

## SECTION 4: STUDENT AND COMMUNITY REFLECTIONS

Read some invaluable reflections from community college students and community partners from around the United States.

### Student Reflections

I am not able to "save" all the kids I counsel, because most of them don't need "saving" per se, but I have been able to help many children who needed it. I grew up pretty much on my own since the age of fourteen, with no one around to help me. Service learning gives me the chance to make sure that this doesn't happen to at least one other child, or two, or maybe two hundred.

- Communications student, Albuquerque TVI Community College

My idea of citizenship has changed as a result of service learning. Before this assignment, I believed that citizenship was only about voting and abiding by laws. We need to endorse our political efficacy... A civil society lacking active citizens possesses no enrichment, diversity, or meaning.

- Service learning student, Miami-Dade College

These first-hand experiences [with service learning] have demonstrated to me that I possess the patience and passion to become a Special Education teacher. I approach my college classes with confidence and pride, as I know that I have found my calling. I continue to seek out additional opportunities to combine experiential learning with my education. For example, I recently was appointed to serve on the City of Mesa Transportation Citizens Advisory Committee, and I will also travel to China this summer to teach English to children. I am truly empowered to teach those with special needs, because of these service learning experiences. I am also confident that with the assistance of faculty and college administration at Mesa Community College I am acquiring the knowledge and skills needed to become a competent teacher and a productive citizen in our society.

-Student, Mesa Community College

Another great aspect about the program is that it doesn't only teach the children, but it also teaches the mentors as well. The program has taught me to become a responsible leader and backs up what I teach in class by modeling the way. Before I began to teach I would waste water incessantly, litter without care, put others down unconsciously (and sometimes consciously), and would pay little attention to safety. These are the exact opposites of the concepts which the program is attempting to instill. I did not want to become a hypocrite, so I've changed my ways... For the past three months I've acted like a responsible leader and have been a contributing factor to the well being of future generations. This experience will always be something that I treasure and that I'll never forget."

- Student EnviroMentor Program, Miami-Dade College

Despite the troubles that arise, most people seem to do the best they can in the time they have to work. Twain did not stop doing his best after he realized that the river was not as wonderful as he had first believed in his essay *Two Ways of Seeing a River*. Yet it is still sad that realism invades fantasy. Twain remarked that he may 'sometimes wonder whether he has gained most or

lost most by learning his trade'. My time spent working at Habitat for Humanity has made me discover that things are not always what you first perceive them to be. Volunteer work is incredibly demanding and unpredictable. I still feel up to the challenge, but will move ahead with less expectation and more willingness to deal with difficult situations.

- English student, Broome Community College

Not only are we learning, but we are also learning that it is equally important to give back to the community. That's what molds us to become great leaders...service to others.

- Student, Albuquerque TVI Community College

This has been such a nice experience for me, because I really could see near me all kinds of problems that some families have because of drugs and alcohol, and I also learned that the only way that you can change a habit is to just "want it," not for someone else, only for yourself. It's just been wonderful to share ideas, interests, and thoughts with different people; and I see the reasons why they were acting like that or doing some things that were not good for them.

- Life skills student, Miami-Dade College

Along with field experience, networking in your chosen field of study, and building a strong resume, the satisfaction of returning something to your community outweighs any perceived inconveniences.

- Psychology student, Albuquerque TVI Community College

At first I looked at the syllabus with skepticism because of my earlier experiences with what was supposedly service learning. I felt pressured into completing x number of hours which seemed to be the most important factor. Both the Listening Project and the Leadership class have since clarified and influenced me enough to change my perception of service learning. Leadership class provided me with all the theory. The Listening Project afforded me the opportunity to put this classroom knowledge to work in the real world... It has always been my firm belief that individuals should perform service to the community. At first it seemed like a one-sided affair, only the community benefited. I was wrong because at the same time I was helping the community, there were things that I learned that sitting in the classroom would not have taught me. It also reinforced my conviction that we should all invest in our community. The service experience definitely changed my opinion. It has enhanced my thinking and communicating skills, given me the opportunity to put what was taught to test, and it provided me with an awareness of some of the needs of the community. I sincerely recommend that everyone be given the opportunity to be exposed to service learning and I am certain it would change the minds of many."

-Student, Miami-Dade College, Medical Center

When I enrolled in this class I was not aware that it would be a service learning pilot program, but once I understood what the program was about, I participated as much as possible. I found it to be extremely beneficial for my academic and personal growth and hope the feeling is mutual between the class and/or service learning partners. I will participate in future service learning projects.

-Spanish student, Skagit Valley College

I got to work with only one student the first day. He was obviously from a Latin American country and he did not speak much English. I had to use a lot of patience with him because he was getting frustrated. He finished all his assignments for that day, but by the time we were done I was ready to go home. At the end of class, the first thing he asked me was if I could work with him the next day. Tears came to my eyes, not only because I was touched by the gesture, but because I felt guilty. Guilty because at first the only reason I did it was because I had to, not really because I wanted to help. But this definitely changed my attitude from then on... Most important of all, I learned a lot about the society we live in, and about myself as an individual. It contributed to my personal growth which was one of my goals as a volunteer.

- Student, Miami-Dade College, Adult Education

I definitely think our kids have learned and benefited by this program. The children learned how to apply the Cesar Chavez principles in their lives. One child told us very excitedly...that he had almost gotten into a fight out in the school yard but that he remembered Cesar Chavez's values and decided that violence wasn't the way to resolve the issue. He said that he talked it out with the other boy and they decided on a compromise. He was very proud because he finally understood why Cesar didn't believe in violence. He said he felt much better after fixing the problem than he does after a fight.

- Social science student, Glendale Community College

I believe everyone should participate in at least one service learning program. I believe a lot is gained in personal knowledge as well as contributing to the community. You discover the need that is out there. Most community services overlap, so you get a sense of what is needed in more than one area.

- Psychology student, NorthWest Arkansas Community College

### **Community Partner Reflections**

Jason was a great asset; he had true excitement for what he was doing here and made an impact on the kids.

- Binghamton High School Math Teacher, about a Broome Community College student

I enjoy the service learners coming in to the facility. The residents get more out of their "stay" because there is more interaction with positive role models.

- Washington County Juvenile Detention Center Site Supervisor, about a NorthWest Arkansas Community College student

Lisa demonstrated dependability, responsibility, initiative and drive. She was able to make quick decisions with regard to the site and its volunteers without any prior training. In addition, Lisa shows good leadership skills. Lisa has met many diverse challenges as Site Clerk, she has handled them all as if they were second nature to her. It has been a great pleasure to know and work with Lisa. I will truly miss her talents, abilities, and leadership. Lisa has done an exceptional job. She has truly been an asset to our organization.

- Habitat for Humanity Site Clerk Coordinator, about a Broome Community College student

Stephanie has been an outstanding asset, working in a Public Relations role, as well as developing hand-out materials...

- Union Volunteer Emergency Squad Training Coordinator, about a Broome Community College