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The Senator Stephen M. Brewer Center for Civic Learning & Community Engagement
CENTER STAFF

FAGAN FORHAN
Assistant Dean of K–12 Partnerships & Civic Engagement
fforhan@mwcc.mass.edu
978-630-9595

SHELLEY ERRINGTON NICHOLSON
Director, Senator Stephen M. Brewer Center for Civic Learning & Community Engagement
mnicholson5@mwcc.mass.edu
978-630-9219

JULIE CRONIN
Staff Assistant, Senator Stephen M. Brewer Center for Civic Learning & Community Engagement
jcronin8@mwcc.mass.edu
978-630-9435

LAUREN MOUNTAIN
Director, United Way Youth Venture
lmountain@mwcc.mass.edu
978-630-9201

EVAN BERRY
Program Manager, United Way Youth Venture
eberry@mwcc.mass.edu
978-630-9531

HAYLIE KELLEY
Outreach Specialist, United Way Youth Venture
hkelley2@mwcc.mass.edu
978-630-9377

DONNA TOOTHAKER
Outreach Specialist, United Way Youth Venture
dtoothaker@mwcc.mass.edu
978-630-9208

RENEE TAMBLING
Program Assistant, United Way Youth Venture
ttambling@mwcc.mass.edu
978-630-9588

JOJO ANTONIO
Development Officer, United Way Youth Venture
jantonio1@mwcc.mass.edu
978-630-9424

DANIEL SOUCY
Faculty Chair of Civic Engagement
dsoucy3@mwcc.mass.edu
978-630-9476

PATRICIA BREWERTON
Coordinator of Career Planning and Placement
p_brewereton@mwcc.mass.edu
978-630-9254

JANA MURPHY
AmeriCorps*VISTA
jmurphy49@mwcc.mass.edu
978-630-9255

STEVIE LABELLE
Student Leader in Civic Engagement & SOS Mentor

BRYAN NOLAN
Student Leader in Civic Engagement

EDEN SHAVEET
Student Leader in Civic Engagement & SOS Mentor

ALISHA VANHILLO
Student Leader in Civic Engagement, SOS Mentor & Intern

RACHEL VARGELETIS
Student Leader in Civic Engagement, SOS Mentor & Intern

GEMINI WALTER
Student Leader in Civic Engagement & SOS Mentor

STUDENTS SOS OFFICE:
Interns:
  Lynnea Anderholm
  Aritha Daniels
  Jarelin Escobar
  Brity Murphy

Volunteer: Elizabeth Cross
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Greetings Friends,

This year has brought a plethora of change and new opportunities both on the national and local levels. We experienced one of the most contentious U.S. presidential races in our history, Mount Wachusett Community College saw the retirement of our longtime champion, Dr. Daniel Asquino. We also welcomed our new president, Dr. James Vander Hooven, “Jim”, to the Mount family. Throughout the academic year, our students, faculty and staff engaged in exciting dialogues around challenging issues, made a lasting impact in our communities through service and volunteerism, and even traveled internationally to volunteer in Costa Rica while learning about its vibrant culture. Providing over 104,000 hours to our community in one academic year is no small accomplishment and our students should be proud of their efforts.

The Center for Civic Learning and Community Engagement was honored to be dedicated to retired Massachusetts state senator, Stephen M. Brewer, this past March. Senator Brewer’s tireless work on behalf of the college throughout his career with the Commonwealth has resulted in our ability to truly impact our communities by embedding civic engagement into the fabric of this institution. A longtime ally, we are now excited to call the Senator a friend!

This year’s AmeriCorps*VISTA, Jana Murphy, focused on the very real and growing issue of food insecurity on college campuses and proposed the creation of a campus food pantry. Her proposal was approved by our new president, and with a generous $1,000 donation from Senator Brewer, we are very excited that the pantry is set to open in the fall. Food For Thought: Campus Pantry will provide students with immediate hunger relief in conjunction with SOS peer-mentoring to help students obtain long-term food security. In addition, the college is currently involved in a newly formed committee from the Massachusetts Department of Higher Education, working with other state colleges in the Commonwealth to develop a survey tool to gauge the prevalence of food insecurity on our campuses in order to better address the issue.

As we reflect on the 2016-2017 academic year, we would be remiss if we did not acknowledge all of the hard work done by our faculty in ensuring our students remain civically engaged across the disciplines. We are always humbled by the unique ways our faculty incorporate civic learning into the curriculum. One outstanding example is the Strategic Management course taught by Professor Emeritus John Reilly. Professor Reilly has reinvented the capstone course to be one that deeply engages students in creating a strategic plan for an area non-profit. This year, Professor Reilly partnered with the Spanish American Center and Ginny’s Helping Hand, two important resources in the Leominster community. His students contributed over 1,000 hours of service developing strategic plans for the two organizations. It is this type of innovative project that yields phenomenal results for students and our community partners alike.

As we look to the future, we do so with a renewed sense of hope. Our students are a shining example of what can be accomplished when given the opportunity to be heard and engage in their community. They inspire us to continue this important work alongside such remarkable students, faculty and staff.

Best,

Shelley Errington Nicholson, Director & Julie Cronin, Staff Assistant
Stephen M. Brewer Center for Civic Learning & Community Engagement
“The best way to find yourself is to lose yourself in the service of others.”

- Mahatma Gandhi
On March 7th, the Center for Civic Learning and Community Engagement was dedicated to Senator Stephen M. Brewer to honor his career in public service and recognize his steadfast support of Mount Wachusett Community College during his twenty-six years in the Massachusetts legislature. The dedication celebration highlighted the impact the Senator had during his decades of civil service in his numerous roles that culminated with his position as the influential Chair of the Commonwealth’s Senate Committee on Ways and Means. The ceremony also detailed the ongoing work of the Center that supports the civic engagement of over 2,800 students at the college with more than 400 community organizations. Through these collaborations MWCC students provide an average of 135,000 hours of service to the community for an economic impact of $3.63 million.

“In the commitment to civic service and engagement from both Senator Brewer and The Center for Civic Learning and Community Engagement make the naming of the center in the senator’s honor an ideal match,” said MWCC President Dr. Daniel M. Asquino.

“One can’t become a truly conscious member of society in a democracy unless one has an appreciation for the essence of democracy. That is engagement, compassion, caring, involvement and sacrifice for the common good. These are the qualities epitomized by Senator Stephen Brewer and that is why we are here today,” said Asquino.

