased, and I am considering being less internationally focused and more locally focused in my career.



What is the most rewarding part of your work?

Emily Wolfis, StreetFest Coordinator and Spring Break Trip Coordinator: The most rewarding part of my work is getting to plan opportunities for others to get involved and hearing stories about how their experiences in Grand Rapids have influenced them and inspired them.



Ana Meekhof, Academically Based Service-Learning Coordinator: The most rewarding part of my work in the Service-Learning Center is seeing everything come together. I love going from having a random list of schools and teachers to actually seeing and hearing the experiences that students are having in the schools.



Leesha Orwig, College Access Coordinator: It is so powerful to realize that the work I am doing is bringing about change and movement toward bringing God's kingdom to earth. In the Service-Learning Center, I find meaning in wrestling and discussing topics like justice, love, peace, and equality with my coworkers.



Angela Svaan, Academically Based Service-Learning Coordinator: My favorite part about my job is seeing different agency partners connect and learn about one another through mutual partnership with our office.

What made you first interested in service-learning?



Allie Meynard, Transportation Coordinator: When I started tutoring ESL, I realized that I was learning a lot more about myself and my student than I ever thought possible. I was no longer just helping him learn English; I was also learning about his culture and his experience as an immigrant in Grand Rapids. The idea of serving and learning sometimes just gets thrust upon you even when you aren't looking for it.



Melanie Roorda, Academically Based Service-Learning Coordinator: When I started doing my research about Calvin, I stumbled on the service-learning website. I recognized that service and justice issues were important to students at Calvin, and that was a major influence on my decision to come to school here. Applying for a job in the office was a natural progression from being heavily involved in service and learning so much from it, to wanting to understand the workings behind it and be part of a staff that is committed to social justice and using service as a means of learning.

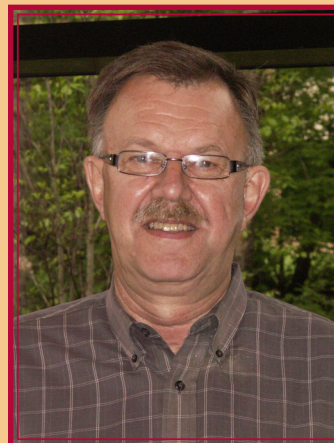


Anna Casto, Academically Based Service-Learning Coordinator: My experience at Street-Fest changed the way that I viewed service. I recognize now that both the serving and the served have something great to offer.

Not pictured: **Kyle Schaap, Special Olympics Coordinator:** Kyle will be joining us for the spring semester.

Jerry Fondse, Interim Director

When Jeff Bouman approached me about a year ago and asked me to consider sitting in his chair while he was away from campus, I was more than delighted to accept his offer. And I have not been disappointed. As Interim Director of the Service-Learning Center this year, I have discovered why Jeff likes his job so much; I get to work with the most remarkable upper-classmen on campus. The students who staff the ten positions here in the Service-Learning Center are passionate about both building community here in the office as well as working for restorative justice in the greater Grand Rapids community. My role is to come along side of these great leaders and their Associate Directors Megan and Noah Kruis and while doing so, to embrace my own service-learning project, to learn much while humbly serving. The work of the Service-Learning Center is to be “agents of renewal”; that’s what we do.



Blood Drive
Sept 27-29

Tuesday

65 people signed in
50 pints were donated
12 first time donors

Wednesday

72 people signed in
52 pints were donated
16 first time donors

Thursday

58 people signed in
40 pints were donated
13 first time donors

In Total:

195 people signed in
142 pints donated
41 first time donors



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Community Partners: Update Service-Learning Opportunities

Our website was redesigned last summer and now it can be used to post new opportunities, review all current opportunities listed for an organization, sign up to receive periodic e-mails about additional partnership possibilities, or provide feedback on S-LC programs. If a representative from your organization hasn't already done so, please

- visit www.calvin.edu/slc
- click on "Community Partners" in the left-hand toolbar
- click on the green "Opportunity Database" button
- type the name of your organization in the "Agency Name" field
- scroll to the bottom and click "Search"

Your search will show each service-learning opportunity that we have marked as a current opportunity for your agency. The "Details" link will open a small window with the program description and supervisor contact information if that has been provided. You can then check whether information about each opportunity and contact persons are correct and e-mail us at slc@calvin.edu with any changes. Please also e-mail us with any opportunities you want removed from our search engine. To send us a new opportunity fill out the "Post an Opportunity" form found on the Community Partner section of the website.



Please help us keep your information updated.