

LSU Community Connections

Building Community-Classroom Partnerships Through Service-Learning

VOLUME 6, ISSUE 2

WWW.CCELL.LSU.EDU

SPRING 2006

Recovery team makes impact in New Orleans

Three busloads of LSU students, faculty, and staff spent their Saturday working side by side with homeowners hoping to return to their hurricane-damaged homes in New Orleans.

The first University-wide New Orleans clean-up project focused on the Tulane-Gravier area, considered by many urban planning maps to be among those hardest hit by Hurricane Katrina.

Working through The Phoenix of New Orleans (PNOLA), the LSU team of more than 150 helped homeowners remove flood-damaged tile and wood-work, clean mold, and remove downed tree limbs.

Many on the team were service-learning students and faculty.

Team members also raked, mowed, and weeded public areas, surveyed

neighborhoods, and assisted PNOLA.

Students were grateful for the opportunity to work alongside home and business owners who had lost so much in the hurricane. "The man whose business we cleaned up was way past grateful for our help and could say nothing but, 'Thank you so much. This is so much more than I expected. You all are amazing, this is amazing,'" said Alan Nicholson, a Denham Springs sociology major.

"Some have told me that it was noble to have sacrificed my Saturday to help, and I tell them that it was not a sacrifice but a day well spent," he said. "I got much more out of seeing that man smile than I ever would have sitting around watching TV or lounging around the pool."

"I actually think that this project made a deep impression on me," said Team Leader Raquel Henry, a biological sciences sophomore from Lafayette and a Service-

Learning Student Advisory Council officer. "At the end of the day I was hot, sweaty, smelly, and my body ached, but

it felt so good to work hard with people who truly deserve it."

Math Professor Robert Perlis, a 2006 Service-Learning Faculty Incentive Grant recipient, helped clean a restaurant

flooded by Katrina. "I was part of a crew of 11 and everyone was enthusiastic, hardworking, upbeat, and non-complaining," he said. "Everyone stayed on task, saw what needed to be done and pitched in without being asked. There was very little directing required."

The store's owner, like other residents, worked with the team. "He would have been quite happy had we left when the floor was still muddy, and he was really overjoyed when we actually got it clean," Perlis said. "He is an inspiring individual, having lost everything and still being so positive."

The trip was a cooperative effort of CCELL, Student Government, Dean of Students' Office, Career Services, and the Service-Learning Student Advisory Council.



Professor Robert Perlis, front, and student Alan Nicholson clean a damaged restaurant.

"Some have told me that it was noble to have sacrificed my Saturday to help, and I tell them that it was not a sacrifice but a day well spent."

Student Alan Nicholson



Emily Valentino, left, dismantles a damaged wall. At top, Raquel Henry (foreground) and Lauren Williams scrub mold outside a home.



In this issue:

Library and Information Science students help meet the information needs of evacuees. 2

"Highlights in Service-Learning" features award-winning LSU service-learning faculty. 2

Communication Studies student finds meaning in service opportunities in area shelters after Katrina. 3

English service-learning assignment with real-world consequences encourages student learning. 3

**CENTER FOR COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT,
LEARNING, AND LEADERSHIP**

Mobile shelter library meets information needs of evacuees

By Michelynn McKnight

In a disaster, information needs change suddenly and dramatically. Professional librarians are experts at matching people with questions to the best sources for the answers.

Students at LSU's School of Library and Information Science are required to take an Information Services course which includes the theory and practice of interviewing individuals to discover their needs, providing them with current, reliable and accurate sources and instructing them in how to use the sources.

Through service-learning, these SLIS 7002 students practiced their new skills by helping Hurricane Katrina evacuees with major information needs in a "Shelter Library." Also known as the "Homework Internet Library," the mobile library opened in early September across the street from the Baton Rouge River Center.

Ann Curtis of ProQuest, a Michigan-based database company, originated and coordinated the idea, and ProQuest furnished the full-sized, single-wide business trailer and databases. IBM donated more than a dozen computers and three children's workstations, and Argosy Casino donated power, water, and Internet access. Beth Bingham, a retired librarian and library consultant, coordinated local staffing for the service. Cajun Clickers, a local computer group, provided technical support; others donated reference, recreational and children's books.

For several weeks, SLIS Information Services students and volunteer professional librarians provided services eight hours a day in ready reference, information and referral, guidance and one-on-one instruction services. Many students far exceeded the eight hours required for the course.

For instance, the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) required

evacuees to register for assistance online. Many were surprised when the last blank on the online form required the evacuee's e-mail address before it could be submitted. Most of the evacuees had no e-mail addresses, let alone Internet experience, so their motivation to learn was intense. Some had never used a mouse before.

For unemployment forms, many needed names and addresses of former employers in businesses destroyed by the flood. Some needed birth certificates, driver's licenses, and replacements for other lost documentation. Others were looking for jobs; some who had found housing needed to know where they

Most of the evacuees at the center had no e-mail addresses, let alone Internet experience, so their motivation to learn was intense. Some had never used a mouse before.

could get low-cost furniture quickly. Worried people tracked the rising floodwaters near their homes in online satellite pictures. They needed information about missing family and friends

from online databases and contacts for rebuilding their lives.

