One thousand volunteers participated at various service sites as the kickoff to the University of Utah’s Homecoming 2011 on September 24. Most volunteers gathered at Mountain View Elementary school and then divided to participate in twenty-four different service projects.

Partnering with Homecoming Week brought a diverse group of student, staff, alumni and community volunteers. The partnership also provided a venue for announcing the Homecoming royalty.

Service Day Statistics

2,500 total hours of service
18 pallets of medical supplies sorted at Globus Relief
700 fleece blankets and 500 pillowcases made for Title I school children
9 quilts completed by hand for refugee families
600 backpacks stuffed with supplies for Title I school children
2 acres at Bend-in-the-River received ecological restoration

Over 3,500 square feet of wall space painted, including 2 elementary school murals
2,000 flash cards and 100 educational folders created for teachers in India
153 pieces of art created by and with Best Buddies
22 adults tutored at Horizonte
4 community gardens weeded, mulched and planted
25 caps knitted for newborns

New Resources for Faculty Engagement

The Bennion Center is excited to announce the Fall 2011 launch of two new programs to support community engaged faculty through the Bennion Center: the Community Engaged Faculty Fellows and the Community Engaged Faculty Affiliates. Their primary goal is to provide support for faculty who are involved with the community through research and/or teaching endeavors through conferences, trainings and networking.

Past experience shows that faculty who teach and research with community partners may feel isolated from colleagues in their own departments and may not easily locate colleagues with similar practices in other disciplines. The Fellows and Affiliates programs seek to help build these bridges among engaged faculty from across the university.

Faculty Fellows apply to add a service-learning component to a new or existing class or to work on a community-based research project. Each fellow receives $500 in his or her development account that can be used to support engaged teaching or research.

Faculty Affiliates are faculty who may not be working on a new project but remain engaged in the community through their scholarly works. In addition, many of our Faculty Affiliates have agreed to serve as mentors and work with the Faculty Fellows to support their projects. Faculty Fellows meet every six weeks to share progress and ideas. Both groups gather once per semester to share lunch and build relationships.

Thanks to all of those who have joined these programs in this inaugural year.

Please see page 3 for a list of faculty fellows and affiliates.

By Nancy Winemiller-Basinger Service-Learning Manager
Benefit Concert: Ends on a High Note

Desiring to duplicate the amazing success of the 2010 benefit concert, Charlotte and Ted Jacobsen sponsored a concert on September 9, 2011, to increase contributions to the Culture of Giving campaign.

The concert featured the group Lower Lights, a collection of local musicians who gather to sing in a hymn revival style.

The event included renowned Bennion Center alumni Steven Sharp Nelson and Peter Breinholt, who played the cello and piano respectively. They also shared memories and lessons learned from their student years at the Bennion Center.

Prior to the concert, the Bennion Center hosted a reception for alumni and friends to honor its beloved founding director, Irene Fisher.

The evening was a great success in many ways: it raised money to support Center programs, it brought alumni back to renew friendships and commitments, it enabled new people to learn about Center activities while enjoying marvelous entertainment, and it honored a woman dear to Center participants.

Due to the first two concerts’ success, this event may become a regular part of the Bennion Center’s calendar. Leon Peterson has offered to sponsor one on April 26, 2012. Please check our website closer to the date for details.

By Lacey Holmes
Public Relations Coordinator

America Reads: 15 Years and Still Growing

Fifteen years in the Bennion Center and America Reads continues to expand. This year began with a record number of eighty-four tutors.

America Reads opened a new tutor lab at M. Lynn Bennion Elementary School fall semester. Due to the enthusiastic support of the school’s administration and faculty, the new partnership has taken flight and more than 70 children are receiving tutoring. The new site quickly established a library of books thanks to generous donations by Mortar Board National Honor Society’s University of Utah Acorn Chapter and Worldwide Book Drive.

America Reads continues to grow in other ways as well. The year also

launched a new partnership with the Road Home’s Palmer Court Study Night, a permanent housing complex for previously homeless families. The Road Home and America Reads are excited to provide a tutoring service to these children.

America Reads has also been working hard to develop the depth of its academic services. It keeps moving forward with innovations such as a new curriculum book emphasizing elementary curriculum standards and tutoring methods; the pen pal program, matching college mentors with elementary students; and new parent outreach initiatives.

