



UNIVERSITY OF Nebraska Omaha



SERVICE LEARNING ACADEMY P-16 INITIATIVE

a **BUILDING BRIGHT FUTURES** Partner

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 needs of the community.

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For more information, visit us at www.unomaha.edu/servicelearning

Aquaponics

By Katie D'Agosto

In a quest to understand how the environment and its valuable resources can be protected and preserved, Dr. Richter-Egger's UNO Chemistry in the Environment students joined with King Science Magnet Middle School, Whispering Roots and the Service Learning Academy to explore "Aquaponics" and sustainable agriculture.

Whispering Roots is an organization that uses an innovative farming system to grow food in water, rather than soil, using 90% less water than traditional farming techniques. King Science Magnet Middle School and Whispering Roots have been working together throughout the year on their own Aquaponics system partnering with UNO students this spring to explore food deserts and sustainable solutions.

This collaboration involved service activities that enriched the learning experience for both the university and middle school students. The UNO students served the K-12 students by



experimenting with the water from their Aquaponics project. The information acquired regarding water solubility and chemical reactions was then taken back to Whispering Roots to improve the independent farming system that has been constructed in the K-12 classroom. UNO students gave presentations and led reflective discussions on specific topics regarding carbon, water, and nitrogen cycle, along with alternative energy resources and the impacts of acid rain within the environment.

Senior Citizen Prom

By Nvèr Hasratyan

"I hope you never wish to fade away, and I hope you will remain so young at heart" – said a Lewis and Clark Middle School choir student's grandparent and local senior resident who gathered at the middle school for the Senior Prom themed "Garden of the Young at Heart."

In partnership with UNO's Introduction to Gerontology class, the Prom was organized to engage students in intergenerational dialogues and encourage more meaningful experiences. Several students expressed strong interest in volunteer work with the senior citizens in the

future; "it is like working with your grandma!"

The project aimed at providing experiential learning opportunities in order to reduce the generational gap in the community. UNO students learned about the life experiences of seniors and challenges associated with aging by engaging in conversations with seniors. Lewis & Clark students practiced and shared their vocal music and harmonica performance skills while interacting with the elderly population and improving their own attitudes and perceptions on aging.

"We always hear we should worry about the future generation; I don't think so..."
-Local Senior Resident and prom participant

Style Proud

By Tess Larson

UNO Public Relations students, North High textile students, and Goodwill worked together on a project that culminated in a fashion show at UNO. The North High textiles class visited Goodwill Industries for a tour and a presentation on Goodwill's mission and history, followed by the opportunity to choose an article of clothing to be repurposed for the fashion show.

UNO Public Relations students organized and planned the fashion show event for the textiles students, inviting real models and fashion-related agencies to come speak with the high school students about

possible careers in the field of textiles, fashion, and design. After the fashion show the North High students created window displays for Goodwill with the refashioned clothing. Local high school textiles classes and their families were invited to participate in the event, which will be continued by a textiles class from another high school next year.

This project applied the concepts of sustainability in clothing and design in partnership with a local nonprofit agency while teaching the high school students that their skills, talents, and interests in fashion can lead to rewarding careers.

Early Childhood

By Annie Driver

Dr. Mitzi Ritzman's speech pathology students partnered with Building Bright Futures Teen and Young Parents Program to promote language and pre-literacy skills. UNO students developed individualized and age-appropriate "interaction plans" and shared these plans with parents at two events held at Turning Point Campus in early April.

Omaha Public Library led story time for the families and shared information about the variety of language development activities available at local public libraries. Families were able to sign up for library cards and received a free book with each registration.



Let's Move

By Krystal Boose

For the past year UNO Social Work & Civic Engagement students and Fontenelle sixth graders explored health issues that impact their community. In partnership with the Black Family Health & Wellness Association's (BFHWA) 14th annual health fair, the students developed age-appropriate activities to inform visiting children about hypertension, diabetes, heart disease, and causes of childhood obesity. BFHWA's health fair provides free screenings for participants in an effort to promote health and wellness in northeast Omaha and within Black families.

"This project was an amazing opportunity; it helped get students from two different age groups get involved in the community and teach themselves and others about the health risks and problems of childhood obesity. It was very rewarding I am very honored to be part of it."

-Brittney Livingston, UNO student

Last Fall, Professor Tanya Siena's social work students developed an educational scavenger hunt for the 6th graders while they visited UNO's health fair on campus and kept them active afterwards with a trip to the rock climbing wall in HPER. Once familiarized with the concept and purpose of a health fair, students began researching hypertension, diabetes, heart disease, and causes of childhood obesity for an in-class presentation.

During the Spring, the UNO and Fontenelle students utilized the research to create games for the BFHWA fair. The activities developed by the students ranged from "Health Jeopardy" and "Build a Healthy Meal" to exercise dice and a bean bag toss. On March 31st students staffed *The Children's Corner* at the BFHWA health fair and entertained youth from the community with their activities.

The project's inspiration came from singer Beyoncé's "Move Your Body" dance, based on First Lady Michelle Obama's *Let's Move* campaign. Sixth grade teacher, Mrs. Jeona Jensen, does the dance with her class every morning to help reiterate the importance of exercise and keeping healthy. This project successfully integrated science and english curriculums with civic engagement objectives to create a project full of meaningful service and youth voice.

