25th Annual Project Youth Breaks Records

Project Youth is the Bennion Center’s longest-running program, having been started the same year as the Center to promote higher education. It is only fitting that 2013, its 25th year, brought the biggest and best Project Youth to date. Student directors began planning the event a year in advance; team leaders and volunteers met monthly, visiting each selected elementary school twice throughout the spring to play games and connect with the schools.

On April 25 more than 175 red-clad University student volunteers hosted a record 852 students from 12 local Title I elementary schools. The day opened with a pep rally welcome at Libby Gardner Hall. It featured an introduction by President David Pershing, a talk by Assistant Vice President Dr. Jennifer Molock, a musical performance by the student a cappella group Infrared and an inspiring speech by Coach Larry Krystkowiak. No pep rally would be complete without Swoop and the U cheerleaders, who raised the energy level.

After the pep rally, U volunteers escorted the elementary students to various classes across campus voluntarily taught by professors. Subjects included poetry, astronomy, wilderness medicine and animation; they often featured hands-on activities such as a physics demonstration or choreography in the dance hall.

Courses were followed by lunch provided by the Bennion Center and sponsors. While photographers documented the day, volunteers and students mingled and ate to music and laughter, with spontaneous dance parties breaking out. The big day concluded when volunteers ushered students onto buses and waved goodbye, expressing hope the kids will someday return as Utes. Volunteers then enjoyed root beer while reflecting on the event.

Thanks to all who contributed to make this year’s Project Youth the best yet.

By Megan Gessel
Project Youth Student Chair

Service Day Honors Martin Luther King, Jr.

On January 19th the Bennion Center hosted the Martin Luther King, Jr., Day of Service. With eight different service sites across the Salt Lake Valley, the Bennion Center doubled the number of service projects from last year. More than 200 volunteers met in the Union building for breakfast, learned about the different projects and carpooled to the service sites.

The variety of projects allowed volunteers to help in a myriad of ways. They assembled safe sex kits and completed a mailing project at the Utah AIDS Foundation. They cleaned and organized First Step House, working alongside the residents. They distributed food and books at a KUED reading party. They cleaned and organized at the YWCA. They painted and made minor building repairs at Maliheh Free Clinic. They assembled art kits for youth and teens at University Neighborhood Partners Hartland Partnership Center. They took photos of athletic teams at Sorensen Multicultural Center and prepared pots for the spring planting season at Red Butte Gardens.

The day was a resounding success. Thank you, volunteers, for your time!

By JaNae Lilly
Community Engaged Learning Coordinator
Expanding Alternative Breaks

Now in its 17th year, the Alternative Spring Break Program (ASB) continues to impact students and communities. Road-tripping to make a change, 108 participants gave 5,298 hours of service to engage with nine cities in the western United States and Canada. They departed March 8 and traveled more than 30,000 miles together.

These trips immersed University students, staff and faculty in social issues concerning such subjects as HIV/AIDS, urban environmentalism and addiction; opportunities included volunteerism, experiential learning and dialogue during a weeklong adventure. Student site leaders and their staff partners spent approximately 1,000 hours organizing the trips and preparing volunteers.

Many students returned with new perspectives on the issues and a commitment to continue their civic engagement locally. A San Francisco participant, whose experience focused on LGBTQ/Human Rights, stated: “I thought it was going to be difficult to become comfortable with the group, especially living in one room with them for a week. I also could not have imagined the impact the service and education of the trip would have on me. I felt closer to this group of people within a week than I have felt with the majority of people I have met this year in college. Together, we were able to learn so much about the Queer Community, and the experiences will never leave me.”

More than 300 students applied for the limited spots. Therefore, the Bennion Center, in conjunction with the Center for Student Wellness, is thrilled to announce that the program will be expanded. In the 2013-2014 year, participant spots will be doubled to match student interest, a larger Alternative Fall Break Program will be built, and new trips will emerge from student initiative and passion.

Thank you to the 108 students and staff who gave up their spring break to lend manpower to community needs beyond our city’s borders. We are excited to see what our students will accomplish next break.

By Kris Fenn
Alternative Breaks Coordinator

Welcome

The Bennion Center welcomes new staff person Melea Smith, who grew up in a rural town on the northern California coast and landed in Salt Lake City after falling in love with the southern Utah desert. Melea began her role as the Student Programs Coordinator in early 2013. This position has felt like a natural fit for her, drawing upon her student advising experience and educational background.

After graduating from UC Santa Cruz with a degree in community studies and a minor in education, Melea earned a master’s in counseling with a school counseling credential from Sonoma State University. For several years, Melea worked at the YWCA Marin Center, providing career, employment and life skills outreach for students and young adults.

More a winding road than linear track kind of person, Melea is thrilled that her career path led her to the Bennion Center, where she can support U of U students as they engage in their own journeys of discovery and community involvement.

Thank You

Without the support of our many donors, we would not be able to continue the programs we do. Thank you to all of you.

Below are some organizations we would like to thank particularly for their in-kind donations to our students and volunteer programs.

