



Connector

Inside this issue

Service Learning in the Curriculum	2
FYI/Habitat Service Trip	3
Carpetbag Theatre	4
Student/Program Spotlight	5
Spring Highlights	6
Staff Spotlight	8

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Spring Break Service Trips

For many college students across the country, spring break means lying on sunny beaches next to hundreds of other college students. But for service-minded students, the idea of an "alternative spring break" has more appeal—a spring break devoted to service. This year several CELTS groups sponsored alternative spring breaks. Habitat for Humanity continued their tradition of helping to build houses in new and interesting places and the Freshman Bonner Scholars spent a week in the Washington, DC area providing a variety of services to children, families and the homeless.

The premise of an alternative spring break is to offer students a more in-depth and concentrated experience with service that is not possible during the regular academic calendar. Students often learn about themselves as well as the world around them as they encounter new situations in different settings. A week devoted to service away from other academic and social demands offers more time for reflection and interaction with others on the team. It is sometimes a life-changing experience.

Bonner Scholars

Early on the first Saturday morning of spring break, the freshman Bonner Scholars embarked on a ten hour car ride to Arlington United Methodist Church near Washington, DC, for a weeklong service trip. During the week, we would do service, see the sights, and get to know ourselves, and each other, very well, becoming even closer than we were already. There were many service opportunities for us, the only disappointment was that we couldn't participate in every one! We had three days of direct service, with options of helping to run an alternative spring break program for children; organizing, sorting and stacking food at the Capital Area Food Bank; visiting with the ladies at the day center of N Street Village, a homeless women's shelter; or helping out in a pro bono immigration lawyer's office called Just Neighbors. Also, on Monday, some people cooked a dinner for many of the homeless of Arlington, and all of us helped to serve the food that evening. Everyone experienced some inspiring moments through the week, many of them coming from the work we did, the people we met, and the amazing new things we learned about the people we already knew (each other).

The children we worked with were an inspiration. During that program, we played games, planted a garden, baked cookies, did crafts and learned a little country dancing from Berea's Country Dancers. The kids had such energy and joy. They were so ready to soak up love and attention and gave it right back! It was incredible to

be a part of their lives, even for a few days. Many of them have already had a lot to overcome in their lives, including the complicated problems of poverty and prejudice. To be a positive touch in their lives and to help them see, just a little bit, what they can become and all that they can do was a gift.

N Street felt like that too. The ladies had such inner beauty and strength, even with all that life has done to try to stamp out their souls. There was the same sense of being some small part of a positive touch in their lives. Jana Vandergrif shared some of her lunch with one lady who then told her, "You're my friend for life!" At the food bank, people sorted and organized food. Melvin Thomas, who worked there every day, had a sense of making a concrete difference, but was disappointed still by the amount of food that was wasted. I think the work at the food bank showed us all that the problem of hunger is not as simple as it might seem.

Each evening, we shared stories and thoughts and feelings. To hear the stories was special. On Tuesday night, the reflection was long, insightful, and emotional, as some people shared their newfound hopes and dreams for their lives.

Throughout the week, there was, at least for me, a sense of hope and love, uniting and overcoming, serving and changing the world at least a little. As Kelle Shaw put it, "I may not be able to change the whole world, but I can change someone's world." I think that puts words to our actions, for that week and hopefully for the rest of our lives.

contributed by Rachel Silver, '05



'05 Bonner Scholars in Washington, D.C., Spring Break, '02

“Service is a commitment we must be prepared to make. We must give of ourselves to make service meaningful and powerful. It is easy to donate money, but to commit to helping someone, organizing a group of people, or fighting for equal treatment, that is true service.”

Chaka Cummings, '02
October 10, CELTS

The Connector

The title of our newsletter comes from the most prominent architectural feature of the building renovation, the Connector that links Bruce and Trades. But the idea of Connection also symbolizes our mission: to connect learning and service; campus and community. As Parker Palmer put it, “Good teachers join self, subject, and students in the fabric because they teach from an integral and undivided self; they manifest in their own lives, and evoke in their students, a ‘capacity for connectedness.’ They are able to weave a complex web of connections between themselves, their subjects, so that students can learn to weave a world for themselves. The methods used by these weavers vary widely: lectures, Socratic dialogues, laboratory experiments, collaborative problem-solving, creative chaos. The connections made by good teachers are held not in their methods but in their hearts—meaning heart in its ancient sense, the place where intellect, emotion, spirit and will converge in the human self.”

