Service-Learning Center
2018 Newsletter

In this issue:

- Academic Based Service-Learning: Natural Sciences and Mathematics
- Academic Based Service-Learning: Language and Service-Learning
- A Lasting Effect: Measuring the Long-Term Effects of Service-Learning
- Combatting Hate with Community: Why We Do Interfaith Work
- StreetFest 2017
- Love Justly: Commit to Place
- Residence Hall Community Partnership: Guest Speaker, Candace
These three words, spoken by our director Jeff Bouman during our first week of training, have stuck with me throughout the year. These words not only represent the mission of our office but also who we are as a staff.

Wisdom guides us to discern issues of justice and how to best approach these issues. Wisdom is an integral part of the decisions we make and the actions we take. We need wisdom to pursue justice as God calls us to.

Courage is essential when confronting injustice. We need courage to faithfully care for, listen to, and fight for those most marginalized. We need courage to call others to justice and find joy where it may seem like there is none.

Persistence allows us to continue our work and commitment to shalom. This persistence is not for the sake of peace-keeping, but for peace-making; this is a pursuit of a just-peace. Persistence is required because without it our work is done in vain. Without persistence, we cannot experience the true flourishing of communities.

The S-LC’s 2017-18 staff continuously worked to embody these three words through our work and leadership. While some of us will move on from Calvin and others will remain, my hope is that these words and the values they represent endure for the rest of our lives.
The writing included in this annual newsletter reflects a community of Christian practice. The Service-Learning Center, since its inception in 1964, has been a community of people within Calvin College that connects the Calvin community with the Grand Rapids community and other communities near and far, in a common pursuit of God’s shalom. The wisdom, courage, and persistence that Emma mentions in her letter from the editor were on display this year in events for interfaith service and dialogue; in research to better understanding correlations between service-learning in the college years and citizenship and community engagement in post-college life; in a creative partnership between a Business/Psychology class and the Vocational Village at Handlon Correctional Facility; in efforts of a hard-working team of students to keep their dorm communities connected to long-term partners in Grand Rapids; in foreign language students spending time in culturally rich environments to increase their capacity to understand, and to love people from other cultures; and in the hard work of communicating complex ideas about love and justice to an entire class of new students on their first day of orientation.

I am inspired daily by the creativity and commitment of students and colleagues who work within this community of practice. One conversation in particular helps illuminate where some of this inspiration comes from. In March we discussed Sophie Scholl, a young university student who was martyred for standing up to the Nazi regime. She left behind a legacy of powerful words, including these, describing people who try to keep things in their lives in control, and as a result, who live small lives: “it’s all an illusion, because they die too, those people who roll up their spirits into tiny little balls so as to be safe. Safe?! From what? Life is always on the edge of death; narrow streets lead to the same place as wide avenues, and a little candle burns itself out just like a flaming torch does... Stand up for what you believe in even if you are standing alone.” Standing together, this community continues to burn brightly.
ACADEMIC BASED SERVICE-LEARNING: NATURE SCIENCES AND MATHEMATICS

BY KIMBERLY OESMAN

A cross-over course titled Industrial-Organizational Psychology in the Psychology department and Advanced Topics in Human Resource Management in the Business department, was offered in Fall 2017, taught by Professor Brian Cawley. This course, Business / Psychology 366, taught students different competencies and skills that people may have. By learning the different competencies and skills, students from this class are able to study jobs/work (called job analysis) and identify which particular competencies and skills are most suitable. Sometimes, people’s strengths and weaknesses are more subtle and require a lot more experience to see. Therefore, this course also taught students to be able to construct assessments to reveal these strengths and weaknesses that might not be apparent. This includes forming good interview questions, activities that may bring to rise these hidden strengths and weaknesses, as well as systematic assessment of behaviors.

On top of that, students in this class also participated in service-learning in the Vocational Village program at the Handlon Correctional Facility. Students helped inmates prepare to look for employment as they exit the prison system. Students start by identifying entry-level jobs and the competencies required for them, then forming assessments for these competencies, training assessors, conducting the assessments, and providing feedback to the inmates. People who were involved in this project not only include the students from Bus/Psych 366, but also people who volunteered to be assessors, a group comprised of professionals and future employers.

