

# The Service-Learning Chronicle



LEARN AND SERVE COLORADO



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## 2006 Directors' Retreat: The Path towards Sustainability

This year's Directors' Retreat, entitled "Sustainability Practibility," brought together players in Colorado's field of service-learning in the beautiful setting of Estes Park. What better location than the Rocky Mountains, which have endured the test of time, natural disasters and human contact, to discuss the issue of sustainability? As several Learn and Serve grants are coming to a close, sustainability is a hot topic in the area of service-learning in Colorado.

While many people think about their projects and programs in terms of longevity, actually gathering people to share their ideas and resources is something else. Even though "practibility" may not be in Webster's Dictionary, to some the term conveys a sense of realistic goal setting and steps towards action. The practical aspects of sustainability, creating lasting infrastructure, community partnerships and gaining school support, were some of the important issues that were discussed during the retreat.

By uniting the new team of AmeriCorps\*VISTAs, with fresh eyes and ears, and seasoned grantees, who have years of knowledge and experience under their belts, everyone was able to learn from one another and share best practice methods, new ideas and emerging concerns.

Still, no retreat can be complete without some fun and games. Each grantee gave a quick overview of

their program and projects. However, this presentation was not any run-of-the-mill talk. No! Everyone did their best to "razzle" and "dazzle" the crowd through skits, short video clips, and interpretive dancing.



The 2006-2007 Learn and Serve Colorado AmeriCorps\*VISTA Team

The Learn and Serve VISTAs were in charge of breaking the ice and warming everyone up between dialogue and breakout sessions. Without the interactive games, choral singing, and tossing a roll of toilet paper, we would not have been able to engage in such thought provoking conversations throughout the two days!

The most exciting idea that emerged from the retreat is the concept of student advocacy for service-learning. There was a lot of conversation around the problem of "selling" service-learning to teachers and other professionals. From this topic, people began to share their experiences with students who have grown up with ser-

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### UPCOMING EVENTS:

- ◆ January 19, 2007, All Hazards Preparedness for Colorado National Service Programs & Partners
- ◆ February 21-23, 2007, Colorado Conference on Volunteerism and Service-Learning
- ◆ March 28-31, 2007 National Service-Learning Conference

### Say It Like You Mean It! Talking about Service-Learning in a Compelling Way

In the world of service-learning, it is easy to get caught up in the day to day meetings, emails, phone calls and other tasks. We sometimes take for granted that people do not know what service-learning is, or what high-quality service-learning is.

With people outside of the work environment it is easy to brush off service-learning with a quick explanation of, "oh, it's combining community service in a way that meets state education standards," making the immediate connection of service and learning.

However, that answer is really a half truth, service-learning is much more. It is vital for anyone that advocates service-learning to remember that everyone, whether in the workplace or outside the workplace, is a potential partner. Service-learning truly is a community wide phenomena and it is not fair to give people a half truth when they might be just the person our program has been looking for.

So, how can we talk about service-learning in a compelling way? First, it is important to be excited about service-learning. If we are not excited or just rattle off some old answer it will be very hard to get someone to want to work with us.

Also, it helps to know what a person's motivation is. Is it serving the community, youth leadership, education? Is it all of these? Naturally, if we focus on a person's interest area, they are going to be more receptive.

If every time I talked about service-learning it came out exactly how I wanted it to, it might sound something like this:

Service-learning is a great way for students to build their voice and have a say over what happens in the classroom. They develop opportunities that address real community needs and by learning about their community, students become engaged civically. The best part is that while doing this students are not detracting from their classroom work; they are meeting education standards and getting even more out of their education. Students are able to apply what they are learning and take part in a process of reflection. This has been shown to help them improve academically.

That is why service-learning rocks!

Article submitted by Alexis St. Juliana, AmeriCorps\*VISTA Team Leader, Learn and Serve Colorado

### *Retreat, con't.*



Service-Learning Coordinators, Directors and Site Supervisors hard at work!

vice-learning and are shocked when they enter a school that does not give them the same opportunities. Framing questions began to surface: Shouldn't we ask students how they learn best? How powerful would it be if students asked their teachers to have service-learning as part of their curriculum? If we could show teachers, administrators and policy makers statistics that show how students feel they learn best, who wouldn't want to support service-learning and the work that we do? Leaving the retreat with these questions hanging in the air, we are all excited to see where this path has lead each of us when we reconvene in February.

Article submitted by Malia Crouse, AmeriCorps\*VISTA member, Regis University Institute on the Common Good

## Benefiting the San Luis Valley's La Puente Home

St. Peter's Lutheran School students didn't need mortar and bricks to build houses to benefit the La Puente Home. They needed cardboard, tape, and a desire to help those less fortunate in the San Luis Valley.

La Puente Home endeavors to serve the homeless and impoverished populations of the San Luis Valley, by offering shelter, meals, assistance with rent, utilities, and more.

As part of this project, AmeriCorps\*VISTA Mary Benavidez of the Adams State College Service-Learning Program, Jenna Boostrom the Community Education Coordinator of La Puente Home and AmeriCorps Member Kelsea MacIlroy worked with students on the needs of the homeless and the services that La Puente Home provides in the San Luis Valley.

For the lesson younger students partnered with older students to design and build cardboard houses. These

will be placed in local businesses as donation boxes to raise money for the community.

Caleigh Cowen, a student from the school, said that she was happy to "help the people at La Puente".

"The students, ranging from grades Kindergarten through eighth grade, were able to connect building houses to benefit La Puente into a service-learning project", said Boostrom.

"St. Peter's Lutheran School has all grade levels in one school building; we were able to bring students of various ages together for this project where the learning is done to benefit the community," said teacher Paul Barnes. "The students learned a great deal from the partners at La Puente and each other. They really had fun."

Article submitted by Mary Benavidez, AmeriCorps\*VISTA member, Adams State College Community Partnerships



Students from Saint Peter's Lutheran School demonstrating their hard work!





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*Seasons Greetings!*

A blue snowflake graphic located below the 'Seasons Greetings!' text.

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## Lincoln Elementary seeks Partnership with Nursing Center

In Colorado Springs a service-learning project is now in the works for Jessica Boline's third grade class at Lincoln Elementary School. Having decided to get involved in service to the elderly, the class recently initiated a partnership with Colonial Columns Nursing Center, a skilled nursing facility located near Lincoln.

The initial stages of this partnership include a visit by an administrator from Colonial Columns to Lincoln to inform the students about the facility and the importance of elder care. After the visit, Ms. Boline is hoping to bring her students to Colonial Columns to form friendships with its residents and establish a pen pal program between individual students and seniors. To culminate the project, the students will

compile a biography book complete with stories, artwork, and photographs.

This service-learning project will be mutually beneficial to both Lincoln and Colonial Columns. Students will have an opportunity to learn about local history in a personal context and develop meaningful relationships, while also improving their speaking and writing skills. The residents will have the opportunity to tell their stories and experience a sense of pride from serving as role models. Service-Learning Colorado Springs has high hopes for this partnership!

Article submitted by AmeriCorps\*VISTA member Colleen Barnhill, Colorado College Partnership for Civic Engagement