

SUNY Cortland Steps Up to Support Mentored Youth

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President's Higher Education Community Service Honor Roll Member With Distinction



Carnegie Foundation Elective Classification in Community Engagement



Children from the Cortland YWCA Bridges for Kids program enjoyed a trip to the campus Planetarium on February 17, 2016.

More than 63 SUNY Cortland students currently serve as mentors to area youth. Now, in addition to mentoring, SUNY Cortland is responding to support local programs in other ways.

More than 40 kids and their mentors from the Cortland YWCA's Bridges for Kids program visited the SUNY Cortland Planetarium on February 17. The Bridges for Kids program partners children from at-risk homes with volunteer mentors who share time with their child weekly and engage them in meaningful activities.

Children, ranging in age from 5-11, gained a whole new appreciation for the night sky while viewing constellations on the ceiling of the Bowers Hall planetarium. They also viewed an I-MAX film, entitled: "Two Small Pieces of Glass: The Amazing Telescope."

The movie explored the history of the telescope and the great discoveries made as a result of it. The kids learned how the invention of the telescope expanded our knowledge of the universe in incalculable ways.

"The Planetarium provides a unique learning experience and awe-inspiring sites and visuals that we are happy to invite the community enjoy," said Planetarium Director Sean Nolan. "The Bridges for Kids students had a great time and left wanting more!"

The SUNY Cortland Baseball team has also stepped up. They are hosting "Fun on the Field," a special boys' day out at Wallace Field on Saturday, April 30. The team will conduct recreational activities for children from Bridges for Kids and from the Cortland Prevention Resources' Compass programs.

The morning session will be geared toward boys in grades K-5, while the afternoon session is tailored more to grades 6-8. The team will engage boys in games and fun activities as well coach them on such skills as catching and batting.

With the support of Coach Joe Brown, team members Austin Clock and Keith Andrews have taken the lead in planning the event, but the entire team will spend their Saturday to make it a memorable one for local youth.

Bridges for Kids Director Sara Earl commented, "So many of the families do not have yards and the fact that the boys can run and be active outside is so important. More crucial than the physical activity, however, is the opportunity for these young boys to interact with positive male role models. The baseball team's willingness to spend quality time with these kids can be life altering for both the boys and the students."

Learning by Giving Students Focus on the Practical Side of Philanthropy

A unique campus/community collaboration began in 2011, with the creation of the course entitled, Philanthropy and Civic Engagement: Teaching Students How to Give.

This course was created by Distinguished Political Science Professor Henry Steck, who, with the Institute for Civic Engagement, received a \$10,000 grant from the Learning by Giving Foundation (formerly the Sunshine Lady Foundation).

Health professor Dr. Barbara Barton has developed additional grant funding for this semester's course, and she is teaching the course this semester.

Barton explains that students learn about philanthropy and nonprofits by participating in a grant-making cycle in which Cortland County nonprofits are invited to submit proposals, and then – using the skills learned in the course – students decide as a group which nonprofit agencies will receive grants.

Through Learning by Giving, students and nonprofit agencies benefit: Students develop skills such as consensus-building, problem analysis, and presentation. Agencies receive funds that help them continue their good work.

Students study philanthropy's values, history, uniqueness, and its contribution to our economy's health.

They also explore individual and institutional philanthropy to understand the values and qualities that make philanthropic efforts effective, and to develop a personal vision of philanthropy that articulates the values and role that students see for themselves as philanthropists.

Reflecting on links between values and



Learning by Giving course instructor and Health Professor, Barbara Barton

action, one student wrote that “these values of compassion and acknowledging privilege, and using them to help, ignite my own view of and vision for philanthropy.”

Students examine the scope and role of non-profit organizations in the U.S. to learn how nonprofits, communities, and grant-making entities work together to address community problems, and to carefully consider what comprises best practices in nonprofit management and effectiveness

Students learn about community needs in Cortland County through sources such as Cortland Counts: (<http://www.sevenvalleyshealth.org/#!/cortland-counts/cwns>) so they can understand the context in which local nonprofit agencies work.

One student, for example, commented on the course's social ripple effects, writing, “It is doing a good deed as a person in society that will then hopefully affect others and create a chain of positive effects.”

Barton's group of fourteen students, including three International students, range from first-year-students to seniors; they major in coaching, communication, community health, biological sciences, political science, psychology, and sociology.

Barton is proud of her Millennial-generation students, she says, in part because “they contradict the

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sense that Millennials are self-absorbed and preoccupied with social media.”

These students are engaged, they want to make a difference in dealing with big problems, policies, and processes. I’m so impressed when I learn that a student wants to go into public office, or that two want to give-back to their home-towns to work in public health, especially in low-income areas.”

Others want to address problems outside of standardized governmental structures, saying that “we have responsibilities for our peers and for our planet.”

After next month’s grants awards, students across the five years of this course will have awarded \$52,000 to local agencies.



