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Urban Experience

Hannah Bechtold, *Urban Experience and Community Partnership Coordinator*

This summer I had the privilege of working in the Service-Learning Center as the statistical report genius and Urban Experience student coordinator. While number crunching and reporting kept me interested in the service-learning our office facilitates, coordinating Urban Experience brought a lot of learning and joy.

Urban Experience is a new trip option through Calvin’s first-year student experiential orientation. While other first-year students went into the great wide wilderness, our participants went into the city of Grand Rapids to get a taste the amazing things it has to offer through a service-learning lens.

After attending Passport, an orientation program to familiarize students and parents with the college, six female first-year students joined me in taking our first urban adventure: riding the bus to our home at the Travis Street Project Neighborhood House.

Our group spent a considerable amount of time



with New Development Corporation, an organization that buys and renovates foreclosed homes to sell to mid and low-income families. We hauled four dumpsters of trash out of three houses during one of the hottest weeks of the summer. Towards the end of our first work day, I felt quite worn out, but these six women were still going strong and trying to see how much trash they could shovel out before we had to leave.

We also spent a day on a canoe and bike tour of Grand Rapids. Some women were apprehensive because they had never canoed before, but ended up loving every second of their time on the Grand River. The bike tour back to our house was also difficult because the bikes were too tall. Despite

frustrations, when I asked if they wanted to take the bus instead, one woman said, “No, I want to finish.” And she did. She learned how to canoe, and she was not going to give up on biking.

In the evenings, we read and discussed a variety of articles to prepare for college life. We talked about living situations and how to stay true to our faith in college. We talked about how to be on fire for God instead of lukewarm. Finally, we considered how to write our plans in pencil instead of sharpie because God’s plan is so much bigger.

As I served to introduce them to life as engaged college students, these six women left quite an impression on me as we experienced Grand Rapids together.



History Students Study Plaster Creek

Kristin Du Mez, *Professor of History*

US Social and Cultural History has always been a favorite of mine—I love introducing students to innovative topics of historical research, such as Appalachian folk ways, nineteenth-century parlors, and the history of Disneyland. Even more so, I enjoy introducing students to cultural theory—to new methods that reveal how power is exercised in culture in complex ways, providing students with eyes to see their own world in a new light.

But this past summer I decided to implement some changes in the course. In light of recent economic uncertainties, we have seen increasing numbers of students choosing to pursue seemingly more “practical” careers, and as a result the discipline of history, like the humanities in general, has experienced a decline in students. We historians have long claimed that the skills we teach in history

classes—the ability to sort through and assess evidence, write powerfully and succinctly, and bring a nuanced understanding of the past to contemporary situations—will serve our students well in a wide array of careers. But in the spirit of “showing,” rather than telling, I set out to provide students with an opportunity to apply these skills directly to a project with clear practical value. I wanted to give students the chance to put their expertise to use in a way that served their community while at the same time giving them practical experiences that would serve them well in a competitive job market.

After spending the summer searching for meaningful research opportunities for the students, I settled on the Plaster Creek Stewards project. I had long admired the work of the Stewards, and in many ways the project was an ideal fit. In conversation

with Gail Heffner, Director of Community Engagement, I set up six different group options; students could select to study the history of an upstream farm, a local industry in the watershed (Kelvinator), a middle class neighborhood (Alger Heights), a local park (Ken-O-Sha), or an urban neighborhood (Roosevelt Park). I also added a “History Happened Here” group that is experimenting with innovative technologies that can help make the history of the watershed available to the public. After a fabulous tour of the Watershed led by the Stewards, students are now hard at work writing historiographical essays on topics relating to their specific group assignments. They will then work as a group to conduct local archival research and gather oral histories, and at the end of the semester they will present their research at the Calvin Environmental Assessment Program (CEAP)

poster session. They will also be turning their research over to the Plaster Creek Stewards to contribute to the ongoing study of the Watershed.

Throughout all of the planning and implementation, the Service-Learning Center has provided encouragement and logistical support. Thus far, students have enjoyed using their developing expertise to contribute something valuable to a larger community while gaining practical skills related to their intended vocational pursuits. Students also benefit from making contacts across campus and in the local community as they conduct their investigations. These contacts may end up serving them well in their future endeavors.

The CEAP poster session will be held on Thursday, December 6 in the Chapel Undercroft.

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Our September drive was a huge success! The blood drive raised a total of 208 pints of blood.

Thanks to all who contributed!