Service Learning in the Curriculum

Through Dr. Dan Vazzana’s ECO 319 Labor Economics course, taught during the January Short Term, Economics and Business students got an understanding of the way economics affect the labor force and vice-versa. During the 2002 Short Term, Vazzana decided to make slight alterations to his syllabus and incorporate a service learning project to add a new dynamic to his students classroom work.

Making use of the recently published report on the basic cost of living for Kentucky families put together by Kentucky Youth Advocates, *The Self-Sufficiency Standard for Kentucky: Real Budgets, Real Families*, Vazzana’s class got out of the classroom and into the Berea community to research and learn about the local labor market. Through the project, the class took on the role of a single mother in search of a job in Berea. The idea was for the students to start from scratch, looking through newspaper ads, finding postings in public facilities like the library, and contacting unemployment offices. Then the students hit the streets, gathering information about the jobs offered in Berea, including their wages and benefits.

Students found the task at times easy and at other times difficult. They learned early on that simply calling up a business, identifying yourself as a college student doing a research project, and asking for the business’s wages often didn’t work, and so some of the students actually filled out applications to gather their information. Once the class had collected their data, the second part of the project involved comparing it with the *Self-Sufficiency Standard* statistics for a single mother with one child living in Madison County. What the class found was both surprising and not so surprising.

Vazzana’s class concluded in their report that there is not a single job in the Berea community that can offer a beginning worker the \$13.30 an hour which the *Self-Sufficiency Standard* says would be the hourly wage needed for a single mother with one child to meet minimal housing, utilities, food cost, transportation, child care, health care, and other basic needs. The class evaluated over 35 business in Berea and found the starting wages to fall between the \$5.15 federal minimum (fast food restaurants and chain stores like Wal-mart) and \$11.27 an hour (industrial plants), in some cases enough to support a single adult, but far below the needs of a single mother.

The student’s finished report was sent to Kentucky Youth Advocates for the organization to use in its discussion and advocacy of *The Self-Sufficiency Standard* with Kentucky lawmakers and citizens. It can also serve as an example for how other colleges and universities can conduct research that is both useful to the organization and the Kentucky families it serves, as well as in student classroom learning.

contributed by Donovan Cain

Service Learning from Portland to Prague

The Center for Excellence in Learning Through Service continues to promote professional development in service-learning for Berea College faculty, students, and staff through national conferences and workshops. During April, CELTS sent a team of six faculty, students, and staff to the Fifth Annual Campus Compact Continuums of Service Conference in Portland, Oregon. At the conference, the team took part in a series of pre-conference workshops, and then attended sessions and heard keynote addresses by some of the top voices in service learning both in Higher Education and the community.

Bonner Scholar students, Thomas Evans and Tramaine Chapman, both took part in a pre-conference workshop on the social change model of leadership in community service and service-learning. They were also able to connect with other students throughout the conference who are involved in service at universities and colleges around the country.

Nursing faculty member Dr. Brenda Hosley and Education faculty member Dr. Dana Stuchul took advantage of numerous conference sessions on everything from service-learning and diversity to assessment and reflection in the service-learning curriculum.

Dr. Hosley said, “I thought it was a wonderful opportunity, not only to network, but the see how service-learning is used and implemented in small and large colleges and universities around the country.”

Also in April, CELTS Director Meta Mendel-Reyes and Associate Director Betty Hibler attended the conference of the International Partnership for Service-Learning (IPSL), held in Prague, Czech Republic. We met directors, students and community partners involved in over 15 programs around the world, including Jamaica, England, France, Russia, Ecuador, the Philippines, and Prague. In addition to academic study and home stays, students volunteer 20 hours/week in a service agency. Students in the India program, for example, work with the programs founded by Mother Theresa; in Prague we visited programs for the mentally disabled. Service not only allows students to give of themselves; it provides a level of cultural immersion and language development that is often not available in other programs. For more information about these and other ways of combine service and study abroad, contact Meta Mendel-Reyes or Suzi Kifer in the International Center.

Donovan Cain and Meta Mendel-Reyes



Betty visits with local service program while in Prague, Czech Republic.

