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Students Bring Jane Addams Project to Morris

Summary: The Morris Jane Addams project is an important touchstone for the community.

(July 10, 2013)-Since fall 2011, the [Morris Jane Addams](#) project has been an important touchstone for students of the University, the people of Morris, and the Latino community that has come to live and work in the area. This student-led project consists of bilingual group meetings and activities aimed at building a sense of community and understanding among these diverse groups of people.

“These meetings are circles of friendship and language,” says Windy González Roberts, Spanish teaching specialist and Jane Addams faculty advisor. “When all of these different people come together, the group becomes a place to learn about and from each other.”

Katie Jacobson '14, Bloomington, Dani Brown '14, Edina, and Sarah Singsank '14, Minnetonka, founded Morris Jane Addams in 2011. The idea first came to Jacobson after she had volunteered with both the Jane Addams School for Democracy at Augsburg College in Saint Paul and the Morris Lazos Cinco de Mayo dinner. Having witnessed Lazo's attempt to integrate the Latino community into the larger community, she realized that the format and principles of the Jane Addams School could easily transfer to Morris.

“Jane Addams is basically taking a culturally diverse community and bringing them together,” says Jacobson. She adds that although the program is managed by students, “everyone is on the same playing field.”

When asked to describe Jane Addams, Singsank, Jacobson, and Brown all echo the Jane Addams motto—“everyone is a teacher, everyone is a learner”—which Singsank says is “the basic premise of the group.” She notes that everyone has something to share and that all are there to help one another.

“The meetings are a place for members of the Morris Latino community to talk about where they've come from, what they have experienced, and what schooling they've had,” says Roberts. “Being able to talk gives them an identity—for example, this man is not just a Mexican. He has a name, a wife and children, and a story to tell.”

Brown, Singsank, and Jacobson, worked closely with Roberts to develop the Morris Jane Addams internship program, and they became part of the first student executive board. All three have found their involvement with the program to be gratifying, and they encourage other students to become volunteers and interns.

“Minnesota seems such a culturally homogeneous place at first glance,” says Brown, “so it's amazing to see how much culture there is and watch others interact.”

The Morris Jane Addams program meets every Tuesday during the academic year at 7:30 p.m. in Imholte Hall 111. For more information on the program or student internships, contact Roberts at wroberts@morris.umn.edu or 320-589-6294.

Jane Addams co-founder Sarah Singsank '14, Minnetonka, at Iguazu Falls on the border of Brazil and Argentina in April 2013

Pictured above (left to right): Jane Addams co-founders Dani Brown '14, Edina, and Katie Jacobson '14, Bloomington

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