This academically-based service-learning project helped students implement what they learned in class with a hands-on experience while at the same time serving the community in positive ways. Bringing together the inmates from Handlon, students from Calvin, and outside professionals, this project enabled the people involved to learn from one another in humility. Oftentimes, we forget that those who are in prison deserve a second chance to make their lives better, and people who are in prison forget to have hope in bettering their lives. This service-learning opportunity not only provided students practical skills and experience, but also allowed them to think critically about a prevailing social issue - prejudice against prison inmates.

Academically-based service-learning is a practical program offered by the Service-Learning Center that integrates service-learning projects into classroom teaching, as seen in this project with the Handlon Correctional Facility. This way, students are able to apply what they have learned in class to real-life situations and commit to service-learning without jeopardizing, but rather enhancing their academic performance. On the other hand, it is also essential that the service-learning experiences help community partners with whom students work. Hand-in-hand, community partners and students work towards a larger goal of bettering the community. I hope that in the future more faculty will consider integrating academically-based service-learning into courses that may fit their academic goals and the community needs.

This project would not have been successful without the help of Professor Laura Shankster-Cawley, who helped extensively to organize the details and guide students through the process. In addition, this project would not have been possible without the Calvin Center for Innovation in Business providing funding for the Executive in Residence position and summer project preparation work as well as jobZology® for offering access to their online assessment tools.
This year, the Languages Literature and Arts division of ABSL showed the importance of language and self-expression as it relates to service-learning. We live in a country with millions of immigrants and refugees who speak different languages and have various needs that simply cannot be provided by expecting them to communicate in English. The continuation of Spanish-speaking immigrants coming to the United States and the current refugee crisis opened up several opportunities for Calvin students studying Spanish to come alongside individuals from Spanish-speaking populations through mentorship programs, supplying medical office assistance, and helping food pantries with their intake and distribution processes. Learning another language and serving oppressed populations helps repair the breaches created by war and gives service-learners access to cultures they would not be exposed to by only learning language in the classroom. To better serve and learn, we must recognize the needs in communities with different forms of self-expression, be that linguistically or culturally.
When training our Spring Break Trip Leaders, we use a curriculum called “Changed for Life.” Indeed, that is the goal of all of our service-learning programs – that values, worldviews, beliefs, and attitudes would be changed for life toward the pursuits of shalom and justice. But I can’t help but ask myself: Do we know that lives are being changed? For good? How? What does it look like? I have been asking these questions since I began working in the S-LC three years ago, and this year I had the opportunity to begin to try to answer them.

This exploration began in the spring of 2017 when Jeff Bouman, Director of the S-LC, and I submitted a proposal for a McGregor Summer Research Fellow. We found a great fit in Isabelle Selles, a current junior, and in early June we were off on an eight-week sprint to answer these questions.

We attempted to squeeze an entire research project into the eight-week window, and thanks to Isabelle’s hard work we nearly did it. She began her summer reading and annotating literature about the long-term effects of service-learning and college in general. From there, we adapted a survey to fit Calvin’s context, and sent it out to over 1500 Calvin College alumni. We then extended an invitation to those who completed the survey to participate in an interview so we could dive deeper into their responses. Over 150 survey responses, seven interviews, and hours of transcription later, we had our data and began analyzing them in the final days of the summer. After a hiatus at the beginning of the academic year to focus on the other work of the S-LC, Joanna Jaimes, a current senior, picked up where Isabelle left off, and continued to more closely analyze our interview data, and brought us to where we are now.

Through the survey we asked questions of participants’ civic and political behaviors and attitudes. Do they participate in service? Do they donate regularly? Do they vote, campaign, or demonstrate? Do they think dialogue across difference is important? We also asked participants about their time at Calvin, and how it has affected their lives today. Did they participate in service-learning? Which programs?

What did they learn from them? What other experiences influenced their worldview?

Our survey data suggested that alumni who had participated in a significant amount of service-learning while at Calvin were slightly more likely to be involved in community organizing, service, philanthropy, and politics, as well as place a higher importance on promoting dialogue across difference. (We cannot, however, claim yet that these correlations are statistically significant.)