Fresh Youth Initiatives Visits CELTS

Berea College's CELTS Center had yet another first this spring, hosting a group of students for a week. The group, Fresh Youth Initiatives, from Washington Heights in New York City, was on campus February 17 to 22, 2002. FYI is an organization committed to community service.

Throughout the year, a group of students, ages 10 to 18, participate in many service projects, including park clean-ups and volunteering at food banks. They also spend a great deal of their time making sleeping bags (from scratch) for the homeless. Each year, students working the most community service hours join the FYI staff on a weeklong community service trip to a different part of the country. Past trips have included Florida, California and Michigan. This year the group chose Berea College.

CELTS staff worked closely with FYI Director, Andrew Rubinson, to organize a trip that included lots of service, lots of fun and a trip to Eastern Kentucky. FYI students were able to work along-side Berea College students, staff and many local students that are part of CELTS programs. Several

community members were also gracious enough to host FYI students and staff in their homes.

Students from CELTS, FYI and local schools participated in many community service projects during the weeklong trip. The service sites were very diverse, but each site had much to offer and was very meaningful to all involved. Service sites included: working at a Habitat for Humanity site, volunteering at the Shriner's Hospital for children, painting at the Boys and Girls Club of Madison County, performing a talent show for the Berea Senior Citizens Center and participating at Berea Community School's Diversity Day.

FYI's trip to Eastern Kentucky was also a new experience, both for FYI and for Eastern Kentucky. According to our sources, this trip was the first time a group of students from New York City had ever visited the Kentucky Coal Mine Museum, the Benham School House Inn, the Pine Mountain Settlement School and Mine Portal #31. At each of these places the FYI students learned about issues facing Eastern

Kentucky and were able to compare those issues to what they deal with in their own home community. They also heard some good ole' mountain music performed by CELTS' own Donovan Cain.

The week ended with a celebration of all that was learned, an exchange of gifts, emails and tears. In the end, this trip was a great experience for all involved. The cultural exchange was amazing. The FYI staff and students truly inspired the folks here at CELTS and dare I say . . . we look forward to hosting more groups in the future.

contributed by Heather McNew Schill, '99



"A Little Hard Work Can Go a Long Way" drawing by FYI participant.

Fresh Young Initiatives is a community-based youth organization committed to engaging youth (ages 9-18) in positive experiences and opportunities through community service. FYI participants work in community gardens, give out cans of food, paint murals, volunteer at soup kitchens, distribute hand-made sleeping bags to homeless people, perform random acts of kindness, remove graffiti and more. Their mission is to support and encourage the efforts of young people in Washington Heights and Inwood to design and carry out community service projects, develop leadership skills, fulfill their potential and realize their dreams.

Habitat for Humanity

Habitat's New Orleans group spent the week working on two homes in the area known as Little Woods. The homes that we worked on were an experimental build, made of concrete. These types of homes require the use of more skilled laborers so chances are they will not be built to often. For the first two days, the New Orleans group painted. On the third day, they worked on getting the driveway and sidewalks ready for the concrete that was going to be poured the next day. They set up the forms, leveled and packed the area with sand, and cut and placed the iron wires. For most, the three days were very tiring, but those three days combined did not prepare them for the day ahead. On the fourth and final day of work, we had the great and wonderful pleasure of learning how to pour concrete. It is a fun and exciting job to do, but very physically demanding. When pouring concrete, you must work quickly and well with your teammates because if you don't, the concrete will harden before you know it.

The group decided to work until the task was complete. By 6:30 PM, the group had finished two driveways and sidewalks surrounding the houses. On the fifth day, both groups got together and went to St. Charles, Mississippi for a little fun at the beach.

The group that went to Covington worked on 4 different houses throughout the week with another group from St. Olaf College in Minnesota. The first day the groups were split up. Some went to help do some masonry while the others helped at the warehouse organizing tons of siding that was donated to Habitat a couple of years back. The groups worked on this for the first 2 days. Eventually, with much hard work, the project was complete. The third day, the two groups went to another work site where there were a total of three homes in progress. We worked on them all. We put up blue board, roofing, and siding, painted, and even helped dig a trench that ran between two of the homes.

For lunch the last two days, we enjoyed the time at a nearby lake where we ate, played and relaxed. On Thursday night, the families of the

new homes and the two groups gathered for a dinner prepared by the homeowners. We all had an excellent time getting to know the families. Some of us enjoyed a few good games of basketball, duck-duck-goose, and "house" with the children.

