



# P-16 INITIATIVE

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## Teaming Up to Stop Bullying through Forum Theatre Performances

By Daniel Walsh

Sometimes words are just not enough. That is the very reason why the UNO *Introduction to Theatre* class and Millard Horizon High School students taught by Mrs. Rose Bernstein teamed up to prevent bullying through a special kind of performance called forum theatre. Based on the work of Brazilian Augusto Boal, this unique style of theatrical performance invites the audience to become spect-actors. UNO and Horizon students created and presented five interactive vignettes on how to identify and stop bullying to Millard Rowher Elementary 3rd graders.

“The students are learning the forum theatre approach,” UNO Professor Doug Paterson said, “whereby short scenes show a good person confronted by difficult antagonists, struggling mightily to get what they want and what the community wants, but failing.” At the final event, Horizon and UNO students went out into the community to perform these scenes of bullying. Afterwards, Rowher students discussed options for what the protagonist could have done differently, and then took the place of the protagonist to play out their ideas.

Reflection and critical thinking were key components to this peer-education. “Critical thinking is foundational to this kind of theatre” explained Dr. Paterson. For example, the Rowher students learned through trial-and-error how effectively different strategies worked in the scenes. Millard Horizon and UNO students created the vignettes after sharing personal experiences of bullying, leading to written companion pieces by the Horizon students. Impassioned by the experience, one Horizon student wrote that she “hopes to be the best I can to inspire kids to do better and not bully.”

Service Learning is an experiential, collaborative method of teaching using projects that promote academic learning and are tightly linked to course content while meeting the need of the community.

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## P.A.W.S. and Reflect

By Deibi Sibrian



"I want to keep my senior friend," said Sandy a 4th grader at Montclair Elementary School. The P.A.W.S. (Puzzle Adventures with Seniors) project had Mrs. Barb Stratman's English Language Learner (ELL) students from Montclair Elementary School completing puzzles with seniors from the Montclair Community Center, aided by UNO students from Dr. Lyn Holley's *Programs and Services for the Elderly* course. The puzzles served as a catalyst that sparked intergenerational conversations between the seniors and the Montclair ELL students, who increased language and vocabulary skills in the process.

Susan Sunderman, the Coordinator of Montclair Senior Center, highlighted the importance of this intergenerational exchange: "The seniors cannot wait for the kids to come each month! In fact, they wish they came more often.

The seniors are very proud of the child they are helping. After the kids leave for the day, they often sit around and tell each other all about their student. The seniors have gained a friend, their self-esteem has been lifted by helping their student, and they have had a lot of fun doing it. They feel good about themselves. Smiles and laughter abound."

Over the course of the semester, the students had the opportunity to demonstrate leadership skills such as responsibility, trustworthiness, and selflessness. They also had the opportunity to practice the four domains of language learning: reading, writing, speaking, and listening. "The highlight of the program was watching my ELL students give their senior friends a guided tour of Montclair Elementary," said Mrs. Stratman. This is a partnership that is bound to last.

## Opening Minds and Hearts to Poverty

By Olga Zeisler

When the realities of poverty and homelessness seem to be hidden, just open the door! This spring, UNO Professor Keller-Charbonneau's *Survey of Criminal Justice* course and students from Nathan Hale Magnet Middle School did exactly that. They swung the door wide open to meet and serve the clients at the Open Door Mission. While at the Open Door Mission and the Lydia Center for Women, students had a chance learn about the causes of homelessness and uncover developing trends in the relationships between poverty and crime rates.

Knowing the source of the problems as well as solving them is no easy task. The students also met with a cadre of professionals from Heartland Family Services and Omaha World Herald who have first-hand experience and/or have researched correlations between poverty and crime rates. The students were able to get the speakers' perspectives, ask insightful questions, and receive feedback on their viewpoints. It is conversations like these that help students better understand their community, reshape attitudes, and create a culture of involved, caring citizenship. This culture combines a pride for their neighborhood, and commitment to step through that open door into the world of volunteerism, responsibility, and civic engagement.

