



TEACH, SERVE, AND LEARN

the newsletter for Service Learning
at Nassau Community College

FALL 2013

BUILDING BLOCKS TO SERVICE LEARNING: MAKING IT HAPPEN FROM THE ABSTRACT TO THE CONCRETE

On October 18, 2013, the Center for Service Learning, Student Activities Committee of the Academic Senate, and the Service Learning Committee of Nassau Community College in collaboration with the Long Island Volunteer Center, hosted a colloquium titled Building Blocks to Service Learning: Making it Happen from the Abstract to the Concrete. This event was designed to further expand the understanding and implementation of service-learning practices across academic disciplines and categorized by the Corporation for National and Community Service's (CNCS) priorities of environment, health, education, disaster preparedness, economic opportunity and veterans/military services.

Welcoming remarks were provided by Maria Conzatti, Acting Executive Vice President of Nassau Community College, Evangeline Manjares, Dean of the Center for Service-Learning and Diana O'Neill, Executive Director of the Long Island Volunteer Center. Following the opening remarks and a presentation by Pat Lupino titled What is Service Learning?, the attendees were divided into workgroups to further discuss ways to develop courses that incorporate the components of service-learning while enhancing student learning outcomes. The groups were divided among the CNCS priorities and a representative from the Long Island Volunteer center moderated each table, providing support and resources. At the end of the breakout sessions, Elizabeth Dysart who leads the Future Corps program at Long Island's number one newspaper, Newsday, addressed the group. She discussed the value of promoting the many ways local youth are engaging in their communities and provided examples of successful service-learning projects.

Below are the key ideas that resulted from the group's breakout sessions:

Environment

Moderator: Anne Sprotte

Academic Disciplines Represented: Biology, Marketing, Economics, Art, and Mathematics

The group opened with a discussion of the evolution of service-learning projects in general; that they should be student driven and even if the project already exists the students should have

the ability to shape and improve the project so that they feel they own it. If a project doesn't get completed during a semester it should not be considered a failure. Students and teachers learn a lot during the research and development stages. The teacher can continue to build on the project with new students the next semester. The group spoke of the 3 types of service learning: advocacy, direct service and indirect service. Students can participate in the project on the level that they feel most comfortable. For example, some students will want to work in the community garden while others will want to do research or contact local politicians to gain support for the program.

There was a lot of intradepartmental cooperation. Teachers were looking to work with other departments to complete a project from which all the classes can benefit.

Materials provided by LIVC seemed useful. Teachers felt that the LIVC list volunteer opportunities and partner agencies interested in service learning would be a good starting point for discussion in class.

Health

Moderator: Cheryl Brancato

Academic Disciplines Represented: Nursing, Psychology, Sociology, Biology, and Health and Physical Education, Dean of Service Learning at NCC, Administration

The group began with Cheryl reviewing the basics of service-learning and highlighting the handouts supplied by LIVC in the folder, including the list of registered agencies. Participants looked through the health, nursing home/assisted-living and social services sections to find possible non-profits with which to work. The group talked about the GenerationOn, IPARD hand-out. Cheryl gave some examples of service-learning projects that were done at other colleges.

Two nursing department professors talked about projects they have been doing in their classes because service-learning is already mandatory for them. They have been doing some very interesting things that need to be expanded upon. The two psychology professors were very interested in an interdisciplinary approach to service-learning because they have a large

percentage of nursing students in their classes. One of the nursing professors and one of the psychology professors are on the committee that runs the annual health fair. The group agreed that it would be a great project to involve classes/students from all of the health-related majors. They also discussed a few on-campus programs, like ESL, that could benefit from service-learning initiatives. One of the people at the table raised the possibility of establishing a one credit service-learning class that would go hand-in-hand with learning communities. The group was very enthusiastic about the idea because it would take some of the pressure off class time and enable them to incorporate service-learning in a more meaningful way. A third nursing department professor who teaches primarily at night, told the group about a project that she has been doing involving recycling of bottles and cashing them in for money, which gets donated to buy healthy snacks for a day care program. Some of her students bring the snacks to the center. It has been very successful and has grown much bigger than when it first started. A biology professor talked about how she starts her projects off by having the class view an eye-opening film at home about an issue such as hunger (see web resources below). This gets the students interested and motivated. She has several community gardens that she works with, on and off campus, and the students get involved with caring for them. The produce gets distributed at food pantries.

