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Service and learning are ageless

Summary: A group of students at the University of Minnesota, Morris learned a lot about themselves while creating a memorable experience by working with older adults. Students studied adulthood and aging Fall Semester in a course that combines learning with service.

(December 13, 2006)-A group of students at the University of Minnesota, Morris learned a lot about themselves while creating a memorable experience by working with older adults. Students studied adulthood and aging Fall Semester in a course that combines learning with service. The class, "Psychology of Adulthood and Aging," is taught by Jacqueline Greenwood, Assistant Professor of Psychology.

Students in the class range from those majoring in psychology to sociology majors. Five classroom sessions focused on a different activity each session intended to generate some intergenerational dialogue with local seniors. For example, the first week students and seniors met to talk about the "generation gap" and created some solutions to bridge that gap. Their final session, a celebration that featured musical entertainment provided by seniors from the community, demonstrated that creativity should occur throughout life. On December 2 the students completed the course by assisting with preparations and decorating for the Morris Senior Center Bazaar.

Lindsey Johansen, Tyler, enrolled in the course for her pre-nursing major. Johansen said of the course, "This project, in particular, does a really good job at linking the community and the campus. It also does a good job at closing the generation gap."

Service Learning at UMM is a classroom experience that utilizes community service, community-based research or other civic engagement activities combined with regular reflection to meet course goals and community needs.

There were 10 such courses at UMM during the Fall Semester.

Wendy Hyatt, assistant service learning coordinator, believes that service learning is great for students and helps them learn a lot about themselves. She explained, "It gets the students really thinking about what they are learning and its application to the real world."

Greenwood expressed a similar sentiment: "One of the most beneficial aspects of the service learning component for the Adulthood and Aging class is bringing to life topics from the textbook. By having the opportunity to discuss issues which students have read about in the course text, they are able to understand and relate the issues to real people and to gain a breadth and depth of knowledge they may not otherwise be able to experience."

Photo by David Nieves '10, El Paso, Texas: Local seniors Adair Horgen and Della Conroy "tickle the ivories" during the class' musical interlude.

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