After a great week together, everyone who participated experienced a new side of life. A life of service is not always easy and exciting, but the rewards are out of this world. Let service be the mindset that drives you for tomorrow.

contributed by Josh Jones, '02



Habitat for Humanity members mix concrete during Spring break.

The Carpetbag Theatre performs *Nothin' Nice*

"Interesting, thoughtful, and touching. It provided many people with information that we don't often think about as people. These issues might be looked at more carefully since we are more informed."

Kimberly Owen, '05



Carpetbag Theatre and CELTS students participate in a diversity workshop before Convocation.

CELTS and the Berea College Black Cultural Center sponsored the Carpetbag Theatre Ensemble on February 7 in their performance of *Nothin' Nice* during Convocation. *Nothin' Nice*, a musical drama by Linda Parris-Bailey, is the story of Lonewolf, a young man forced to confront issues of "Environmental Justice" and the impact of "Environmental Racism" on his family and community. Raised in New Orleans' "Ninth Ward", a community ravaged by toxicity and violence, Lonewolf also faces the destruction of the women in his life. With the guidance of his uncle Victor, a former Civil Rights activist; his mother Lil, who is battling cancer; and Nicole, the young woman who is the mother of his child; Lonewolf discovers his own ability to accept the adult challenge of community leadership.

CELTS invited the Carpetbag Theatre in order to support the College's commitment to interracial education, as well as to educate the community about some of the most important social issues facing people of color and the poor. The Convocation received very high evaluations but also sparked controversy, as illustrated by the student comments on this page. We wanted to reprint them, with the permission of the authors, so as to encourage the dialogue that is such a vital aspect of service and social change. Two are Convocation comments; the longer response is a reflection written for a class.

Meta Mendel-Reyes

"This drama was extremely powerful. It was very aware of the things that are happening not only in the black community, but in all communities. Lonewolf is like the black Erin Brockovich. This play had a very important message: do not sit and let things happen. Stand up and take action now, especially while we are young. Young people are what makes the world go around. Don't wait, it may be the last time, we don't know."

Jeremy McShan, '05

Nothin' Nice: my perspective

Nothin' Nice does reflect the lives of many Americans. My own life has much in common with the characters in this play. I grew up on my Grandma's farm without electricity and indoor plumbing. The state government without their consent in order to build a lake for tourists relocated my family. A company called SYCOS was caught dumping toxic chemicals in that lake and that was the water that we drank, bathed and watered the field with. In my hometown the police were always harassing my family and many of my relatives have been unfairly treated, even abused, by the system. I think the chemicals that were dumped in the lake could have caused my mom's death from cancer at age 38. I think many people have suffered mistreatment in this nation.

This is not only a condition that African-Americans must endure. The "White Man" referred to in this play is the same "White Man" who displaced and disrupted my white family. That "White Man" the troupe mentioned again and again is the same "White Man" that kept tens of thousands of Kentuckians struggling for survival in mines and factories all over this state. That "White Man" is the

same cause of suffering for poor people (Black, White, Hispanic, and many others) all over America.

I must say I am so tired of hearing about that "White Man". The whole idea is a lie. It is an exaggeration of one symptom of a ubiquitous problem. The divisions in this country do not stem entirely from the White versus the Black. A greater dilemma faces everyone who is poor. The rich, the powerful, and the unconcerned is a more accurate description of the oppressor. The "contented majority" should be made to replace "White Man" in the mouths of everyone who cannot see.

When my mother was diagnosed with cancer and died after six months of painful treatments in a cold hospital bed no great white savior came to defend my family from bankruptcy, homelessness and despair. It is time we acknowledge that the "White Man" includes poor Appalachians. The "White Man" includes homeless whites. I find it grossly unfair to say the "White Man" did anything to anyone. I am a white man and I have suffered with all the rest.

contributed by Daniel Phillips, '05

SFA Devotes Year to Appalachian Studies

As many people know, Students for Appalachia (SFA) is one of the oldest service organizations on the Berea College campus. Having been established and reaching out to the surrounding region for over three decades, it has been a place of learning, service, labor, and out-reach to countless people over the years. However, Students for Appalachia is more than just another avenue of service and that difference can be found within its own name. Students for Appalachia, by its very title, is making a commitment to be a body of students and volunteers that are dedicated to the Appalachian area. But what exactly does that mean?