Participants at both sessions were very lively and engaged and seemed to be excited about working together on this initiative. Many interesting ideas were generated at both sessions.

Education

Moderator: Tracy Murtagh

Academic Disciplines Represented: Adult Education, English (reading, writing and communication) ESL, Math, Psychology, Sociology, Communications and American Sign Language and Nursing

It was clear from the beginning that these professors understood the value of bringing material taught in the classroom out to the real world. One professor was interested in incorporating the value of citizenship into his English class and to provide practical help for his students who are in the process of applying for citizenship in the form of understanding the process, basic vocabulary and how to complete the necessary forms. Another adult-ed English professor wanted her students to improve their communication and writing skills by having them gather an oral history of a certain group of individuals. The professors were very enthusiastic about the idea of service-learning but were finding the implementation and logistics of creating a program challenging. We discussed the idea of starting small and not being afraid to fail. The group also discussed the importance of preparing some ideas and structure in advance but to also allow the students to create the project, that their voice and ownership is a critical component to a successful service-learning program. The professor from the nursing department said that they have a service-learning program in place but there seems to be some confusion about what type of activity can be considered service-learning. The example she gave was health walks, i.e. walk for breast cancer, and walk for heart health. The group brainstormed ideas for ways this type of activity could be structured to pro-

mote service-learning. For example, students could research the health issue; they could research the history of the walk and why walks are effective. They could partner with the group organizing the event to see what needs are not being met and put together a table with additional educational material. Finally, the American Sign Language professor brought up the important point of building bridges between communities of learners and the importance of breaking down stigmas so that we can learn and support one another.

Economic Opportunities/Disaster

Preparedness

Moderator: Laura Messano

Academic Disciplines Represented: English, Nursing, Marketing and Design

During the breakout session, one Nassau Community College Professor asked, "How can my marketing students get involved with service-learning?" The initial brainstorming began with ideas that marketing students could help a local store that was affected by the storm to get back on their feet. However, there are entire communities that included blocks of businesses that were affected by Superstorm Sandy. The idea led to, "Why not have students work with the Chamber of Commerce for the entire business community to bring business back to the town." For instance, Nautical Mile in Freeport was devastated by the storm. This is a block on the water that was hit from one end to the other. It is a popular summer place full of restaurants; shops and even dinner boats leave from Nautical Mile. Marketing students could collaborate with the Mayor, the Chamber of Commerce and the community at large to assist in revitalizing the community and "get the word out" that Nautical Mile is back! The Long Island Volunteer Center offered to connect the dots and contact Mayor Kennedy who we have previously spoke with on many occasions. The Nassau Community College Professor informed us that many of the students are from Freeport. The students can take pride in the fact that they participated in bringing back their own community. This may lead to developing contacts and many other benefits beyond the border of the Service Learning Project. Another area that may also benefit from NCC's marketing students is Long Beach.

Another idea that could also be used in relationship to the marketing program and disaster recovery efforts is that students could create websites as a service-learning project and develop social networking for either non-profits or disaster relief organizations that are working along the South Shore of Long Island. At the request of FEMA, the Long Island Volunteer Center has been working to develop and participate in COADs (Community Organizations Active in Disasters). The goal of a COAD is to respond to the needs of those who are suffering most from Superstorm Sandy and to build a resilient community in case a disaster should happen again. In the past, many of the participants in the COADS have expressed interest in having a website for their COAD since communication is essential in times of disaster (and pre and post times). The ability to get accurate and current information to

the residents in the community is key. In the past, there has been misinformation by well-intentioned individuals communicating to residents via Face book and social networking sites. COAD's have begun in towns such as, Long Beach, Massapequa, Seaford, Patchogue, Lindenhurst/Babylon, etc. .

