



# Connector

## Inside this issue

Service Learning in the Curriculum	2
Student Spotlight	3
Jim Wallis Convocation	3
Alumni News	4
Berea Bikes	5
Service Reflections	6
Staff Spotlight	8

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## Doing Justice: The Micah 6 Transportation Project

by Betty Hibler

Have you ever needed to get somewhere, but couldn't due to lack of transportation? It happens to all of us from time to time if our car breaks down or we are temporarily without one. But for some members of our community, it's a constant problem in a small town with no public transportation. There are many different reasons

for not having a car of one's own, and many senior citizens as well as other residents find themselves in this predicament. A new

service project at CELTS is making a difference for some of them.

The Micah 6 Transportation Project began in fall 2002 and is a collaboration among several groups, including the Bonner Scholars Program, Campus Ministry, People Who Care, and Union Church. Berea residents in need of occasional transportation to a doctor's appointment, the grocery store, pharmacy, bank, or post office, fill out an application, return it to the Micah 6 Team at CELTS, and receive information on how to make a request. Meanwhile, a group of student volunteer drivers stand ready to respond to those requests. The service is limited to a five mile radius around Berea, and to requests that can be completed within a two hour time period.

In order to be successful, the project needs a vehicle available every day, and so, with funds from the Bonner Foundation, CELTS purchased a used car — lovingly dubbed the "Micah 6 Mobile." The person who fields the calls and assigns the volunteers is Vanda Cook,

Coordinator of People Who Care, and member of the Micah 6 Team.

The seeds for our project were planted in several different locations. Two years ago the Bonner Foundation gave Bonner Scholar Programs the opportunity to propose a project that would be a partnership between the campus and a local church. If accepted, Bonner

would fund the project through a \$5,000 grant. Four years ago the National Council of Churches spear-headed what it also called



Micah 6 volunteer Grace Brutto with Mrs. Goss and the Micah 6 Mobile, posing for the camera before an outing.

"Micah 6," an effort to encourage local churches to examine their commitment to the biblical passage found in Micah 6:8 "What does the Lord require of you, but to do justice, love mercy, and walk humbly with your God?" In other words, put faith into action. Union Church became a Micah 6 congregation at that time, so it was a perfect partner for the transportation project.

Now that we had the partner, we needed to choose a project. And this is when we found that other seeds had been planted by students in a service-learning class, Nursing 349: Community Health Nursing and Leadership II, spring term 2002, taught by Professors Brenda Hosley and Laura Crawford. In a community needs assessment completed in fall 2001, Nursing students Corey Russell ('02) and Misty Penn ('02) determined that lack of transportation could be a contributing factor to poor health when senior citizens and others

## Service Learning in the Curriculum

Spring is always an exciting time for Service Learning on campus, and this year learning through service is continuing to expand. Professors from across the disciplines are using service learning in both new and regularly taught courses, with exciting results. Several of these classes are pushing the limits of what a service component can do for courses which typically never make it outside of the classroom.

One of the classes for which service learning is providing a new twist is GST 203, *U.S. Traditions*, taught by CELTS Director and General Studies faculty member Meta Mendel-Reyes. While exploring the required readings and writing goals for the course, Meta struck upon the idea of combining writing with service in a community-based project.

Working with CELTS Service Learning Coordinator, Donovan Cain, Meta contacted Berea College community partner, the Woodland Community Land Trust in Eagan, Tennessee, who publish a weekly newsletter entitled, *What On Earth*. Woodland was immediately interested in the students assisting with a special issue. They invited the class to come down to Eagan on a Saturday and work with local youth to interview community members about their relationship to water: where their water comes from, how their water has changed, what in their life has been effected or changed by water, etc. All of these interviews are now being turned into stories for the special Earth Day supplement for the April edition of *What On Earth*.

By spending the day in the rural, Appalachian community of Eagan and Rose Creek, Tennessee, students got to experience a piece of Berea's own Appalachian legacy that many of them knew only from their U.S. Traditions readings. While learning about Appalachia and learning about the importance of water from community members, students are also serving the community by helping to collect and preserve its oral heritage.

Another professor teaching a course with an integrated service-learning component is Professor Caryn Vazzana. Caryn's ECON 350: *Econometrics* class is working this Spring with the Appalachian Field Office of Save the Children. They are learning the field of economics by analyzing data collected by Save's Foster Grandparent Program.

