



SERVICE-LEARNING
Growing In Service • Grounded In Learning

Service-Learning Connections

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CPCC Service-Learning: Enriching Lives

By: Mark Helms

Where do we find meaning and purpose in our lives? What can we do to quench our persistent thirst for true happiness? How can we make a difference in a world filled with suffering, chaos, and injustice?

The great minds of the world have pondered these questions throughout history. Whether explored from the perspective of religion, politics, or the arts, one answer consistently emerges: our lives have greater meaning when we serve our fellow human beings.

Here are a few ways that I believe our lives are enriched as we serve others:

Serving those in need puts our own lives in perspective. We all endure hardships in our lives, but we will never have to search very far to find someone whose situation makes our own seem fortunate by comparison. "I cried because I had no shoes until I met the man who had no feet."

Service to others can be empowering. It reminds us that we all have the capacity to feel compassion for others, and to do something to make a difference. Witnessing human suffering,

but doing nothing to alleviate it, can leave us filled with hopelessness and despair. Every time we commit an act of kindness, we take charge of our little piece of the world, and we can see how a seemingly insignificant good deed can make a difference in someone's life.

Service offers a counterpoint to the hollow satisfaction that comes from the rampant materialism that seems to drive the world. Nice clothes, an expensive car, and other things that money can buy will only give us a fleeting sense of happiness. Our relationships with other people can be a much greater source of happiness for us. These relationships are strengthened and enriched when we reach out to help someone in need.

This fall, Hurricane Katrina brought unprecedented destruction and suffering to people in Louisiana and Mississippi. When tragedy strikes, good people feel compelled to do something to help. Within hours of this terrible storm, efforts were under way to rescue people, collect and deliver supplies, and solicit financial contributions to help the victims rebuild their lives.

Here at CPCC, hundreds of miles from the devastation, our student leaders quickly went to work collecting donations. Within two weeks they raised over \$10,000. These dollars are now being distributed through a Louisiana foundation to help community college students rebuild their lives and continue their education. The CPCC community is very proud of our students for committing their time, energy, and money to helping fellow students in such great need.

The CPCC Service-Learning Center helps provide opportunities for students to discover the satisfaction that comes from serving others while they learn. Through our students, faculty, and staff, CPCC has worked with over 250 non-profit organizations in our region that help meet



critical needs in our community. Over 30 of the College's best instructors have adapted their courses to include a service-learning option. The SGA, Phi Theta Kappa, and numerous other student organizations regularly conduct successful service projects. The Martin Luther King Challenge and Alternative Spring Break are just two of a growing number of service opportunities open to our students. Through Service-Learning, our students are fighting hunger and homelessness, helping school children learn to read, improving the lives of people with developmental disabilities, serving senior citizens, supporting health care initiatives, and working to improve our environment. Our community is better for these efforts.

Think about what you can do to help make someone's life a little better. Find a cause that you care about, and offer a hand in service. You just may find that, as you help someone else, you are enriching your own life as well.



The Growth of Service-Learning at CPCC

By: Dan Herrin

In March of 2003, Mark Helms, then the Director of Student Life, and I organized our first Service-Learning orientation for CPCC faculty. We invited two instructors, one from Johnson C. Smith and one from UNCC, to share how they had incorporated Service-Learning into their classes. Only two CPCC faculty members showed up to that first meeting. We thought it would take some time for the idea to catch on here, so we weren't discouraged. Still, we had little idea how much CPCC Service-Learning would grow in the next two and a half years.

To date, over 30 CPCC instructors have offered Service-Learning components in their classes, hundreds of students have completed thousands of hours of service, with over 250 different community organizations. We have heard countless stories from students about how meaningful their experiences were to them, how their experiences influenced their vocational direction, and how they have grown personally from them. Instructors have shared with us how Service-Learning

has enlivened their classrooms and enhanced their teaching. Community Partners tell how enthusiastic and talented CPCC students are helping them to accomplish their missions and making our community a better place to live.

In the CPCC Service-Learning Center, we organize, coordinate, and support service opportunities directly connected to the classroom and those opportunities students seek on their own to enhance their education. Whichever type of service it is, we have found that not only the recipient of the service benefits but the service provider as well.



Service-Learning moves to new offices; staff changes

CPCC faculty and students might have a few questions if they haven't been in contact with the Service-Learning office lately. First, our place in the Van Every building is now empty. Where did we go? And even when they find our new Service-Learning Center, they won't find the same faces they've associated with Service-Learning over the past three years. The most visible of our recent changes is that we now have our own center in the new Academic and Performing Arts Center, room 257.

