During spring break this past March, I embarked on a hiking trip in the Tennessee portion of Great Smoky Mountain National Park. After the initial sunny, warm days had deteriorated into hours of blizzard conditions, five friends and I arrived at an Appalachian Trail shelter to find another young hiker displaying the early stages of hypothermia. Although it was not our intention, we found ourselves in a time and place to extend an act of hospitality. Through the combined intervention of our group, the young hiker returned home safe and healthy.

After the conclusion of the trip, I had time to begin reflecting on all that had happened, and my mind returned again and again to Jesus’ story of the Good Samaritan. Here we find a man traveling upon a road separating two estranged lands. When the Samaritan stumbles upon the victimized stranger, there is no hesitation in his response. Luke writes, “He went to him and bandaged his wounds, having poured oil and wine on them. Then he put him on his own animal, brought him to an inn, and took care of him” (10:34 NRSV).

The Samaritan man becomes, in part, a symbol of what active hospitality is. Active hospitality is an action that often occurs in the space where the commonplace, subtle, and innate divisions between strangers fall away and Christ’s love for all people pours out in action. When Jesus challenges and chastises his audience and today’s reader with the statement, “Go and do likewise,” one can no longer ignore the importance of an act of hospitality. My time spent in both the academic and communal sides of Messiah College has shown me that the hospitable community extends beyond the definition that holds its door open to the stranger, but also actively seeks places and situations where God’s love for all might be manifested. The challenge, therefore, for Messiah College is to continue to educate men and women in light of this calling. Students must not only gain an understanding of the field in which they study, but they must also recognize and remain open to breaking down the barriers that create strangers. Messiah College’s current undertakings in a wide spectrum of areas—including the Faith in the Academy conference and the service opportunities supported through the Agapé Center for Service and Learning—speak to the College’s emphasis on an active, hospitable community. The task of Messiah College and Christian higher education, in a time when boundaries, fear, and misunderstanding abound, is to reflect Christ’s mandate to “go and do likewise.”

Lucas J. Sheaffer ’05 is an admissions counselor at Messiah College.
Faith in the Academy speakers challenge participants to think beyond traditional paradigms

During the fall of 2005, Messiah College hosted a groundbreaking conference: Faith in the Academy, a gathering of 350 scholars from across North America who together began to rethink traditional paradigms of combining faith and scholarship in higher education. Participants based their discussions on ideas raised in Scholarship and Christian Faith: Enlarging the Conversation, an Oxford University Press book written by Messiah professors Douglas Jacobsen and Rhonda Hustedt Jacobsen, along with other Messiah educators.

Drawing on this important book, speakers and participants considered the ways in which scholarship and teaching are perceived and practiced in light of Christian faith. Reconsidering historical models, the group proposed a shift to welcoming a wider variety of methodologies and Christian faith heritages into future conversations.

Conference speakers included such renowned scholars as Lee Shulman, president of the Carnegie Foundation for the Advancement of Teaching; Robert C. Andringa, president of the Council of Christian Colleges and Universities; Monika K. Hellwig, president and executive director of the Association of Catholic Colleges and Universities; and Richard H. Ekman, president of the Council for Independent Colleges.

Reflecting on the conference, one attendee, Barbara K. Olsen, of Lee College, Baytown, Texas, said that she most appreciated the participants’ “passionate commitment to and interest in the questions [raised at the conference].”
Messiah College culminated its first common learning program during the spring of 2005 with a pilot of a new core course, Created and Called for Community. A group of 140 first-year students, along with their resident assistants, participated in the course. The College fostered the creation of a complementary living and learning community for these students by housing them in Hess Residence Hall.

The new pilot course was linked to a common reading program that involved all first-year students in reading James McBride's The Color of Water and in attending a lecture by the author-musician. Building on that experience, the new course featured a rich variety of readings, music, films, and art, including a final art project intended to celebrate creativity. Through all the course's activities, students explored the significance of being created in God's image.

Many students in the course responded positively to their experiences. "From this class I have learned how passionate my professor is about God's active role in our lives," says Meghan Donaghe '07. "I have also learned how important it is to explore our own faith through looking at the faith of others."

As part of Family Weekend, Messiah dedicated its newest student social hub, the Larsen Student Union (pictured below), during the fall of 2004. The ceremony gave parents — many of whom are also alumni — a glimpse of the ways in which the campus is evolving to enrich student life.

President Kim Phipps spoke at the event, which featured international desserts, a performance by singer/songwriter Derek Webb, formerly of Caedmon's Call; a Brain Storm trivia game; and an open-mike session.