Professor Scott Droege, also in the Economics and Business department, has undertaken the massive task this Spring of integrating service-learning into both his BUS 257: *Consumer Behavior* class and into his BUS 315: *Management* class. This was no easy task, considering that both classes had student enrollments of over 30. By working with CELTS on project ideas, refining proposals and identifying resources, both classes currently have over 12 service learning projects underway. Students are working with both for- profits and non-profits, from the Daniel Boone Chapter of the American Red Cross to Berea's newest coffeehouse, Coffee Conspiracy. Both classes will do presentations, both on and off campus, at the end of the semester.

Also making service learning a strong part of her HLT 210: *Health in Appalachia* course is Professor Kris Wright. This semester students are working on projects related to a variety of regional community health issues, from the regional epidemic of diabetes to the local issue of Radon gas exposure, all in coordination with the Madison County Health Department. Students are designing informational websites and preparing community education programs, all while reading and discussing the health issues facing Appalachian people and communities.

*Service-Learning continues to grow at the Berea College campus. To discuss making Service-Learning a part of your course, please contact CELTS Service-Learning Coordinator, Donovan Cain, via email or at ext. 3605.*

## Service Learning Workshops: Kerri Heffernan

In continuing its pledge to make Service-Learning easier and more accessible for Berea College faculty, CELTS happily welcomed Dr. Kerrissa Heffernan of Brown University to Berea College on March 20. Dr. Heffernan, known for her expertise on service-learning in the curriculum, presented an in-depth, afternoon workshop on the fundamentals of service-learning course construction.

Attended by college faculty and staff from a range of disciplines, including Economics & Business, Biology, Sociology, Child & Family Studies, Music, and Nursing, Heffernan took workshop attendees, step by step, through four course models for integrating service-learning into the classroom. After the formal presentation, faculty had time to ask Dr. Heffernan questions, and share ideas and

concerns about making service-learning part of their course offerings. CELTS Director, Meta Mendel-Reyes, and CELTS Service-Learning Coordinator, Donovan Cain, were also on hand throughout the workshop to assist faculty and help answer specific questions about how CELTS can assist with service-learning course construction.

Dr. Heffernan is currently the Associate Director of the Swearer Center for Public Service and Director of the Royce Fellowships, both at Brown University. She is the author of *The Fundamentals of Course Construction* and the co-editor of both *The Practice of Change: Concepts and Models for Service-Learning in Women's Studies* and *The Introduction to Service-Learning Toolkit: Readings and Resources for Faculty*.

CELTS offered this workshop as part of the new CELTS Community-Based Research Institute, funded in part by a grant from Just Connections, Inc. A second workshop for new Institute Faculty and Community Fellows will be offered in either late summer or early fall at a community partner site. This upcoming workshop will be led by leaders in the field of Community-Based Research/Service-Learning from both the academic and grassroots communities.

*For information and an application for the CELTS Community-Based Research Institute, or for information on upcoming faculty development workshops and services from CELTS, please contact Donovan Cain, via email or at extension 3605.*

## Student Spotlight: Thomas Evans

by Sheila Lyons

Thomas Evans is truly a service-oriented person. We first became acquainted with Thomas during his freshman year as a Berea College Bonner Scholar. He served in the EDGE (Educational Designs that Generate Excellence) After School Program. He became the Freshman Coordinator of the program during his sophomore year, mentoring freshmen Bonners and children alike. Now a junior, Thomas is coordinator of another Bonner program, One World.

One World is a diversity program that works with children ages 10-12

from the local Boys and Girls Club of Madison County. Through One World, the kids are taught to value diversity and appreciate differences.

Thomas's service to Berea has not been limited to the Bonner Scholars program. He spent a year tutoring math and computer skills in the New Opportunity School for Women, a project that started through a service-learning course he took with CELTS director, Dr. Meta Mendel-Reyes. Thomas also volunteers additional time at the Boys and Girls Club, and enjoys mentoring a Berea Buddy.

Thomas, thanks for all that you do!



Thomas Evans (third from right) and fellow Bonner Scholars welcome Bonner Cluster participants to Berea College.