2015 area agency award winners

Join Barton and her students at their May 4th Awards Reception, which is free and open to the public. The celebration runs from 4:30 to 5:30 in Corey Union’s Exhibition Lounge.

For additional information, contact Barbara Barton at: Barbara.barton@cortland.edu

ICE Staff Present at Campus Compact Conference

Mary McGuire, Director of the Institute for Civic Engagement, and John Suarez, Coordinator of the Institute’s Office of Service-Learning, conducted an “ignite” event, entitled “‘Hire’ Education, Public Purpose, and Student Employers,” at Campus Compact’s 30th Anniversary Conference, March 21-23, in Boston, MA.

Empathy Empowers Workshops that Teach Empathy

Developing empathy is a key consideration in service-learning because students partner with people whose lives, in many cases, are dramatically different from their own.

The Institute for Civic Engagement offers a variety of role-play and simulation workshops to help students and others develop empathy-related skills. Role-play activities involve five-minute, non-scripted vignettes in which participants practice the reflective listening skills of asking open-ended questions and “mirroring.” A person “mirrors” a message by paraphrasing the other individual’s cognitive and (importantly) emotional message, both verbally and nonverbally.

The simulations are “docudramas” (dramatized documentaries) of an individual or family interacting with others in low-income or multi-cultural situations. In an assessment, an International Studies student in Professor Cathy Sinnott’s Health Problems of the Underserved class addressed the personal effectiveness of both workshops by writing, “I think that they ‘brought life’ to problems such as teenage homelessness, drug use, and pregnancy.”

A biomedical sciences student wrote, “They made me think.”

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The presentation used a “What If” approach to role-play that explored potential benefits of, and challenges to, a SUNY system that serves as a brokerage agency for college students: The audience imagined a SUNY that refers students to professionals in their disciplines; students choose and hire professionals to be mentors. Students work with those mentors in experiential-learning situations for the majority of their college educations.

Contact Information

Mary McGuire, Director.
(607) 753-4806 or
Mary.McGuire@cortland.edu

John Suarez: Office of Service Learning Coordinator.
(607) 753-4391 or
John.Suarez@cortland.edu

Cynthia Guy: Community Innovation Program Coordinator.
(607) 753-4271 or
Cynthia.Guy@cortland.edu

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Vignettes for both kinds of events are drawn from first-hand experiences of SUNY Cortland service-learning students, and from faculty, staff, community agency partners, service-learning literature, and news articles.

Requests for a docudrama grew from strong faculty interest in scheduling the State of Poverty Simulation (conducted by the Cortland County Community Action Program – CAPCO) for their classes. This two-hour event includes a non-scripted simulation in which roughly 80 people try to survive on minimum wage for a one-hour “month.”

However, considerations such as timing and the requirement of a minimum number of participants interfered with the scheduling of this event for individual classes, so the Institute works with faculty, staff, and agency partners to create workshops that meet different courses’ scheduling and content needs.

These events have been conducted for in-service educators, as well. For this past Spring Break, Memorial Library’s Director, Gail Wood, partnered with the Institute to conduct a three-hour role-play and docudrama event for the library’s faculty and staff.

The Institute has also conducted the workshops for the American Association of University Women of Cortland County, and for educators at regional conferences of the Robert Noyce Scholarship Program (for STEM educators).

In October 2013, two Office of Service-Learning Interns, Crissana Christie and Regina Gianfreda, conducted workshops for in-service educators at the Third Annual Eastern Regional Campus Compact Conference in Philadelphia.

Valerie Widdall (Childhood Ed) works with the Institute to refine workshops for



State of Poverty Simulation in Jacobus Lounge –participants learned the challenge of making ends meet on a low income.

the Childhood Education Department’s learning community. Other individuals who have contributed to the development of these workshops include Lindy Glennon (CAPCO), Chad Underwood (Access to Independence), Mary Schlarb (International Programs), Jack Carr (Communications Studies), Anita Kuiken (Memorial Library), Lisa Kahle (Campus Technology Services), Joseph Rayle (FSA), and Michelle Kelly (FSA), who emphasized the importance of including the strengths that low-income families demonstrate.

For more information, contact John Suarez, Coordinator of the Office of Service-Learning, at john.suarez@cortland.edu.

Upcoming Events

Save the Date —

- Community Action Conversation.**
Thursday, April 7, 6:00-7:30 p.m.
Main St. SUNY Cortland, 9 Main Street
- Leadership In Civic Engagement Awards and Scholarship Reception**
Thursday, April 21 4:30-5:30
Jacobus Lounge of Brockway Hall
- Sandwich Seminar – Community Innovation Lab Presents 2016 Projects**
Tuesday, April 26 Noon-1:00
Jacobus Lounge of Brockway Hall
- Learning By Giving Awards Ceremony**
Wednesday, May 4 4:30-5:30
Jacobus Lounge of Brockway Hall