The question of what it means to be students who are for Appalachia is a complex one, but one that we believed was important to explore over the course of this past year. I think we found the answer to be

complicated by each person's own perception of Appalachia and one's experiences growing up in or out of this part of the country. We started by dedicating our fall retreat to focusing on this issue and have devoted labor meetings to better understanding our Appalachian identity. Several of the SFA programs implemented ways to assist the youth that they work with in tearing down negative stereotypes of the Appalachian region and helping them to see the amazing culture that is found in this area. Also, SFA spent the month of January researching issues and lobbying our Kentucky Legislators in Frankfort for bills that would assist the families that are in the Appalachian region.

In March, five SFA members prepared and presented a poster at the annual Appalachian Studies Association conference on the

work that SFA is doing in the region. For many reasons this meeting proved to be an important event for those SFA members who participated. The meeting brought activists, intellectuals, students, and just about anyone with a heart for the region together for a time of teaching and collaborating. This sharing of information made it clear that the Appalachian region is incredibly distinct, but intricately connected to not just the rest of this country, but also the events of the world. It would have been impossible to leave the conference without a much broader and prouder sense of what it means to be a "Student for Appalachia."

Spending this past year focusing on what it means to be Appalachian has given me a greater understanding and respect for the area. But I think I can speak for all of SFA in saying that even more importantly, it has just made me realize how much I love this region and its rich and diverse culture.

contributed by Ashley Small, '02

The Bonner Scholars Program, founded at Berea in 1990, is an organization that offers an opportunity for students to serve the community, nation, and world. Currently, 25 colleges, mostly in southern Appalachia, participate in the program.

There are 55 Bonner Scholars at Berea College. Among them, 15 are freshmen, who participate in one of two highly structured programs: SLIP or EDGE. SLIP (Student Leadership Initiative Program) works with sixth and seventh graders, focusing on doing community service projects. In December, SLIP went to Wal-Mart to sing Christmas carols to raise money for the people of Belize, a Central American country that was hit by a hurricane which wiped out a lot of services, especially schools. All donations were used for much-needed school supplies.

The rest of the freshmen participate in EDGE (Educational Designs that Generate Excellence), which shows eighth and ninth graders about how to start a business. When leaving the program, the students have both an adequate amount of information to start a business and a high confidence level that they can succeed no matter what the obstacles. Ben Reppert, an EDGE student, has learned how to "walk the walk" when dealing with business.

Besides the two programs, the Freshman Bonner Scholars participated in many service projects around the community. They have delivered bags for the food drive, visited nursing homes, and helped in a soup kitchen in Louisville. They traveled to Washington, DC to do numerous service projects in the area during Spring break.

contributed by Jeremy McShan, '05

Student Spotlight: Luke Webb

Editor's Note: Luke Webb is a Berea College sophomore and Bonner Scholar who is studying at Payap University in Chiang Mai, Thailand spring semester. The following is a letter home.

About thirty students and teachers from Payap University here in Chiang Mai and about the same number from Kiesen college, a women's college in Tokyo, along with three Bereans and one other American traveled to a very remote Karen village in the Mae Hong Song District of Thailand, very close to the Burmese Border. The Karen is the largest hill tribe group in Thailand. They are the indigenous people of this area and have lived here for thousands of years. They live in the more remote locations and mostly in higher elevations. They live in the highlands for many different reasons, partially because there is a history of minority groups, such as the Karen, being subordinated to the dominant group- the Thai- through social repression. In order to escape the situation many of the minority groups in Thailand have isolated themselves in the mountains where they can live with independence. Members of the hill tribe groups have more traditional lifestyles, but culture is never static and always changing.

Christian missionaries and the Thai institution of education are two of the largest outside influences on the hill tribe group and the village I went to has been deeply affected by these factors, although the people there definitely retain their distinct cultural identity. The traditional costume of elaborately embroidered shirts and skirts is still worn daily by the women and girls of the village while the men mostly only wear their traditional attire for church and other special occasions. The Karen language is still spoken widely

while the village school teaches standard Thai. But there are no Karen teachers at the school, only Thai.

The group I came with was there to build a dining hall for the school. My intention for coming was to experience a vastly different culture in a way I may never be able to again. Even if I get a chance to go back, it will be very different. I also wanted to serve, of course, and I knew my service was to be an instrument of an unavoidable cultural change and I am withholding judgment in regard to that aspect for now.