Early Childhood continued...

“This event was such a great opportunity for the families to enhance the interactions with their child. The students did a great job providing ideas and ways to teach these young parents on how they can continue to interact with their child to increase their language literacy.”

-Alejandra Sinecio (Health & Family Support Liaison, Building Bright Futures)

UNO students were able to apply concepts learned in class and to transform them into valuable skills for young parents to use with their children. One parent noted, “I am so excited to go home with my baby and actually do what they showed us. I learned different ways to talk to my baby and that I should not always talk to her like a baby.”



P-16 Award

By Julie Dierberger

The P-16 service learning “Food for Thought” team consisting of Blackburn Alternative Program’s Culinary Academy, Adams Park Community Center, and UNO Gerontology students received ServeNebraska’s “Outstanding Community Partnership in Education” award on April 18th, 2012. The project partners were honored in North Platte at the First Lady’s Outstanding Community Service awards ceremony by Nebraska First Lady Sally Ganem.

Over the past two years, the “Food for Thought” project has teamed culinary students from Blackburn Alternative High School and gerontology students from UNO with members of the Adams Park Community Center. As part of the project, meals prepared by Blackburn students are served to members of the center and UNO students helped facilitate relationship building between the senior residents of Adams Park and students from Blackburn. All told, Food for Thought has provided over 1300 hours of service and served approximately 1,350 meals at the Adams Park Community Center, which offers recreation and social activities for older adults.



Sprouting Creativity

By Marcia Ghali Bergren

Students from the UNO Department of English and the UNO Women’s and Gender Studies Program, partnered with Millard North Millard School (MNMS) seventh graders this semester for “Sprouting Creativity.” The students learned from Karen community members while exploring creativity and cultural sustainability in writing, visual arts, gardening, and verbatim theater. The students met to discuss Alice Walker essays, Paul Fleishman’s *Seedfolks*, and the role of creativity in the history of their own families.

The Karen are a group of indigenous people from Southeast Asia who have

been displaced by civil war. Over 2000 Karen refugees are currently living in Nebraska. Through the involvement of Lutheran Family Services and City

Sprouting Creativity was an ambitious and innovative project that brought together people from all over our city! The middle school students and the UNO students developed great relationships over the semester and made meaningful contributions to City Sprouts and the Karen Community.

- Marcia Ghali Bergren,
Graduate Assistant

Sprouts the students have become acquainted with the Karen community and conducted oral history-style

interviews with several families. On April 24th the UNO and MNMS students worked together at City Sprouts to rehearse a cultural celebration of the Omaha Karen community, to plant flowers and vegetable gardens for several Karen refugee families, and to complete a mural on the supply shed. On May 2nd the students, members of the Omaha Karen refugee community, and Lutheran Family Services hosted a potluck dinner and theater performance at City Sprouts to celebrate the culmination of their project.

The students enthusiastically shared the performance, garden, and mural projects with parents and community members. This project successfully integrated science, writing, reading, and art curriculum into meaningful service for the UNO and MNMS students.

As we close out the second full year of the P-16 Initiative, we reflect on the impacts the pedagogy has made not only on the students, but also on the teacher, and community nonprofit partners. In the 2011-12 academic year, 2,319 P-12 students learned and served with 806 UNO students. This involved teaching course learning outcomes through the application of course concepts while meeting community-identified needs. In addition, these students interacted at UNO, in their classrooms, and at the community partner sites. P-12 and UNO instructors collaborated, co-taught, and expanded the classroom into the community.

The Service Learning Academy collects pre and post survey data from P-12 students assessing their level of engagement, understanding of course content, and personal development. Last semester 291 P-12 students (with parent permission) and 311 UNO students completed these assessments. As this data is analyzed, we continue to understand how service learning as a method of teaching impacts students and the community. In the interim, we rely on qualitative data to articulate service learning impacts for both teachers and students. I'd like to share a few:

"Seeing the professional and personal growth in both the UNO students and mine as they cross barriers and connect has been powerful. I'm not sure how we would accomplish that without service learning. I see students staying connected to the learning and service even after the course is over."—Cathy Nelson, Blackburn Alternative Program

"Since I've been working with J, I feel like I have a new mentor in my life, someone who understands what I've gone through. She comes every week, ready to listen and ready to help. I make sure I come to school on the days that she is going to be here." —K-12 student

"My own teaching and students' learning, as reflected by quantitative and qualitative data gathered, on-going reflection, and end-of-the-semester presentations, has been so profoundly impacted by these experiences that I can't imagine what it would be like not to include these components into my courses."—Dr. Mitzi Ritman, UNO

The best time to initiate a P-16 service learning partnership is during the Service Learning Seminar. Our next Seminar will be held July 16th-20th. During the Seminar, P-12 and UNO instructors learn about how to co-develop quality service learning projects that meet course learning outcomes.

2012
SEMINAR:

JULY
16-20

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www.unomaha.edu/servicelearning

Seminar participants receive a \$400 stipend for participation, with the expectation the project they develop will be implemented over the next 18 months. Sign up for the seminar is available at
www.unomaha.edu/servicelearning.

As always, thank you for serving and learning with us this year! We look forward to continued partnership in the future!

Julie Dierberger, P-16 Coordinator
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