# Talking and Walking: Interdisciplinary Advocacy for a Crosswalk

By Erika Jacobson

Understanding language is one of the essential keys to learning. Dr. Mitzi Ritzman and Mrs. Cathy Nelson created their Learning Strategies service learning project based on this idea. For the past several semesters, Dr. Mitzi Ritzman's speech pathology students enrolled in her *Special Education/Communication Disorders* course have been visiting Blackburn Alternative Program to assist with language-related topics in the classroom.

This semester, the service goal of the project was to advocate for a crosswalk to be installed on Hamilton Street, in front of the high school. The UNO students

worked collaboratively with several Blackburn instructors including Mrs. Hilary George (Graphic Design), Mr. Greg Buelt and Ms. Dorothy Walker-Dombeck (Government/Juvenile Justice), Ms. Amellia Hansen (Auto Care), Ms. Jennifer Noelle (Economics), and Ms. Ladeidre Jackson (Science) to achieve this goal. This interdisciplinary approach to classroom learning had the students count cars crossing the street, research processes in Omaha to obtain a crosswalk, and create stylized infographic posters featuring statistics on pedestrian traffic safety.

In April, the Blackburn students presented their research about the need for a school crosswalk to Omaha City Officials in the hope that it would persuade the city to act. The UNO and Blackburn students later presented what they learned in the process. UNO student Jordan Gearhart reflected, "It was a great opportunity to interact with the kids at Blackburn while facilitating their language skills." While the crosswalk has not yet been put in, a school crossing sign was installed in front of the high school due to the students' hard work. We look forward to future developments in the crosswalk on Hamilton Street!



## Understanding Chinese Culture across Generations



By Angeela Shrestha

Students from Crystal Liu's *Chinese Language Class* at Central High School and Dr. Lyn Holley's *Working with Minority Elderly* UNO course partnered with the Omaha Chinese Christian Church this spring for a P-16 service learning project. Throughout the project, students interacted with the native Chinese seniors and organized an intergenerational activity at the Church. The main goal was to provide an organized outlet to bridge communication between the students and the seniors while also practicing Chinese language skills, through speaking and reading.

While at the Church, UNO students designed an interactive and educational game for Central students and the Chinese seniors that had them learn about culture and language. The groups matched animal signs of the Chinese Zodiac New Year Calendar with the corresponding 'attributes' of that animal, and then, with help from the seniors, interpreted the meaning. For the duration of the event, the seniors and students engaged in Chinese conversation.

This gathering was an opportunity for the students to meet and talk with native Chinese speakers as well as learn about China's rich history and culture across the generations.

## All that Jazz: Bringing Families Together Through Art



By Erika Jacobson

Dr. Ashley Vaughns wanted to create an opportunity for the students in her *Family-Centered Partnerships* course to work with young children and their families from the Omaha community. This idea led to her partnership with Ms. Janet Ashley of the Love's Jazz and Art Center and Ms. Anne O'Hara of the Learning Community Center of South Omaha. Through their collaboration, they created a two-night family event which took place in January and February at the Love's Jazz and Art Center, named after local jazz musician Preston Love. Families with young children, ages four to eight, attended the event to work with the UNO students on

family friendly activities related to reading and jazz. In January, children's author Gregory Christie read his book *Jazz Baby* to the program participants and led jazz-related activities. In February, the UNO students created books about jazz with the children and their families.

"The arts are so important for students, all students, to help with creativity," Dr. Vaughns said, "It's about engaging with families and using resources in the community to engage families." Dr. Vaughns hopes to continue the project and create a program that will not only benefit Omaha families but also provide an opportunity for her early education students to learn how to work effectively with young children and their families.