The interview portion gave us deeper insight into the connections between service-learning and postgraduate behaviors and attitudes, and were the most enjoyable part of the experience for those of us who were involved. While our participants certainly drew direct lines between their Calvin experience and their current civic and political participation, they tended to discuss their Calvin experience holistically, and share that the array of their experiences (service-learning, study abroad, Project Neighborhood, and coursework, to name a few) worked together for their worldview and values development. Further, many of our participants reflected on pre-college experiences within their families and high schools, and connected those to both their decisions at Calvin and their decisions today. Even so, some participants did specifically mention that their time on the S-LC staff, on spring break trips, and in their residence hall community partnerships played a significant role in their growth.

These are values that we hope students will develop through service-learning, and even if we cannot prove a direct line, we are encouraged to see them in our alumni.
The more time we spent with the interview transcripts, the more we began to see themes beyond the connections between service-learning and their current lifestyle. Participants demonstrated a sense of responsibility to their community, a desire to seek and foster belonging, and a practice of critical self-reflection on important issues in their role in their communities. These are values that we hope students will develop through service-learning, and even if we cannot prove a direct line, we are encouraged to see them in our alumni.

A year of asking big questions has led us to more questions than answers, but we have learned a lot along the way. I am inspired by our alumni who are investing in their communities, and they have challenged me to dig deeper into the work of the S-LC to play our part in developing such thoughtful and vibrant graduates.

Note: We are grateful to the Civitas Lab and the Office of the Provost for their support of Isabelle and Joanna as our student researchers, without whom this project could not have happened.

StreetFest 2017
Love Justly: Commit to Place

By Abby Kroon

On September 1, the Service-Learning Center kicked off the academic year by hosting the 25th annual StreetFest. StreetFest is part of Calvin’s new student orientation where incoming students head out into the city of Grand Rapids and serve and learn at around 50 different community partners.

Through the StreetFest program, we hope to introduce students to their place in the city of Grand Rapids and encourage them to think about how they will interact with the city while at Calvin. The theme for StreetFest is the guide for the day. This year the theme was Love Justly: Commit to Place. The theme was chosen to invite students to think about what it really means to love. Love is not just a feeling, but rather taking action everyday to pursue the flourishing of others. However, you must know the place you love to do this well. That’s why committing to place is important. It allows us to take a step back to listen and learn from the people that already know the place. It means joining in with others for the long haul. When students participate in service-learning at various community agencies during StreetFest, they get the opportunity to learn from people who are deeply committed to their place. Our hope is that StreetFest is an introduction for students to think about how their actions affect their place. We hope that they will work towards justice both in Grand Rapids, and beyond.

Photo Above: StreetFest 2017 logo designed by Tia Wierenga
Photo Left: Two first-year students disassembling computers at Comprenew during StreetFest.
This semester our interfaith program focused heavily on site visits, starting with our “Meet Your Sikh Neighbor” dinner event in Ada, followed by several visits to our local masjid (mosque) and synagogue, as well as a handful of lecture and dialogue events with representatives from the Hindu temple and LDS church, and ending our semester with an on-campus dinner and lecture event on Islam and Hospitality, with special guest Justin Meyers of the Al Amana Centre in Muscat, Oman. While the general response to interfaith work has been positive among Calvin students and faculty, others remain wary and concerned. So why do we pursue interfaith work at the Service-Learning Center?

In addition to exposure, we strive to engage in often sensitive and difficult dialogue with people who think differently from us.

As a Christian, my faith is central, personal, and deeply-rooted, shaping how I live my life, the decisions that I make every day, and in how I view the world. What we often easily forget is that this experience is the same for the millions of people of other faith traditions. Interfaith work involves sensitive and difficult dialogue, and Christians need to be equipped to understand the traditions and core beliefs of Muslims, Hindus, Jews, Buddhists, and others, in order to truly love them. Why? Because Christians are not the only ones who experience the sensus divinitatis, the sense of the divine, and we should learn about the beliefs that others value deeply. We also think this is important because with a simple glance at the Bible, we see that Jesus broke down walls, talking with a Samaritan woman (John 4), sharing meals with the social rejects of society (Mark 2:13-17), regardless of their ethnic, social, or religious identities. Jesus’s new, radical teachings should be considered in our current context as well.
It has been an encouraging and exciting year for interfaith work at Calvin. As we continue to pursue this work on campus, we will continue to learn from and reach out to “the other” better through our relationships with them, pushing back against the ill-informed hatred that has no place in our community, state, country, and world.

