First Link — All About Connection by M.L ‘05

From August 29th – 31st, 68 first-year students participated in the First Link pre-orientation program; a three-day event co-sponsored by S.O.S. and the Chapel that includes one full day of community service at various non-profit agencies in the Pioneer Valley area. Besides being fun, First Link includes panel discussions on ways to get involved in the community and introduces students to a number of different S.O.S. service opportunities they can participate in throughout the school year.

This year, the 68 First-Linkers and team leaders worked at eight different community service sites, including the Khmer Growers of Western Mass., Nuestras Raices (an urban community agriculture center), Habitat for Humanity, Holyoke Neighborhood Network Center, HCAC Day Care Center, the Food Bank Farm, a Cambodian Buddhist Temple, and the Mass. Audubon Society at Arcadia.

“First Link is a great chance to meet first-years from other houses as well as connecting people who have a common interest in community service. I had a great time and still keep in touch with the friends I made through First Link. I would recommend it to any first-year student!”

Enchanted Forest by Claire Reilly-Shapiro

With curious creatures, terrific tours, and cute kids in costume, the “Enchanted Forest” was one of S.O.S.’s highly successful short-term events this semester.

On October 26th, eleven Smith students helped the Hitchcock Family Center put on its annual Halloween event for children and their families.

To highlight this year’s theme, “sounds of the night”, Smith volunteers led families on a tour along a jack-o-lantern lit path – at various points discovering characters who educated us about nocturnal creatures.

One of the most memorable sites was the “acorn lady” and her elaborate acorn village with people, accessories, and buildings made entirely out of acorns and plants.

Along the route, we also encountered an owl looking (Continued on page 3)
SASS at Jackson Street Rocks

How do you teach a child about decimals or to decipher a math word problem or to improve their reading comprehension? If you’re a tutor with SASS – the Smith After-school Service program – these are the things you’ll learn.

The SASS program is an after-school program at the Jackson Street School that provides academic enrichment and support to children in grades K through 5. This is the fourth year of our program, which receives funding from Mass Campus Compact, the Dean of the College and the Dean of the Chapel.

This fall, a total of 18 tutors work with children individually or in small groups from 2:45 – 5:30, Monday through Thursday helping to improve basic skills and instilling an appreciation for reading. Children receive homework assistance and participate in academic enrichment activities.

This year, SOS is delighted to welcome Melissa Medvin as our new SASS director. Melissa recently moved here from Arizona with her family and has eight years of elementary school teaching experience.

At the end of each tutoring session, tutors have a half-hour discussion and review of the day.

We asked Jessica Martinez, a tutor from Scales House about the program:

“Each child I have worked with has taught me something new. Some have been more challenging than others either because they need more help or simply because they don’t like to study...it really makes you feel that you have made a difference in their lives when they begin to improve.”

Fall Blood Drive by Kim Porter

On October 30th and 31st SOS hosted its twice-annual Red Cross Blood Drive in the Scott Gym. With the hard work of SOS house reps., we had an enormous response; over 400 faculty/staff/students requested appointments and over 100 students asked to volunteer.

With such a great response, the Red Cross has agreed to expand our spring drive, bringing more staff and equipment to allow for more donations and shorter waiting times.

One important thing to know when considering donating blood is that as of October 15th, the Red Cross has updated its donor eligibility requirements. They now exclude people who have spent more than three months anywhere else in Europe or Oman. This is to reduce the risk of transmitting CJD (Mad Cow Disease) and will remain in effect until the disease is better understood.

Thanks to everyone who donated/tried to donate and all the volunteers!

See you in the spring!
CSIP: Action, Learning and Reflection by Hannah Sager

According to Program Directors’ Prof. Jerry Sachs and Tiertza-leah Schwartz Director of Voluntary Services, CSIP is designed as an intensive community service internship program combining action, learning and reflection.

Students participate in a weekly reflective seminar; receive a stipend of $2,000; work 4-6 hours weekly at local non-profit agencies; and complete detailed process notes. These notes are used as the basis for discussion in the seminar and the seminar utilizes a social work model of analysis.

Professor Sachs originally conceived the program as a way to link the School for Social Work with the undergraduate programs of the college. To date, forty-two students have participated in the program.

