

SERVICE-LEARNING:

THE IMPACT

Volume 2, Issue 2

PROGRAM SPOTLIGHT: Sustainability



Sustainability at Messiah is an example of advocacy for environmental practices and Christian stewardship.

Sustainability is more than a buzz word at Messiah College. The Grantham Community Garden is run by students as a community supported agriculture (CSA). Community members purchase shares, which also support Messiah College Dining Services. Students plant, cultivate, and harvest the humble quarter-acre organic garden throughout the summer months. During the academic year, students take on a different role to advocate and raise awareness about sustainable practices like composting and gardening.

The Community Garden meets a “different kind of need,” according to Agapé Center Director Chad Frey. Sustainable Agriculture Outreach Coordinator, Katie Todd, describes the Community Garden as a “student-driven effort to demonstrate and promote real-life concepts of sustainable agriculture” while reminding us of the importance of Christian stewardship. A metaphorical bridge is built, drawing the local farmers, Messiah community, and the greater community into closer harmony by interrelated food sources.

In addition to serving the community, Messiah College students actively engage in their academics through curricular service-learning. Dr. David Fos-

ter’s class Plant Ecology studies the changes of “plant form, function, community composition, and community diversity across environmental gradients.” Foster’s class emphasizes the connection between the classroom and garden as an opportunity for experiential learning by propagating crops for the garden.

However, sustainable agriculture is not just for the environmental science majors. Senior English major, Kinley Zook, finds connections and inspiration between her work as the garden manager and her studies. “As an English major, I first thought that working in the garden would mean a change of working style, but I’ve found those comforting similarities of contemplation and mindset of respect that the garden and the English major share,” said Zook. Students are finding relationships between their service, academics, and Christian lifestyle through advocacy and learning from God’s creations. “For our students, being involved with the garden is raising awareness that we’re part of a local economy, ecology and community. Through the CSA it’s deepening the relationships they have with the community around them and with the earth,” said Frey.

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:

Harrisburg Catholic Worker House

Recognizing the need for housing and hospitality for men out of prison with addiction problems.

1440 Market Street
Harrisburg, PA 17103
717-230-8328



**MESSIAH
COLLEGE.**

EDUCATOR SPOTLIGHT: Erik Lindquist

Dr. Erik Lindquist, associate professor of Biology and Environmental Science, defines sustainability as “trimming excess to live within our means to think about our children and do some legacy thinking”. We must decrease how much we use and, thus, leaving the wasteful footprint behind us.

In 2008, Lindquist also traveled to Rodeo, Bolivia with students to evaluate and observe the effects of eco-tourism, soil and land use, and other factors. Food for the hungry used the information he provided and turned a \$50,000 grant into a \$100,000 grant to further research the area. In his latest trip, Lindquist went to Bolivia for his 6 month sabbatical in 2009. During that time he worked with SAWYER water filters to improve the health of local children, helping decrease diarrhea in children 60-90%.

On campus, Dr. Lindquist teaches The Inca

World: Ecological Anthropology in the Andes. In the class, students will test seeds to see if they help the community. The students hope to teach the families new ways to use agriculture. During their time in class, students will learn about Bolivian agriculture and teach the people of Bolivia practical ways to use their surroundings to create a beneficial change for the local community. Using the information gathered, students will research the benefits of the agricultural changes applied to the community. An expected 10-12 students will attend the trip during May-term 2011. Nicole Steiner '10, who took the class in 2008, says the class “fostered class discussion and learning better than any classroom course ever did”. Dr. Lindquist’s overall commitment to sustainability involves his work in Chile, Bo-



livia, teaching Messiah students, and his own family. He has helped bring stability to many communities in Bolivia and Chile. Sustainability is not something that can be overlooked but it is something we must care for and nurture through education and service to our environment. As we become more conscious of sustainability the more we realize “sustainability is the cornerstone of life”.

Student SPOTLIGHT: Roanna Martin '11

Roanna Martin, a senior Science and Nutrition major, has been actively involved in sustainable agriculture service-learning since her freshman year at Messiah College. Her involvement began the first few days of college orientation during Into the Streets, a service plunge day in the community for new students. Her group was assigned Joshua Farm, a community supported agriculture (CSA) farm based in Harrisburg. Joshua Farm provides fresh vegetables at minimal cost to urban families, while educating the youth on nutrition. After that initial experience of service and learning, Roanna felt compelled to return weekly for the remainder of her first semester. This was the jumpstart to her next four years dedicated to service in her local and global community through her declared major.

Roanna’s experience at Joshua Farm opened her to a new way to connect Christian service to her love for growing food and exposing others to a lifestyle of healthy eating. She explains her weekly volunteering role as helping to complete “the everyday tasks of running a farm”. She views her work impacting the youth in the area by exposing them to the fact that food comes from soil. This was a shock for her, considering Roanna

grew up eating dinner with ingredients that came straight from her own family’s farm. Roanna also gained insight into the way that inner city food systems work and how essential it is to increase availability of fresh vegetables in urban areas. All of these experiences played a role in her interest to spread the word about sustainable agriculture.

After freshman year, Roanna continued to get involved in sustainable agriculture through her coursework. She took a service-learning course taught by Agapé Center Director, Chad Frey, in which she learned more about diving into service. Through the class, Roanna was given a grant to work this past summer for Joshua Farm. With her new “Farmstand Manager and Nutrition Educator” title, she was able to expand her role in the community. She taught weekly cooking classes focused on using herbs and vegetables straight from the farm to create delicious, healthy, and easy-to-make meals. After this experience, she realized that her “passion for growing things as a child can translate to a career that can help people”.

Roanna has taken this concept beyond her local community and applied it globally. Last summer she went on a Community to Community (C2C) missions trip to Messiah’s sister community

in Rodeo, Bolivia.

C2C is a relationship sponsored by Food for the Hungry (FH) that connects developing world communities to American churches. The churches send short-term mission teams to their assigned community and “focus on a specific need or project determined by the field they are visiting”(www.fh.org). Church members are also encouraged to sponsor a child in their sister community to make personal connections. Although the focus of the trip was not agriculture, Roanna had the opportunity to meet and work with her sponsored child in the potato farms because of her personal background in farming. She decided to begin researching sustainable agriculture for the community of Rodeo and will be returning this summer to learn and interact more with this agricultural town. Roanna is a passionate individual with many aspirations and goals for the future. She plans on pursuing a job where she can put her love for food, people, and sustainability into action... and there is no doubt that she is on the right track to do so.



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 that 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, developing skills and understanding needed to contribute to civic well-being.

MESSIAH COLLEGE AGAPÉ CENTER FOR SERVICE AND LEARNING

One College Avenue, Grantham, PA 17027
717-796-1800, ext. 7255
Chad Frey, director, ext. 7218
CFrey@messiah.edu