## Jim Wallis at Berea College and CELTS

On February 6, Jim Wallis, Co-Founder of *Sojourners Magazine* and "Call to Renewal," came to Berea College to give a Convocation, and to



Jim Wallis at a reception in his honor after he spoke at Convocation.

speak with CELTS students, and members of the local group, Bereans for Peace. During his visit, which was co-sponsored by CELTS, Wallis encouraged students to participate

in a new movement based on Christian ethics and social justice. *Sojourners Magazine*, which is accessible on the web [<http://www.sajo.net>] as well as in print, is a "progressive Christian commentary on faith, politics, and culture." "Call to Renewal," headed by Berea graduate and Upward Bound alum Will Jones, aims to mobilize thousands of young people to create a new politics, through overcoming poverty, ending racism, and rebuilding family and community.

### Jim Wallis on Christianity and the Attack on Iraq

In the days before the attack on Iraq, Wallis's arguments at Berea for peace and international cooperation were especially timely. During the week after his visit to Berea, Wallis traveled to Great Britain to personally encourage Prime Minister Tony Blair to seek a non-violent solution.

After the attack of March 26, he wrote in *Sojourners*:

*"Dissent in a time of war is not only Christian, it is also patriotic. A long and honorable record of opposition to war in church tradition and American history puts dissent in the mainstream of Christian life and American citizenship. Rather than acquiesce with the start of war, prayerful and thoughtful dissent will become more important than ever.*

*The churches have demonstrated the most remarkable unity in our history in opposition to a war, even before the war with Iraq started. In the eleventh hour, the American churches didn't just say 'no' to war, but offered compelling and credible alternatives that were seriously considered by many political leaders around the world, but not by our own government. An American president who increasingly uses the language of Christian faith refused even to meet with American church leaders for discernment and prayer as he made momentous decisions to go to war. The American churches are now in deep solidarity with the worldwide Body of Christ, and may have to choose between their Christian alliances and the demands and policies of their own government. We must learn to be Christians first and Americans second."*

I am hopeful today  
I wonder how all the  
ideas generated over  
these three days will be  
put into action  
I hear voices that want  
to make change  
I see hands ready to help  
I want to encourage in  
any way that I can  
I am hopeful today.

I pretend that the future  
is already here  
I feel excited that what  
was once only possibility  
is now reality  
I touch each hand that  
reached out  
I cry for what is left undone  
But I am hopeful today.

I understand that  
change is hard  
I say that it is possible  
I dream of a world of  
peace and fulfillment for all  
I try to imagine that it is so  
I believe that it can be  
And I am hopeful today.

Betty Hibler  
Associate Director, CELTS  
Written at the 2003 COOL  
Conference



**Perrin de Jong visits SFA during the weekly staff meeting to talk about Kentucky Heartwood.**

## ALUMNI NEWS

### Perrin de Jong, Lisa Perkins

**Perrin de Jong, '99** is a volunteer coordinator with Kentucky Heartwood, a grassroots, non-profit organization that advocates for an end to commercial exploitation of public lands and for the restoration of large unbroken blocks of interior forest ecosystems. The organization works to stop timber sales, mining leases, road projects and other commercial developments, and off-road vehicle use. They need your help! Anyone interested in helping can contact Perrin at [kyheartwood@alltel.net](mailto:kyheartwood@alltel.net).

**Lisa Perkins, '91** lives in Huntington, West Virginia. She is an in-school therapist for West Middle School. Lisa works with youth ages 12-14 who are either at risk of incarceration, dropping out, being sent to residential treatment centers or removal from their homes.

*We would like to hear from all of our Alumni! If you would like to share any information with us, please do so by contacting Sheila Lyons at CPO 2170, Berea College, Berea, Kentucky 40404.*

**"We place pre-judgments on people due to their backgrounds, values, beliefs, principles and appearance. I learned that this is neither right nor wrong. It is a natural process, but it has to eventually stop for a group to move in a new direction. For a group to reach its full potential, differences have to be accepted and understood for what they are because it's these differences that ultimately make the group unique, strong and special. Trust is the foundation of the group that makes it possible for members to handle obstacles, failures, arguments and misconceptions."**

Bart Williams, '06  
COOL Conference

## Micah 6

continued from page 1

could not get to doctors' appointments, to the pharmacy for prescriptions, or to the grocery store on a regular basis. Challenged in their class to come up with a solution to this problem, Corey and Misty approached several CELTS programs about collaborating on a community transportation project. The pilot project took place during April and May 2002, with referrals coming through the Berea Senior Center.