I hammered nails in planks and painted and put the tin roof on. I swam in the beautiful river everyday and I went to church and worshiped with the villagers. I thought about how they ultimately make their own choice to become Christian, although missionaries have a tendency to set up a system of paternalism based on providing material goods to influence groups like the hill tribes to accept their faith. But the villagers want education for their children, so if I can help address that perceived need, then I will try to.

We finished the dining hall in just a few days and the week ended with a friendship dinner with the whole village featuring traditional Thai and Japanese dancing, and lots of other games and songs. Meredith Parsons, Claudia Scott and myself (all three Bereans) sang "I'll fly Away" and "Blowin' in the Wind" through a bullhorn to the assembly and it was, by the grace of God, somewhat in tune! The goodbye ceremonies were pretty intense too. Candlelight, you know?

When we left we rode bamboo rafts down the river, so peaceful as we floated gently down. I ate some honey so fresh it had chunks of wax and whole bees floating in it.

I was really blessed last week and I know I'm glad I have a story to share with you.

Spring Reflections

Thank You, CELTS!

Thank you so much for sponsoring a college car for my volunteer experience at the Bluegrass Farm Worker Health Center during the January 2002 short term. The month was full of experiences that will help me serve Hispanic clients in my future nursing career. I learned a lot by working and job shadowing a family nurse practitioner who works in two clinic locations. She works diligently to serve the farm worker population in Central Kentucky.

She taught me about the unique health needs of migrant workers and their families. I saw that access to affordable health services and medical staff who speak Spanish are great needs for this underserved population. I was able to practice speaking Spanish in a health care setting. I interacted with children and families. Some of the clients have lived and worked in Kentucky for years, while others had just arrived a few days before their visit to the clinic.

After my job shadowing experience and volunteer work, I fully appreciate CELTS's aim of supporting learning through service. This experience allowed me to learn Spanish while becoming familiar with an underserved population. The experience will help me serve similar groups in the future.

Rhonda Burkholder '03

Drama is This to Me

Eric Baldwin, a Berea College junior, taught a Theater class in Upward Bound last summer. One student, applying for the Governors School for the Arts, described his experience in the class in the following essay:

Drama has not been a long time interest of mine. In fact, I would say less than a year old. However, once exposed, I was drawn to the infinite number of stories an actor can tell, even within a single role. I could pick my own story to tell, and tell a greater one with the aid of other storytellers, sensitive and adaptive to my story even as I could be to theirs. Drama is this to me.

It also appeals to me in a more personal way. On stage I can find an energy and a

motive to act, to become another person, to get the attention and excitement my life so often seems to lack. And yet acting is a deeply personal thing; no character comes out of you without taking a part of you with it, to lean on.

This is an art form I enjoy and could one day be very competent. I also believe that the stories an actor tells can be much more than entertainment. They can teach: a better way to resolve a conflict, empathy for the oppressed, and mistakes to learn from. Is this my future? I hesitate to decide. I desire to find out.

If I could trace my drama career back to a single definitive point in time, it would be a certain night last summer. I was in an acting class in the Upward Bound

Program (which I joined partly for fun and partly to escape a less desirable alternative class), and this night was our "Acting Showcase." We were presenting a show of short plays, monologues, and improvisations. Amid other things, I was to give a sarcastic monologue by Christopher Durang.

The memory of it is somewhat blurred to me. I remember that it wasn't long into the monologue before I decided I was giving my best performance ever. Everything went right. My voice was loud enough (a constant hurdle for me) and I forgot nothing. The audience honored me with a standing ovation, and I jogged off the stage grinning. They loved it. I loved it. I couldn't deny I loved it.

My Visit to FYI

This past January Short Term I had the opportunity to serve the community of Washington Heights, one of the northern most sections of Manhattan. I had been to NYC once before, but never made it much further north than Times Square. It is a very unique part of the city. Like China Town or Little Italy, it's a section predominantly composed of immigrants. At least ninety percent are from Latin countries, mostly the Dominican Republic and Cuba. And everyone spoke Spanish except, of course, me. This isn't to say that it's still not very much New York. No one can mistake the endless composition of buildings, traffic, and subways surrounded on all sides by water.