S-LC Staff Covenant

Our Roots

This fall, our student staff spent time developing a covenant to establish what we value as an office and what we want to work for in the upcoming school year. Our covenant takes the shape of a tree. Our core values are the roots. The branches of the tree leave space for fruit to express the ways we see God at work through the Service-Learning Center.

- | | |
|---------------------------|------------------|
| Pursuit of Shalom | Perseverance |
| Justice-Mercy | Profound Hope |
| Faithful Presence | Prayer |
| Convicted to Act | The Word |
| Humility | Inexplicable Joy |
| Facilitating Discipleship | |
| Love & Compassion | |
| Contemplative Servanthood | |
| Courageous Imagination | |
| Purposeful Discomfort | |



But blessed is the one who trusts in the Lord, whose confidence is in him. They will be like a tree planted by the water that sends out its roots by the stream. It does not fear when heat comes, its leaves are always green, it has no worries in a year of drought and never fails to bear fruit.

Jeremiah 17:7-8

The Service-Learning Center Staff 2012-2013



Back Row (left to right): Megan Kruis (Associate Director), Noah Kruis (Associate Director), Nic Scobey (Spring Break Trips), Sarah Sherman (Communications), Julia Hawkins (Transportation)

Middle Row: Jeff Bouman (Director), Jeff Brown (Partnership Development), Hannah Bechtold (Community Partnership Coordinators), Tonisha Begay (ABSL Social Sciences & Contextual Disciplines), Owen Selles (Research), Chris Van Zanen (Department Assistant)

Front Row: Nikita Miner (ABSL Language, Literature, & Arts), Anna Casto (ABSL Natural Sciences & Math), Leesha Orwig (College Access), Jae Eun Chang (ABSL Education), Emily Wolffis (Special Programs)



StreetFest Reflections

Anna Casto, *StreetFest Coordinator and ABSL for Natural Sciences and Mathematics*

On Thursday, August 30, the first day of new-student orientation, the first-year students of Calvin College left our campus to serve and learn for one day in the city of Grand Rapids. We worked with 71 local non-profit organizations, and over 120 student leaders gave their time to introduce the first-year students to our amazing city.

The students began their day with a chapel service. Together we reflected on what StreetFest means for students, for the college, and for the community. To guide our reflection, we focused on our theme for this year – *Discover: Respond*.

Through the theme, we acknowledged that StreetFest is not about *our* work saving the world. Rather, StreetFest is an opportunity to discover or re-discover Grand Rapids. It is a time to witness the work of people and organiza-

tions who have committed to this city. Our discoveries during StreetFest would hopefully prompt a response

FIVE WAYS TO DISCOVER



STREETFEST 2012



ENDLESS WAYS TO RESPOND

of continued service throughout each student's college experience. The colon as a grammatical device was also vital to our theme. It reminded us that our discovery should inform our response

in ways that would allow us to respect the experience of community members.

After the chapel and

a short breakout session, students and leaders headed out to their StreetFest sites. I felt relieved as I watched the last few students board their bus and leave the parking lot. I knew they were in for a hot

day of hard work, and as my co-workers and I sat down for a quick lunch, we hoped they would see the redemptive work of Grand Rapids' non-profits and be challenged to consider their place in our city. To me, StreetFest speaks to Calvin College's hopes and expectations for the students who graduate from this institution. It may seem strange that on the first day of orientation, first-year students would leave campus and venture into the city, but I think the people here who have chosen to invest in students' lives sincerely hope that we all would become the type of people who dive deep into our communities and affect real change. I'm still amazed by the number of people that invested their own time to welcome new students to Grand Rapids through this unique program. It was a privilege and blessing to be a part of StreetFest.



StreetFest Chapel

Remarks from President Michael Le Roy

As we participate in acts of service throughout the community today, we want to be connected to God's larger project. You will hear a lot about this project at Calvin College. God is involved in the renewing of all things today, and every day. The renewing of all things is a big project because we live in a broken and hurting world. It involves racial reconciliation. It involves ameliorating poverty. It involves restoring the creation. It involves saying "no" to racism and "yes" to justice. It involves creating a peaceable kingdom. And we get to be a part of it.

This year is the twentieth anniversary of StreetFest, and this summer was my son's twentieth birthday. I'm



reminded of a story I want to share with you. Several years ago, my father and I were painting a hallway—potentially a very messy job. We had carefully laid out drop cloths, and just when we got the cans of paint open, I heard my five-year-old son run around the corner proclaiming, "We're going to paint!"