In attendance were a number of governmental representatives, some of whom took the stage to speak about Senator Brewer’s wide-ranging influence, commitment to the entire Commonwealth and personal interactions that defined his time in the legislature.

State Senator Jennifer Flanagan said Senator Brewer epitomizes public service, while Fitchburg Mayor Steven DiNatale spoke to the Senator fundamentally being a good person and State Representative Jonathan Zlotnik said that the Brewer name is perfect for the Center.

“We have all learned so, so much from Senator Brewer throughout the years,” said Senator Anne Gobi who filled his seat after his retirement. “He took to heart those words of Hubert Humphrey that we take care of those in the dawn of life, in the twilight of life and in the shadows of life. And for the students who are going to benefit from being at this center, if you can keep those things in mind you will pay the right homage to this gentleman right here.”

In addition to those that knew the Senator during his career, three speakers from the college talked about the ongoing influence of the Center and the Senator. Jasson Alvarado-Gomez, Student Trustee at Mount Wachusett Community College, told the story of how a comment the Senator made to him in the halls of the school, saying that he would be a senator himself someday, opened his eyes to the vast possibilities the future held.
“I want to tell you something. Someday, when I become a senator, I am going to go back to college and I am going to tell some kid sitting by himself you are going to be a future senator,” said Alvarado-Gomez.

The other two speakers addressed the influence the Center had on them.

“During my first semester, the Center became my anchor, it became a second home. It is the reason I feel connected to Mount Wachusett Community College and why I am so proud to be a student here,” said Jana Murphy a current student and AmeriCorps*VISTA member.

“But it wasn’t until I hit my first rough patch that I realized how important it is to feel that kind of connection to your school. It was this connection that kept me from dropping everything when I had a hard time in my classes, or when life in general became overwhelming."

“The Center is a vital part of this school. It helps those in need. It gives people hope. It shows the student population that we do care about their success. They are not alone,” said John Day, former Center AmeriCorps*VISTA, who graduated in 2015 and now works part-time at the school while pursuing his Bachelor’s degree at Fitchburg State University.

When Senator Brewer took the stage he talked about the commitment to learning that he sees in the students at Mount Wachusett Community College and how you cannot help but be inspired by the “miracle of learning” while at the school. The Senator said that he hoped the lessons of his life could have an impact on the lives of others.

“We know that none of us can do everything, but each of us can do something,” he said.

“Thank you for this honor and responsibility.”

The dedication included a ribbon cutting with red tape standing in for ribbon to represent all the red tape that the Senator cut through during his years in the legislature. The Senator will have an office in the Center and continue his work inspiring and assisting students looking to make an impact on the world.
The third annual Hunger Banquet was held this past November in an effort to expose students to hunger issues throughout the world. Based on the Oxfam model, and coordinated by our AmeriCorps*VISTA, Jana Murphy, this event brought faculty, staff and students together to experience different meals determined by random seating assignments.

Upon entry to the event, participants were given an identity which indicated their name, country of residence and other identifying factors such as age, family status, and job. 60% of participants were designated as low-income and received a meal of white rice and water – which they ate on the floor with their hands. Middle-income individuals made up another 30% of participants and were seated at a table, served themselves a bowl of rice and beans, water and plastic utensils. Finally, high-income individuals made up just 10% of the population and were seated at a table with linen, china and were served a plated three course meal.

During the event itself, Shelley Errington Nicholson, Director of the Senator Stephen M. Brewer Center for Civic Learning and Community Engagement, provided an interactive discussion on issues of poverty worldwide and at home. For entrance to the event, attendees either donated $2 or a canned good. Over $80 was collected to benefit the SOS Soup Voucher Program, and canned goods were donated to the Phi Theta Kappa Food Drive benefiting our students in need.
On April 22nd, Phi Theta Kappa hosted its third annual Character Breakfast at MWCC, open to children and families across the region. The event, coordinated by Jana Murphy, raised over $2,000. All proceeds from the event were donated to support hunger alleviation in Northern Central Massachusetts through the Gardner Community Action Committee and the MWCC SOS program.
The Students Serving Our Students (SOS) peer-to-peer mentoring program is a student-created and student-led service offered within the Center. With the goal of helping MWCC students succeed in their education, this program offers a variety of services to help students overcome personal barriers. Mentors assist their peers by connecting them with external social and community services and internal supports at the college. These referrals aid the students in overcoming a variety of issues including financial concerns, childcare challenges, transportation issues, food insecurity, and housing.

The SOS office is structured such that student mentors guide the implementation of the program, which allows for mentors and volunteers to have a truly empowering experience. SOS mentors and volunteers acquire skills in critical thinking, communication and collaboration; increase their knowledge about resources and opportunities available in the North Central region; and are afforded the opportunity to develop both civic and professional experience.

This academic year, Human Services Interns, Student Leaders in Civic Engagement and volunteer peer mentors provided services and referrals to 61 at-risk students. 171 food vouchers were given out to food insecure students. The SOS program also conducted numerous fundraisers to subsidize the meal voucher program, constructed a handbook for a food pantry to begin next fall, and worked with at risk students on numerous challenges including childcare, homelessness and transportation.
Through SOS, I had the opportunity to help other students find success. Helping others has been a privilege and improved my life immeasurably. The struggles I saw among my fellow classmates opened my eyes to issues of poverty and hunger right here on campus.

- Jana Murphy, 2017 Newman Civic Fellow
STUDENT LEADERS IN CIVIC ENGAGEMENT (SLiCE)

The Brewer Center hosted five Student Leaders in Civic Engagement (SLiCE) members during its second year of the program. SLiCE members engage students and the community by creating and sustaining a culture of lifelong leadership development, training, and education. The SLiCE program provides paid employment opportunities for MWCC student leaders to coordinate service programming, and assist with volunteer recruitment and management. This helps provide more meaningful opportunities for MWCC students to engage on campus and in our community.

This year’s SLiCE members included Stevie LaBelle, Bryan Nolan, Eden Shaveet, Rachel Vargeletis, and Gemini Walter. SLiCE members work 500 hours over the course of the year, splitting their time between the Brewer Center, the SOS Office, and their partner site. This year’s site placements included the Student Life Office, Growing Places Community Garden, MWCC’s Department of Access and Transition, and United Way Youth Venture.

“SLiCE gave me the confidence I needed to change my long term goals and my understanding of people. It allowed me to work on myself and pursue self-betterment… it provided me with the environment and resources I needed to grow and believe in myself.