The Micah 6 Team gathered in May and decided to adopt the transportation project based on the success of the pilot. In the proposal, we explained how we believe that lack of transportation in our rural area is a justice issue. The proposal gained funding from the Bonner Foundation, and was augmented by additional funding from Campus Ministries. CELTS provides office space, student labor, and staff support. Work began this past fall to implement the project, and we currently have about fifteen participants who use the transportation service. There is no cost to the participants.

A typical request is for a ride to a doctor's appointment or to the grocery store. But according to our volunteer drivers, the conversation that occurs along the way is

every bit as important as the ride. One student driver reported that the lady he drove home from an appointment reminded him of his grandmother.

An important component of Micah 6 is a commitment by the Team to engage in spiritual exploration and reflection on a regular basis. We find that, as we reflect on our faith and our service, both are strengthened. The Team meets biweekly over dinner for fellowship, planning, and reflection. Rev. Loretta Reynolds is currently leading a discussion based on the Sermon on the Mount.

As with any new undertaking, it takes time to organize, publicize, and get started. One of the challenges we face is the college calendar, and how to provide service when classes are not in session during breaks and the summer. Here is where Union Church plays its part. We already have several volunteer drivers among church members and we hope to recruit more before summer. And in May, we will request a continuation of our

grant for next year, so that we can continue to give rides to members of our community who need them, to make connections between generations, and to see the smiles as the "Thank-yous" are expressed.

*For more information about the Micah 6 Transportation Project, call and leave a message at 985-3136, or call Betty Hibler at 985-3936.*



**Vanda Cook, Coordinator of People Who Care, answering a Micah 6 phone call.**

## Program Spotlight: Berea Bikes

Imagine a place in harmony, a community of people living together and working for justice, a world free of air pollution and wars for oil. Admittedly this sounds utopian and far off; but through critical reflection on our daily lives and behaviors, we can come to recognize the decisions we make that make such a world



**Berea Bikes coordinators Leah Devine and Charles Downs.**

impossible. We as a population can change our actions so that such a reality isn't so unrealistic.

By emphasizing the small changes in our lives, we can move toward a better world. We can make changes in our daily routines, in our transportation.

Imagine a fleet of bikes for

transportation available for all students and the campus community to use. This is the reality in other communities and campuses around the globe, and we want to realize it here in Berea.

In the fall of 2002, a working group was formed out of a vision of Bereans on bikes. The cooperation between members of the HEAL team and the community came together to create a Community Bike program and bike maintenance workshops.

As a result, the Berea Bicycle Action Project, now Berea Bikes, was established. Since our inception, we have taken to the streets in Critical Mass Bike Rides to demonstrate bikes as a

sustainable and viable form of transportation; hosted three bike maintenance workshops on basic bike repair and upkeep; and recently, we collaborated with SFA's Teen Mentoring program to foster community involvement and shared knowledge.

Community bikes are important because they foster community development through interaction, by encouraging accountability and responsibility, as well as upholding a fundamental respect for the earth, people and self. Berea Bikes is dedicated to:

- Improving transportation choices on Berea College campus and community.
- Exploring and promoting sustainable transportation.
- Providing a community bike fleet for the Berea College campus and community and overseeing its maintenance.
- Educating the Berea College campus and community about bike maintenance and repair, and providing the necessary space and tools; culminating in a self-sufficient Learning Bike Shop incorporated into the labor program.
- Serving as a resource and network for the Berea College campus and community.

We are currently in search of a working space for the bikes. In that space, we plan to hold additional workshops and prepare a fleet of blue community bikes. So keep your eyes out in the future for students and community alike riding through campus on brightly colored community bikes. If you want to become involved with this project or donate a bike to the project, please contact HEAL@berea.edu. As a community we can make this project happen!

Imagine how you would live in your ideal world and live that way today.

## Kentucky/Tennessee Bonner Scholar Cluster Event

On February 7 and 8, four Bonner Scholar schools and two Bonner Leader Schools met at Berea College for the second annual Kentucky/Tennessee Bonner Scholar Cluster Event. The six schools included Berea College, Carson-Newman College, Union College, Maryville College, Centre College, and Tusculum College. Last year, Carson-Newman College was our host and we met in Gatlinburg, TN. The hope of the Bonner Foundation is that the Cluster Event will be held every year and hosted by a different school.