Banbury Cross Donuts
Cucina Deli
Chartwells
Einstein Bros Bagels
Jet Blue
Red Iguana
REI
Rico Brands
Salt Lake City School District
Sugar House Coffee
Sweet Tooth Fairy
Utah Food Services
The Service-Learning Scholars program combines a student’s volunteer interests with his or her academic pursuits. To receive the program designation on their transcripts, students must complete 400 hour of service, 8 reflections, 10 credits of community engaged learning coursework and an integrative service project (ISP). The rigorous requirements make it fitting that we celebrate students’ success at an annual banquet.

This year’s banquet, held on April 17, was built around the adage “When life gives you lemons, make lemonade.” Kylee Belnap, a graduating scholar who spoke, added that without sugar the lemonade would be sour. She shared how the sugar of service sweetened her experience at the U and her life.

This year 11 students earned the full Service-Learning Scholar designation, and 7 students earned the certificate. The program recently began a new partnership with the College of Nursing which resulted in 11 additional certificate recipients. Overall, the night was filled with the enjoyment of delicious food, recognition of students’ hard work and the light scent of lemon and sugar in the air.

By Sena Belgard
Service-Learning Scholars Leadership Team Member

Bennion Center Students Awarded for Service

Bennion Center Awards
Each year the Bennion Center recognizes students for their service and dedication with various awards. The Dan Wendelboe Continuous Community Service Award honors a current student with at least two years’ active work through the Center. The recipient demonstrates value for service through action, accomplishment, respect, integrity and leadership with a focus on consistent involvement. This year’s recipient is Alice Ma.

The Chelsea Hale Creative Community Leadership Award recognizes a current Bennion Center student with vision and understanding of the issues that affect our community. The recipient demonstrates value for service through action, accomplishment, respect, integrity and leadership with a focus on creative and innovative service. This year’s recipient is Jimmy Lee.

In the 25th Anniversary year, the Bennion Center created a new annual award to recognize a Center alumnus who exhibits outstanding service and leadership. Recipients will be selected for effectiveness in living the Center’s mission, to engage in lifelong civic participation with the greater community. The award is named after Drew Peterson, who helped create the mission statement as the first advisory board chair in 1987. This year’s Drew Petersen Alumni Service Award honors Andrea Ferguson.

University of Utah Student Leadership Awards
The Office of Orientation and Leadership Development initiated University-wide awards for all campus student leaders. Bennion Center students were well represented as they took home half of the awards.

Student Leader of the Year:
Sena Belgard
Emerging Student Leader of the Year:
Elizabeth Sapperstein
Commitment to Service Award:
Max Wood
Student Group of the Year:
Bennion Center Student Board
YouthLinc Young Humanitarian
Each year a local nonprofit, YouthLinc, recognizes one student leader who speaks, mentors, volunteers and provides a voice for the young people who have contributed to the community through service and humanitarian work. The top four finalists this year were all University of Utah students, three of them heavily involved in the Bennion Center. The award was given to Megan Dolle, a service-learning scholar. Other finalists from the Center are Jessie Du Pre, the Bennion Center Service Corps co-chair, and Sena Belgard, who serves on the Scholars Leadership Team.

Newman Civic Fellow
Campus Compact, a national organization, recognizes one student at each member university as a Newman Civic Fellow. The student excels in community engagement and service. This year they recognized Rachel Barnes. Rachel’s passion, energy and service have been focused on healthcare. She has demonstrated her ability to think critically about social issues. Her spirit of involvement and advocacy is contagious and has greatly benefitted our campus community.

By Lacey Holmes
Public Relations Coordinator
**Community Engagement Increases on Campus**

Spring 2013 was a busy time for Community Engaged Scholarship at the University. We held the largest ever Community Engagement Recognition Luncheon on March 28th where we recognized the amazing work of a number of engaged scholars. Among the awards given was the Public Service Professorship for 2013-14 to Dr. Janet Kaufman (English) for her “Grump Meter” project working with Rose Park Elementary on teaching emotional self-regulation to elementary students through art, math and English. Also recognized was Pat Eisenmann (Exercise Sports Science) as the 2013 Distinguished Faculty Service recipient. Pat’s career-long service to athletes, refugees and people with disabilities has had a huge impact in our community. Keynotes by Gary Daynes and Hiram Chodosh highlighted the depth and breadth of engagement at our institution.

As Spring semester concluded we began transferring our second installment of new community engaged learning funds to departments that taught engaged courses during the semester. This second semester of funding brought our total for the first academic year of these funds to $180,000, which went to departments to support community engaged scholarship. This has been a very exciting new endeavor for the Bennion Center and the U.

On May 8th we held the inaugural Engaged Faculty Retreat at the University Guest House. Nearly 30 faculty from across campus shared their experiences and plans for future engagement opportunities at the U. We are now busy planning our Community Engaged Faculty Institute, which will be held at the Homestead Resort August 14 & 15. This is our second year hosting this expanded version of the institute and we look forward to hosting our three national speakers: Julie Hatcher from Indiana University-Purdue University Indianapolis, Nick Cutforth from University of Denver and Caitlin Cahill from Parsons The New School of Design. This event is co-hosted with University Neighborhood Partners and Utah Campus Compact; it is always a great way to wrap up the summer networking with engaged faculty colleagues from across the state.