A student (the only student in attendance) who attended the service-learning conference explained that she is currently studying to become a nurse. She has a great interest to combine her nursing skills with disaster response and was looking for ways to engage in a service-learning project in her field of study. Some of the ideas discussed were ways that she could work closely with the American Red Cross and perhaps even start a Red Cross Club since there are two American Red Cross shelters at Nassau Community College. One is for families and individuals and the other shelter is for pets. This shelter is operated by PetSafe as well. The Red Cross Club could work closely with the American Red Cross to operate the shelters by deploying volunteer students who are already trained to work in the shelters. The students could work with the Red Cross to schedule trainings and to develop a process so that when and if a disaster should strike the students (and faculty) are ready to be deployed. We also discussed that perhaps the student could also give trainings to her classmates on how to become "Red Cross Ready" and the importance of safety. Students could research and then demonstrate how to wear protective gear (helmet, mask, tyvek suit, boots, gloves, respirator and goggles) when entering a home or facility that has been damaged by the storm. Students can educate fellow classmates, so that they can educate their family and friends on what is needed in a "Go Kit" to better prepare homes for disasters.

There were also discussions of students working with non-profits that provide nursing homes and senior housing to record the oral history of seniors on Long Island and/or having students record/document the oral history of the grandparents, neighbor, etc. In this case, it was for an ESL class. In reflection, this could be expanded upon and students could document the history of a town, place, etc. since there is so much revitalization going on in the towns that were hit by SuperStorm Sandy. The idea that the student would give back the project to the senior was also discussed. There were also discussions on the Freeport Trailer which is a trailer where Day Workers gather for employment. Discussions on the most vulnerable populations and the agencies who are working with the trailer and how to get correct information out to the most vulnerable citizen who may not speak English was discussed as a service-learning project.

Veterans/Military Families

Moderator: Diana O'Neil

Academic Disciplines Represented: Nursing, Math, Computer Science, Art, Marketing, ESL, and Reading Comprehension, Service Learning coordinator.

The group first talked about the fact that the highest numbers of deployed military come from NYC and Long Island to reinforce that programming around military family support and veterans issues are critical needs for this region. Diana shared several resources for research into nonprofits and community organizations addressing the varied needs of veterans and military families: LIVC website, Rotarians Operation Initiative, Nassau County

Veterans Stand Down, Operation Military Kids, Suffolk County United Veterans Project Group Homes, United Veterans Beacon House Group Homes, Wounded Warriors, and The Mission Continues. Also the Hicksville VFW has partnered with Stroke Life Society to help wounded veterans. The group brainstormed potential needs that could be considered for adaptation to service-learning curriculum: family support when parent deployed, re-acclimating to community life, workforce development, job training, computer usage, budgeting, personal financial management, literacy, mental health, homelessness, food insecurity, and art therapy. In addition, support could be given to the nonprofit organizations to expand their capacity and messaging. The professors hoped they could investigate the possibility for service-learning projects for this semester and, depending on student interest and desire to engage, were inclined toward supporting the Nassau County Veteran Stand Down and Operation Military Kids. Two of the professors are also Girl Scout leaders and want to explore the possibility for their students do some kind of mentoring project with the Girl Scouts.

Resources Provided

Nassau Community College: Critical Reflection & Assessment in Service-Learning, Research on Service-Learning by Robert G. Bringle, Patti H. Clayton, and Julie A. Hatcher, Building Your Service-Learning Worksheet

Long Island Volunteer Center: List of Long Island Volunteer Opportunities and partner agencies interested in participating in service-learning programs, GenerationOn Rebric for Quality Implementation of Service-Learning and Planning and Assessing your Service-Learning Experience worksheet, canvas tote bags and LIVC t-shirts printed to commemorate event.

Newsday Future Corps

A list of successful service-learning projects

Web Resources Highlighted:

www.ncc.edu/campuservices/servicelearning.shtml

www.longislandvolunteercenter.org

www.generationon.org/

www.operation-initiative.com

www.newsday.com/services/programs/futurecorp

Internet Programming to engage students and teachers:

www.youtube.com/watch?v=qI31a2L1Olw

www.takepart.com/place-at-the-table

documentaryaddict.com/Food+Inc-2174-documentary.html

www.ted.com/talks/stephen_ritz_a_teacher_growing_green_in_the_south_bronx.html

greenbronxmachine.com

Also Noted

It was noted on the event materials that Nassau Community College is a member of the New York Campus Compact, an association of college and university presidents and their campuses committed to promoting active citizenship as an aim of higher education. Way to go NCC!!!

"JOURNEYS" DEPARTMENT OF NURSING

The College wide-theme for the academic year 2012-2013 "Journeys" was announced last spring. It was at that time that the NUR101 evening faculty agreed to incorporate this theme somehow into their course.

