

The Institute for Civic Engagement

Service Learning • Community Outreach • Research and Economic Development

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SUNY Cortland Bringing Theory to Practice Project Featured in National Newsletter

SUNY Cortland's Bringing Theory to Practice project, "The Bridge to the Future: Bringing Theory to Practice's Leadership Coalition and Demonstration Site Programs at SUNY Cortland," was featured in the most recent edition of Bringing Theory to Practice's national newsletter, which was sent out to over 32,000 subscribers. You can see the entire article at <http://www.aacu.org/blast/bhttp/2011/january.cfm> . Here are some excerpts.

As a public institution of higher education, it is our mission to work with our neighboring communities to help meet our common challenges. Our Institute for Civic Engagement, now in its eighth year, was created to aid the college in fulfilling this mission.

Our participation in BTtoP's Leadership Coalition began in 2009 and led to the formation of Cortland's President's Leadership Coalition for Student Engagement. This committee, chaired by the Director of the Institute for Civic Engagement, was charged with coordinating the work of Academic and Student Affairs programs and initiatives that are related to transformational change and high-impact learning.

... This committee's work complements Cortland's college-wide strategic plan, which focuses on the following four priorities: academic excellence, transformational education, well-being, and maximization of resources.

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Nominate an Individual or Group for a Leadership in Civic Engagement Award and Scholarship

Students, faculty, staff, and people in the greater Cortland community can nominate students for the Leadership in Civic Engagement Award and for specific scholarships. The nomination form is available at www.cortland.edu/civicingagement. (Look for the button at left.)

Scholarship nominees are automatically considered for a Leadership in Civic Engagement Award, one of three non-monetary awards also administered by the Institute for Civic Engagement. (The nomination form describes those awards.) Award recipients will be announced in campus and community publications in mid-April 2011; the Awards Ceremony will take place on Thursday, April 21st, at 4:30 in SUNY Cortland's Jacobus Lounge (in Brockway Hall). Please e-mail your completed nomination form by Friday, February 24, 2011, to The Institute for Civic Engagement at getinvolved@cortland.edu. Should you have any questions, please call The Institute for Civic Engagement at 753-2403.

Research & Economic Development: Cortland Art Downtown at Main Street SUNY Cortland

Cortland Downtown Partnership Executive Director (and Main Street Building Administrator): Adam Megivern

The Research and Economic Development activities are operated from Main Street SUNY Cortland which is located at 9 Main Street

Two Business Idea Competitions for Students

Do you have a great idea for a new product or business?

The Cortland Downtown Partnership, 40Below Cortland, and SUNY Cortland's Center for Economic Education encourage Cortland County High School students and SUNY Cortland and TC3 students to apply to *New York's Creative Core Business Idea Competition* for a chance to win \$5,000 for themselves and, with the same application, an additional \$1,000 for their educational institution.

The link to the online application is below; online submissions must be made by the close of business on Friday, February 11th 2011.

Students have an opportunity to win an additional \$1,000 for themselves by sending

- the Creative Core e-mail verification of their submission *and*
- a copy of their *One Thousand-Word Business Idea*

to adam@cortlanddowntown.com.

(See below for a summary of both competitions.)

The top local submissions will be invited to display their new product or business idea in digital format at the Cortland Downtown Partnership office in the Main Street SUNY Cortland facility at 9 Main Street in Historic Downtown Cortland.

Students have the chance to start their entrepreneurial careers by winning \$5,000 through *New York's Creative Core Business Idea* contest (which also brings \$1,000 for the student's educational institution), plus an additional \$1,000 for themselves through the *Local Business Idea Competition*.

Contact Adam Megivern of the Cortland Downtown Partnership at 607.342.6460 with any questions.

The 2011 *New York Creative Core* and *Cortland County Local Business Idea Competitions* mark the first events in programming that are being developed for the Cortland Downtown Partnership's Business Innovation Center; the Center will be retrofitted in an upper floor of a building on Main Street in Historic Downtown Cortland. The purpose of the Business Innovation Center will be to cultivate an environment in Cortland County conducive to the creation of new innovative businesses that will attract and retain young professionals.

- Link to *New York's Creative Core Business Idea* application: http://www.creativecoreny.com/index.php?option=com_chronocontact&chronoformname=5k_Business_Idea_Competition
- E-mail your 40Below Cortland's *Local Business Idea Competition* application to adam@cortlanddowntown.com.

In your 40Below Cortland application, include your Creative Core Business Idea's e-mail verification and a copy of your One thousand-word business idea.

Historic Downtown Cortland: Community Engagement Opportunities

Main Street Community Outreach Coordinator: Stephanie Plude

Volunteers from the campus or the community can participate in annual festivals and beautification opportunities in the cultural and economic center of Cortland: Historic Downtown Cortland. A list of events is at www.historicdowntowncortland.com. Event volunteers get free admission to the event.

Event volunteers help set-up, run, and break-down Downtown events and festivals throughout the year; beautification volunteers maintain the Beautification Committee's efforts by helping to create and/or clean attractive window displays, parking areas, building improvements, street furniture, street lights, signs, sidewalks, and landscaping. Communications volunteers promote events and opportunities to the Cortland Community.

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Service-Learning

Service-Learning Coordinator: John Suarez. The Office of Service-Learning is located at Moffett #2105

Stimulating Simulation Events

You are invited to observe two events in Corey Union's Function Room: On Wednesday and Thursday, February 2nd and 3rd, from 2:30 to 4:00, a team of faculty and agency supervisors will conduct the *Student Service-Learning Orientation* session. Through activities such as *The Yarn Web* and *The Human Knot*, this Project-Adventure-based event helps students understand that real people depend on students' attentive and consistent participation in community projects.

