It’s November 4, 2008.  7:00 a.m. on Election Day in America. The voting precinct stations have just opened, and the lines are already long. Forty percent of all registered North Carolinians have cast their ballots at Early Voting stations, and the percentages are nearly as high in other states across the country. By all accounts, this election has generated more energy and excitement among the citizens of our country than any in recent history, and young people in America are stepping up to vote in unprecedented numbers.

Our country is facing some of the biggest challenges in its history. Our economy is in turmoil, and we appear to have entered what may be a long period of recession. Our military is mired down in two wars, with over 150,000 men and women fighting in some of the most dangerous places in the world. Forty-seven million Americans are not covered by healthcare insurance. Public education is not meeting the needs of our children. Dirty air and water compromise our health as the debate over energy and global warming continues. Poverty and homelessness are on the rise, and the numbers of working poor in America are increasing each year.

Even amidst this heated election and the growing challenges our country faces, I would contend there is some very good news. Research indicates that the millennial generation, generally defined as children of the baby boomers who were born between 1978 and 1995, is bringing a new energy and optimism to our country. Many millennials are college students, and they are among those turning out in large numbers to vote. This generation is described as optimistic, inclusive, entrepreneurial, tech-savvy, self-reliant, and service oriented. They are becoming engaged in their communities, and they want to make a difference.

On this Election Day, they are engaging the democratic process by participating in the most important responsibility and the greatest privilege of all Americans – voting. The voice of these engaged young people is captured in this comment from Neha Mathew, a freshman college student, as quoted in the San Francisco Chronicle:

“Voting to me is as compulsory as oxygen. This might be because of the value I place on waiting so many years to finally have a legitimate say in politics here in America. Because of this, I believe that voting for either candidate in this election is stirring. It deems young individuals to step into adulthood and claim responsibility over the world we will soon be shaping. Voting is this active first step which I am extremely thankful for.”

America’s strength has always been the ability to face the challenges that confront us. And I am optimistic that, with the fresh ideas, new energy, and community spirit of the millennial generation, this country will rise to the occasion.
A Different Perspective: Ksuin Cil’s Story

By Erin Turner, Family Literacy Coordinator

It’s easier to understand why someone from a troubled third world country wants to come to America after listening to CPCC accounting student Ksuin Cil. Her pleasant smile and easygoing disposition are a sharp contrast to her life experiences. Her father struggled with bureaucratic roadblocks for 15 years, spending five of those years in prison as a Vietnamese political dissident from 1979-1983 while Cil’s mother was left to raise five children alone. Ksuin, the sixth born, was likely the result of a happy reunion between her parents upon his release from confinement. Eventually, in 2003, the paperwork completed, the Cil family of eleven people was cleared to come to America. At 19, Ksuin was old enough to realize she had a tremendous opportunity for a new life.

Now at age 24, Ksuin is hopeful she can be a positive force in this country. She plans to graduate from CPCC next spring and attend UNCC, finishing her accounting degree in 2011. “I’m blessed to have an opportunity to come learn about the American experience,” she says. Cil wants to give back to the country that provided her father and family a safe place to live. She plans to use her accounting knowledge to help other immigrants better understand money issues in this country. “I understand their situation,” she explains. “It’s always scary to come to a new place when you struggle to learn the language.” She especially wants to help non-English speakers understand medical terminology. “It takes so long to translate in hospitals, from one-half to an hour,” she elaborates, “they need to speak better to get help faster.”

Ksuin has already started to give something to her community. She gave her time this past spring through service-learning by participating with CPCC’s Family Literacy Program at the Aldersgate Senior Citizen Community Center with Vietnamese elders, and at Shamrock Garden Elementary School with Spanish-speakers. She only asks for one thing of Americans—empathy for those from other countries. “I would ask for some to respect that internationals are trying to make friends…it will help us learn English faster [to have American friends]. We want to contribute, to give something back, not break laws because of confusion.” She reminds us all that although the global world is getting smaller, there is opportunity to make our world greater.

Alleviating Poverty one weekend at a time

By Marcy LaBossiere, AmeriCorps VISTA

According to the National Center for Children in Poverty, nearly 13 million children in the United States, 18% of all children, live in families with incomes below the federal poverty level. As a VISTA, I am fighting a war against the harsh realities that these statistics represent. Every day I wake up and ask how can my peers and I help to alleviate poverty? For me, it started with a party.

Birthdays are celebrated everyday with cake, balloons, plenty of junk food, and entertainment. Outwardly, it appeared to be your typical birthday party but unlike most birthday parties in America, this party was for two homeless children in the Charlotte Area.