All Nursing students accepted into the program are required to submit a typed autobiography on the first day of class. The faculty read the autobiographies in order to get a sense of the students experience and their background prior to entering nursing. While reading these autobiographies, it was found that many of the students described their accomplishments, prior to being accepted into the nursing program, as a "Journey". Inspired by these autobiographies, it was decided by the faculty to ask each student to submit a picture or art work that represented their "Journey" with a few words to describe their choice.

Meredith Samuelson, an Art teacher at The Bay Academy-IS98, located in Sheepshead Bay, New York, was asked if her students would be interested in collaborating with our nursing students' "Journeys" project. She presented the idea to the school offi-



cial of The Bay Academy and accepted the challenge of taking our nursing students "visions" and "thoughts", with the plan of engaging her art students in this "Journeys" assignment. The project was developed solely under the guidance of Mrs. Samuelson, with no instructions from the NUR 101 faculty or students.

INTRODUCING SERVICE LEARNING OPPORTUNITIES INTO BIOLOGICAL FIELD COURSES AT NASSAU COMMUNITY COLLEGE

Dr. Betty Borowsky Biology Department

Service learning experiences provide so much to our students. They gain first-hand knowledge of real world issues; and they learn the gratification of volunteerism. In turn, the organization they serve benefits from the students' participation in their activities and their special skills. Biology 162 (Animal Ecology) and biology 165 (Natural History of Long Island) are complementary field courses that focus on learning about the native habitats on Long Island and the diverse species that occupy them. One of the goals of both courses is to instill in students the desire to maintain and preserve these beautiful sites.

When I began teaching these courses a few years ago, I wanted to incorporate service learning into the curriculum; assisting a local environmental education and/or environmental conservation group would be a natural fit. The problem was how to do this without making it a requirement, as many students have family and work obligations that really limit the time they can spend on extramural activities.

I resolved this by offering service learning as one of four options for the independent project that is one of each course's requirements. After some trial and error, the following procedures were developed, and have proven to work out well: 1) the student contacts a community group whose mission includes environ-

mental conservation and/or education; 2) the director of the group selects a sponsor for the student, and the student and the sponsor work out a project plan that will be completed within the required time frame (both these courses are half-semester courses); 3) the student obtains my approval (to make sure the project will meet the requirements for a service learning project). After the project is complete, 4) the sponsor writes a brief description of the work that was performed, and confirms the amount of time the student worked on it; and 5) the student submits this narrative with his or her reflections on the experience, along with some photos documenting his or her activities.

As you may imagine, each student's service learning project is different. Here are a few examples:

- 🌀 Assisting the Environmental Educator at Sweetbriar Nature Center in Smithtown with animal care and with conducting live animal programs for children (see photo 1).
- 🌀 Building and installing birdhouses to attract bluebirds to the Hempstead Plains, which is located on our campus.
- 🌀 Preparing trifold informational brochures to advertise educational programs available at the Theodore Roosevelt Sanctuary and Audubon Center (TRSAC) in Oyster Bay.
- 🌀 Manning a booth at the Oyster Bay Festival for TRSAC and educating Festival visitors about TRSAC programs (see photo 2).
- 🌀 Organizing a trail cleanup for the New Jersey Trail Conference by recruiting NCC students to help with the day's activities.



photo 1



photo 2



photo 3

☞ Assisting with the removal of invasive plants from the Garden City Bird Sanctuary. This student “taught...some rope tying skills I learned in the marine corps so we could handle the sticks more effectively” and assisted with directing visitors at the Sanctuary during an “open house” for the community (see photo 3).

The “reflection” narratives are really interesting. Although students worked with different organizations, many had similar comments on how challenging environmental education and preservation is, and yet how rewarding it is to help:

☞ “I learned mostly from this experience that running a nature center is very hard work. Whenever I thought I was done I had another task to do.”

☞ “The sanctuary sorely needs the help of volunteers and donations from various organizations to survive. It takes a lot of resources and man power to maintain this sanctuary”.

☞ “I think what they are doing here is great and it is a shame that they do not have the manpower on hand that they deserve”.

☞ “I learned how hard it is to maintain a sanctuary and that

what is accomplished one day will just have to be done again in a few weeks. ...but the result of having a beautiful preservation is well worth the hard work.”

