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Service Learning Expo set December 8

Summary: View student projects, learn about next semester's courses, and talk to students, staff and faculty who are familiar with each course during the Service Learning Expo, 3-5 p.m. Thursday, Dec. 8, in the Student Center University Room.

(November 21, 2005)-Are you wondering what service learning is all about? The Service Learning program at the University of Minnesota, Morris will host a Service Learning Expo from 3-6 p.m. Thursday, Dec. 8, in the Student Center University Room at UMM. View projects completed by students during this semester's Service Learning courses, learn about next semester's courses, have a snack and talk to students, staff and faculty who are familiar with each course.

Here are the projects from Fall Semester 2005 that will be featured at the Expo:

Argie Manolis and Andrew Hostetler, co-taught Aging in Greece: Comparative Practices and Policies. Students spent the first week of the May Session course touring Athens and surrounding areas as well as reading about and discussing aging and Greek culture. For the remaining weeks of the course, students completed four projects at a nursing home in rural Ikaria, Greece, which they visited daily. They planted a garden, created a mural with input from the elders, created a brochure to recruit more volunteers to the home, and developed a scrapbook with stories and photos of each resident. Students also planned daily small and large group activities for the elders. Despite the challenges of cultural and language barriers, the project was successful, and the nursing home director has requested an ongoing partnership with UMM.

Students from Manolis' courses, Introduction to Creative Writing and Introduction to College Writing, A Directed Study in Found Poetry, worked with the elderly partnership at West Wind Village in Morris by visiting with residents on chosen topics and transforming their conversations into poetry. Students learned that there is an increasing need in the world for these types of activities. As people live longer it is important for groups to come together and understand each other's ways and needs. This activity has been beneficial to patients who suffer from Alzheimer's disease and related dementia - giving the resident the opportunity for valuable interactions and the opportunity to discuss old memories. In turn, the students are able to use the knowledge to improve and develop their writing skills and styles while growing through community connections.

Students in the Sociology of Deviance course took theories of power, oppression, and deviant behavior and applied them to real-world situations by working with community partners to address issues of sexual violence and domestic abuse awareness and prevention. While working with both the UMM Violence Prevention Program and with the Someplace Safe/Stevens County Crisis Prevention Program, students made connections between the issues and themes studied and discussed in their classroom with the issues and themes that emerged while working with Take Back The Night programs, RAD self-defense class offerings in the community, community awareness campaigns highlighting issues around domestic violence and its effect on spouses, partners and children, community-based research into outreach activities designed to meet the needs of GLBT communities and people of color, and focus groups addressing legal

issues and identifying potential changes in laws impacting survivors of sexual violence.

"I'm excited about this course, because I hope to make a real difference," said Brittany Jablonsky, a member of the legal issues group. Joy Stokka and Anna Kosloski, members of the group working on awareness activities around domestic abuse, found that they were part of a "Power Walk" that put them in a position to "actually be involved in real social change in the community." The focus groups, interviews, awareness activities and community-based research all provided students with experiential education that enhanced their classroom experiences and contributed to their knowledge of the field of sociology.

Jennifer Rothchild's Sociology of Gender course completed nine different community-based research studies, ranging from a study of the needs of elders living alone in the community to a study of how gender affects community members' religious experiences. These studies were based on needs suggested by community members who visited the class early in the semester. Students will present their results to community members and agencies, and their reports will be used to plan future service-learning projects.

Students in the Advanced Individual Performance Study: Voice have been working under the direction of Dr. Hope Koehler. These students chose one of two service learning projects. Two of the students went to the Morris Senior Center on Friday mornings for a sing along with the seniors. The rest of the UMM students gave private lessons once a week for students at the Morris Area High School. The final event celebration for the high school students will be singing at the MAHS Christmas Concert, the Senior Center Bazaar or the West Wind Village Celebration.

Therese Buchmiller's Sculpture class service learning project involved working directly with the community in order to create a group sculpture about the significance of the Morris community. The project was a collaborative effort between the Prairie Renaissance Cultural Alliance and UMM's sculpture class. The students conducted interviews with Morris businesses and residents to gather information on the community's perspective of culturally significant landmarks in Morris. The final project was installed at the Morris Public Library.

The students also created individual sculptures reflecting on what they learned from the project. These multimedia works reflect personal experiences of place, student interactions with Morris residents, and personal responses to the project. A storefront window exhibition at Prairie Renaissance Cultural Alliance displayed the sculptures. In addition, students created postcards of significant landmarks in Morris. These are on sale at the Prairie Renaissance Cultural Alliance, John's Total Entertainment and Common Cup Coffeehouse, all located in downtown Morris. Proceeds will go to the Prairie Renaissance Cultural Alliances summer Prairie Camp for youth.

Art students in Michael Eble's Media Studies: Mural Project and Public Art course created and painted three different murals for the Morris community. The first mural, a painting reflecting the importance of locally grown foods to the community, is located in the Food Service building on campus. The second mural was designed for the Salvation Army in Morris and will be installed and on display in May or next semester. This mural shows the importance of the Salvation Army's role in the Morris community and beyond and was designed to increase arts and cultural opportunities in west central Minnesota. The final mural, which will depict student's personal responses to the class and their involvement in working with the community, will be installed in the HFA Gallery and on display beginning January 19.

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 or call 888-866-3382.