As we head into the Fall 2013 semester we are perhaps most excited about the change in name given to service-learning: It will hereafter be community engaged learning, the official designation going into class schedules and course catalogs at the University. This new name signals to community organizations, students and faculty that we are not simply serving the community; we are engaging with the community to meet community-identified needs in ways that allow students to learn and grow.

**Spring Celebration Recognizes Students**

Spring Celebration is an annual event that recognizes Bennion Center student leaders’ dedication to service. The Center’s mission is to foster lifelong service and civic participation by engaging the university with the greater community in action, change and learning. This mission is fulfilled because student leaders spend hours organizing and preparing service projects and programs.

Spring Celebration was held on April 5 at Camp Tracy in Millcreek Canyon. The theme, “Mapping Our Impact,” allowed us to focus on the impact Center volunteers have throughout the city, state, nation and world. It celebrated the thousands of service hours volunteers gave. With the help of Jimmy Lee, Bennion Center Recognition Coordinator, each Center student leader was recognized individually and presented with a small gift of thanks for their leadership roles.

Dinner was served and provided through generous donations from Red Iguana, Utah Foods and Sweet Tooth Fairy.

Many students go beyond the expectations of college classes to selflessly serve. It is fun to get together with them in an environment that celebrates their work, not because recognition is expected, but because it is deserved.

**By Kylee Belnap**

**Spring Celebration Student Chair**

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**Spring Celebration Student Chair**
Volunteers help with **Literacy and Education**

As part of the Bennion Center’s longstanding partnership with America Reads and Horizonte Instructional Facility, the February Saturday Service Project provided literacy support for hundreds of students and refugees. More than 50 volunteers representing non-profit organizations, as well as Center student leaders, braved a snowy February morning to spend their Saturday engaged in several literacy-based activities.

Working in a cramped classroom, the first group of students could be found painstakingly cutting, folding, organizing and preparing literacy kits crucial to the reading curriculum for Salt Lake City’s Title I elementary schools. Horizonte’s library was equally busy as volunteers spent hours cataloging and recording hundreds of new books requested by Horizonte’s students and teachers for supplemental instruction both in and out of school. A final group of volunteers worked with non-native English speakers to improve their English skills and understanding. When the day closed, a combined effort of 200 hours was committed to improving literacy and increasing access to education for various communities throughout Salt Lake City.

By **Tayler Clough**
America Reads Coordinator

**Environmental Service at the Bend-in-the-River**

New and returning volunteers happily came together for two spring events at Bend-in-the-River. With support from REI, the Center kicked off Spring Clean-Up on April 6. More than 70 community and university volunteers tackled invasive species removal and site beautification projects. TreeUtah lead groups in planting cottonwood trees and rescuing more than 150 native trees on this beautiful two-acre site along the Jordan River.

Despite the surprise storm, the annual Earth Day event was held on April 20. Supported by REI and Chase Bank, this day engaged the community at the Social Justice Gardens at Jackson Elementary and the Bend. Braving blustery weather, 185 volunteers of all ages enthusiastically contributed to environmental projects. The volunteer impact was amazing: 750 feet of trails maintained, 450 gallons of invasive species removed, 15 family garden signs built and 28 garden beds improved. The day ended with blue skies and sunshine as hungry volunteers feasted on burritos generously catered by Rico.

Bend-in-the-River is maintained by caring stewardship from community volunteers, University students and our partners at Salt Lake City Parks and Public Lands. This protected green space continues to be enjoyed by a diverse community of visitors and provides a fertile space for environmental learning, appreciation and recreation. The Bennion Center is happy to support site restoration and education at the Bend through large volunteer events held each spring and fall.

By **Melea Smith**
Student Programs Coordinator

*Top and Above: Volunteers work with kids on environmental projects at the Bend-in-the-River and the Social Justice Gardens.*

*Top and middle left: Volunteers at the Bend dig new trails and protect trees in the rain.*

*Above: Student team leaders provide invaluable support to the more than 75 volunteers at the Bend for Earth Day.*

*Above: Volunteers get the boxes at the Social Justice Gardens at Jackson Elementary School ready for spring planting season.*
If you would like to receive this newsletter electronically, please send your contact information to info@bennioncenter.org

Upcoming Bennion Center Events

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<th>Month</th>
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<th>Event Description</th>
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<td>BC 101</td>
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<td>Legacy of Lowell Day of Service</td>
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<td>12:30-1:30 pm</td>
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<td>Issues and Action Luncheon</td>
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<td>Service House Dialogue</td>
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<td>24</td>
<td>Bennion Hinckley Forum</td>
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<td>26</td>
<td>Saturday Service Project</td>
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<td>Oct.</td>
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<td>Issues and Action Luncheon</td>
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<td>Bennion Center</td>
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<td>Saturday Service Project</td>
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<td>Catholic Community Services Project</td>
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<td>MLK, Jr., Day of Service</td>
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<td>Multiple Sites</td>
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<td>30</td>
<td>Issues and Action Luncheon</td>
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<td>Bennion Center</td>
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Please visit our website for more information: www.bennioncenter.org