In this issue

Legacy of Lowell
Brings Service Home

September 8th, 2012, saw an amazing kick-off to the University of Utah’s homecoming week with the Bennion Center’s annual Legacy of Lowell Day of Service. More than 800 volunteers from the community and university turned out to contribute more than 2,400 hours. The day began at Glendale Middle School, where volunteers picked up breakfast and chose their favorite project or work site from 15 options. Various student groups were pre-assigned to help with home improvement projects across the city. Project completion was rewarded with a delicious lunch catered by Cafe Rio.

This year we were also joined in service by three alumni groups across the country, connecting with the spirit of homecoming, despite the distance.

To wrap up the day and begin the celebration, homecoming royalty was announced. Thank you to all the volunteers who worked so hard on such a wonderful day to improve our community!

By Danielle Johnson
Legacy of Lowell Student Director

Legacy of Lowell
Celebrating 25 Years of Building Community

One of the most important aspects of volunteerism is celebrating the work. Taking time to reflect on and formally observe accomplishments enhances the desire and commitment to volunteer. On November 14, 2012, the Bennion Center celebrated its first twenty-five years of service rendered in and reciprocated by the community. More than two hundred students, alumni, staff, faculty members, and community partners gathered from all over the country into the Union Ballroom to share dinner and memories. We were fortunate to be able to celebrate the founding of the Center with Irene Fisher, founding director; former University president Chase Petersen, and founding donors. As part of the program, past directors Irene and Marshall Welch spoke of their experiences and joys serving and being served, guided by the philosophy of Lowell Bennion and the enthusiasm of thousands of college students.

The keynote address was given by newly inaugurated University of Utah president David Pershing. He talked about the importance of service on the U of U campus, and the vital role that the Bennion Center plays in making that happen. He also recognized a few alumni who were there as they continue serving in the community.

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Legacy of Lowell
Service Statistics

11,000 pounds of food sorted at the Utah Food Bank
3,000 safe-sex packets assembled for the Utah AIDS Foundation
1,000 backpacks filled with school supplies
533 blankets made for refugees and children
300 feet of new trails built
250 education kits created
200 local kids instructed in soccer
200 emergency kits assembled
178 pillowcases made for children
150 gallons of invasive species removed
53 blankets made for pets at the Humane Society
50 hats knit for newborn babies and homeless people
30 adults tutored in ESL
10 houses improved
1 mural painted
Volunteers Re-Energize the Rio Mesa Center over Fall Break

During fall break in 2012, a great group of students went to the Rio Mesa Center for a week of fun and service projects. We camped next to the Dolores River and endured a cold first night. Southern Utah warmed us right up when we got to work on several small-group service projects. These included putting waterproof finish on benches, building a volleyball court and horseshoe pit, and placing large rocks to outline roadways. The projects were fun, especially because we got to enjoy intense volleyball and horseshoe games after completing the court and pit.

A joint project entailed removing invasive tamarisk. The trees were no match for our determination. We cleared a huge area next to the river, creating a massive amount of firewood. This we put to good use. The bonfires kept us warm at night and provided a center for sharing stories. We enjoyed a lot of marshmallows and s’mores during those nights.

In addition to significantly improving the Rio Mesa Center, we had great fun exploring and learning about the area. Experts taught us about topics such as light pollution, honey bees, bird banding, and insects, all of which affect Utah. We sampled varieties of honey, studied the stars and constellations through a telescope, and participated in banding birds. We also did some exploring for ourselves. Some went swimming in the Dolores River and others hiked in nearby canyons. One group even went on a night hike. The most memorable sight was probably the spectacular red rock, which many of us had never seen before. We really got to experience it up close when an entomologist took us on a long canyon hike and identified every insect we pointed out.

Future visitors to the center will benefit from our work, and we got to make some really good friends while having an unforgettable experience.