- Student Leader in Civic Engagement
MEET THE SLiCE TEAM

**Stevie LaBelle:** Stevie served two years as a Student Leader in Civic Engagement. During her first year of SLiCE, she coordinated the Students SOS Office, and this past year she worked on projects around food justice and education, particularly with the SOS Community Garden Project in partnership with the ISC220 course. Stevie is incredibly passionate about eradicating food insecurity, and also coordinated a deliberative dialogue about the topic this year.

Stevie has been involved with the Mount Observer at MWCC as well as a member of numerous other clubs on campus. She is an Honors Program Student and a member of the Phi Theta Kappa Honor Society.

Outside of her work and education, Stevie is a mother of two much-loved children: Hunter and Isabel. She enjoys spending her free time reading, writing, cooking and gardening. She will be going on to pursue a degree in Political Science with a concentration in International Politics in the future and hopes to one day attend law school and become a published author.

**Bryan Nolan:** Bryan was partnered with the Educational Talent Search and Upward Bound programs through the Department of Access and Transition at MWCC. A 2011 Gateway to College graduate, 2014 Mount Observer Editor-in-Chief and Graphic Designer, and 2015 Computer Information Systems graduate, Bryan has been a member of the MWCC community for several years.

Bryan started to pursue a bachelor’s in Software Development at Southern New Hampshire University, and is now planning a new educational path that combines Computer Information Systems with Civic Engagement.

Outside of MWCC, Bryan is planning a small business, writing on a freelance basis, and enjoying life. His hobbies include writing music, playing instruments, taking pictures, going on adventures and thinking a lot. Bryan’s long-term goal has been to teach on a community college campus, but he is now also contemplating a career in government. Next year, Bryan will serve as a Commonwealth Corps member with United Way Youth Venture as their Transformational Leadership Design Innovator.
**Eden Shaveet:** Eden is an Israeli-born Gateway to College student. Eden was partnered with the Department of Access and Transition at MWCC, and worked with local middle and high school students to provide a multitude of academic, college, and career awareness services through the Upward Bound Math and Science program and the Educational Talent Search.

Outside of SLiCE, Eden volunteers with the House of Peace and Education in Gardner, Massachusetts as a mentor for the Pals Program, is a blogger for the Gateway to College National Network, President of the Human Service Club, the Vice President and Treasurer of the Sexuality and Gender Alliance, and a Student Affiliate of the American Psychological Association. Eden graduated with an associates in Liberal Arts and Sciences as the Valedictorian of the Gateway to College program, and is going to continue her education in pursuing a Bachelors of Psychology at Elms College. Eden will also be serving as a full-time Commonwealth Corps member with United Way Youth Venture next year as their Retention and Engagement Innovator.

Despite having left traditional school at the age of 14, Eden has managed to reclaim her education and surpass all expectation. Eden plans to continue her education to the doctoral level.

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**Rachel Vargeletis:** Rachel was a Pathways Early College Innovation School student here at the Mount, which allowed her to simultaneously earn her high school diploma and her associate’s degree in Human Services in May 2017. Rachel was highly involved on campus including PTK, SAGA, The Human Services Club, and the school newspaper.

A large part of her role as a SLiCE member was working with United Way Youth Venture; Rachel worked with surrounding schools to mentor and facilitate workshops with students in their pursuit to develop their ideas or “ventures” for social change. She worked very closely with venture teams at Sky View Middle School and Northwest Elementary School.

Next year, Rachel will continue her education in pursuit of a Bachelors degree in Human Services at Fitchburg State University.
MEET THE SLiCE TEAM (continued)

Gemini Walter: Gemini was partnered with the Office of Student Life. He just graduated with his associate’s degree in Human Services. He brings a non-traditional background both personally and academically. He tends to be reserved but is also known to use humor to open hearts and minds to create human connections to deal with difficult issues.

Gemini envisioned and coordinated an event on campus entitled, “Breaking Down Walls at the Mount.” This event brought together over 100 faculty, staff, students, and community members to engage in conversation about diversity and inclusion at MWCC and beyond. At the event, the MWCC Adult Basic Education students displayed art and essays on what diversity meant to them. A number of speakers also shared experiences and thoughts around diversity, including President Vander Hooven, Shelley Nicholson, and Gemini’s mother Cindy.

Gemini’s long-term goal is to help teenagers and children understand the importance of education as a path to their success. He continues to share his experiences with at-risk teens and children in Springfield with the hopes of encouraging them to see their potential.

“When I first came to this program I struggled to start conversations with other people or do any public speaking. Even though I took a speech course, I was still reluctant to speak publicly. Through my participation in this program, I gained the confidence that I needed, and now I can speak in front of small or large groups of people.”

- Student Leader in Civic Engagement
The Office of Career Planning & Placement had a busy and productive year as it continued its efforts to align itself with, and support, civic engagement learning outcomes. The Office provides job preparedness skills for our students in the classroom, one-on-one and in conjunction with on-campus activities.

Our growing economy brings with it increasing opportunities for our students. In response to an optimistic economic outlook, the Office of Career Planning & Placement continued its efforts in providing targeted services to the Gardner, Leominster and Devens campuses. These efforts included job search workshops, one-on-one student sessions as well as employer visits on all three campuses. Included in these efforts was support of the college’s advanced manufacturing program housed on the Devens campus. Job postings, employer visits, and site tours assisted in bringing job opportunities to our students.

To best prepare students for a targeted job search, the Coordinator of Career Planning & Placement, Patricia Brewerton, developed in-class presentations and workshops beginning with First Year Experience classes through capstone courses for those students soon-to-graduate. These workshops begin with a discussion of ‘in-demand’ majors, how to explore labor market trends, followed by discussions and development of resume building experiences, with a focus on utilizing civic engagement experiences to build the resume. Students learn how to apply their education at the college to real world experiences including volunteer experiences, service learning and cooperative education experiences and eventually paid part-time and full-time jobs.

The annual job fair attracted a record number of students as well as employers this year. Students applied their dress for success and resume building skills in order to land full-time, part-time and internship opportunities. Over 35 employers arrived at the college equipped to share job opportunities in the fields of human services, business, STEM, advanced manufacturing, computer information systems, and criminal justice to name a few. Both employers and students were impressed, resulting in the opportunity for students to put their education to work!