The America Reads program was established as a Bennion Center program out of the Clinton Administration’s America Reads Challenge of 1997. With four out of every ten fourth graders failing to achieve partial mastery of reading, the goal was to ensure every child could read independently by the end of third grade. Today, America Reads works beyond this goal to provide quality tutoring in both literacy and mathematics. As a work-study program at the University of Utah, the program provides comprehensive tutor training and fosters mutually beneficial community partnerships.

By Elsa Gustavson
America Reads Coordinator

Hunger Banquet: Food for Thought

The annual Hunger Banquet took place as part of the University of Utah-BYU Rivalry Food Drive. This event is jointly sponsored by the Bennion Center and ASUU, through the University Service Corps, to raise awareness of hunger while collecting money and canned food for the Utah Food Bank.

This year’s focus was on local hunger issues. Everyone enjoyed soup in a bread bowl donated by Chartwells, followed by a wonderful program of music and speech. Bennion Center alumni Steven Sharp Nelson and Peter Breinholt performed on the cello and piano. Pamela Atkinson, a prominent local community advocate, relayed stories about her experiences working with the poor and hungry and conveyed means for the audience to make a difference personally.

Students from the International Leadership Academy brought the Empty Bowls art competition to the banquet. They had recruited pieces that showcased hunger and international poverty. This added a wonderful visual component to the evening that will hopefully continue.

About 175 people attended, raising $400 in monetary donations and contributing three large barrels of food.

By Lacey Holmes
Public Relations Coordinator
Engaged Faculty Gather at Alta Institute

In August the Bennion Center co-hosted the Engaged Faculty Institute, “Next Steps in Deepening Our Commitments to Community Engagement,” with Utah Campus Compact and University Neighborhood Partners. This annual conference in Little Cottonwood Canyon brings together faculty from across the state that are engaged with the community through teaching and/or research.

The keynote speaker was Dr. Tania Mitchell, associate director for undergraduate studies and service-learning director in the Center for Comparative Studies in Race and Ethnicity at Stanford University. Dr. Mitchell addressed the group on how to create just relationships by “responding to the challenges and opportunities of community engagement.” Her keynote address was followed by a discussion session which focused on using a critical theory approach to improve the pedagogy of service-learning.

Lunchtime speaker was Dr. Rosemarie Hunter from the U College of Social Work and director of University Neighborhood Partners. Dr. Hunter discussed her 2010-2011 Public Service Professorship project in which she evaluated the curriculum and overall needs of the refugee assistance organizations for leadership and organizational development.

Nearly 100 participants attended the conference from ten universities and five community organizations, with half being from the U of U. In addition to the two keynote addresses, 12 panel discussions explored issues ranging from community-based research to partnership development. This year was the first time the Service-Learning Scholars Leadership Team joined the event. Special thanks to Alexi, Becca, and Kylee for their help with introducing the panels and conducting the evaluations.

As always, participants greatly appreciated the knowledge and networking with colleagues. The planning team is already busy putting together a bigger and better faculty development conference for next year, which will be held August 8-9. By Nancy Winemiller-Basinger Service-Learning Manager

Students and Community Serve Together

This fall, in addition to Legacy of Lowell Day of Service, the Bennion Center hosted three Saturday Service Projects. These monthly events allow students and community members to serve together.

October Health and Safety Fair at Hser Ner Moo

Hser Ner Moo is an after-school center for children in refugee families. Working with their program, the Jennison Center co-hosted a health and safety fair and Halloween party. Volunteers from the Salt Lake City Bicycle Collective repaired bicycles for all who came, and each child received a bike helmet. Nutrition students taught lessons on how to make healthy snacks. Volunteers from the Bennion Center and the Honors College led fun games other activities. It was a great opportunity for direct service.

November Fall Leaf Haul

Despite the snow, more than 75 people showed up for the annual Fall Leaf Haul. Partnering with First Step House, a residential substance-abuse treatment center, volunteers met to divide and conquer the neighborhood, raking leaves at 20 homes of people unable to do it themselves. Enterprise Rent-A-Car helped promote the event, and many of their employees participated in this project as well. Despite the snow, everyone had a great time serving.