By Carina Hahn
AFB Site Leader

New Program Empowers Students to Meet Community Needs

The Bennion Center Service Corps (BCSC) is a new group that recruits and provides student volunteers for short-term projects. Some projects we have done were sponsored by non-profits and include the American Cancer Society Gala, KUED phone-in donation night, the Road Home's Chili Night and the Salt Lake City Health Fair. Additionally, the BCSC has generated projects of its own. We provided students to help people who needed a house painted or a meal delivered or who just wish for an occasional visit.

In October we had an opportunity to organize volunteers to stucco and paint the house of a woman named Alma. Alma is a mother of 6, a volunteer at neighborhood schools and an advocate for higher education. One the Saturday we painted Alma’s home, we were able to meet her and her family. Alma was immensely surprised and relieved to have the job done. Her happiness continues motivating me to seek out people in need and find help for them. She is an inspiration.

This first semester was full of projects. They gave opportunities for BCSC volunteers to connect with people from different neighborhoods, backgrounds, and non-profit organizations. This is a great program for anyone to just jump in and get involved in service. The projects coming up this semester promise more accomplishments, friends, and happiness for everyone involved.

By Jessie Du Pre
BCSC Co-Chair
On June 29, 2012, a successful service adventure was launched in Costa Rica. Led by Gina Russo, a group of Bennion Center alumni and students commenced a week-long service project in the beautiful mountain community of San Luis.

The service objective for the week was twofold: to improve this small community’s medical clinic and to assist with constructing their first community center. The medical clinic is a humble six-room cinder block building; it lacked a proper entryway and needed a new septic system and fresh decorative paint. Holes were dug, cement was hand mixed, and artistic talents were deployed to spruce up this much-needed facility. Also, a new cement entry was framed and poured, allowing an ambulance to back up to the building’s doorway.

The new community center would serve as the heart of San Luis, acting as a civic building and a social gathering place. Here we found ourselves digging foundations, working with more cement, and preparing and finishing some woodwork. There is no such thing as easy or light work when you are working with cement. Though our skills may have been lacking, we moved a dump truck of rock as well as buckets of gravel and sand for cement throughout the week. We dug foundations for multiple entryways, porches and 100 feet of sidewalk; we mixed cement and hauled it by wheelbarrows to fill the forms.

We did not take the lead on constructing either project but served under the direction of the community members of San Luis. They started before we arrived, their work breaks were shorter, and they worked after our day was finished, showing true ownership of these projects by their cheerful hard work. They are a gracious happy people who quickly became our friends.

After each day’s work we visited the industries of this impressive community. We toured a paper recycling facility that, by hand, recycled paper waste and converted it to useful paper products. We visited various farms that grew bananas, sugarcane, coffee and cacao (the chocolate bean). One family made 20 varieties of soap. We purchased many hand-made items, brought them home to share with family and friends, and have enjoyed them immensely.

The trip would not have been complete without taking advantage of the tourist hot spots. They included the zip lines of Monte Verde, a scenic waterfall hike, and a private tour and demonstration of chocolate making at a fabulous boutique chocolate shop.

Welcome

Nothing is more important for Tayler Clough than public education! For seven years Tayler has been working in public education as a volunteer, a coordinator, and, most recently, a history teacher in South Korea. Tayler received his bachelor’s degree from the University, is currently working on a master’s degree in education, and looks forward to further contributing to public education as the Bennion Center’s newest America Reads coordinator.

Think Globally, Act Locally at Hunger Banquet

To contribute to the University of Utah’s annual food drive and raise awareness about hunger, the Bennion Center once again partnered with various student groups to host the Hunger Banquet. Student leaders from the International Leadership Academy, National Residence Hall Honorary, University Service Coalition, One and UNICEF Red Collaborated on an informative program. A class in the College of Social Work assembled table centerpieces that showcased the amount of food one person could get on a food stamp budget.

The theme “Think Globally, Act Locally” invited a variety of information. The global aspect began with a presentation by James Mayfield, an emeritus professor and founding board member of CHOICE Humanitarian. He described a form of international development that allows communities to have better access to food through education and infrastructure development.