Training students on job search strategies, participation in our job fair, and exposure to local job opportunities is also shared with our community, through a partnership with the House of Peace and Education in Gardner. These hands-on trainings and job opportunities bring a ‘can do’ attitude to HOPE clients, equipping them with skills necessary to compete in today’s market.
In the Fall, with the support of a grant from the National Endowment for the Humanities, the Brewer Center partnered with student life to coordinate three deliberative dialogue events. A training was held in the summer for faculty, staff, and students interested in becoming dialogue facilitators. Topics included “Why Vote,” to discuss the importance of voting and impediments to voting; “Post-Election,” which was a space for participants to discuss the outcome of the presidential election; and “Don’t Bite Your Tongue,” which prompted participants to discuss hot button issues, such as the Alt-Right movement and the Standing Rock pipeline.

At the conclusion of the National Endowment for the Humanities grant cycle, our Student Leaders in Civic Engagement (SLiCE) decided they would carry forth deliberative dialogues at MWCC, as they believed it was vitally important that someone continue to engage students in discussing these important topics.

In the Spring semester, SLiCE hosted three deliberative dialogue events: Food Insecurity, The Future of the U.S., and The Future of MWCC. These three deliberative dialogue events brought together students, faculty, and staff to discuss and share their ideas and experiences around food insecurity on college campuses, the U.S. government budget and funding priorities, and the future direction of MWCC. Over the course of the year over 200 participants attended these dialogues to engage in conversation.

“Even in as turbulent of a political climate as we are in today, understanding is possible.”

- MWCC Student
GIVE PULSE

This year marked the first full academic year of utilizing GivePulse to track the entirety of college activities related to service learning, volunteerism, internships, externships, and co-ops.

We now have a comprehensive tool to track and assess service learning and volunteer hours/experiences.

ELECTION YEAR

The Brewer Center hosted a variety of programming over the course of the election season to encourage students to engage in politics, locally and nationally. This programming was inclusive of voter registration drives, streaming of national debates, election and the presidential inauguration coverage, and dialogues around election topics. The purpose of these events was to encourage participation in politics, regardless of party or belief.
The Sharyn A. Rice Civic Engagement Award is presented to a MWCC student each year in honor of past Senior Vice President Sharyn Rice, who retired in 2013 after 25 years of service to the College and the greater community. The awardee is a student of good character that demonstrates a clear commitment to the community. This year's Sharyn A. Rice Award was presented to Tianna Caisse. Joyce Kulig of the Visions Program was one of her recommendations for the award and she spoke of Tianna’s determination to overcome obstacles and provide a bright future for herself and her young son.
This year 283 graduating students qualified to be recognized for their service to the community.

**Service Learning Lapel Pin**
- 8 students

**Civic Scholars Medallion**
- 76 students
- 40 hours

**Civic Scholars Medallion & Outstanding Achievement Pin**
- 71 students
- 75 hours

**Certificate of Recognition from President Vander Hooven, Civic Scholars Medallion & Outstanding Achievement Pin**
- 128 students
- 100+ hours

**Eligibility for the United States President’s Volunteer Service Award**
- 59 students
- 100+ hours (within one academic year - PVSA)
SERVICE LEARNING AND VOLUNTEERISM CELEBRATION

On May 17th more than 100 MWCC students attended the College’s annual Service Learning and Volunteerism Celebration, an event coordinated by the Brewer Center and SLiCE. The event celebrated the service completed over the past year, while recognizing students, faculty, and staff for their outstanding commitment to the community.

During the event, dozens of graduating students were recognized for their extensive hours of service in the form of medallions or pins to wear during graduation. The Gardner Community Action Committee was presented with the Community Partner of the Year Award for working so closely with the Brewer Center and with our AmeriCorps*VISTA Jana Murphy on food insecurity programming this year. Through this collaboration, the Gardner CAC agreed to make the MWCC SOS Office a satellite site to distribute their food baskets to students in their service area.

The Above and Beyond Award was presented to the Otaku Club, a club that celebrates Asian culture, for their third annual silent auction, the proceeds of which are used to purchase age-appropriate books for the students from the Scholastic Reading Club. The club donated 1,400 new books to a local elementary school and to the Garrison Center this year for summer reading.
felt more comfortable working with diverse groups of people to make collaborative decisions and address common problems

felt that they are now able to put themselves in other people’s shoes as a means of better understanding their experience

felt that they made a meaningful contribution to their community
To commemorate Martin Luther King Day, members of the MWCC community joined forces with the United Way of North Central MA to help package 100,000 meals for families in need. The Combat Hunger Meal Packaging Event was held on January 19th at the Double Tree by Hilton in Leominster.
A group of nearly 200 enthusiastic volunteers at Mount Wachusett Community College worked in shifts throughout the day on September 15 to more than double last year’s efforts to combat hunger in the region through the 21st Annual United Way Day of Caring.

Through the college’s Senator Stephen M. Brewer Center for Civic Learning and Community Engagement, students, faculty and staff teamed up in assembly lines to package 46,872 meals to serve families in need, beating President Asquino’s challenge to double the year’s previous record of 20,000. The meals were distributed that afternoon to food pantries and veterans centers in North Central Massachusetts, benefiting 18 local organizations.

The college became a Day of Caring host site in 2013, following years of participation in off-campus activities, and the event continues to grow each year. Jana Murphy spearheaded this year’s packaging event in her role as AmeriCorps*VISTA.
Each year, the Brewer Center partners with Student Life to ensure our incoming students understand MWCC’s culture of service from the day they step onto campus through Leadership Academy. Student Life coordinates the two-day experience to introduce incoming students to faculty, staff, and other students, while giving them a taste of what college will be like. This year’s 12th Annual Leadership Academy was record-breaking, both in the number of attendees and in the number of community service projects.

Service projects included the annual backpack drive to benefit Massachusetts school children living in foster care; landscaping at the Montachusett Veterans Outreach Center and MWCC’s Gardner campus; maintenance and painting benefiting Heywood Hospital’s wellness trail; vegetable harvesting at the Many Hands organic farm in Barre; and sorting and organizing household and construction supplies at the Habitat for Humanity ReStore in Leominster.

Through the generosity of the new students and members of the college community, the backpack drive resulted in 138 new backpacks filled with school supplies for children in need.
ALTERNATIVE SPRING BREAK

This year, five students and two staff advisors volunteered for a day at the Habitat for Humanity ReStore in Leominster. The group cleaned out some old inventory, and matched windows with frames. During their day of service, they were joined by incoming MWCC President James Vander Hooven to discuss civic engagement and the work of the Brewer Center.
9/11 DAY OF SERVICE

In remembrance of the events of September 11th, 2001, Student Leaders in Civic Engagement assisted in coordinating an event for faculty, staff, and students to write notes of appreciation for first responders in the region who put their lives in jeopardy for the sake of others.