December Globus Relief

Globus Relief is a local organization that distributes medical supplies at highly discounted costs to organizations all over the world. In December volunteers sorted medical linens such as bedding, blankets, scrubs and medical gowns. Participants sorted more than four pallets of goods, preparing them for shipment. By Lacey Holmes Public Relations Coordinator
Scholars Leadership Team Takes the Lead

For the first year the Service-Learning Scholars Leadership Team has been involved with the Bennion-Hinckley Forums, an event put on by the Bennion Center and the Hinckley Institute of Politics. Each month the forum focuses on a new theme or issue faced by the Salt Lake community and invites three involved community members to speak. In September, the forum theme was service at the U, October focused on international service, and November’s theme was hunger. The forums so far this year have been very well attended and extremely informative.

The forums are a great way for students to become involved in community changes, because the first step to becoming involved is becoming aware. Awareness helps students find different opportunities available to get involved.

The Leadership Team helped in setting-up, taking-down, providing panelists with questions and providing snacks that coordinate with the month’s theme.

The Leadership Team has been involved in other events as well. They started the semester with the fall retreat, where 20 scholars came together to get better acquainted, to learn more about the program, and to serve at the Social Justice Gardens and surrounding neighborhood houses. Later in the semester, the Leadership Team put on a social that included a fun scavenger hunt and a group reflection for all scholars.

The Leadership Team is now planning the January service project for Martin Luther King Jr. Day in collaboration with the Service House. This will include multiple projects about civil rights to celebrate the holiday. The Leadership Team is also starting on plans for the Service-Learning Scholars Banquet to honor the scholars graduating in May.

This year the team consists of three students: Kylee Belnap, a senior in biology; Rebecca Long, a senior in history education; and Alexi Nichols, a senior in exercise physiology.

By Service-Learning Scholars Leadership Team

Welcome to New Staff Members

Kris Fenn  
Student Programs Coordinator

Kris has been working within the nonprofit and higher education community for the past four years since completing her undergraduate education in Georgia. She has worked extensively with students and young adults in arts education at the College of Fine Arts and Spy Hop Productions. Kris is currently working on her master’s degree in the Public Administration program with a focus on nonprofit management.

Lacey Holmes  
Public Relations Coordinator

Originally from Boise, Idaho, Lacey graduated from BYU with a degree in public relations. She worked for a top-tier national public relations firm following graduation. Deciding she needed a little more soul in her career, she moved to the nonprofit sector, working with the Make-A-Wish Foundation, then the American Lung Association. Although a graduate of the Y, she has fully embraced the spirit of the U and is currently working on a Master of Public Administration degree.

Issues and Action Come Together in New Quarterly Luncheons

Fall 2011 marked the first of the new quarterly Issues and Action Luncheons. The purpose of these luncheons is to provide students an opportunity to discuss how the policy environment is affecting and affected by Bennion Center community partners. For many students, this serves as a gateway to understanding the connection between service and advocacy, a connection that can be intimidating or confusing for people who have not experienced the political realm of nonprofit work.

The two Issues and Action Luncheons focused on issues related to immigrant and at-risk populations. Speakers included: Laura Chukanov from High Road for Human Rights; Kate Diggins, the director of adult education at Guadalupe School; Jesse Oyler with the Health Access Project; and Matt Minkevich the executive director of the Road Home. The speakers provided powerful and exciting messages to our students and displayed a continuum of public policy involvement and experiences.

Given the successful attendance and excitement these luncheons have spurred in our students, the Bennion Center looks forward to the upcoming Issues and Action Luncheons in the spring semester:

- Friday, February 3  
  Education and Advocacy
- Friday, April 6  
  Environmental Stewardship

By Kris Penn  
Student Programs Coordinator

Now Available

These Lowell Bennion quote cards are available for purchase. They are blank inside with the full quote on the reverse. Proceeds will benefit Bennion Center programs. Order them online at www.BennionCenter.org

10 cards for $15

Cards designed and printed by Sharon Colette Urquhart
Alternative Fall Break: Service in Southern Utah

The Bennion Center took 25 participants to the Rio Mesa Center on the annual Alternative Fall Break (AFB) trip. The Rio Mesa Center is an interdisciplinary research station operated by the University of Utah and located on the Dolores River outside of Moab.