The next speaker, Supreet Gill, focused on local food accessibility. Gill manages the New Roots Program through Salt Lake County. This program trains refugee populations to farm and garden in order to enjoy fresh healthy food.

Attendees were challenged by Geneva Thompson, student body president and Social Justice Gardens program director, to get involved. Many volunteer opportunities were presented at tables around the room, encouraging guests to sign up and start work soon.

Chartwells donated the evening’s soup and bread to enable the Utah Food Bank to receive the full $5 price of admission. More than 130 guests donated $435 and filled two large bins of food. Please join us this year. 2013 trip will be June 8-15. More info online.

By Jonathan Pinnock
BC Alumnus
Costa Rica Participant

Please join us this year. 2013 trip will be June 8-15. More info online.

By Lacey Holmes
Public Relations Coordinator
This fall brought a few changes to our Saturday service projects with new community partners, new ideas and new participants.

**October**

For the second year in a row, the Bennion Center partnered with the City of South Salt Lake and the Hser Ner Moo Center to put on a fun carnival for refugee children. The carnival was aimed at helping kids understand more about the dangers of gangs, drugs, and pornography. Volunteers helped with a carnival style program. We provided community resources to all participants including the Salt Lake Valley Health Department and the South Salt Lake Fire and Police Departments. More than 80 volunteers came to serve as mentors to more than 100 refugee children.

**November**

The volatile November weather has not always been conducive to the outdoor leaf haul we have done in the past, so this year a new indoor project took its place. Partnering with the Road Home, volunteers participated in a shape-up project by helping clean and even remodel the playrooms of the Road Home and Palmer Court shelters. Snowfall that day made the more than 175 volunteers grateful to be inside; to witness the drastic changes produced by our work made it all the sweeter.

Enterprise Rent-A-Car once again partnered with us.

**December**

Partnering with Catholic Community Services, Bennion Center volunteers collected clothing and toys as holiday gifts for children in a refugee family. Volunteers were very generous in their donations. After a few weeks collecting items, they took them to Catholic Community Services to wrap them and more gifts donated for other families. Thirty-five volunteers wrapped presents for more than 160 children.

**Alumni Reflection**

Looking back on my journey at the Bennion Center leads me to giggle just a bit. I think to myself, “What a crazy kid!” I remember seeing a flyer that read Alternative Spring Break (ASB) and promoted serving others during spring break when most other students are having fun with friends, enjoying time with family, and even catching up with a backlog of assignments. Signing up and making the commitment investment (a small supply fee), you would think I was crazy, right? But I was willing to shift out of my comfort zone and learn something new. Not only did I learn about issues and people whose lives were changed by AIDS/HIV, but I also met a lot of new and lifelong friends. I learned about a subculture and demographic not my own. I also learned way more than I would have otherwise about myself. The service trip led to my becoming a site leader the next year for ASB for other students, receiving the opportunity to be one of the first students to live in the Bennion Service House, and eventually returning after graduation to act as a community partner for service-learning projects.

Now, as a member of the alumni committee, it is apparent why I continue to stay involved. The Bennion Center, for many students, is a sacred space and outlet for creativity, positive peers, mentors, self-discovery, academic achievement, duty to others, and, very important for me -- DIVERSITY. Diversity is important in service work because it allows us to challenge our own beliefs and values, arrive at deeper understandings of different perspectives and cultures, and find appreciation for our own strengths and knowledge. One thing I am most proud of is that diversity, that single term used to represent us all, was included in the mission of the Service House; it was constructed by those of us who figured out that diversity helped us before it hindered us. In the end, the Bennion Center taught me this: Respect and love each other, unite and be collective, will the power to the people you serve.

**By Clifton Uckerman**

Clif is a social worker who holds leadership positions throughout the community. He is the current chair of the Chicano Scholarship and teaches social work courses at Salt Lake Community College. He is currently establishing a private practice.