Photo Right: Manato Jansen, S-LC interfaith Coordinator

Photo Bottom-Left: Calvin students share a Middle Eastern meal together at the Islam & Hospitality event on April 9th.

Photos courtesy Luke Erickson

**Residence Hall Partnerships:**

**Guest Speaker, Candace**

*By Tess De Jong*

In each of Calvin’s on-campus residence halls, there are two Community Partnership Coordinators (CPCs) that help connect students to their dorm’s specific partner organization. For example, CPCs help connect Boer-Bennink residents to Cook Library, while Rooks-VanDellen is partners with Baxter Community Center. At these organizations, students participate weekly in various service-learning activities. In addition to the work the CPCs do at their respective partnerships, they also attend biweekly meetings to consider and discuss a wide array of social issues.

In these meetings, we learn about struggles and injustices that exist in Grand Rapids, as well as the assets and resources that the city has to offer. We discuss how the topic may apply to our own lives and how our learnings go hand in hand with our service-learning opportunities. At one of our meetings this year, I invited a good friend of mine to be a guest speaker.

Candace is passionate about the clothing industry, labor rights, and ethical consumption. While abroad in Honduras through Calvin’s social justice semester, Candace had opportunity to learn about local labor rights and economic justice. As part of this unit, Candace toured several clothing factories. She learned that while some clothing factories in Honduras maintain ethical labor practices, she also heard stories of workers experiencing injustice within their workplace. She learned about the safety hazards, strict rules, and intense pressure put on the employees who cut fabric and sew seams. She also came to understand that it is largely American consumerism and popularized “fast fashion” that drives these conditions. Specifically, because eighty percent of all Honduran clothing exports go the United States, Honduran factories feel immense pressure to keep up with ever-changing fashion demands. And, when factory owners face overwhelming pressure to match American consumerism, workers’ rights and wages are often the first things to get cut.

Candace’s new knowledge and experiences have had a lasting impact on her. Since her return home, Candace has begun to understand how our simple, daily choices affect others. Upon return, Candace didn’t buy any clothes for a full year in an effort to combat the fast fashion industry. She bought books to learn more about big name brands and how they pay all workers involved. She started speaking up to ask companies to become more transparent. She believes that if individuals knew how their purchases were impacting the workers’ lives, they would demand change, better working conditions for workers, and higher quality clothes for consumers. She said, “When you interact with people and hear their stories, you can’t ignore injustices against them.”

Candace embodied what we seek to do with our community partners in Grand Rapids. We seek to form reciprocal relationships with people, and to simultaneously take action and continue learning. This year, thanks to Candace and other guest speakers, the CPCs were challenged to think about what social justice looks like in different contexts, as well as to consider how our local and small actions at our community partnerships can make a big difference.
Giving to the Service-Learning Center

The programs and services that the S-LC provides are funded by the general college budget. Any gifts given to Calvin College and designated specifically to the Service-Learning Center allow us to offer financial assistance for students who participate in the annual spring break service-learning trips (www.calvin.edu/go/springbreaktrips).

Additionally, donations designated to the S-LC Gift account allow us to continue long-standing programs like StreetFest, and to occasionally fund student transportation to conferences or other professional development opportunities (www.calvin.edu/support).

Thanks for your continued support!
Special Olympics
2018
Meet Bri, the 2018 StreetFest Coordinator!

Brianna Rutgers is a rising senior majoring in social work. She is originally from Lynden, Washington. Bri is very excited to coordinate StreetFest this year and is looking forward to learning about and working alongside organizations in this great city!

StreetFest will take place on Friday, August 31. If your organization is interested in participating in StreetFest, please email Bri at slc@calvin.edu.