I stayed in an apartment that was only a few blocks from the program that I volunteered with, Fresh Youth Initiatives. I stayed with a mother and daughter who are very active in the program. They were incredibly hospitable. The culture shock of being immersed in an environment so different from Berea, an inner-city where I was the only Caucasian in a ten block radius, would have been far worse had it not been for the warmth of my hosts. Instead, it felt like, and still does, that I had a second mother and a new sister.

For the three and a half weeks I was in NYC, I volunteered for an after school program called Fresh Youth Initiatives (FYI). During the mornings, before the teens arrived, my job consisted of visiting soup kitchens, food pantries, and the like as a sort of scout. After working with the various community services I compiled information about the sites and determined whether or not it would be a suitable place to send the program's teens. Once the teens arrived, I worked

with them and the various programs they had running every afternoon. Each day there was a "menu" of various programs which they could sign up for. Youth leaders themselves, instead of staff, run many of the programs. I was amazed at how many programs they were actually able to keep going from week to week. One youth leader started a group called Baby Care Givers. The group collected formula, diapers, and clothes for newborns and distributed them. Another group ran the only youth-run food pantry called the Helping Hands Food Pantry. They even delivered bags of food to the elderly that couldn't make the trip to the pantry. The main program that I was involved with was the sleeping bag program. We ordered materials and prepared them for the big end-of-the-month project called the Sleeping-Bag-A-Thon. FYI invited groups to help them sew the sleeping bags on the last Saturday I was there. Later, they would be delivered in person to the homeless.

Working for a non-profit program like FYI is something I'd love to do 'when I grow up.' The impact the program has had on the community in its short 9-year existence has been tremendous. It was inspiring not only as a career possibility but also for my on-campus job as a mentor in the Teen Mentoring Program of SFA. I've seen the great potential youth have in shaping their own lives and communities through service. It was definitely one of those experiences that have strengthened my commitment to service and my faith in its power to shape individuals as well as those they serve. It's hard to convey how much I've gained and will continue to gain from those few weeks as I keep processing the experience and drawing on it as I continue serving.

contributed by David Schaffer, '02

Spring Reflections

COOL Conference '02

My experience in Atlanta was indescribable. I have never felt so much pride in myself before. It was amazing. I had never been to Atlanta before but I had heard of Morehouse and Spelman Colleges. I think that everyone has heard of them. I didn't know what to expect. When I got there I was almost instantly overwhelmed. I had never before in my entire life been somewhere where the African American population was the majority. Of course it was like that in the conference. I didn't get around town much, but just seeing the drivers, the workers

and the pedestrians all being of African American descent was incredible.

It was so uplifting and encouraging to see so many of my people making it in a "white" world. I met the owner of a brand new multimillion dollar hotel and he was African American. I met members of the board of trustees for Alabama State, I met a police officer whose daughter was valedictorian for her high school and is now making a 3.94 in college, I met future law students, pre-med students, and Krispy Kreme cashiers. I met someone from every level of society and they were ALL African American. It may not

seem like a big deal coming from another perspective but just tell any African American about another African American making something of himself or herself and they will be proud. I am not surprised, I am just so proud. It is so hard for African Americans to go up the social ladder, especially those of us with darker skin. I know that going to Atlanta changed my life.

The conference was not that bad. I think that our diversity workshop gets better and better every time that we do it. The spirit of service and the atmosphere it creates is AWESOME!!!

contributed by Melenia Jackson, '05



COOL Conference participants clowning around before the Hunger Banquet.

Reflection of a Citizen

This has been an important school year in my development as a citizen. The terrorist attacks of September 11, 2001 devastated America. The war on terrorism is continuing to expand as I speak. I personally became involved in issues pertaining to hunger and fair trade. And I have learned a lot about our economic system, militarism, hunger, and the environment as I have involved myself in these issues. But most importantly I have learned a lot about what it means to be a responsible citizen.

September 11 struck a chord with me, like the rest of America, because I had never seen such devastation so close to home. In an effort to do something about it, some friends and I started prayer circles for the victims. And in the days that followed we wrote a letter to the president asking for a responsible solution to these issues. We held two teach-ins about various issues related to the attacks. And we held fundraisers for the victims. This was the first time that I had empirical evidence to prove that I could effect change in the world.