On September 23rd, Birthday Blessings, a non-profit organization that hosts birthday parties for homeless children, partnered with the YWCA and CPCC to provide presents, food, and entertainment to these two children who don’t have a place to call home. With the help of CPCC student volunteers, we served food, boogied down to the top 40 hits, and ate birthday cake. Being one of the seven representatives from Central Piedmont Community College, I was greatly touched by the fact that we were able to celebrate the life of these homeless children in ways that they may have never experienced before.

As a recent college graduate from the University of Rhode Island, I’m excited to be serving as the Americorps VISTA for Central Piedmont Community College. The most enjoyable part of my experiences thus far have been participating in CPCC’s Service in Action! events which provide a wide variety of community service opportunities for students. Birthday Blessings was the first of many community partners we worked with in Service in Action!, including events that targeted alleviating poverty (Crop Walk), helping the environment (Big Sweep), and focusing on other community needs (playground build for disbaled children).
No one can ever imagine everything that goes into start up day for an afterschool program; you really have to be there! CPCC Nursing student Damon Culpepper was there, and he had the exciting privilege of beginning a service-learning commitment on the day we held our Open House in which we invited all the parents and students for a family dinner and introduced all components of the tutorial program.

With over 150 parents and students to serve, our staff had to be on their game, including Damon. However, an outside observer would not be able to tell him from the regular BOLD Kids staff. He was on his mark after only a half day’s worth of experience in the early morning hours.

Damon decided to volunteer at our Lake Wylie 21st Century site early this semester. When he came, he had no idea what he was walking into, but he was certainly up to the challenge! He literally worked from almost sun-up to sun-down.

Damon began his day early that morning inventorying massive amounts of books that were donated to us by Second Harvest. He was in and out of the office carrying box after box. Not only did he inventory books, he inventoried all supplies and equipment to prepare us for a clean start. He could have left by mid-afternoon and came back to complete his assignment in the morning but he chose to continue working!

Soon it was late afternoon and the decorators and set-up team had come. Damon began to jump right in and give a helping hand. In just a few hours, his work area went from quiet to chaotic! Kids everywhere! Energetic, enthusiastic, inquisitive, screaming kids from one corner of the room to the next! Damon was not only excited but intrigued!

Seeing all those bright, hopeful faces was not only fulfilling for Damon but he was motivated to stay until the end! He served plates, replenished food and cleaned up until the last scrap was gone and the last kid had screamed with excitement. Most impressively, he came back the next day and exceeded his required hours!

The students in GIS 215 GIS Data Models conducted an urban ecosystem analysis to map the structure of the land area in Huntersville for their Fall 2008 GIS service-learning project. This analysis enabled the community to quantify the monetary costs associated with loss of tree canopy due to urbanization. The students presented their findings at a public tree planting event on November 22. Central Piedmont Community College Center for Sustainability, in partnership with the Sierra Club, American Forests, Service-Learning and Mecklenburg County, planted 2500 trees near Mountain Island Lake.

The tree planting was the follow-up to Big Sweep stream clean-up and both activities were directed at protecting the Charlotte region’s watershed. The volunteers included diverse groups such as boy scouts, college students, families, and neighborhood residents. The site was prepared by Mecklenburg County with different color stakes designating the different variety of trees to be planted to help the novice tree-planters. All the 200 volunteers were rewarded with a lunch from Subway and Arby’s and prizes were given away through an environmental trivia game that included Parks and Recreation gold cards, Sierra Club calendars and tickets to the Catawba Riverkeeper Film Festival.

The first CPCC sponsored tree-planting was held in February with over 500 trees planted by 100 volunteers and because of the tremendous success of the plantings in 2008, a third is already in the works for fall 2009, details coming soon!
Jonathan Junus receives Community Impact Student Award for CPCC

Jonathan Junus of Central Piedmont Community College received the third annual North Carolina Campus Compact Community Impact Student Award during the Compact’s Student Conference held at High Point University Saturday, November 8. Twenty-seven college students across the state received the award for making significant, innovative contributions to their campus’ efforts to address local community needs.

State Senator Vernon Malone of Wake County and the Compact’s Executive Director, Dr. Lisa Keyne, presented the award to Junus before an audience of more than 250 college students and guests representing 33 higher education institutions. President of High Point University, Dr. Nido Qubein, initiated the ceremony, emphasizing the conference’s theme, “The Power is Yours.”

Junus is a sophomore business major and in his second year as Service Club co-chair.

Breaking bread and breaking down barriers

By Brenna Haughey, CPCC Service-Learning Student, English

Society today is known to judge people before they get to know them. For example, when one sees a clean-shaven young man in a suit, one might automatically say he’s living the American Dream. When one sees an old, dirty looking man on the street, one may naturally judge him. What if the truth was the first man had no family and no money at all, whereas the second man had a family and money to spare? My perceptions of others greatly shifted after experiencing something like the above example through a service-learning activity at the Charlotte Rescue Mission.