For the second year, SLiCE partnered with the Center of Excellence for Veteran Student Success to make the event possible. Thanks to the support of the college community, 96 cards with 227 signatures were distributed to first responders in the greater community.
SERVICE LEARNING SCHOLARSHIPS

This year, one of the Brewer Center’s service learning scholarships was named after Hillary Bartlett Newsome, an MWCC alumna who passed away suddenly. Hillary epitomized Mount Wachusett Community College’s spirit of civic engagement and service. After her time at MWCC she continued as a Marine wife, teacher and volunteer until her untimely passing in Spring of 2017. Hillary graduated in December of 2009 with an Associate’s Degree in our Early Childhood Transfer program, and she then transferred to Fitchburg State and received a Bachelor of Science degree.

Although her academic accomplishments were admirable, what made Hillary special was the gift she possessed of spreading sunshine to whomever she met. Her bubbly personality and positive outlook served her well as a club officer, volunteer, early childhood professional and, of course, a friend and family member. During her time at Mount Wachusett Community College, she worked with her faculty and fellow classmates to raise money and awareness for multiple causes and organizations and she truly transformed into a confident, young, caring professional. She began as simply a bake sale volunteer, continued on to run as a club officer, and raised a large amount of money through her polar plunge for Camp Sunshine, (a summer camp for children with life threatening illnesses), which she then did three times. She took her first trip as a volunteer at Camp Sunshine as a student, but upon graduation was a faithful volunteer. She has inspired and will continue to be an example to many through the passion and dedication she shared with others.

The inaugural Hillary Bartlett Newsome Scholarship was awarded to Rachel Vargeletis for her incredible efforts in her Human Services internship with the Students Serving Our Students Office. She was nominated by Jana Murphy for exceeding expectations in creation of an extensive manual to guide the establishment of a food pantry on campus.

The second service learning scholarship was awarded to Ryan Weston. Ryan was nominated by Peter Olszak, Professor of Math and Physics. Ryan participated in service learning through Dr. Olszak’s Functions and Modeling class in Fall 2016 and in Computer Assisted Design in Spring 2017. Ryan volunteered at the Boys & Girls Club in Leominster both as a coach for US First Lego Robotics and with the 3D printing program.
STRATEGIC MANAGEMENT SERVICE LEARNING CAPSTONE

Strategic Management (MGT 250), a capstone course focused on team approaches to learning with an emphasis on critical thinking, has quickly become a model for high-quality service learning projects at MWCC. This year, the Brewer Center assisted in coordinating projects for two sections of MGT 250 under the leadership of Professor Emeritus, John Reilly. In this hands-on course, students step into the shoes of business consultants and work together as a team to create a new strategic plan for a non-profit organization in need.

In the Fall, Reilly’s students partnered with the Spanish American Center in Leominster, which offers a variety of services to the community including free community dinners, domestic violence counseling, and ESL classes. Students took a deeper look at the Spanish American Center’s branding and outreach in the community, organizational structure, and volunteer recruitment and management to provide recommendations to improve their outreach and sustainability. The students also researched potential funding, grant, and community partnership opportunities.

This Spring, Professor Reilly’s class partnered with Ginny’s Helping Hand in Leominster, an important resource in the Leominster community that serves as a thrift shop and food pantry for residents. The students researched opportunities for technological improvements and building restoration for little-to-no cost, volunteer management systems, grant opportunities, and a strategic marketing plan.

“I thoroughly enjoyed Professor Reilly’s MGT 250 class very much. It really provided a pro-active, hands-on way of learning. Sometimes textbook and lecture can become mundane and I felt this class gave me a real work experience with not only researching and compiling the material, but the ability to collaborate with fellow students. It was rewarding creating a strategic plan appropriately, while working in conjunction with a group of people with different thoughts and ideas, and having presented it successfully as a team.”

- Cindy Doyle, MGT 250 student

“The students are gaining both a real life exposure and perspective in business as well as gaining invaluable service learning experience for our community.”

- John Reilly, Professor Emeritus
COMMUNITY SERVICE LEARNING CAPSTONE

This year, Associate Professor Dan Soucy chose to focus on economic inequality in his multiple sections of ISC220, the Interdisciplinary Studies capstone course. During these courses, students engaged in contemplative work around poverty issues with a special focus on hunger. In the spring, two sections of ISC220 developed proposals for community garden plots to benefit the SOS program and future food pantry. The presentations addressed topics including seed recommendations, marketing, and volunteer management. Based on the work of these students, the Brewer Center purchased two community garden plots on campus to support the food pantry.

ENTERPRISE BANK NONPROFIT COLLABORATIVE

Enterprise Bank, in partnership with the Brewer Center, hosted two workshops for non-profit organizations in North Central Massachusetts this year. Both seminars were held on the Gardner campus and were free for any local community organization employees. Twenty-six community partners attended the first event in October entitled “Engaging and Leading Employees,” featuring Jamie Gabriel, Chief Human Resources Officer at Enterprise Bank, as the keynote speaker.

The second seminar was held on April 4th, entitled “The Winning Edge: Grant Writing Strategies for Success”. Susan Linn, President and CEO of the Epilepsy Foundation of New England shared tips she learned throughout her two decades in non-profit, higher education, and governmental leadership fundraising, with a grant writing success rate of more than 90%, and $100M+ raised. Nearly sixty representatives from three states attended the workshop.

These two workshops brought 57 unique participants onto the MWCC Gardner Campus, representing 50 community organizations.
Youth are a vibrant, yet often underutilized, source of power for creating and leading positive community change—but that is not necessarily the case in North Central Massachusetts. Young people involved in United Way Youth Venture (UWYV) through one of 17 partnering schools develop leadership skills, build confidence, provide countless services to their communities and most importantly, are given the chance to make lasting positive change in others as well as themselves.

During the UWYV process, youth learn how to identify and confront problems, and find creative solutions. A consistent presence in the region over the past 15 years, UWYV has changed the perception of how adults view youth in the communities served by the program. Youth are invited to share perspective, help make decisions, and lead change. They are a driving and inspirational force of creative, problem-solving energy, who are empowered with the skills and encouragement needed to improve their communities.