We have also had several personnel changes this semester. On August 29th, Brandon Lewis started as Assistant Service-Learning Coordinator through North Carolina Campus Compact's AmeriCorps VISTA (Volunteers in Service to America)

program. Brandon filled the position vacated when Aimee Brunton moved to North campus to become Student Life Coordinator. Brandon is from Fergus Falls, Minnesota. He has had a great start in Charlotte and he is excited about the upcoming year at CPCC.

We have also added two new positions to the Service-Learning department. On Thursday October 6th, we were happy to welcome Terry McMicking to our team. Terry has been with CPCC in different capacities since 2000. She graduated from CPCC in 2003 and she has worked with Behavioral and Social Sciences and the Theatre Box Office as a part-time employee.

Service-Learning was also able to add a new position for a CPCC student through the federal work-study program. In

addition to serving as President of the Student Government Association, Armah Shiancoe is excited to have the chance to be the first work-study student in our office. Unfortunately, we also learned that Dan Herrin, Service-Learning Coordinator, will be leaving after December as he moves on to pursue his interest in acting. Dan has been with CPCC Service-Learning since we began three years ago. Dan brings a delightful presence to our office every day. We offer him our best wishes. Service-Learning is thriving at CPCC. We see our recent growth as a positive sign of our impact on the college and our community. Despite many changes, we will continue "Growing in service, Grounded in learning."

The Mission of Service-Learning

By: Tommy Lopez

The Mission of Service-Learning is to “initiate and support curricular and non-curricular activities that enhance student learning, promote civic responsibility, and respond to the critical needs in our community through collaborative campus and community partnerships.” When this mission was presented to the Human Services Program, we began to see how our students, program and community could benefit from this collaboration.

“Human Service professionals receive formal education combined with practical experience. This combination produces a competent individual capable of assisting individuals to meet many needs. There is a whole new spectrum of challenges today, which the Human Services professional is meeting.” The cooperation between Service-Learning and Human Services is designed to allow our students to gain experience while providing service to our community. Many of our partner agencies need personnel who assist clients with negotiating for services. With the large influx of clients, and the continuing decrease in funding, our pool of future Human Service Professionals are seen as a “God send.”

The Human Services curriculum is designed to prepare graduates to fulfill many needs in human service settings in order to enable people to live a more satisfying, autonomous, and

productive life. The program combines liberal arts education, human services/mental health care courses, internships and specialty courses with Service-Learning to fully prepare our students. Experimental education is our emphasis. Information is first presented in class. Then, through laboratory exercises and field placements, the students are able to see their studies “fleshed out.” Professional attitudes, personal growth, and knowledge in addition to civic responsibility and community volunteerism are all components of both Service-Learning and the Human Services Program.

In the Human Services Program we are currently using the Service-Learning component in our Interviewing/Counseling Class, HSE 123. These students learn how to assist clients in communicating their needs, getting the client’s “story,” accessing services, negotiating Human Services systems and providing minimal counsel in a multi-cultural environment. Students perform their duties and share their experiences in class. This sharing demonstrates how techniques learned in class are used in serving clients.

I would like to share a story, from one of our Service-Learning/Human Services Students, which will demonstrate our success in partnership. This student performs her Service-Learning at Crisis Assistance Ministries. Crisis



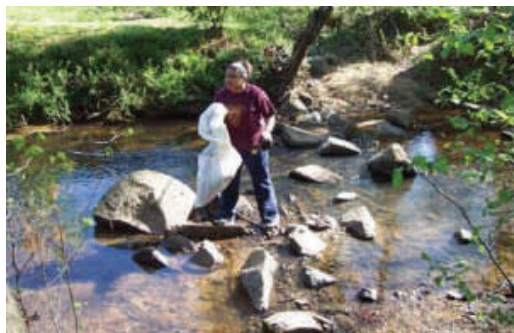
Assistance Ministries is a private non-profit agency dedicated to provide families, children and individuals in crisis with food, clothing and emergency assistance. Her reports to the class are filled with the tears of joy seen on clients’ faces when they receive assistance. The students ability to set clients’ minds at ease and fulfill clients’ needs is a testament to the effort she places on learning the skills necessary to be a good Human Services worker.

Human Services plans to expand its work with Service-Learning. We hope to instill in our students the need for community service, activity, commitment and civic responsibility. Service-Learning is an ideal mechanism.