The purpose of the Cluster Event is to allow Bonner Scholars and Leaders to learn about the different service positions in which each Bonner is involved. The Cluster Event is about gathering students together to talk about service. This interaction among Bonners allows knowledge to be exchanged, and serves to improve the overall effectiveness of the service in which each is involved. The Cluster Event allows for each Bonner to learn more about the Bonner Foundation and the other Bonner schools in their cluster.

The theme of this year's Cluster Event was *The Six Common Commitments*. These six commitments include International Perspective, Civic Engagement, Social Justice, Diversity, Spiritual Exploration, and Community Building. These commitments were created by members of the Bonner Congress, a collection of two representatives from each Bonner Scholar School and one representative from each Bonner Leader School, and the Bonner Foundation. The Bonner Foundation encourages each common commitment to be incorporated, as much as possible, into the service work in which each Bonner is involved. The event consisted of workshops, games, and activities. Each Bonner school was assigned a different Common Commitment to explore and present as a workshop. The workshops were very hands on, and offered suggestions on how each Bonner can incorporate each commitment into service work.

We were privileged to have a representative from the Bonner Foundation, Kate Brockett, at our Cluster Event. Kate was able to read a letter from Wayne Meisel,

President of the Bonner Foundation, who was not able to join us. He wrote that he wished he was able to attend and conveyed his wishes on how happy he was that we were gathering together, as college students, to talk about service. As Kate read the letter, I remembered how many times I had heard Wayne speak about service and young people. I remembered him explaining that when he was younger he would always hear about how apathetic students were, and how students and young people didn't care about their communities. But he never believed that. I have always been encouraged by Wayne's belief in the positive changes that young people can make in their communities. I knew that, even though Wayne was not present physically, his ideas and thoughts and hopes were. I can only hope that those present were feeling the same way.

I know that the Cluster Event was a huge success. I believe that whenever students gather together to talk about serving their communities, great things can be accomplished. And I think that happened this year.

Kelle Shaw, '05

# Service Reflections

## Cool Conference: a poem

*Editor's note: Last month nineteen Berea students, accompanied by staff, climbed aboard the college bus and headed north to Cleveland for the annual COOL Conference. The theme of this year's conference, hosted by Cleveland State University, was "Students Leading Change." Throughout this newsletter you will read student reflections from those who attended the conference. The following poem is an example.*

### Alone...No Longer Alone

I stood alone.  
The day before I stood  
Indomitable  
Alone but indefatigable  
My dream and aspiration  
Were for me a hope and  
inspiration  
I stood alone, or so I thought  
Despite a world with trouble  
fraught.  
The Day before I stood alone.

Yesterday I stood alone.  
But I was at my lowest ebb.  
Entangled and subdued by a web.  
A web of fear and helplessness.  
I was overwhelmed and  
frustrated.  
Suppressed and dominated.  
I stood alone, or so I thought  
In a world with trouble fraught.  
Yesterday I stood alone.

Today I'm not alone.  
Multitudes of soldiers stand  
beside me.  
Soldiers in a cause for our right  
to be.  
I am a drop in an ocean of heroes.  
And together we confront our  
common foes.  
I stand with others, this I know  
Although the tides of oppression  
against us flow.  
I have found the partners I sought.  
In a world with trouble fraught.  
Today, I'm not alone.

Gyude Moore, '06

## Adopt-a-Grandparent: An Incredible Experience

As a former Adopt-a-Grandparent volunteer and a current member of the Adopt-a-Grandparent staff, I would like to tell you why this program is a very special part of life here in our community, and also a very special part of my own life. One of my father's sayings is that every time an old person dies, it is as if a library has burned down. In Adopt-a-Grandparent, we have the opportunity to read some of the books in those "libraries" before they disappear, and we also have the chance to help make those last "chapters" be as happy as possible. That is an incredible experience.