☞ “Most importantly, I learned the value of helping others and dedicating your time is greatly appreciated”.

☞ “By volunteering our time we’re helping to improve the area for people and animals alike”.

Overall, integrating service learning into the curriculum as an option for the students’ required project has worked out very well. Although service learning projects require extra time from the sponsors, the students and myself, all the participants have found it rewarding. The organizations have benefitted from the students’ assistance; the students have really enjoyed spending time helping these groups (in fact several students have continued working with them); and I have benefitted by meeting new people in different environmental groups through my students. And I think it is fair to say that all of us have been gratified by seeing how much the experience has meant to the students.

FESTIVAL OF TREES

The Design Innovators’ Club under the advisement of Professors Joe Pescatore and Heidi Oconnell

The Design Innovators Club members have been preparing handmade Christmas Tree ornaments for the annual Festival of Trees event. During the months of October and November the members have been meeting and holding club hour workshops to design and create a variety of holiday tree ornaments in a special theme called the “Designer Tree”.

The festival of Trees is an annual event and has been a fundraiser for over 20 year’s raising funds for the United Cerebral Palsy Association of Nassau and the Cradle of Aviation Museum. The festival was held over the Thanksgiving weekend, Nov. 29, Nov. 30 and Dec. 1 at the Cradle of Aviation Museum, here in Garden City. Hundreds of guests came to see all the decorated trees over the weekend and at the end of the event the trees would be auctioned off with the proceeds going to the two groups.

The Design Innovators club members worked hard in making detailed ornaments in the typical fashion design manner using wooden thread spools, lace bows and buttons, felt pin cushions and measuring tape garland to name a few. After spending many club hours together to create these ornaments the members went to the museum to decorate their own tree on Tuesday, Nov. 26. They were all thrilled with the outcome and very proud of their work and efforts going towards such a wonderful cause.



FRIENDS OF HEMPSTEAD PLAINS AT NASSAU COMMUNITY COLLEGE BREAK GROUND FOR EDUCATION AND RESEARCH CENTER



On July 29th under a brilliant blue sky, Friends of Hempstead Plains celebrated groundbreaking for the new Hempstead Plains Education and Research Center, located on 19 acres of protected prairie at Nassau Community College.

Standing proudly with County Executive Ed Mangano who led the groundbreaking ceremony, were the Friends' Board of Directors, including Professor Annetta Centrella-Vitale (President), Physical Science Department, Dr. Betty Borowsky (Treasurer), Dr. Rosann Gonzalez, Dr. Catherine Kelly and Professor Betsy Gulotta, Biology Department, and Dr. Joe Muscarella Vice President for College Administration. Other Board members from the community included Dr. Scott Emmons, Harriet Carotenuto, Angela deCaprariis-Salerno, Recording Secretary, and Reese Michaels. Legislator Dave Denenberg, New York State Comptroller Tom DiNapoli and former County Executive Thomas Gulotta, also attended.

Funded in part with a grant from the 2006 Environmental Bond Act, the Education and Research Center will be a state-of-the-art green and sustainable building. In addition, in 2010 the Hempstead Plains was chosen by the Sustainable Sites Initiative, SITES, as a pilot project to test its new guidelines. SITES, a rating system similar to the LEED's rating system for sustainable buildings, is a partnership of the American Society of Landscape Architecture, the Lady Bird Johnson Wildflower Center and the US Botanic Garden in conjunction with diverse organizations



dedicated to encouraging sustainable practices in landscape design and maintenance.

Plans include a sustainable visitor area and classroom powered by solar panels, a grass roof, stabilized earth walkways and an outdoor children's nature play garden. Visitors will enjoy strolling along interpretative trails winding through the prairie and learning the natural saga of this historic habitat. Students can engage in class activities and research to learn about habitat restoration and endangered species. For Nassau students there will be many interesting service learning opportunities, such as giving tours, welcoming guests in the visitor center, managing the plant herbarium, developing educational programs, habitat restoration and more.

Construction is not deterring Friends of Hempstead Plains from offering tours of the prairie. College classes, schools and community groups can schedule field trips, grade-appropriate activities and special events. For further information, call 572-74575 x 26531 or log onto www.friendsofhp.org.

Editorial Staff

Prof. Susan Beganskas
Prof. Kerry Golde
Prof. Izolda Maksym