United Way Youth Venture is a three way partnership between Mount Wachusett Community College, the United Way of North Central Massachusetts, and Ashoka’s Youth Venture which serves as the international model for UWYV programming. Young people involved in UWYV combine their passions and skills to address a problem they see in their community through an entirely youth-led and youth-created social venture.
UWYV (continued)

PROGRAM EVENT HIGHLIGHTS

UWYV hosted several events including an invigorating Fall Kick-Off event with 250 middle and high school students in attendance, and a second annual Spring Showcase, highlighting the dreams and success of more than 40 Venture Teams to the larger community.

Staff facilitated a Champion Training and Roundtable to educate and support our partnering school staff. MWCC hosted a third annual Administration Breakfast for school superintendents and principals where keynote speaker Vipin Thek from partnering organization, Ashoka, passionately spoke about the imperative for educating students to become changemakers.

UWYV and Venture Teams had the opportunity to present the program at the Massachusetts Conference on Service and Learning, MWCC Foundation Dinner, Ashoka Conference and The United Way Community Leaders Conference.

Finally, UWYV took on an official leadership role in managing and training new and existing UWYV programs in operation around the U.S., sponsored by Simplex Grinnell Fire Protection Solutions to help spread the program to new communities. To help with the sustainability and expansion of the UWYV program nation wide, UWYVNCM hosted a “refresher training” for all current national programs, which emphasized best practice sharing and technical assistance to reach more youth across the country.
UWYV BY THE NUMBERS

17 elementary, middle & high schools partnering with MWCC

nearly 8,000 
youth actively engaged in workshops, team development or volunteering

35 new Venture teams 
launched in FY17 across 13 schools with an additional 40 teams in the pipeline well on their way to becoming a launched Venture

more than 12,500 area youth reached

$13,748 in seed funding awarded in FY17 to launch Venture efforts

608 students leading Venture Team efforts with 289 newly engaged this year

over 200 adults engaged in supporting Venture teams by undertaking the role of panelist, ally, and/or volunteer

UWYV staff delivered 66 workshops to venturers helping develop their understanding of 21st century entrepreneurship skills and deeper social & emotional learning
SUCCESS STORY

Two quiet and introverted 6th grade students at Sky View Middle School couldn’t understand why at the Allencrest Community Learning Center and Apartment Complex, where they are residents, there wasn’t an opportunity to recycle trash. In caring deeply about the environment and how much pollution is caused just from waste, it was upsetting for them to know that recycling wasn’t an option for Allencrest, and (they discovered later) many other Leominster Housing Authority complexes.

While most young people might think, “Who am I to think I can make such a big change at my age?” - these two girls, instead, thought, “HOW can we make this change happen?” They joined United Way Youth Venture, and created a Venture called H.O.T.C. (Helping Out the Community), with their mission being to bring recycling to Allencrest and other Leominster apartment complexes.

These quiet girls discovered early on that they would have to become vocal and outspoken activists, as they went through the long, sometimes tedious process; from having to survey residents, to getting approval from the Allencrest Management Team, and then the LHA Board of Directors, to implementing fundraising activities, to getting bids for recycling bins, and quotes for recycling pick-up. Because of their determination, and newly developing skills, along with their passion for making the world a better place, they were successful.

Today, the Allencrest apartment complex has a large recycling bin in a convenient area, located by resident mailboxes; and folks are fully taking advantage of it. The girls prepared flyers for all residents informing them about the bin and what can be recycled.

The students are so pleased that their dream has become a reality. Because of their success, more people are aware of the harm in not recycling, and, thus, more folks are recycling, and there is less and less harm to the environment. And these girls are not done, yet! Their goal is for more and more complexes to bring in recycling.

And while the change at Allencrest, and the improvement to the environment benefits us all, the biggest change is in the newfound confidence, assertiveness, and mettle of these two students who throughout this process learned valuable and beneficial real world, and life-long, lessons about affecting change in the community.

Feel that UWYV has helped them have a better understanding of working with people different than themselves

Believe that UWYV has given them a better understanding of how to problem solve

Believe that UWYV has helped them to believe that people their age can influence decisions and policies

Feel that their participation in UWYV has helped them learn the importance of teamwork

Plan to continue doing things that will improve their community in the future

84% feel that UWYV has helped them have a better understanding of working with people different than themselves

78% believe that UWYV has given them a better understanding of how to problem solve

86% believe that UWYV has helped them to believe that people their age can influence decisions and policies

79% feel that their participation in UWYV has helped them learn the importance of teamwork

90% plan to continue doing things that will improve their community in the future
On February 2nd, the Brewer Center hosted the first annual Resource and Volunteer Fair in partnership with the Gardner CAC to provide an opportunity for students, faculty, and community members to network with nonprofit organizations in the community. The event, coordinated by Student Leader in Civic Engagement, Eden Shaveet, and AmeriCorps*VISTA, Jana Murphy, provided students and community members a platform to learn about the resources, volunteer opportunities, and internships offered by local organizations in the North Central Massachusetts area.

Much like a job fair, the vision was to create an event where organizations in attendance have the opportunity to educate and recruit, except rather than seeking out employees, they provided information regarding the services that they offer to students and community members who may need them, as well as any potential volunteer or internship opportunities they were currently looking to fill. Over 150 students attended the event, and had the opportunity to chat with representatives from 22 different community organizations and resources.
FACULTY FELLOWS

This year, the Brewer Center hosted four faculty fellows in diverse disciplines to engage in conversation and develop projects for service learning. The four fellows were: Elmer Eubanks, Assistant Professor of Business; Maureen Provost, Associate Professor of Early Childhood Education; Candace Shivers, Associate Professor of Human Services and Sociology; and Michelle Valois, Professor of English.

The Brewer Center hosted three roundtables for faculty as an opportunity to discuss challenges, ideas, and models for integrating service learning into the diverse curricula.

TEACHING, LEARNING AND STUDENT DEVELOPMENT CONFERENCE AT MASSASOIT COMMUNITY COLLEGE

In April 2017, Shelley Errington Nicholson, Director of the Brewer Center, and Greg Clement, Associate Dean of Students, presented at the Teaching, Learning and Student Development Conference about the first MWCC international service trip to Costa Rica. Attendees gained knowledge as to how the program was started, how the site and participants were selected and then general do's and don'ts of international travel with students. In addition, Shelley also presented on her research into female community college students who are food insecure and where they go on campus for resources. Both sessions were well attended and MWCC was well represented amongst our community college colleagues.