On a daily basis, Dina, Jared, and I, and our volunteers, connect with the people we visit in so many ways. Through touch: giving and receiving hugs, holding someone's hand, letting someone take your arm to walk down the hall. But also in more intangible ways, especially conversation. Even when you talk with someone who can't talk back to you or doesn't make sense when they do speak, your physical presence means a lot. When you are sitting with someone who can't go out, you get to talking about how it looks and feels outside today and lately, and you hear back from them their memories of the outdoors, like how one good rainstorm turns everything green all of a sudden in the springtime, or their memories of farming, tending a garden, or playing in the woods as a child. The written word is also so powerful- the poems of one man reveal so much about who he is inside. Laughter is a part of it too. Not only does it help to have humor in tough situations where as my grandma used to say, "If you didn't laugh, you'd cry," but also the grandparents may say funny things sometimes. One lady told me, "Old age will sure enough get you down but it won't kill you," and another preceded a story about her life with "To tell the truth (and the truth's all anybody ever should tell)..." Also, as Dina and maybe even some of the volunteers could also attest, proposals of marriage and being kissed on the hand occasionally are also part of the job.

It's also neat to see the perspective of another generation and how the world has changed, like one grandparent being scared of cars when they first came to her town because she didn't know what they were, "and now look at them, they're all over the place! Of course they're not as funny-looking now as they were then," or how one grandparent doesn't see any need for schools with more than one teacher, because "They learned just as good with one teacher for all eight grades as they do now!" You will also hear stories of endurance, people getting on with the business of life after hard times because they had no other choice. You can see that endurance still, in their eyes or in the square of their shoulders, when they say things like, "I had four young boys to raise" or "You don't know what you can stand till you've got to stand it; you don't know the strength you have till then." I wonder if I would have the strength that many of them had and still have, despite the fact that their bodies and minds may be getting weaker. Some of the grandparents are sources of good advice, too: "You've got to take risks, gambles, like the people who went digging for gold in California- they didn't know whether they'd strike it rich or not. Otherwise you'll never know any more than you know now."

Our volunteers are such special people too- they have very caring and tender hearts. They become such a friend to their grandparents, so that their grandparents start to look forward to their visits every week and never want them to leave! Our volunteers learn, if they don't instinctively know it, the value of holding a hand, of giving a hug, of listening to the same story over and over, of just being there. One volunteer sat by the bedside of his grandparent who was very ill and could hardly talk, and was able to make him smile again by humming favorite hymns, and to coax him to drink a little bit when he had not wanted to eat or drink for anyone else. Another volunteer was willing, on extremely short notice, to don a Santa Claus suit and pass out presents to the grandparents at our party, asking several of them, "Well, have you been good this year?" and even belting out a fair number of jolly "Ho ho ho's"! One grandparent shared with me the special time "her" student did her nails for her and they spent time watching movies together. Many of the volunteers have been willing to share their voices and other musical talents with the grandparents during mealtimes, even though they often lacked confidence in their abilities, and the grandparents have heartily appreciated them, often singing along or calling out praises. There have been so many other instances of something special between a grandparent and his or her volunteer, often known and felt only by the two of them. One volunteer wrote in her application that she wanted "to give and get love" as an AGP volunteer. That experience of giving and getting love is virtually inevitable if a person is a part of this program for any length of time. In meeting and knowing and loving these grandparents, there is often joy and pain and sorrow and happiness and exhilaration, and also the discovery of the breadth and depth love can have, how far it can reach, and what it can do, and even sometimes how much that kind of love can make you hurt when that person is gone. In the giving and receiving of that love grows a whole new perspective of what it means to be a human being. Rachel Silver, '0x

# Service Reflections

## COOL Conference: Getting a Successful Mentoring Program Started

We were given supplies, like Styrofoam cups and construction paper and paper clips and Tootsie rolls, with instructions to construct a car. We made a Lollipeople Candycle. When done, we switched projects with another group, with instructions to add or take away from each other's creations as we wished. We added a propeller, did some repair to their wheels, and included a lollipop pilot and passenger. No major damage. What was the point of the activity you ask? When you initiate a mentoring program as a student, there will eventually come a time when you will have to put that creation/project into another person's hands, and trust them to keep your vision going. Depending on what foundation you set, the program can either grow stronger or crumble. Do you plant your program in a firm foundation, that requires only small changes, or do you merely uphold an incomplete notion that leaves unrecognizable constructs for the future generation of leaders scrambling to figure out? Again, I am set to ponder my role as a visionary and as an activist, if an activist I am.