## Davis Middle School Showcases Human Rights

By: Anastasia Most

To connect course objectives with global issues, UNO students from Dr. Jennifer Harbour's *Black American Culture* course took multiple trips to the new Alfonzo W. Davis Middle School throughout the spring semester to help Mrs. Julie Meyer and Mrs. Hope Hibler's 8th grade social studies students research different human rights topics. Using the United Nations' Universal Declaration of Human Rights as a template, each Davis student selected one article on which to create an educational poster and a related activity to be showcased at the Davis Family Night. The UNO students guided these efforts and were greeted by a diverse group of students who were anxious to learn from their UNO mentors.



Reflecting on the project, UNO student Ra'Shar Bibbs recognized that "diversity is what makes up the whole of humanity and it is our job to reflect that in our work. Having the opportunity to help in the success of the children

of Alfonza W. Davis Middle School was a humbling experience." The first annual Davis Family Night was a perfect opportunity for all students to celebrate and reflect on the great work accomplished throughout the semester. At the

event, students and their families listened to Sierra Leone resident Samuel Menyongar discuss his experience with civil war in Sierra Leone and Liberia. Afterwards, families toured the students' posters and presentations of human rights issues.

## Sharing Stories, Building Confidence



By Rachel Johnson

Students from Bryan Middle School and UNO Professor Jacqueline Reiser's *Social Work and Civic Engagement* course had a unique service learning opportunity this spring to interact with parents enrolled in English Language Learners (ELL) classes, representing diverse ages, languages, and cultures. As a part of their project, the UNO students prepped the 8th graders on how to organize and execute effective interviews. The middle schoolers utilized these techniques at the Learning Community Center of South Omaha to interview these parents about their lives and upbringings.

The project format allowed for student-ownership in the process, as well as increased cultural understanding. According to Learning Community ELL

instructor Joey Mollner, this particular service learning project gave his students "an opportunity to increase their confidence in having a conversation in English and to proudly share a part of their life story".

Using these stories, Bryan students created biographical children's books from the interviews, which they presented to the Learning Community parents at a final celebration. As Bryan Middle School teacher Len Stessman reflected, "I think this has been a wonderful experience for my students. They have had a chance to see firsthand the great work ethic of those at the Learning Community Center and experience the excitement of the college atmosphere in their visit to the UNO campus."



## UNO/King Science Aquaponics Program wins First Lady's Service Award

By Rachel Johnson

King Science and Technology Magnet Middle School students, UNO students, and Whispering Roots were honored with ServeNebraska's First Lady Award this spring in acknowledgment of their outstanding volunteer program. The award recognized the importance of introducing children to healthy and lifelong eating habits through learning about sustainable farming practices.

UNO and King Science Middle School has been participating in P-16 service learning projects with Whispering Roots for three years. This interdisciplinary partnership has spanned Chemistry, Biology, and Goodrich program courses. This semester, King Science students collaborated with UNO Biology Professor Dr.

Karen Murch-Shafer's TLC students to focus on plant respiration. On a chilly winter day, the group sent native flowering seeds on a balloon launch into the upper atmosphere with the goal of testing how high altitude might affect plant growth rates.

King Science teacher Kris Denton said that the First Lady Award "was a huge honor. It has been a momentous partnership between Whispering Roots, the UNO Service Learning Academy, and the professors of UNO. To be acknowledged for the work we have been doing the past three years is wonderful and it spurs us to do more!" Indeed, they someday hope to enhance STEM programs throughout Omaha Public Schools with mini-aquaponics systems of their own.

# Sew In Style: Bringing New Life to Old Clothes

By Tiffany Kelly

UNO's new Community Engagement Center (CEC) opened with style this spring—Sew in Style, that is! As part of this P-16 Service Learning collaboration, Dr. Dave Ogden's *Public Relations* students rebranded and promoted a fashion show, while the students in textile and design classes from Omaha North and Central High Schools, with a budget of \$10.00 each, shopped at the Goodwill for source garments. The high school students spent the next months repurposing these garments, resulting in fashionable and hip designs to be worn by their peers. In preparation for the final event, students explored their creativity, critical thinking, and planning skills, in addition to taking ownership of their work. "It is a much more personal project for me," said Ruby Bless, an Omaha North Magnet High student.