FACULTY SUPPORT

The Brewer Center provides ongoing support for faculty engaged in service learning including one-on-one meetings to integrate service learning into a syllabus, trainings for new faculty on how to log service hours, how to find appropriate service sites and how to provide the most quality service learning experience to our students. In addition, the Brewer Center participates in new faculty orientation, on-going professional development for faculty, and provides technical assistance for GivePulse, the online service tracking tool, to enable faculty to approve service hours. Finally, the Brewer Center also offers a series of three roundtable sessions dedicated specifically to civic engagement in the classroom, which were attended by faculty and academic deans and facilitated by Brewer Center staff.
EDUCATING THE MWCC COMMUNITY WITH THE NEW YORK TIMES

During the Fall semester, the Brewer Center continued its partnership with the New York Times in order to provide a resource for faculty to integrate relevant current events into classroom discussions. The paper was integrated into three course sections, and a total of 2,146 papers were consumed by the MWCC community throughout the Fall. A MWCC student, compensated by The Times, delivered and stocked newspapers throughout the campus. The partnership also provided academic passes online for students to digitally access The Times website at no cost.
Bridging the Gap is making an impact on my life, more than I expected. I see myself in each youth as I once was and see that this program is making an impact in each one individually. I have been blessed with this internship, and it’s truly becoming hard to know that soon I will be leaving a group of kids I have learned to care for and help in some way or the other; advising them to making better choices and make a difference in their lives in a positive way. Sharing my own story in my life I pray will help guide them through tough situations in their lives.

- Tiffany Vicenti, Criminal Justice Service Learning Intern at Bridging the Gap: Salvation Army
AMERICORPS*VISTA

This year, the Brewer Center hosted SLiCE alumna, Jana Murphy, as their Massachusetts Campus Compact AmeriCorps*VISTA. Jana was partnered with the Gardner CAC with the focus of hunger alleviation and education on campus and in the community. She planned hunger-related programming each month to educate students and spread awareness of hunger in the community. This programming included an Oxfam Hunger Banquet, a Resource and Volunteer Fair, and the Phi Theta Kappa Character Breakfast.

Jana also coordinated the Students SOS Office, and submitted a proposal with Shelley Errington Nicholson for a food pantry on campus, which was approved to open this upcoming fall. The college also secured a generous donation of $1,000 from Senator Stephen Brewer to serve as seed funding for this project. Finally, Brewer Center Director, Shelley Errington Nicholson joined Jana and other community college colleagues dealing with college student food insecurity at a state wide conference “Voices of Hunger” in May at Bunker Hill Community College. The SOS program was highlighted by Executive Director of Massachusetts Campus Compact, Barbara Canyes, as a stellar program. MWCC was also asked to host the gathering next spring due to our efforts in combating student hunger.
ECONOMIC INEQUALITY STUDENT SUMMIT

For the second year in a row, MWCC partnered with Keene State College to plan and host an Economic Inequality Student Summit, this year with a focus on the topic of social mobility. This summit was part of the three-year Economic Inequality partnership between the two institutions through The Democracy Commitment and the American Democracy Project Economic Inequality Initiative. This year's summit drew participants from four institutions on March 25th at Keene State College.

The summit encouraged participants to think about social mobility in terms of the Social Genome Model, which provides benchmarks for important stages in a person's life that impact their ability to reach the middle class. Participants engaged in discussion with a panel regarding the benchmarks and common obstacles associated with each age group. Additional speakers included MWCC President James Vander Hooven, Senator Stephen M. Brewer, and Stephen Pimpare, a nationally recognized expert on poverty, homelessness, and social policy.

Students also participated in a deliberative dialogue about making ends meet, and then in working groups, created plans of action on both macro- and micro-levels, to help individuals experience social mobility.
“Poverty is a multifaceted problem that requires a multifaceted solution. Working together with diverse people generates the best solutions.”

“I learned how powerful I can be in my own community by engaging and informing others about our economic inequality crisis. Together we can take small steps toward creating equal opportunities.”

“I have realized just how substantial of an issue economic inequality is in our country and in our region in particular. It definitely gave me perspective in regards to how I can better approach this issue in my line of work.”
2017 CIVIC LEARNING AND DEMOCRATIC ENGAGEMENT MEETING

This year, three staff, one faculty member and one student attended the annual conference in Baltimore. Fagan Forhan served on the 2017 Civic Learning and Democratic Engagement Meeting Planning Committee and The Democracy Commitment Board of Directors, and Dr. Daniel Asquino was awarded the inaugural TDC Civic Leadership Award. The following presentations were given by MWCC faculty and staff:

Presentations:

**Locating Safe Spaces for Food Insecure Female Community College Students**  
Presenter: Shelley Errington Nicholson, Director, Senator Stephen M. Brewer Center for Civic Learning and Community Engagement

This research-based poster discussed the findings of a qualitative study conducted in the fall of 2016 at Mount Wachusett Community College. The intent of the research was to explore how food insecurity is navigated by female students. Specifically, the research addressed was how female community college students find spaces on campus to disclose food insecurity. This study utilized narrative inquiry and feminist spatial theory to deconstruct the notion of safe spaces for female food insecure students.

**College Student Food Insecurity: Strengthening Support Systems for Students in Challenging Times**  
Presenters: Shelley Errington Nicholson, Director, Senator Stephen M. Brewer Center for Civic Learning and Community Engagement and Kris Pierre, Senior Director, Academic & Community Partnerships, Northeastern Illinois University

This session explored the growing problem of food insecurity on college campuses. Discussion leaders explored key factors to be considered in developing campus food pantries and community gardens including available space, volunteer and staffing resources, funding, and level of need. Presenters explored programs to raise awareness of the issue, engage student volunteers to aid peers struggling with food insecurity and offer practical solutions to this growing problem.