The Larsen Student Union, named after College trustee and benefactor Dorothy Larsen, offers a place for students to relax with friends, listen to poets or eclectic bands, play pool or foosball, or meet with the many student organizations.
MESSIAH COLLEGE ENHANCES EDUCATION
FOR HARRISBURG'S YOUNGEST STUDENTS

When Don Murk, professor of early childhood education and Boyer Fellow, learned of the first collaborative effort in Pennsylvania between a school district and a Head Start program, he was quick to offer his services.

Seeking to educate Harrisburg's youngest population, Capital Area Head Start and the Harrisburg School District teamed up in 2002 to provide preschool education for area 3- and 4-year-olds. Their year-round program currently serves over 500 children, preparing them for school not just academically but emotionally and physically, as well.

In February 2005, Messiah's Harrisburg Institute sponsored a professional development day for the Harrisburg School District early learning educators who work with this preschool population. Murk coordinated the event, which drew more than 100 participants. "We're giving teachers tools and information that will really benefit the students in their classrooms," he says. "Each time we do one of these professional development sessions, we're asking the teachers what they need more support in — what they'd like to learn about."

Messiah College's involvement with the Harrisburg School District is part of the greater Harrisburg Institute for Community Research and Collaborative Partnerships, which develops strategies of community engagement that address core issues and fosters mutual learning among students, educators, agencies, and communities, with priority given to urban neighborhoods in Harrisburg and the capital region.

“...We know that we cannot do what needs to be done for children and families alone. To be able to tap the expertise of a higher education facility at no cost is just invaluable.”
— Debbie Reuveny, director of early childhood programs in the Harrisburg School District

Nearly 1,500 students, educators, and community members volunteered for the sixth annual Special Olympics, joining 1,000 athletes for a day of fun and friendly competition. Volunteer “buddies” cheered on the Special Olympians throughout the competition.

“...We know that we cannot do what needs to be done for children and families alone. To be able to tap the expertise of a higher education facility at no cost is just invaluable.”
— Debbie Reuveny, director of early childhood programs in the Harrisburg School District

MESSIAH COLLEGE INTO THE STREETS

GIVING TO ALL THE WORLD

MESSIAH's AGAPI CENTER FOR SERVICE AND LEARNING REPORTS STRONG SERVICE AND MISSION PARTICIPATION FOR 2004–2005:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>INTO THE STREETS</th>
<th>988 first-year and transfer students</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>SERVICE DAY</td>
<td>750 Special Olympics student volunteers</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>660 other students serving at 46 sites</td>
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<tr>
<td>REGULAR LOCAL COMMUNITY SERVICE</td>
<td>665 participants</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SPACE TRIPS</td>
<td>1056 participants</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>INDIVIDUAL SUMMER MISSION TRIPS</td>
<td>41 students in more than 25 countries</td>
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<tr>
<td>SUMMER INTERNATIONAL MISSION TRIPS</td>
<td>37 students in 4 countries</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SPRING BREAK INTERNATIONAL MISSION TRIPS</td>
<td>22 students in 2 countries</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Thomas Baker ’05 (second from left) and area children combine topsoil and peat moss to prepare for a vegetable garden at the Silence of Mary Home for teens in Harrisburg. Baker is a member of Messiah College’s Students in Free Enterprise (SIFE), which is installing a greenhouse at the home.

Messiah College establishes a winning streak of service
Students in Free Enterprise recognized for global influence

The Students in Free Enterprise (SIFE) team at Messiah College is combining business skills with service to make an impact in the United States and abroad, whether by providing free income tax assistance to the economically disadvantaged in Harrisburg or helping to create a micro-enterprise farm in Mahadaiga, Burkina Faso. Comprised of 32 students, under the direction of Terry Earhart, assistant professor of business information systems, Messiah College’s SIFE team helps others learn entrepreneurship, personal finance skills, and business ethics.

Last year, among their many projects, SIFE members offered business consulting for a farm in Costa Rica; helped two women in Indonesia launch their own quilt-making business; and created No Limits 2004, a weeklong camp that introduces high school students to business skills and ethics.

For their initiative and service, the Messiah College SIFE team has been awarded first place for three consecutive years at the SIFE USA Regional Competition. At this event, students give presentations on their work and compete with students from other colleges across Pennsylvania. But the awards, while greatly appreciated, are not the ultimate goal of Messiah’s SIFE team. “If we can help one person, that is success for us,” says Amanda Lavis ’05, SIFE vice president of finance. “Seeing how one person and one team can make a difference has really inspired me. Nothing can compare to the real-world experience you gain.”

STUDENT PROFILE

WEE LEE SIM ’06
Hometown: Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia
Major: Economics

“The Philadelphia Campus expanded my conception of the United States...I have realized that my notion of America lacked many important dimensions such as urban poverty and unequal opportunities...While at the Philadelphia Campus, I appreciated the ability to take advantage of the academic breadth of a public university while maintaining the close-knit relationships unique to Christian colleges.”