From the group that we had created in response to September 11, a new group formed, which is now called the Patriots for Peace. This is a group that was created to oppose the bombing of Afghanistan. The group held a peace rally on the triangle just outside of Boone Tavern in Berea. It also held a "peace encampment" outside of Fairchild dorm on the college campus to oppose the bombings and to raise funds for the Afghanistan refugees. The group set up tents on the lawn outside of Fairchild, and hosted activities including music, a dinner, and a closing reflection, and stayed the night on Fairchild lawn.

Another issue that I was involved in was the promotion of Fair traded coffee on campus. Fair traded coffee is grown in a manner that is better for the environment, and the people who produce it are given a living wage. This has been a very slow campaign. It began with me talking to the manager of our food service to get tables set up so that a group of students could distribute information about Fair traded coffee. After the action, nothing much happened. But as I discussed this issue with other activist friends, I decided to call suppliers of Fair traded coffee and see if

they could offer it at Berea College. I am now currently waiting to get information from them about the cost of their coffee, to see if it is feasible.

Finally, I have also dealt with hunger issues. Hunger affects us locally, nationally, and internationally, and occurs for a number of different reasons. The group that I am involved with, known as the Hunger Task force, is organizing a dinner on April 25, at 6pm in the basement of Union Church in Berea to present a number of different hunger issues. And this is a project that I hope will continue throughout my college career and maybe even work.

So what have I learned this semester? One, there is a lot of stuff that I do not know including-economics, government foreign policy, history, and at times, right and wrong. The various issues I work with are intertwined with many other systems of the rest of the world, and there is not one that I am an authority on.

Two, if we are to change the world we must educate ourselves and must not lead others irresponsibly. I learned this after I went to a teach-in and listened to some speakers. What I took from the teach-in was very controversial (The controversial part concerned American militarism). But I did not hesitate to share the one perspective that I received from the teach-in to my friends. What I did not know was that one of my friends was well-versed in history, and that I had only seen one side of the issue. I felt horribly irresponsible after that, and have tried to pursue both sides of an issue as much as possible.

A third thing that I learned is that sometimes we may not have all the answers, and we must err on the side of whatever our conscience dictates, or be neutral if we choose. Neutrality does not change anyone or anything though. And our limited knowledge will make us feel really stupid sometimes, but it is better to learn from mistakes than to not try to do what you think is right at all.

Finally, no matter what positions you take, changing the world will take self-sacrifice, courage, humor, love, and risk. And we should all feel responsible for our world, or else we are simply a burden to it.

contributed by Matthew Cummins, '04

In the Spotlight

Darla Pearson

In this issue of the Connector, we will introduce you to Darla Pearson, the Director of one of Berea College's TRIO programs, Educational Talent Search (ETS). ETS works with 725 middle and high school students in a small pocket of the Berea College service area, seven counties in south central Kentucky, with the goal of motivating youth to stay in school and to realize that a college education is an attainable goal.

Darla has a long and sustained commitment to TRIO programs. She came to Berea College first as a sophomore in high school when she enrolled in Upward Bound. She has been a part of the Berea College family ever since, touching the lives of many young people who have been in our TRIO programs during the past twenty years.

Following graduation from McCreary Central High School, Darla attended Berea College and completed her B.S. in Vocational Home Economics Education in 1983. Her student labor positions during college included work as a tutor-counselor and office manager in Upward Bound, gaining teaching skills and putting many of her own ideas into practice. After college graduation she became the Academic Coordinator for Upward Bound. In 1992 she was selected as the



Darla Pearson

Coordinator for Berea's new Educational Talent Search program and in 1999 she assumed overall leadership for ETS. Along the way she earned a Master of Arts degree in counseling from Eastern Kentucky University.

In 1990 Darla co-wrote the initial grant proposal for ETS, and she has guided the program from its inception to today, concentrating on refining services to better meet the needs of participants. In addition, she is active in TRIO at the state and regional levels. Most recently, she served two years as President of KAEOPP, the Kentucky Association of Educational Opportunity Program Personnel, and she is completing a year on the board as past president. As a board member of TRIO's regional association, she has chaired the standing committee on Strategic Planning and Evaluation and authored the association's current strategic goals. Additionally, she co-chaired the regional UB Scholars' Bowl and coordinated the

Newcomers' Orientation for two years.

Outside work, Darla is a Trekkie, a creative cook, and needlecraft artist. She loves to travel, read, hike, and spend time with her close knit family. She and her new husband Danny love to watch sports together, especially UK Wildcat basketball.

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