**Ye Olde Civics and the New Fad of Engagement: A Fanciful Tale**  
Presenter: Daniel Soucy, Associate Professor and Chair of Civic Engagement

A new report issued from the National Association of Scholars makes a distinction between “Old Civics” and “New Civics.” The former deals with the learning of fundamental concepts such as law, liberty, and self-governance within the traditional classroom setting. The latter is claimed to teach political activism through civic engagement at the expense of foundational learning. This roundtable discussed whether or not this distinction presents us with a false dichotomy, and question the overall veracity of the report.
An Appreciative Inquiry into the Community Partner Perspective
Presenter: Julie Cronin, Staff Assistant, Senator Stephen M. Brewer Center for Civic Learning and Community Engagement

This research-based poster discussed the findings of a qualitative study exploring community partner perspectives regarding institutional supports for service-learning. A convenience sample of four community partners shared their perspectives through an appreciative inquiry session grounded in participatory methods. The data offered a logic model for service-learning partnerships: (1) institutional supports, (2) dynamic relationships, and (3) symbiosis. The purpose of this poster-presentation was to share the results of the study, as well as to introduce a method for collecting feedback through the community partner voice.
NEWMAN CIVIC FELLOW

Jana Murphy was named a 2017 Newman Civic Fellow for her unwavering commitment to service in her community, particularly around issues of food insecurity. The Newman Civic Fellow is awarded to a community committed student who has demonstrated an investment in finding solutions for challenges facing communities. Jana has been engaged at Mount Wachusett Community College since her first semester serving as an SOS (Students Serving Our Students) Peer Mentor, member of the Parents Support Club, a 2015-2016 Student Leader in Civic Engagement and two time participant in the MWCC International Service Trip to Costa Rica.

In addition, Jana is about to serve her second term of service as an AmeriCorps*VISTA dedicated to increasing student volunteerism in relation to hunger through a partnership with the Gardner Community Action Committee. In this capacity, she coordinated the United Way Day of Caring where over 46,000 meals were packaged by MWCC students, faculty, staff and alumni volunteers, beating all previous records. These meals were distributed to area food banks and our own students in need. But for Jana, this was not enough. She submitted a proposal to create a food pantry at MWCC to provide hunger alleviation in an effort to allow students to address the root causes of their hunger and become more food secure. Working in collaboration with community partners, she is exploring the social justice issues behind food insecurity and working hard to eliminate that barrier to educational success.

“Over the last few years community involvement has become an important part of my life. One of the first groups I joined was the SOS mentor program. Through SOS, I had the opportunity to help other students find success. Helping others has been a privilege and improved my life immeasurably. The struggles I saw among my fellow classmates opened my eyes to issues of poverty and hunger right here on campus. By signing on for a year of national service as a *VISTA, I hope to alleviate some of the hunger issues I have seen and create a long-term sustainable solution that speaks to not just the immediate needs of students, but to the root causes of hunger on campus and in our community.”

I hope to alleviate some of the hunger issues I have seen and create a long-term sustainable solution that speaks to not just the immediate needs of students, but to the root causes of hunger on campus and in our community.

- Jana Murphy, 2017 Newman Civic Fellow
“The emotions you feel while supporting others is incredible. All people should be able to participate in service in some way. I believe helping others not only assists the recipient, but also benefits the volunteer. As a mother I’ve always realized the impact I could have on children. However, service learning during my college years has also shown me I can inspire adults.”

“The day was spent in Dorchester rebuilding a woman’s porch, installing new doors and windows, and cleaning up the yard. The woman had some health problems and could no longer take care of her home. With the help of ReBuild Boston 100 volunteers completed all of the tasks in one day. The smile on the woman’s face and the friends we made during the project was a joyful experience. I will continue to work with ReBuild Boston in making other people’s lives better.”
I learned a lot about myself, culture, and community in this class. I greatly enjoyed collaborating with my classmates.

-Terri Alden, ECE 103 Student
SERVICE LEARNING STUDENT REFLECTIONS

“The best thing I got out of this experience was a sense of worth in knowing the extent of my own abilities, and finding out my own strengths and weaknesses within this field.”

“I have learned so much. I was able to take everything that I had learned in the classroom and put it into a hands-on learning experience, connecting all of the dots from my education to the field of duty... It was at that moment that I knew without a doubt that I had made the right choice to become a police officer. The smile I held was because I knew the first responders had made a difference and a positive impact on the community.”
SERVICE LEARNING STUDENT REFLECTIONS

“I love when they come up with new things for me to do. It helps me learn more about the job I want.”

“The work in the community tied right into the career path I chose. I was able to bring dental care and hygiene to the Boys and Girls Club and teach the students basic things to spread mindfulness about self-care.”

“Very enlightening and empowering experience! I feel as though we were able to educate the students.”

“This internship has been a great opportunity to gain hands-on experience, develop deep relationships and set myself up for a rewarding career.”

I have been able to take what I have learned in classes and relate them to real life situations. Witnessing and observing the way officers tend to our local community has taught me that this field is the best choice for me.

- Rachael Grammont
  Criminal Justice Intern at Westminster Police Department
INTERNATIONAL

KIDS SAVING THE RAINFOREST
WILDLIFE ANIMAL SANCTUARY
A CULTURAL SERVICE IMMERSION EXPERIENCE IN COSTA RICA

As part of the Center’s experiential learning philosophy, for the second year in a row, a group of student volunteers traveled to Costa Rica for a week of service, which they described as a life-changing experience.

MWCC students Jana Murphy, Tom Berger, Cristen Comptois, Morgann Kirker, Stevie LaBelle, Mary Remillard, Rachel Vargeletis and Eden Shaveet were joined on the trip by Associate Dean of Students Greg Clement and Shelley Errington Nicholson, Director of the college’s Brewer Center for Civic Learning and Community Engagement.

The group’s first project was at an eco-friendly lodging in the capital of San Jose where they did work on a water filtration unit and composting. The second project was at an animal sanctuary where they rehabilitated cages for sick animals. They scrubbed walls and raked dirt while monkeys, birds and other creatures crawled on and around them. They also dug trenches for new cages and hauled gravel. The team also participated in a beach clean-up and planted trees at a bio-dynamic farm. One of the bigger projects this year was painting a house (inside and out) for a low-income cancer survivor. Finally, the group spent time at a local school, where they were welcomed with a cultural performance, dressed in traditional Costa Rican garb, and learned a national dance. At this site, the volunteers also played soccer and games with the children.

The group participated in various activities such as a bio-dynamic farm tour, a night hike in the rainforest, parasailing, zip lining, snorkeling, hot springs and horseback riding. Every evening they gathered for dinner of fresh local cuisine to reflect on what they learned and experienced that day. Students were able to ask questions of the local guide to further contextualize their service.

The trip was funded through the students’ hard work of raising over $15,000. The trip was co-coordinated by Nicholson and Clement as co-advisors of the Cultural Engagement and International Service student club. Clement and Nicholson are already at working hard planning next year’s international service trip to Peru.
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Total Number of Hours of Service to the Community: 104,986

Economic Impact: $3,136,982