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### Office of Community Engagement celebrates a year of success

University Relations

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**Office of Community Engagement celebrates a year of success**

*Summary: Argie Manolis serves as coordinator for the new office, which is a combination of the former Service Learning program and Community Service and Volunteerism.*

(November 22, 2010)-After spending more than six years splitting time between teaching English courses and being the service learning coordinator, Argie Manolis is now the full-time coordinator for the new Office of Community Engagement at the University of Minnesota, Morris. The office was created in 2009 to fulfill the needs of the campus that were formerly addressed by the service learning office in the Faculty Center and by Community Service and Volunteerism in the Office of Student Activities.

As stated on the Morris website, “The [Office of Community Engagement](#) seeks to engage members of the broader community and University of Minnesota, Morris students, faculty, and staff in meaningful, reciprocal course-based and co-curricular partnerships.”

It’s not always as simple as students and members of the community both signing up to take part in the process. Whether considering the schedules and goals of both parties and location of the project, it can get a little more complicated. Says Manolis, “It can be somewhat like match-making.” And based on the positive feedback the office gets, a happy marriage is not too crazy an analogy.

For every student there is a different project that will work best, and vice-versa. At each point in a student’s time at Morris, there is a certain kind of opportunity that will be most appropriate.

“We work with both individuals and groups to find projects,” shares Manolis. “We offer opportunities for students to get a taste of community engagement through fall and spring service days, Trick or Can, Halloween in the Halls, holiday projects to benefit people in poverty, Six-Ton Campaign, a monthly dialogue series called Soup & Substance, and a monthly community meal. We help match individual students to opportunities that fit their interests and goals, and also help student organizations, athletic teams, and residence hall floors plan projects.

The Office of Community Engagement has worked to perfect the process of deciphering opportunities. Its web page offers information on available projects, the process for setting up a project, and the assessment that helps the office evaluate how the entire process worked for all parties involved.

With an established process, Manolis has also been able to incorporate different service-learning projects into numerous classes at Morris. Every year, about 20 different courses build projects into their class work, with every academic division represented. Service-learning courses include community-based research, community building, and direct service projects. In service-learning classes, students apply what they are learning in class to help meet community needs. This semester, service-learning course projects have ranged from creating artwork for the local public library to conducting a research project on social inclusion requested by several community organizations.

As more projects are successfully completed, more UMM faculty and students become interested in getting involved. And with a new office focused completely on community engagement, it should be even easier for more people to take advantage of such great opportunities.

Through personal and academic discovery, the University of Minnesota, Morris provides opportunities for students to grow intellectually, engage in community, experience environmental stewardship and celebrate diversity. A renewable and sustainable educational experience, Morris prepares graduates for careers, for advanced degrees, for lifelong learning, for work world flexibility in the future, and for global citizenship. Learn more about Morris at [morris.umn.edu](http://morris.umn.edu) or call 888-866-3382.