



The Agapé Center for Service and Learning develops, administers, resources, and coordinates programs of service-learning, community service, and mission, contributing to the mission of Messiah College to “educate men and women toward maturity of intellect, character, and Christian faith in preparation for lives of service, leadership, and reconciliation in church and society.”

SERVICE-LEARNING:

# THE IMPACT

Volume I, Issue I

## PROGRAM SPOTLIGHT: The S.A.L.T. Program

A partnership between the Agapé Center and the Harrisburg Institute



The Harrisburg Institute houses 25 community-driven individuals.

Downtown Harrisburg presents both a challenge and opportunity to interact, directly or indirectly, with the hustle and bustle of local community life and culture. The Harrisburg Institute, located on Dewberry Street, is “an interdisciplinary research, service, and training institute, which develops strategies of community engagement that address core community issues and fosters mutual learning among students, educators, agencies, and communities, with

priority given to urban neighborhoods in Harrisburg and the Capital region.” Ultimately, this equates to a culmination of academic, social, and cooperative collaboration. The S.A.L.T. program “engages students in the following areas: volunteer service in Harrisburg, intentionally living in community, and orientation and engagement in the city life of Harrisburg, with particular concentration on socio-cultural, political, and religious dynamics.”

### MESSAGE TO THE READER

In this issue, you will find insights into the service-learning program at Messiah College. Our students, faculty, and community partners have all contributed to the publication of this newsletter by graciously sharing their stories. Our featured alumni focus story serves to provide a glimpse into the valuable experiences that our service-learning programs provide. By reading the impact that one person can have on the community, we hope that you will be inspired to get involved. Read further to learn how—and why—service-learning makes a difference in the places we live. Thank you for your support of our work and all that you do for the greater Capital region!

*Chad Frey, Director of the Agapé Center for Service and Learning*

### COMMUNITY PARTNER SPOTLIGHT:

#### Big Brothers Big Sisters

To help children reach their potential through professionally supported one-to-one relationships.

The Greater Harrisburg Area Office  
1500 North Second Street, Suite H  
Harrisburg, PA 17102  
Phone: 717-236-0199



## EDUCATOR SPOTLIGHT: Craig Dalen



Nestled on Dewberry Street, an easy walk to the bustle of Strawberry Square and a stone's throw from Whitaker Center, is the Harrisburg Institute. Its steel-framed windows reflect the surrounding cityscape. Although established in 2002, the Institute moved from North Street in Harrisburg to Dew-

berry Street in 2007. In contrast to the enclosing reinforced concrete, the Institute is shifting—academic dynamics, that is. Currently home to the S.A.L.T. program (Serving And Living Together) at Messiah College, the Institute is now witness to socially-conscious and servant-minded students seeking to engage with their community.

An integral part of this establishing community is Craig Dalen, (a 2003 Northwestern University and 2009 Temple University graduate) who has earned his undergraduate degree in business administration and management and a master's degree in education organizational development. Originally spending time at Messiah College as residence director of Witmer Hall and fulfilling duties as director of community life in Harrisburg, Dalen presently serves as program manager, coordinating the usage of classrooms and academic spaces and teaching courses at the Harrisburg Institute.

Engaging the City (SERV 235) is a course which Dalen is very fond of instructing. "This is

a great way for students to pull back the layers of complexity of urban dynamics—using Harrisburg as the place for service-learning," says Dalen. Additionally, Engaging the City is not only a service-learning course, but it also meets the requirements for the Cross Cultural waiver—although it is only offered to students living in the Harrisburg housing."

Dalen encourages students of all years to consider voluntary service through the Agapé Center, academic service-learning (opportunities for an array of majors), or even living as one of 25 S.A.L.T. students intrigued with the workings of the city and its social structures. "This space is still Messiah College. The Institute is a Messiah 'footprint' in the city of Harrisburg," says Dalen.

*For more information on opportunities and experiences through the Harrisburg Institute, check out the Web site at [messiah.edu/hbg](http://messiah.edu/hbg).*

## ALUMNI SPOTLIGHT: Jess West '08

Jess West, a 2008 Messiah graduate, holds firm to the idea that being connected and actively participating within the local community is "crucial for understanding and genuinely applying one's self toward an individual vocation or calling."

With a degree in early childhood education with a concentration in special education, West has brought and continues to bring a servant passion for teaching local youth in the Harrisburg Pennsylvania School District. The desire to serve through teaching developed during her time as a student at Messiah College.

Messiah-inspired experiences significantly shaped her attitude toward leading, living, and serving. These experiences included participation in the Best Buddies program, where students can establish one-

on-one friendships with adults who have special needs at Paxton Ministries in Harrisburg; volunteering at Paxton Ministries by visiting and spending time with disabled residents; and serving as coordinator of health and special needs for student outreach missions through the Agapé Center.

It was through mandatory junior-year classroom field experience when West found her particular interest in the schools of Harrisburg. Living in the Harrisburg Institute, West student-taught throughout her junior and senior years, gaining invaluable skills through hands-on training. "The combination of experience, teaching, and application of my own learning in the classroom truly inspired me to become immersed

and serve through [the field of] education," she says.

This mindset transferred with West as she dove into her current challenge: teaching preschool professionally in the Downey School of Harrisburg. "It was all here for me," says West. "I am connected to the district I teach in, I live in the same neighborhood as many of my students, and I am having a significant impact on their personal futures."



**SERVICE-LEARNING** is a type of curriculum that intentionally integrates academic learning with community service in a credit-bearing academic course. Students participate in an authentic service activity which meets needs identified by the community (designed within the framework of a mutually beneficial relationship) and then they critically reflect on that activity. Thus, students gain a deep understanding of course content, a commitment to socially responsible citizenship, and develop skills and understanding needed to contribute to civic well-being.

### MESSIAH COLLEGE AGAPÉ CENTER FOR SERVICE AND LEARNING

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