"Quiet and privacy were things that many of these individuals had relinquished in order to survive," one SLIS student said. "In similar circumstances, I would imagine they might be some of the things I would miss the most. As important as it was for me to meet their information needs, it was just as important to respect those needs as well by simply being quietly available for those whose body language suggested such a need," the student observed.

When the evacuees moved into FEMA-provided trailers in November, the Shelter Library was moved to Renaissance Village, the FEMA trailer site in Baker. At that time librarians from the East Baton Rouge Parish Library began providing information services. One might call the Shelter Library a digital rebirth of the "bookmobile" idea.

(McKnight is assistant professor of Library and Information Science and a Service-Learning Advisory Council member.)

HIGHLIGHTS IN SERVICE-LEARNING

Abadie receives CSWE Social Work Award

Dr. Margo Abadie, associate professor in the School of Social Work, was named recipient of the 2006 Council on Social Work Education (CSWE) "Heart of Social Work Award." The award is presented annually to a person who demonstrates excellence in partners in Social Work field education.

Abadie received a 2005 Service-Learning Faculty Incentive grant for her work with Social Work 4070 students who traveled to Belize to mentor high school students, study physical and mental health care strategies, and assist in hosting a national health care conference.

O'Neil presented 1 of 6 Regional Teaching Awards

Carol O'Neil, professor in the School of Human Ecology, received a Regional Teaching Award in the USDA-NASULGC Food and Agriculture Sciences Excellence in College and University Teaching Awards program. O'Neil is the 2003 TIAA-CREF Service-Learning Fellow.

The award, sponsored by the United States Department of Agriculture (USDA) and National Association of State Universities and Land-Grant Colleges (NASULGC), is one of six regional awards given each year.

Hicks receives Reily S-L assistantship

Casey Rayborn Hicks, a graduate student in the Manship School of Mass Communication, is the first recipient of the H. Eustis Reily Service-Learning Graduate Assistantship. The award is named in honor of the late Mr. Reily for his devotion to community advancement and will be funded by his family.

As graduate assistant, Hicks was organizer of the first University-wide New Orleans Clean-Up Day on April 1, which was co-sponsored by CCELL. More than 150 students, faculty, and staff cleaned neighborhoods damaged by Katrina.

CMST 4119 students take part in hurricane response

Students in Renee Edwards' Communication Studies 4119 class found that studying nonverbal communication took on greater meaning as they devoted time to serving evacuees in area shelters.

Originally, CMST 4119 was not a service-learning class; however, hurricanes Katrina and Rita presented students with opportunities to observe non-verbal communication skills while assisting hurricane evacuees.

Edwards, chair of the Department of Communication Studies, encouraged her students to complete 10-15 hours of any service that included other people, either volunteers or evacuees. Students were to observe some aspect of nonverbal communication related to assigned chapters in their course text. Students kept a log of their service.

One student, Elizabeth Earle, a fourth-year student from Baton Rouge, worked first in the special needs shelter housed in the LSU Field House. "I began by working at the Red Cross regis-



Elizabeth Earle, left, with shelter residents Kevin Willis and Violet Horton. They are celebrating Kevin's birthday.

tration tent for families of the patients. I also worked with the pharmacy and on the microphone paging people. Sometimes I worked at the front desk giving out bracelets to volunteers and workers."

Later, Earle moved to a location set up to search for missing people. "We found so many people, and the best feeling was being able to call someone and

tell them we found their sister, mother, or son," she said. "I still went to the shelter at LSU to visit with some of the patients that I had become friends with."

Earle enjoyed the experience so much that she even devoted her free time to visiting the shelter. "I spent an average of 25 hours per week for the seven weeks the shelter was open," she said. "I loved working there so much that I spent all my free time there."

She admires those she worked with. "The people I worked with were such an inspiration to me. I learned to be thankful for everything that I do have," Earle said. "The patients there had lost everything they had, but were thankful just to be alive and safe with their loved ones."

Earle believes her experiences have changed her outlook on life. "Now I feel like I am much more open minded and I am much more kind to people. I realize that I am very lucky and I try not to take anything for granted," she added. "It really put things in perspective for me."

Service-learning assignment has 'real-world' consequences

By Amy Norvall

I took a service-learning English class in my freshman year. Our assignment was to write a grant for a non-profit organization in Old South Baton Rouge and then write papers and prepare a presentation on our experience.

In the beginning, I was thinking about how I could ensure that my group got an A for the assignment. By the end we were thinking about how we, as a team, could ensure that the grant got chosen for the community.

It's amazing how a service-learning class changed my perspective. I saw this happen to every student in our class, and it was amazing to witness this change. I remember looking around the room one day and everyone was so energized and focused because suddenly we realized that a lot more was riding on this assign-

ment than just our grades – a whole community was depending on our input and effort.

Being a real-world situation, our assignment had real-world consequences, so as a result we all became much more engaged as learners. All of a

Suddenly we realized that a lot more was riding on this assignment than just our grades. A whole community was depending on our input and effort.

sudden what we were learning and applying had a real purpose and a very real effect.