This year’s participants were a diverse group with students from seven different countries. A major part of the trip is the service rendered to the center. Participants were able to dig and clear a drainage ditch, create and install a self-guided walking tour, finish building solar showers and build a horseshoe pit.

Camping in Southern Utah allows for a unique array of activities. Participants soaked up the environment as they practiced yoga on the red rock at sunset, walked with Utah’s expert on water pockets to gain hands-on experience about the life within them, tasted more than twenty kinds of honey from one of Utah’s premier beekeepers, learned about the art and science of bird banding and met archeologists to learn about the people who inhabited the area long ago. They pitched tents, prepared delicious feasts, made s’mores around the campfire and met new friends.

All students are invited to participate in the Rio Mesa AFB trip next fall. If you like to meet new people, serve under the autumn Southern Utah sun, sleep under a starlit sky, stretch your muscles on the red rock, dig until you get blisters and make the world a better place, Rio Mesa is the place to be.

By Gina C. Russo
Student Programs Manager

Costa Rica Welcomes Students and Alums
June 29 - July 7, 2012

The spring trip is full; however, registrations are being accepted for the July trip.

More information and registrations are available online at www.bennioncenter.org/alumni

By Gina C. Russo
Student Programs Manager

Alternative Spring Break
Arcata, CA Ecological Restoration
Hollywood HIV/AIDS
Las Vegas Youth and Addiction
Pt. Reyes, CA Ecological Restoration
Rio Mesa, Utah Ecological Restoration
Portland Environmental Justice
San Diego Health & Poverty, Immigration
San Francisco Human Rights
San Juan River Trip, Utah River Rafting and Clean-up
Seattle Hunger and Homelessness
Vancouver Canada Healthcare

Alumni Reflection
By Gina Cornia
Utahns Against Hunger

It’s been almost twenty years since I was a student at the Bennion Center, and I still think about the lessons I learned.

It was lessons from the Bennion Center that set me on my path, and I still use them today in my work at Utahns Against Hunger.

I learned you can always find common ground with people who don’t see the world the same way. I learned, as hard as it is to admit sometimes, that I’m not always right, and that’s okay. And I learned that poverty, racism, sexism and homophobia diminish us all. I knew I wanted to be part of something that would change that, that would make the world I live in a more equitable place.

I learned that each one of us can change the world, and in fact it is our obligation to try.

The Bennion Center played a critical role in my life choices. I get up every day and have the privilege to do what I do and work with amazing, dedicated and smart people who are making the world a better place. No mother or father should have to put their child to bed hungry. I get to be part of working to make sure that all Utahns have what they need to make sure that doesn’t happen.

I discovered who I was at the Bennion Center.
Fall 2011 has ushered in a new season of positive change at the Bennion Center. The Carnegie Designation for Community Engagement the University of Utah received this year has raised the bar and provided a stronger sense of our social impact on campus and in the community.

The Culture of Giving campaign is in its second year, continuing to encourage current students and alumni to share of their time, talents and treasure. We have now enjoyed two successful benefit concerts supporting this campaign and cause.

On the service-learning front we continue to deepen academic commitment. Regarding faculty, the University of Utah Community Engagement Task Force Report was released in July 2011 and identified specific recommendations to increase faculty engagement for our campus. Using the report’s recommendations, we have begun a Service-Learning Faculty Fellows program and grown the engagement efforts campus wide.

We welcome our new staff members, Kris Fenn and Lacey Holmes, whose work already demonstrates excellent service to students and the Center.

Kim Paulding is our first Bennion Center alum to serve as the chair of our advisory board. She is a tremendous leader, spearheading the 25th Anniversary celebration that will culminate in a November 2012 reunion event.

Sincere thanks to everyone who plays a role in the success of the Bennion Center and the University as we reach out to the community. Success is happening in a multitude of ways. We are honored to be associated with so many people and organizations that positively impact our community.

By Linda P. Dunn
Director

Upcoming Bennion Center Events

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Please visit our website for specific times and locations.

www.BennionCenter.org

If you would like to receive this newsletter electronically, please send your contact information to info@bennioncenter.org