Omaha North and Central High School students visited UNO for a campus tour, participated in presentations led by individuals in various areas of the beauty and fashion industry, and exhibited their designs at the fashion show. WOWT's daybreak reporter Katey Stukey emceed the fashion show, highlighting the

repurposed designs created by Omaha North High and Central High students. The goals of Sew in Style fashion show were to bridge the gap between high school students and careers in fashion by exposing students to local fashion professionals while providing them with hands-on experience through a 'Project Runway' inspired fashion show.

The collaborative efforts of Goodwill Industries, Omaha North and Central High School students, and Dr. Ogden's *Public Relations* students made this "must see" event a shining example of what service learning is all about!

# Sacred Circle: Global Connections

By Carol Redwing

In its third year, the Sacred Circle service learning project continued to bring together UNO students from Dr. Edouardo Zendejas' *Contemporary Issues of the Native American* students with N.I.C.E. (Native Indigenous Centered Education) students at Omaha South High School. This year-long P-16 service learning program takes place weekly and revolves around Native American culture such as arts, food, games and discussion.

This semester, the Sacred Circle group focused on American Indian hand games and crafts. For the crafting portion of the project, the students made dreamcatchers; the first time for nearly all of the students. These traditional American Indian activities, imperative to cultural exchange, forged bonds between the college and high school students.

Another exciting component to Sacred Circle has been the connections made with

Aboriginal Australians. Last fall, South High School and UNO students created videos for Australian high school students in Southeastern Queensland detailing life as urban Native Americans. In exchange, the Australian students shared glimpses of their lives through art and humor. As part of this global interaction, Sacred Circle students received a parcel containing traditional Aboriginal artwork, a collage of the students and humorous pictures to illustrate life in Australia.

Sacred Circle students created dreamcatchers to send back to the Southeastern Queensland students.

Although nearly ten thousand miles and a multitude of cultures exist between the two groups of students, this collaboration illustrates that one's existence can parallel another's in extraordinary ways, if we are willing to share.

## Letter from the Program Coordinator

2014 is shaping up to be an unforgettable year for the P-16 Initiative in the Service Learning Academy! We wanted to share with you some highlights from the year and upcoming events:

- The Service Learning Academy moved into the new Barbara Weitz Community Engagement Center. The 60,000 square foot, nationally unique space serves to strengthen UNO's existing outreach efforts and to foster future opportunities for partnerships between UNO students, faculty, staff and nonprofit or governmental organizations. The Service Learning Academy is one of several organizations housed in the center, along with UNO student leadership programs, the Buffet Early Childhood Institute, Brennan Labor Institute, and 20 nonprofit partners. On April 17th the building was dedicated and named after Barbara Weitz, a former UNO Grace Abbott School of Social Work faculty member. The dedication provided a call to action for collaboration to impact community change.
- At the CEC Dedication, the Weitz Family announced the endowed Service Learning Directorship, which upon retirement will be known as the Paul Sather Distinguished Directorship. We are thankful to learn and serve with Paul each day and are thrilled to celebrate this honor with him!
- The sixth Service Learning Seminar will be held July 14-18, 2014, in the Barbara Weitz Community Engagement Center. Please encourage colleagues to participate and learn about quality service learning pedagogy and practical application. Registration is available online at [www.unomaha.edu/servicelearning](http://www.unomaha.edu/servicelearning).
- The 2014 Service Learning Seminar Alumni event will be held May 16th from 4-6 pm in the Barbara Weitz Community Engagement Center. This year's event is taking a French salon theme and will include engaging and interactive formats that share the high quality service learning scholarship happening across the P-16 continuum. We hope you will join us for a drink, baguette, éclair, and conversation!

Thank you to all our service learning partners this school year!

Sincerely,

Julie Dierberger, P-16 Coordinator  
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