I looked at him and thought, "oh, no." He was so full of joy, but I could not imagine a worse mess.

My father enthusiastically told him, "That's right! Go get your painting clothes on!" So my son changed his clothes. He came back, picked up a brush, and started going at it.

As I watched my son and my father, I confessed my lack of flexibility and joy. My son painted, creating drips and messes. My father walked along behind him and smoothed it out and made the way clear. My son was involved in a big project. He got to participate. But my father went behind him to make the way right.

Today, we get to participate in God's project of renewal. We are not here to save the world, because God



has already saved the world. We are here to participate, to paint. That is what this Calvin education will equip you for. At the end of four years, we want you to be out in the world every day, painting. You will make some drips and you will make some messes, but we know that we have a loving God who will follow in behind and make the path clear.



**Thank you to all who made StreetFest successful!
The Calvin College Service-Learning Center staff is grateful for the participation of students, faculty, staff, and our 69 community partners who made this event possible.**



Director's Book Review

Jeff Bouman, *Director of the Service-Learning Center*

In *Welcoming Justice*, Charles Marsh tells of meeting John Perkins in the summer of 1980. Perkins responded to Marsh's "confession" that his own grandmother retained racist perspectives by simply offering him fresh blueberries to take to her. Throughout the book the gesture symbolizes what MLK meant by "beloved community."

"The end," MLK said, "is reconciliation, the end is redemption, the end is the creation of the beloved community." Marsh sums up the book with, "God gathers us into the family of faith, not only for our own sake, but also so that we might welcome justice and build beloved communities of discipleship for the sake of the world. That is the purpose that drives followers of the risen Christ. It is the movement of the Spirit that began at Pentecost and has continued in faithful communities of discipleship throughout every generation. It is the

theological vision that we need desperately to reclaim in our time" (18).

In chapters entitled "The cultural captivity of the Church," "The next great awakening," and "A time for rebuilding," Perkins makes the contribution of a person who has had the opportunity to speak to, learn from, and dream with younger leaders in vibrant roles in American Christianity. His is a voice of hope and wisdom.

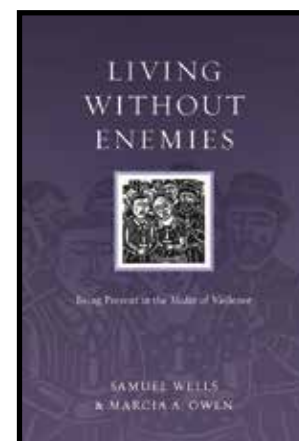
Living Without Enemies "is a book... for those who are discovering that poverty is a mask we put on a person to cover up his or her real wealth and that wealth is a disguise we put on a person to cover up his or her profound poverty. In the end, this book aspires to a renewal of the Christian vision not just of ministry, but also of God." (17).

New to Durham in the summer of 2005, Sam Wells, the Dean of Duke Divinity School, was looking around for places where Christ might

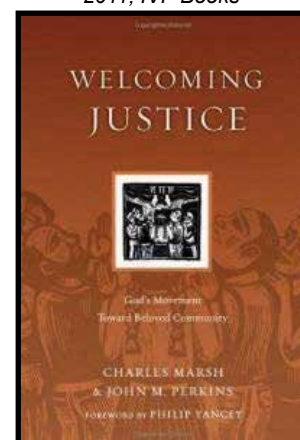
show up. At a prayer vigil to commemorate the life of the victim of a shooting, he met Marcia, with the Religious Coalition for a Nonviolent Durham, a local organizer and leader in the movement to highlight gun violence, and to honor those whose lives were lost to it.

In addition to the value of silence and of touch, the book provides four models for engagement, summarized as; (1) Working For; (2) Working With; (3) Being With; and (4) Being For. Concluding chapters focus on practical ministry in the form of re-entry assistance for people coming out of prison as well as a list of "ten gleanings" from Marcia based on her years of direct contact with both victims and perpetrators of gun violence.

Welcoming Justice, and Living Without Enemies are important books that connect theory and practice in ways that will move the church and its people forward in faith. They help those of us



Living Without Enemies,
Marcia A. Owen & Samuel Wells,
2011, IVP Books



Welcoming Justice, Charles Marsh
& John Perkins, 2009, IVP Books

involved in service-learning at the college and community level understand that a dialog between us is imperative as we pay attention to the ways God is at work in Grand Rapids and beyond.

2013 Service-Learning Spring Break Trip Preview

Americus, Ga—intentional Christian farming and racial reconciliation.