When you think of the “Dream Team” advisory board to a community organization, you should think of our current Bennion Center Advisory Board. This collection of energetic and talented people provides support for all Center activities. Our 30-member board is composed of dynamic community members and Bennion Center alumni, and it includes some university staff in an ex-officio capacity. We so appreciate the time and talents contributed by each member!

This past year the board structure was changed so that members are grouped into working committees. Committee responsibilities vary widely, as they address topics as diverse as incorporating service into university courses, fundraising, building relationships with community partner agencies, and engaging Bennion Center alumni in ongoing activities. The small committee groups meet monthly, joined by an assigned staff member, to work on projects and resolve challenges. The full board meets four times a year and hears highlights of and progress made by separate committees. The new structure has proven productive. It gives members an increased sense of ownership over a specific area of Bennion Center activity.

In August 2012, we welcomed several new members who joined the returning volunteers, many of whom have been committed supporters and board members for years. This mix of old and new, community members and university staff provides a rich reserve of expertise, connections, and knowledge. New members are David Buchman, Josh Bradley, Steve Brown, David Chapman, Patti Clements, Lindsay Ferrari, Rick Henriksen, Jani Iwamoto, John Kesler, Kathleen McDonald, Sandi Pershing, Jon Pinnock, Luanne Schmidt, and Christy Thayne. They represent government, business, law, medicine, education, and community resources. We are proud that each of them has chosen to affiliate with the Bennion Center and contribute their considerable talents to support our students.

Thank you to all who serve and have served on the Bennion Center Advisory Board. We know we have the greatest advisory board at the University of Utah!

**By Mary Draper and Noel Applebaum**

**Advisory Board**

**Health & Ability**  
**Environment**  
**Social Justice**  
**Education**  
**International**
Issues and Action

While many Bennion Center service programs have a strong civic component, it is the Issues and Action Luncheons that directly address government and politics. At these events the center fills with energized students, a guest speaker, and dialogue about the issue. It is a unique space for combining service and political action.

I was honored this fall to speak about voting as an individual who is passionate about voting rights. We discussed the knowledge and feelings we have about voting, specifically raising doubts about the value of voting and addressing why we do it anyway. The action component was simple: go vote.

Our luncheon in November, came after the presidential election, when it seemed as though politics had finally stopped. However, politics and government never stop. We therefore focused on the level of government that is closest to us: the local. Appropriately, Professor and Salt Lake City Councilman Luke Garrott spoke on both the functions of local government and his personal path to politics.

We will have two more luncheons this year. Although much work has been done, more always remains to be addressed.

By Ali Sadler
ASUU Director of Government Relations

The University of Utah Gets Engaged

With all the hype of getting a new president at the University of Utah, students were curious about what his priorities and values would be. Would he put the students first? Would he care too much about athletics? Would tuition go up or down? Would he be the kind of leader the University of Utah needs at this time? President David Pershing is proving to be EXACTLY what the University of Utah needs.

Part of the inauguration ceremony of President David Pershing as the 15th President of the University of Utah included a week of activities. President Pershing declared the first day, October 23, 2012, as “Community Engagement Day,” asking all colleges, departments, and student groups to showcase their devotion to service. He thought it would be appropriate to start off “his” week by planning and carrying out a day focused on others; a day which demonstrates that his new assignment to lead the university is not about him but about those who make the university a great institution.

Beginning the previous June, Sandi Breinholt, assistant vice president for the Office of Outreach and Engagement, along with Bennion Center Director Linda Dunn, chaired a committee of faculty and students from across campus to plan service projects appropriate for as many people as possible on and off campus. Getting everyone engaged in community work throughout the day in different locations. The committee’s work was a success.