Correct grammar and format, appropriate language and tone, and even group goals and telephone conversations were given new meaning.

Applying these lessons in a real-world scenario guaranteed that we truly learned them and carried these tasks out properly and professionally.

Our service-learning class also got us



Amy Norvall, right, Service-Learning Student Advisory Council president, with Raquel Henry, SLSAC secretary.

in touch with the community outside of LSU's gates, the one which we often drive through with our eyes straight ahead in case we see something that offends us. We got to see the living soul and the beating heart beneath this exterior. Instead of avoiding the community, we became part of it.

This class also armed us with lessons that we can now apply to our futures, whether it be in our first interviews or careers. We mastered dealing with busy professionals, sending business letters, and budgeting. We practiced being flexible, quick witted, and creative.

(See Service-Learning on Page 4)

CCELL
Center for
Community Engagement,
Learning, and Leadership

SERVICE-LEARNING PROGRAM

Jan Shoemaker, Director
 225-578-9264
 jshoema@lsu.edu

Jean Rohloff, Assistant Director
 225-578-4074
 jrohlof@lsu.edu

Newsletter Editor
Roxanne Dill, Program Coordinator
 225-578-4245
 rdill1@lsu.edu

CENTER FOR ACADEMIC SUCCESS

Dr. Sandra McGuire, Director
 225-578-6749
 smcgui1@lsu.edu

A DIVISION OF UNIVERSITY COLLEGE

MISSION

The mission of the Service-Learning initiative at LSU is to promote and facilitate credit-bearing, educational experiences in which students participate in organized service activities that meet identified community needs and then reflect on the service activities in such a way as to gain further understanding of course content, broader appreciation of the academic disciplines, and an enhanced sense of civic responsibility. Adapted from: Robert G. Bringle and Julie A. Hatcher (1996). *Implementing Service-Learning in Higher Education. Journal of Higher Education*, Vol. 67, No. 2.

B-31 Coates Hall
Louisiana State University 70803
Phone: (225) 578-9264
Fax: (225) 578-2696
Web: www.ccell.lsu.edu
E-mail: ccell@lsu.edu

'Thank You' to our Community Partners

Adult Literacy Advocates Animal Control Center Association for Retarded Citizens Baton Rouge Arlington Vocational Baton Rouge Center for Visual & Performing Arts Baton Rouge Green Baton Rouge Magnet High School Baton Rouge Youth Big Buddy Bring Back New Orleans Brusly Middle School Buchanan Elementary Cameron Parish Police Jury Carver Branch Library Children's Charter School Community Association for Welfare of School Children Community Garden Community University Partnership Connections for Life Louisiana Department of Social Services Dufrocq Elementary East Baton Rouge Parish Recycling East Baton Rouge Parish School System Eden Park Elementary Family Health Center—Reach Out and Read First United Methodist Church Forest Heights Academy of Excellence Galway Therapeutic Horsemanship Grandparents Raising Grandchildren Information Ctr/r Greater Baton Rouge Food Bank Harding Elementary Highland Elementary HOPE Ministries Kenilworth Middle School Lamar Dixon Animal Shelter Robert E. Lee High School Louisiana Department of Social Services Louisiana Department of Revenue Louisiana House Louisiana Office of Addictive Disorders	Louisiana School for the Deaf Louisiana Sea Grant LSU Cooperative Extension Service LSYOU Magnolia Woods Elementary School McKinley High School Melrose Elementary Musee Rosette Rochon Myriam's House O'Brien House Old South Baton Rouge Community Ollie Steele Burden Manor Nursing Home Our Lady of the Lake Hospital Parker Coliseum Shelter Parker House Polk Elementary Prescott Middle School Rape Crisis Center Riveroaks Elementary School Sherwood Middle School Social Justice Initiative South Boulevard Elementary Southdowns Center St. James Place St. Vincent de Paul Trinity Hospice University Lab School University Terrace Elementary Urban Restoration Economic Corporation Valley Park Alternative Center Villa del Rey Elementary School Voluntary Income Tax Assistance Volunteer! Baton Rouge Volunteers in Public Schools West Baton Rouge Parish Library Westdale Heights Academic Magnet Elementary Westminster Elementary School Woodlawn High School WordPlay at Big Buddy Program YMCA-Charles Lamar Branch
---	--

Service-learning assignment

(Continued from Page 3)

It was also hit home that there is a world out there that does not revolve around us and that our work was being evaluated as it was; considerations were not being made just because we were freshman students.

Finally, one of the major lessons we learned – review, review, review! If you ask any one of my classmates just how many times we reviewed and revised our final works, I can guarantee that their re-

sponses would involve a great deal of sighing and eye rolling!

I am a fan of the service-learning system, but I am aware that there is a fine line between strongly encouraging it and forcing the issue. However, there is one thing that I am sure of: a lot of flames for community service were lit in that service-learning class and I hope that they will be kept burning.

(Amy Norvall is president of the Service-Learning Student Advisory Council.)

Center for Community Engagement, Learning, and Leadership

B-31 Coates Hall
 Louisiana State University
 Baton Rouge, LA 70803