Currently there are CSIP interns placed with the following agencies: Decisional Training/Threshold program at Franklin Co. jail, Martin Luther King, Jr. Center, Springfield School Volunteers,YWCA, Children’s Aid/ Family Services, and Jessie’s House.

This program has had a great impact on both students, the community and all of its participants.

Professor Sachs and Tiertza-leah Schwartz work collaboratively to monitor the student’s placements, their progress and their style of interaction as mentors. Helping students to refocus their approach to mentorship’s and relations with the community agencies is a primary aim of the program.

The CSIP program has been a wonderful addition to the array of community service opportunities that S.O.S. engages in.

Quote from Allyson Bogie ‘03J CSIP Intern

“I’m working with the Thresholds program at the Greenfield jail. In this program, volunteers meet one-on-one with inmates teaching a five step decision making process so that the inmates can develop their decision making skills for their time both in and out of jail. I work one-on-one with an inmate, and I also help teach the group session.

Working in the jail is a unique experience. The environment is not like any other that I’ve experienced...This work is so new to me, I find that our Wednesday night CSIP seminars are a particularly good time to further reflect and get input for this work. When questions or difficulties arise, we all have the opportunity to discuss and get feedback with our peers as well as Jerry Sachs from the SSW and Tiertza-leah.

CSIP provides an opportunity for a range of ages and genders all coming together to create a strong learning experience for both the inmates and the volunteers”

Enchanted Forest

(Continued from page 1)

for a meal, a bat about to migrate south for the winter, a shrew with his grasshopper dinner, and a singing firefly with her backup glowworms.

Volunteers also worked inside the Family Center, making crafts with the kids and playing games related to nocturnal animals. It was fun to interact with adorable kids dressed up in their pumpkin, skeleton, and princess fairy costumes, and rewarding to help the Hitchcock Family Center’s goal in providing an alternative, fun and interesting Halloween event. For information about future short-term events, contact your S.O.S. house representative.

Upcoming Training

WomanShelter Companeras Volunteer Training for Hotline volunteers and domestic violence center
Feb. 7th — 10th Contact: Peggy Cichon 413-538-9717

Decisional Training Volunteers for the Franklin County Correctional Facility ASAP Contact: Janet Dahlberg 413-586-1640

Safe Passage Interviews for Crisis Intervention volunteers
Nov. 20 — Jan. 12 Contact: Lashonnie Jackson 413-586-1125

Coming Up...
The holiday season is here. Help those less fortunate by participating in The Winter Gifts program through S.O.S.
As a participant in the program, your house will raise money to buy warm clothing and toys for children and their families who use the Hilltown Churches Food Pantry. The Pantry works with families from West Franklin providing food to over 400 individuals twice a month.

Look for more information from your house reps.
Benefit Carwash Makes a Splash written by Adrienne Leavitt

On September 30th members of Scales House, King House, and Jordan House spent the afternoon running a carwash to benefit the American Red Cross. In two and a half hours the group raised $840 to aid the September 11th relief effort.

“It really touched me to see people opening their wallets, giving ten and twenty dollar bills to us. Our original goal was to raise between $200-$300, so we were quite pleased to raise over $800!” said Carrie Gray, a member of Scales House and co-chair of the event.

The idea of a benefit carwash started with Davy Kong, Scales House President, who brought the idea to House Counsel during the week following the events of the 11th. Two members of House Counsel, Rebecca Martinson and Carrie Gray, immediately jumped at the opportunity to help and volunteered to chair the event.

“We basically ran ourselves ragged getting it arranged in a week,” said Rebecca.

Local businesses came to the aid of the students organizing the carwash. Carrie informed that “we called local businesses and were able to secure a prominent location on King Street.”

The Daily Hampshire Gazette ran an advertisement for the carwash. The add was underwritten by Danrich Reality. RADS provided the buckets, sponges, rags, and soap needed for the carwash, and Physical Plant provided the hoses.

“The carwash was important,” said Davy, “because at that time we were all grieving and it just seemed like something that made sense through our shock, confusion, and sorrow. It was also a great bonding experience for everyone who was there.” Rebecca spoke to the same issue, “All those people who lost their lives, were injured, all those people who lost loved ones, all those heroes who gave their lives — I couldn’t just say that was tragic and horrible without trying to help in some way. I just couldn’t.”

SOS would like to acknowledge the great work done by Smith students who go above and beyond.

S.O.S. Spotlight

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