Sarah Beth Watson, '05

**"God has not called me to change the world. God has not called me to be the Savior of the world. God has, however, blessed me with unique gifts and talents to be able to do what I can for humanity, and that is all God asks of me—to do what I was created to do."**

William Gyude Moore, '06  
COOL Conference

## Habitat for Humanity's Collegiate Challenge

*Editor's Note: 24 Berea College students, accompanied by Stacey Kennedy of People Services, traveled to New York State during Spring Break.*

Westchester County in New York State is renowned as one of the wealthiest counties in the nation. The development of property in suburban areas throughout this county has created million dollar plots of real estate. Several famous, wealthy actors and actresses live in the plush neighborhoods of Westchester county. Despite this picturesque scene of economic luxury, 78,900 residents of Westchester lived in poverty in 1999, according to statistics from the U.S. Census Bureau. This is a 36% increase in poverty over ten years and indicates that 15,100 families are living below the poverty threshold. Perhaps it is the expansive gap between the rich and the poor of Westchester that emphasizes the need of some families in this area. While some residents live in utmost luxury, others must make due with substandard housing and the constantly increasing cost of living in New York State.

The need for safe housing, which thousands of families face in Westchester county, caught the attention of our Berea College chapter of Habitat for Humanity. When choosing a site for volunteering, during the collegiate challenge of spring break, we decided to visit Yonkers, in Westchester County. The collegiate

challenge is a program created by Habitat for Humanity to urge students across the nation to devote their spring breaks to a week of service at a Habitat construction site. This program encourages students to experience a place they may never have been before, while dedicating the majority of their time to service and hard work.

During our stay in Yonkers, the Trinity Lutheran Church provided us with their basement to sleep in and access to a full kitchen to prepare our meals. The construction site we volunteered at for the week was within walking distance of the church. Peter, our contact and the coordinator of the volunteer construction work at this site in Westchester, organized our work schedule and found multiple volunteer opportunities for us during the week. Each day, a small group of five or six people was sent to help with a fire relief effort. A huge fire had displaced over 600 families shortly before we came to visit Yonkers. The members of our group that helped with fire relief, folded clothing, sorted food, and boxed care packages for the displaced families. Another small group of ten people spent one day painting the walls of an elderly woman's apartment. Work at the construction site was far more physical and involved shoveling gravel, applying concrete to the outside walls of the house, and digging holes for the foundation of another house. The



**Berea College students work on site in New York City.**

application of liquid cement to the outer walls of the house is called "stuccoing", and helps to insulate the home from extremely hot and cold temperatures. Our group applied two layers of concrete to the outer walls of the first level of the house. We also helped dig and even the foundation of the plot for the second of three Habitat houses that will be built in this area. Although we will not get to see the completion of the construction on the first house, it was a great experience to contribute the physical labor that we could. This service trip was a valuable experience that was magnified by the visible differences that our contributions made. It was refreshing to work with our hands and bodies when so many of us are used to working at school with our minds and pencils. I think everyone enjoyed volunteering and participating in this trip and we look forward to next year's collegiate challenge.

Audrey Trigg, '05

## In the Spotlight

### Dreama Gentry



**Dreama Gentry**

Dreama Gentry is the director of Berea College's Special Programs. It is composed of GEAR Up, a federal partnership program with Rockcastle County Schools, the Elderhostel Program for adults over the age of 55, and the Community Education and Conferences programs. As the director, Dreama works with her staff to ensure that they are administered according to funding guidelines and goals.

Dreama is from the local area, growing up in Lincoln County. She graduated from Berea College in 1989 with a B.A. in Political Science and a minor in Philosophy. After Berea, Dreama went on to attend the University of Kentucky College of Law and received her J.D. in 1992. Prior to her employment at Berea College, she practiced law in Bowling Green, Kentucky for three years.

Dreama remains at Berea College because she believes in the work that the college does, particularly the college's commitment to serve Appalachia. Her goals are to continue to develop partnerships with local schools, agencies, and individuals. She also serves on several local boards, using her many talents—grant writing, facilitation, and legal experience—to serve the Berea Arts Council, the Human/Economic Appalachian Development Corporation, and Forward in the Fifth, a non-profit organization working to improve the schools of Eastern Kentucky.

Outside of work, Dreama assists her partner, Hasan Davis, in the development of his living history presentations, and is an avid reader. Dreama spends the majority of her free time with her son Malcolm, who she says is the center of her life.

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