Big Sweep 2005: Little Sugar Creek Rebounding

On October 1st, CPCC students and staff participated again in Mecklenburg Water Quality Program’s annual Big Sweep event. CPCC has a long tradition with cleanups at Little Sugar Creek. For nearly 10 years, CPCC has led a cleanup at this creek. Through these years, at least 750 students have gotten involved. At the October 2005 cleanup, more than 50 students participated. Little Sugar Creek and our community have seen the benefits of CPCC’s efforts. Ten years ago, Little Sugar Creek was considered one of the most polluted creeks in North Carolina. Now, bacteria levels are down and the creek is on the rebound.

At Four Mile Creek near the Levine campus, twenty people cleaned approximately a half-mile of shoreline. Some of the participants had also been involved with a previous cleanup at the same site six months ago. They commented



on how much cleaner the creek was before the cleanup even started this time. CPCC’s efforts have helped to make Squirrel Lake Park a more attractive place to visit. CPCC should be proud of its commitment to making Mecklenburg county’s streams cleaner, safer, and more enjoyable!

Service-Learning Beyond the Classroom

By: Armah Shiancoe

For the past few semesters, I’ve found myself doing service-learning. Some instructors require that their students engage in some type of service-learning project for which they receive class credit. Though that is a great idea, service-learning extends beyond the classroom. There are programs available for anyone who has the time and is willing to do service work.

I decided to join the Student Government Association (SGA) because I saw it as an opportunity to do

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The MLK Challenge is More Than Just One Day

By: Dena Shonts

The Second Annual Martin Luther King Day Challenge is fast approaching. Mark your calendars for January 16, 2006!

The MLK Challenge is a day of service projects, but with a different process from other such events. The MLK Challenge takes the service concept a step further by framing the actual service as a “challenge” to be completed. We hope this will result in automatically causing participants to be in a different mindset and be prepared for a rigorous day. Once given their “challenge,” teams will be provided basic instruction, seed money to complete their project, and a final goal. The rest is up to them.

As the Service-Learning Center enters into the initial planning stages for the MLK Day Challenge, I realize the magic does not just happen the day of the event; it also occurs in the planning and preparation

stages.

Here is what I mean: One of our wonderful student leaders put together a committee to assist with the planning and details of the event. At their first meeting, we discussed the MLK Challenge and the layout of the day. As we discussed Dr. King and all he stood for, the conversation turned very personal. The students shared stories of times in their own lives when they felt prejudice and how that feeling made them very aware of who they are. As the stories unfolded, I sat and listened. I understand that we all have felt a form of discrimination in our lives, but these students made me realize it is what you do with that prejudice that matters. This group felt that hate is something you learn, and even though they have all felt, it they do not



want to spread it.

As we plan this event to celebrate Dr. King, I know these students do not just celebrate on his birthday, but instead they celebrate him every day.

If you would like more information about the MLK Challenge, please contact Dena Shonts at 704.330.6558.

Service-Learning is “life changing”

By: Jane Fountain

I'm a returning student in my third semester here at CPCC. I have done service work since I was in my 20's, but due to an extended illness, hadn't done anything in a couple of years.

I got involved with service-learning this time last year. I was offered the chance to get out of a final exam in exchange for keeping a journal about my service experiences, and of course, I was all over that. I'm a transfer student who wants to get a degree in journalism – A four page journal? Piece of cake. I chose the Uptown Men's Shelter, because a friend of mine had worked there.

When I started, I worked Thursdays as the dental receptionist and on Monday nights as an assistant in the creative writing class.

The 4 page journal I was supposed to be keeping grew. When I got to page 14, I asked my instructor if he would like this on an audio CD. He agreed. I still typed out the liner notes to the CD, and those alone were about 5 pages.

I began service work last

September. By March, I had been hired as a part time front desk supervisor. I work there three or four nights a week now, and get paid.

I've always been skeptical of people when they tell about things in their life and add the phrase, “It's changed my life.”

Service-learning did that for me in a way. I was fortunate enough to have the grades to become a member of the Honor Society. Because of my work in service-learning, I was approached and asked to run for VP of Service. I agreed, and now I hold that position. In one year's time, I've gone from watching TNT all day on television, with an occasional nap, to being a part-time job holder, full-time student, honor society officer, and columnist for the school newspaper. That's pretty life changing.

Maybe getting involved with service-learning won't change everyone's life who participates, but I promise your life will improve.

