Student Finds Niche in Community Service

Laura Graham '07

Follow this and additional works at: https://digitalcommons.linfield.edu/linfield_magazine

Recommended Citation
Available at: https://digitalcommons.linfield.edu/linfield_magazine/vol4/iss1/10

This article is brought to you for free via open access, courtesy of DigitalCommons@Linfield. For more information, please contact digitalcommons@linfield.edu.
Student finds niche in community service

Monica Nelson, ‘07 sorts clothing that has been donated to Henderson House for victims of abuse during her internship there last year. Nelson combined her interests in social work, psychology and the Spanish language for the position.

When it comes to community service, Monica Nelson’s actions speak for themselves. As a sophomore, Nelson ’07 became president of SPURS honor society, a service organization involved with projects ranging from community food drives to caroling at nursing homes during the holidays. Last year she studied in Costa Rica, where she participated in a Habitat for Humanity building project. As Zeta Tau Alpha philanthropy chair, Nelson organized the Duck Derby on campus to raise money for breast cancer research and education.

“I just love to do all different types of service,” Nelson said.

By the time she reached her senior year, Nelson, a sociology and Spanish major, wanted to find an internship that involved helping others and did not confine her to an office.

“I wanted to be working directly with people as much as possible,” she said.

While surfing the Internet, she found Henderson House, an organization that provides services to victims of domestic and sexual abuse and maintains a shelter in McMinnville for women and children escaping abuse. Here, Nelson knew she could put her Spanish language skills to use and help people.

Nelson began working with Henderson House in the summer of 2006. She organized donations, worked at fundraisers, provided child care for the children living in the shelter, transported clients and helped with renovations to the shelter.

“The fact that Monica is always willing to do anything to help is amazing,” said Rhonda Fabreth, executive director of Henderson House. “We need more volunteers like her who are willing to lighten our load so we can focus on helping our clients.”

This spring Nelson participated in the 30-hour Henderson House volunteer training, which allowed her to interact one-on-one with clients. She took part in a fundraiser organized by the Order of Omega Honor Society collecting donations at home basketball games for “A Generation of Change,” which was a benefit for Henderson House.

Nelson’s experiences with Henderson House have not only taught her about working for a non-profit organization, but have also affected her life.

“I have always known domestic violence is a reality, but listening to people’s stories has been really personal to me,” Nelson said. “It has made me all the more passionate about wanting to do something about domestic violence and work in an area of social services.”

Nelson’s work at Henderson House has led to an interest in psychology and social work.

“Careen with organizations like Henderson House are usually thankless,” Nelson said. “But the work that they do is so necessary and important to the communities we live in.”

— Laura Gudmun ’07

Henderson House has served survivors of domestic and sexual violence in Yamhill County and surrounding counties since 1981, providing more than 35,000 shelter nights to women, men and children. For more information or to seek help, contact the following organizations:

Henderson House
www.hendersonhouse.org

National Domestic Violence Hotline
www.nndvh.org/educate/index.html

Family Violence Prevention Fund
www.endabuse.org

National Center on Domestic and Sexual Violence
http://www.ncdsv.org

Kids get moving toward good health

Local youth recently found out health can be all fun and games during an after-school nutrition and physical activity program at Linfield College.

Twice a week, eager young participants stuffed fruit smoothies or munchied “ants on a log” (peanut butter on celery) during hand-on nutrition lessons before heading out to play. There were scavenger hunts, slip-and-slides, traditional sports and swimming games.

The program, developed by Janet Peterson, assistant professor of health and human performance and recent winner of the Samuel I. Graf Faculty Achievement Award, focused on helping children live a healthy lifestyle. Participants ranged in age from 7 to 18.

The single most important element to improving kids’ health “Getting moving,” said Julie O’Neil ’07, this year’s program coordinator.

She knows active children are more likely to feel good about themselves and perform better at school.

“Every child should learn the importance of living a healthy lifestyle,” said O’Neil, who will pursue a master’s in public health promotion at Oregon State University in the fall. “It’s important to get them out playing and enjoying activity.”

But with cutbacks in physical education classes and the growth of the video game industry, today’s youth often don’t get the recommended 60 minutes of daily activity. And, Peterson said, 70 percent of overweight kids are likely to become overweight adults.

“If we can give them tools to make good decisions now, we can also work on adult obesity as well,” she said.

With guidance from Peterson, more than 20 Linfield students ran the program, gaining practical experience outside the classroom in addition to serving the community. They performed fitness evaluations and prescribed an exercise regimen for each child.

Enrollment has nearly doubled from 17 to 32 since Kendra Victor ’05 led the first project in 2005. Although it initially targeted overweight youth, the program is now geared to all kids, stressing a healthy lifestyle.

Two of this year’s most energetic participants were 7-year-old twins Emily and Megan DeYoung, daughters of Bill and Amy (Chari) DeYoung, ’89 and ’87. The twins both play soccer, but their parents know that’s not enough.

“We want to encourage them to choose to be active during the down time instead of watching television or being on the computer,” said Amy, an accounting clerk at Linfield.

Tips for healthy families

• Make cooking an activity and eat at the table as a family.
• Make fun snacks, such as trail mix or fruit-kebabs.
• When baking, use applesauce instead of oil or butter and use whole-wheat flour.
• Make homemade pizza with lots of veggies.
• Avoid fast food, or choose a grilled chicken burger or salad.
• Ride a bike or walk to school.
• Join a sport team.

Sisters Emily, left, and Megan DeYoung take part in a wheels-around race with the help of Janet Peterson, left, and Julie O’Neil ’07.

Julie O’Neil ’07, left, and Janet Peterson, assistant professor of health and human performance, address the importance of exercise and nutrition during an after-school program for youth. The program culminated with a one-mile Fun Run coordinated by the Order of Omega, Linfield’s Greek honor society, on May 6.

DeYoung is already teaching her daughters nutrition at home and she was happy to have it reinforced.

“When it comes from fun, young people, it catches their attention and sinks in more,” she said.

— Laura Davis