A press conference in the Park Building at noon, where many gathered to listen to President Pershing explain the ensuing events despite the rain, opened the day. From then until 8:00 p.m., service happened. The projects included tying blankets for the Rape Recovery Center, visiting veterans at the VA Nursing Home, reading with and tutoring students at Bennion Elementary, sorting and packaging food at the Utah Food Bank, and discussing in the Hinckley Caucus Room the history of the Civility Initiative with Mayor Becker.

The day turned out to be such a success that the University has decided to carry out an annual Community Engagement Day, providing students and faculty with yet another opportunity to show their commitment to community. The next Community Engagement Day has been scheduled for Thursday, April 25, 2013, where many people are expected to be “getting engaged” -- not with rings, flowers, or kisses, but in the community they love so dearly.

By Max Wood
University Service Coalition Co-chair

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.

Chartwells
Deseret Book
Einstein’s Bagels
Enterprise Rent-A-Car
King Fisher Ranch
Lakeshore Learning
Marriott Library
Sherwin Williams
Utah Idaho Supply

25th Anniversary continued...

Bennion Center alumni Peter Breinholt and Stephen Sharp Nelson performed the musical numbers and shared their own memories of service and leadership in the Bennion Center and the community.

Students in the center’s past have been privileged to interact with hundreds of thousands of individuals through service. The Bennion Center continues the legacy of service. We chose that evening to re-dedicate ourselves with the phrase coined by Lowell himself, “Life goes on . . . Let it be spent in the things that matter most.” I am excited to see, as a student and alumnus, the impact that will be made over the next twenty-five years of this wonderful center.

By Curtis Sudbury
25th Anniversary Intern

More than 200 guests gathered in the Union Ballroom to celebrate 25 years of building community.

Current students added to the celebration.

Top: President Pershing started off the day with a press conference in the Park Building.
Below: Student ambassadors direct volunteers to the bus going to the Utah Food Bank.
If you would like to receive this newsletter electronically, please send your contact information to info@bennioncenter.org

Upcoming Bennion Center Events

**Feb.**
- 17-21 Bennion Center Open House
- 5 Issues and Action Luncheon
- 12 Bennion Hinckley Forum
- 19 Service House Dialogue
- 23 Saturday Service Project: Earth Day

**March**
- 9-16 Alternative Spring Break
- 19 Service House Dialogue
- 21 Bennion Hinckley Forum

**April**
- 4 Issues and Action Luncheon
- 5 Spring Celebration
- 6 Bend-in-the-River Spring Cleanup
- 16 Service House Dialogue
- 18 Bennion Hinckley Forum
- 20 Saturday Service Project: Earth Day
- 25 Community Engagement Day & Project Youth

**June**
- 8-15 Costa Rica Service Trip

**Sept.**
- 7 Legacy of Lowell

*Please visit our website for specific times and locations.*

www.bennioncenter.org

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A Note From the Director

When I attended the Bennion Center’s 20th anniversary celebration in 2007, it was just prior to my being offered the position as director. I remember right then realizing that I would likely have the opportunity to help plan the 25th anniversary in 2012. That privilege and duty seemed a long way off at the time, but suddenly it was upon us.

From the beginning of my tenure I’ve felt a great responsibility to adequately honor the rich legacy of the Bennion Center and Lowell Bennion, its namesake. How does one adequately continue the models forged by Lowell Bennion, Irene Fisher, and Marshall Welch? Remarkably, Lowell’s presence seems ever with us. I have felt his guiding hand. I frequently imagine his questioning brow as we struggle with decisions, and I see his approving smile when we resolve issues. I know he appreciates the consistent, committed students who continue to lead out.

Now I stand on the other side of the anniversary and am so pleased with both the outcome of that evening and the collective energy that powers the Center. The event signifies 25 years of real growth and accomplishment from the Center’s heart; it means five years of honor for me to serve as director.

The stories you read in this newsletter are possible due to a supportive administration, hard-working staff, faculty, students, and generous donors. The work depends on everyone contributing her or his part. Thank you for yours!

*By Linda Dunn*

*Director*