An instructor wrote that the event "is a life changer!" The students learned "about stats and (more importantly) the factors of trust and the importance of" students' participation in community projects.

The second event, the *State of Poverty Simulation*, will run on Tuesday, February 8th, in the Function Room. It is conducted by the staff of CAPCO, the Cortland County Community Action Program. The goals are to show students that poverty is not always a choice, and to help students understand the plight of the poor at "a gut level" – to help students empathize.

It begins by describing the current state of poverty, including distinctions between *the poverty line*, *minimum wage*, and *living wage*. In the hour that follows, CAPCO staff serve as community resources, (e.g. landlords, grocery store clerks, and Department of Social Services staff). Each student tries to survive as someone living in poverty by conducting daily business, such as shopping for food.

During concluding debrief sessions, students have asked, "This isn't real, right? You're exaggerating. ...It's not really this bad." One student said, "It's so frus-

trating! I couldn't pay my rent, so I got evicted – and it wasn't my fault!" Another student, reflecting on her experience, sent an unsolicited email to her instructor, writing that she never realized that people in America could be so hungry that the mother would need to sell her only oven, a microwave, to the pawn shop so that she could have money to buy food.

Role-playing activities such as these are experiential learning tools that help service-learning students understand course content and empathize with their community partners. Recent neuroimaging-based research suggests that role-playing's effectiveness comes from the human brain's tendency to reconcile seemingly-competing actions: the brain integrates emotion and cognition, and it accepts imagined activity as real.



Deciding what bills to pay in the family budget.

Emotion is integral to thinking; Caine and Caine (1990) state that "emotion and cognition cannot be separated." Linked to this realization is the understanding that the medium through which we receive information affects the way in which we understand it.

Our brains have many medium-based comprehension centers; each helps determine our perceptions. One, for example, processes *the reading* of a homeless shelter's

description; another interprets *the hearing* of the description, yet another makes sense of the *moving*, the crawling, into a damp cardboard box on a snowy night.

Our brains have other motion-related neural circuits that help us learn cognitive and emotional information as we consciously or unconsciously mimic another person's actions. Multi-sensory learning experiences, including those involving physical movement (such as role-plays), increase the chances for more nuanced and empathetic learning.

Please contact John Suarez, Coordinator of the Office of Service-Learning, at 753-4391 or at john.suarez@cortland.edu.

National Newsletter, continued from page 1.

As part of our BTtoP project, the President's Leadership Coalition for Student Engagement is also overseeing the development and implementation of the President's Certificate for Engaged Learning and Leadership. This program will contain the following elements: (a) a voluntary commitment on the part of each student entering SUNY Cortland to engage actively in a high-impact learning process in one or more ways, including service learning, international experiences, internships, leadership development, and undergraduate research; (b) the implementation of a cocurricular transcript to document the ways that our students are engaged in the life of the campus and community; and (c) a certificate, awarded upon graduation, to recognize students who complete the program.

It may be too early to decipher overall effects, but there are already numerous empirical outcomes. Our President's Leadership Coalition for Student Engagement has forged new collaborative relationships among those on campus working to engage our students in high-impact practices. We are eagerly anticipating the first analysis of our BTtoP data, which will occur following our post-tests in December 2010. Our new strategic plan highlights well-being and transformational education as goals of our college community. Students in our Leadership House Living-Learning Community have already started to contribute to campus life in ways we did not predict. We are working on new levels of institutionalization by embedding high-impact practices in courses and curricula. We don't know for sure where this will take us, but, looking back, we are not the same campus we were even ten years ago. We have changed, and we have no doubt that we will continue to do so.

Historic Downtown Cortland, continued from page 2.

Kevin Geer, a SUNY Cortland Art major, came to the Cortland Downtown Partnership in fall 2010 when he was looking for a place to complete his community service hours. Since then he has been a communications and beautification volunteer. Geer thinks "there are a lot of wonderful and diverse small businesses in downtown Cortland, and it's really great to be part of an effort to get more people to recognize its potential." He helped a new downtown business move to a larger downtown location; he has helped improve and expand the Downtown Gift Certificate program. Geer has also decorated and distributed First Night 2012 donation jars with Jodi Wainwright, owner of Bangles, Bags, and Bling, and with a Board member of the County Chamber of Commerce and the Cortland Downtown Partnership.

For more information on volunteer opportunities with the CDP, contact Stephanie Plude at stephanie.plude@cortland.edu.

Upcoming Event

The Closing Reception for SEND OFF will be at the Beard Gallery on Friday, February 4th, from 4 p.m.-6 p.m. at Main Street SUNY Cortland, 9 Main Street, in Historic Downtown Cortland. The Art Exhibition Association (AEA), the Cortland Downtown Partnership, and SUNY Cortland's Institute for Civic Engagement invite the Cortland community to attend the closing reception of SEND OFF, which opened December 15th; it is the second exhibition curated by these AEA students: Caitlin Adsit, Tara Evans, Stacy Griswold, Erin Harmon, Jeremiah Harvey, and Brittany Riehlman. For more information on this or upcoming exhibits, contact Adam Megivern at the Cortland Downtown Partnership at 753-4270.



The activities of the Institute for Civic Engagement and Main Street SUNY Cortland are made possible through the support of the Office of the President, the Office of the Provost, the Office of Sponsored Programs, the Faculty Development Committee, the MacDonald Foundation, the Corporation for National and Community Service, the Cortland Fund, the Cortland College Foundation, the Division of Institutional Advancement, the Auxiliary Services Corporation, Bringing Theory to Practice, and the Office of former Congressman Michael Arcuri.