While rolling meatballs for the spaghetti dinner we were preparing for the mission, I struck up a conversation with one of the cooks. When I told him I was volunteering for my service-learning requirement in English class, he became very excited. He told me how he loved to read and wished he had more time to do it. While discussing authors and stories, I found out he lived at the mission—I was shocked. I knew that those who live at the mission are men who recently had problems with drug or alcohol abuse and they usually come to the mission to re-start their lives through a 90-day program offered. After speaking to the cook, I realized I never would have guessed that he was not just another helpful volunteer, but a man seeking help as well.

As the night progressed, the volunteers finished making dinner and the men lined up for the meal. The men preparing to eat were, to my surprise, normal looking men. They were not just one ethnicity or age group like I had expected. Rather, they comprised a variety of ages and all ethnicities. It was amazing to see how despite their differences, the men were all united and seemingly a family.

After speaking with a couple of other men, I learned about their past and life experiences. As I watched them all leave the dinner, I saw people I could relate to: people with histories, backgrounds, families, and futures. When I left the mission, I reflected on what I had learned and found that people are not always what you expect. Even though everyone has made different choices, we need to remember that at the core, we are all human.
Imagine traveling back to 79 A.D. when Pompeii and the surrounding area vanished under a thick layer of volcanic ash and remained amazingly preserved for 17 centuries. The exhibition *A Day in Pompeii* tells the story of several aspects of daily life including customs and activities associated with commerce and business, medicine, food and dining, private residences, and beauty and luxury.

With the sudden eruption of Mt. Vesuvius, the city remained lost and forgotten. With the help of CPCC Service-Learning, students were able to help bring Pompeii back to life. CPCC Service-Learning volunteers dedicated their time to help recreate daily life in the town as it was before time stopped. Students volunteered as exhibit hosts and greeters accumulating over 79 volunteer hours. They helped guide guests through the exhibit and recount the final hours of life in the city. In addition to traditional docent responsibilities, students also served as advocates representing the museum and showcasing Discovery Place’s brand. With the help of these students, guests of the exhibit were able to receive service and additional information to ensure their visit was truly a memorable one.

CPCC students have become an asset in the successful operation of the exhibit. With their help and dedication, the exhibit has created once in a lifetime experiences for guests from all over the world.

All across our region, children go to school every day without the tools they need to succeed in the classroom. Imagine for a minute, trying to complete homework assignments without notebook paper or taking a test without a pen or pencil. Classroom Central was founded in 2002 to address these issues, and through our mission of equipping students to effectively learn by collecting and distributing free school supplies, Classroom Central served more than 80,000 students during the 2007-2008 academic year. Since opening in 2002, more than $12 million in free school supplies have been distributed to students in Charlotte-Mecklenburg and surrounding school districts.

Operating as a free store, Classroom Central hosts, on average, 1,200 teacher shoppers each month. It takes an army of volunteers every week to keep Classroom Central up and running. In September alone, Classroom Central volunteers contributed more than 1,500 hours to serving our teachers and students in need. We are proud to count CPCC students, faculty and staff among our long list of volunteers and donors!

At the end of the semester, as college students clean out their backpacks and apartments in preparation for a new course load, countless binders, text books and more are thrown away. Before you dump your end of semester leftovers, please think of Classroom Central! We accept new and gently used magazines, books and binders, and new markers, crayons, colored pencils, paper, pencils & pens.

If you are interested in giving time, energy or school supplies to Classroom Central, please contact Taryn Rimland at taryn@classroomcentral.org!
Mark your calendars!

Community Partner/Faculty Breakfast…………… Jan 7th
Blood Drive………….. Jan 14th
MLK Challenge……… Jan 19th
Volunteer Fair……….. Feb 5th
Alt. Spring Break……..Mar 9th-15th

Check us out on the web!
www1.cpcc.edu/service-learning

Growing in Service~Grounded in Learning

Service-Learning Staff

Mark Helms
Dean for Student Life and Service-Learning

Dena Shonts
Director of Service-Learning

Cassie Moore
Service-Learning Coordinator

Terry McMicking
Executive Secretary

Marcy LaBossiere
Assistant Service-Learning Coordinator, NC Campus Compact VISTA

Things happening around us...

- Continually growing, we are always adding new community partners for students to volunteer with. This semester, we welcome Love in the Name of Christ (Love INC), Crossroads Charlotte, Discovery Place, Trips for Kids-Charlotte, Habitat for Humanity ReStore, and Park Village Rehab and Health.

- Dena Shonts was promoted to Director of Service-Learning, and Cassie Moore will be hired into the full-time coordinator position starting Jan. 5th. Mark Helms was also promoted to Dean, Student Life & Service-Learning.

- Service-Learning has purchased a Poverty Simulation kit! Look for upcoming Poverty Simulation coming to a CPCC campus near you!