Baltimore, MD—housing and arts as urban community development.

Chicago, IL—racial reconciliation and homelessness. Christian Reformed World Relief Committee—disaster relief.

Grand Isle, LA—Hurricane Katrina relief.

Great Smoky Mountains National Park—hiking and trail maintenance.

Houma, LA—Hurricane Katrina relief.

Jackson, MS—Christian community development.

Kermit, WV—coal mining and Appalachian culture.

Knoxville, TN—work with at-risk women.

Mobile, AL—adults with mental disabilities.

Rehoboth, NM—cultural awareness and college readiness

Pittsburgh, PA—urban community development.

Restoring Eden—public health and environmental advocacy in Appalachia.

St. Louis, MO—urban revitalization.

Three Rivers, MI—art, agriculture, and development in intentional rural communities.

Food Insecurity

Owen Selles, *Research Coordinator*

Food is a popular topic these days –farmers markets, local food, and organic farming are all growing public interests. Food security, however, is a serious issue that receives little attention.

The U.S. Department of Agriculture defines food insecurity as when a family’s “access to adequate food is limited by a lack of money and other resources.” In Kent County, 15.2% of the population, about 92,484 people, experienced food insecurity in 2011. Geogra-



phy adds another dimension. Food deserts, a term used by U.S. policy makers, are low-income neighborhoods where the nearest grocery store is more than a mile away. If a family in this neighborhood has poor access to transportation, their ability to get food is limited. These figures reveal a serious need in our community.

During the week of October 9-12, Calvin College joined Kent County in contributing to the County Wide Food Drive. We believe that giving to the food drive is a way in which we can respond as a community to the injustice of food insecurity and a way to affirm our faith in God’s abundant provisions. The food and personal care items collected at Calvin

during the County Wide Food Drive will be distributed to 11 pantries that together provide for 1,200 people in southeast Grand Rapids every month.

To get students thinking about food insecurity and the importance of contributing to the food drive, I conducted seven discussions across campus that explored the issues of food insecurity and giving. The goal was to help students approach the food drive more mindfully personally. Each discussion included an interactive activity that simulated food insecurity in the U.S.

I found pro-



moting awareness about an injustice in our community to be challenging, but important – our discomfort about an injustice should call us to action. In thinking about food insecurity and our role in the Food Drive I was reminded that Jesus said: “whatever you did for the least of these brothers and sisters of mine, you did for me.” The discussions that took place on campus were an important step in encouraging our community to respond to food insecurity.

StreetFest International

Paula Wigboldy, Calvin Alum '80

StreetFest International is program for Calvin alumni to continue the service-learning tradition in their own communities. While Calvin’s incoming students were serving and learning in Grand Rapids on August 30, alumni were simultaneously serving in Illinois, Iowa, Michigan, North Carolina, and Washington.

The first annual “StreetFest: Chicago Style” was a huge success! Young alumni joined seasoned alumni to

work together to make a difference, and the blessings followed. Conversation was good, new friendships formed, and we learned more about the work done on a daily basis at two very different service organizations.

One group met early Saturday morning at the Yorkfield Food Pantry. They stocked shelves, serviced clients, and managed the store for the morning. The best part came as the group was leaving; the alumni asked, “When can we do this again?”

Another group was led by Chris Langkamp of Lampstand Ministries, who connected us to the needs at Westside Christian School. We dug weeds, planted grass, and cleaned up the perimeter of the school. It became clear as the day went on that it was less about the work we were doing for them, but the partnership we established *with* them as we understood more about their ministry. We met some people they ministered to and learned about how

lives are being touched by the church. A strong connection formed as we learned of other ways to partner with them. We will work side-by-side with them again in the future.

Next year, we hope to have more locations and more participation. Good things happen when we work side by side to minister to others.





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Giving to the Service-Learning Center

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 enabled donors who wanted another way to support Calvin College. Thanks to your generous contributions, the endowment fund reached \$50,000 in 2012. We may now access usable interest which will contribute to the growth of vital Service-Learning Center programs.

What does this mean for you and for the Service-Learning Center? Your current and future gifts to the S-LC can now be made directly to Calvin College. Simply indicate you would like the gift to be designated the S-LC in the check memo line, or via online designation. These gifts will be added to the usable interest from the endowment fund to enable programs like StreetFest and Residence Hall Community Partnerships, as well as a wide variety of academically-based service-learning projects to flourish.

If you are interested in giving to the S-LC please donate on-line at www.calvin.edu.