Beyond the Classroom

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something positive with my time outside the classroom. This is how students should see service-learning. As a part of the SGA, we have performed numerous tasks that have benefited students here and elsewhere. We continue to regularly do projects for others, while advocating for CPCC students remains our first priority.

In the wake of the Hurricane Katrina disaster, the SGA partnered with Phi Theta Kappa and many other student clubs and organizations on campus to raise money to help those affected by the disaster. We had an emergency meeting and decided to raise as much money as possible within two weeks. Although we hoped to raise \$16,000, we were able to collect almost \$11,000. We decided to donate this money to other college students in Louisiana.

My participation with the SGA has been a great experience of service-learning. I have been fortunate to participate in Habitat for Humanity, a clothing drive, and many other acts of community service. Although I'm not in the financial state to donate large sums of money to various charities, it is gratifying to give my time to impact OUR society.

I encourage everyone to take advantage of the service-learning opportunities we are given here at CPCC.



LifeSpan connects volunteers to kindred spirits

By: Lori Avery, Development Associate

At LifeSpan, we support children and adults who have developmental disabilities throughout North Carolina. For many of the CPCC service-learning students, LifeSpan is their first introduction to someone who has a developmental disability.

LifeSpan supports children and adults with developmental disabilities by providing education, employment, and enrichment opportunities that promote inclusion, choice, family supports, and other best practices. Our programs serve individuals, from six weeks of age through their senior years, who struggle daily with their own developmental delays or disabilities (i.e. Downs syndrome, autism, cerebral palsy, etc).

When first working with a student, I invite them to take a tour of our programs. There is almost an immediate connection or *kindred spirit* between the students and the individuals we support. Most CPCC

students who engage in our programs start with a curriculum our program director created based on the number of hours the student will be spending in our program. The curriculum includes fundamental concepts – spending time, getting to know one another, playing, reading, crafting a bead bracelet, quite simply, having a new friend.

Some service-learners return and see their friends on a regular basis after their class commitment is complete. Friendship is something many of us take for granted. The friendships formed during service-learning projects are wonderful gifts for the students and the children and adults at LifeSpan to share.

Over the last two years, I have watched in amazement at the growth of the Service-Learning Department at CPCC. The students and staff make service-learning an integral part of their daily lives on campus. I had the opportunity to attend the Service-



Learning Institute for Faculty in August which gives faculty the opportunity to learn more about the concept of service-learning and how it is being implemented across campus. It was amazing to see how new faculty members were embracing the concept, especially after hearing first-hand from students how ten or twenty hours made a difference to them in life.

Service-learning at CPCC has been a wonderful experience – thanks for taking LifeSpan along on the journey!

Community Partner Profile: Guardian ad Litem

By: Kristina Koul, Volunteer Recruiter

My name is Kristina Koul and I serve as the volunteer recruiter for the Guardian ad Litem program in Charlotte. A Guardian ad Litem volunteer is a trained community volunteer who represents the best interest of a child involved in a court case as a result of having been abused or neglected. Volunteers serve as an advocate by getting to know the child and the child's case, preparing a written report to help the judge understand what is best for the child, and to ultimately find them a safe, permanent home. It is hard for us to believe that child abuse can occur in our own community. While it may not be something you are faced with on campus or in your own home, child abuse is a problem that affects us all.

In North Carolina alone, every five minutes a child is abused or neglected. We, therefore, have close to 500 children awaiting a guardian. These are children waiting

for help that we can only provide with additional volunteers. This is where we could really use your support. The Guardians office has partnered with the Service-Learning Center and many CPCC students



already give their time to serve as an advocate. They eat lunch with their assigned child at school, speak with their teachers to track their progress, visit them at their foster home and sit with them in court. But we still need many more students willing to donate their time and experience. Becoming a Guardian is a wonderful opportunity for students to gain experience working with the court system and in the field of social work, while serving as a role model for children most in need of our support.

We believe this is a unique opportunity for us to partner CPCC students for the benefit of children who deserve our best collective efforts.

Service-Learning Staff

Mark Helms

Associate Dean for Student Life and Service-Learning

Dan Herrin

Service-Learning Coordinator

Dena Shonts

Service-Learning and Student Life Coordinator

Terry McMicking

Senior Administrative Secretary

Brandon Lewis

Assistant Service-Learning Coordinator, North Carolina Campus Compact VISTA

Armah Shiancoe

Service-Learning Work-Study