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Baystate Medical Center
By Meng Li

Many students interested in health-related volunteer work or a future career in medicine have gained valuable work experience and knowledge about the medical field by working at Baystate Medical Center as Research Interns. Interns screen patients for research protocols, collect data by reviewing medical records, interview patients and assist in implementing study procedures. Students also have the opportunity to learn medical terminology and observe doctors and nurse practitioners while they go on their rounds.

Mekkin Lynch ’05 is one of the Smith students who interns at Baystate. She works twice a week in the Emergency Room, screening patients who come in to check if they are eligible to participate in the various research projects being conducted at Baystate Medical Center. Currently, Mekkin is looking for any patients who come into the ER with abdominal pain and/or are coming into the ER to get abdomi

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Needle Exchange
By Anna Graseck

Some of the most important lessons I’ve learned in college have been outside of the classroom. One experience rich with such lessons was a service-learning project for a sociology class, “AIDS and Society.” We were given the option of writing a final paper or volunteering for an organization that had a connection to HIV/AIDS services or prevention. Through SOS, I began volunteering at the Tapestry Health Needle Exchange in downtown Northampton. The state-funded program operates on a harm reduction model of public health. Essential to this philosophy is the idea that drug use will not go away, and society should work toward reducing its harmful effects. Following this philosophy, needle exchanges acknowledge drug use and provide users with clean needles, to prevent the spread of infectious disease.

Baystate Medical Center

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Community Education Chair
Angela Saquibal

At the fifth community ed luncheon, several people came out to hear representatives from Girls Inc. and Springfield School volunteers talk about ways in which students can get involved with their agencies. Tamara Adkins of Girls Inc. and Maria DeAngelis and Denise Cogman from Springfield School volunteers gave detailed accounts of the responsibilities of volunteers and the effects they have on their organization as well as the students. Smith volunteers and mentors are known to boost the students’ test scores and overall enthusiasm for academics.

During the luncheon a few students also enthusiastically shared their experiences as volunteers for the Gerena School in Springfield. Overall, the luncheon generated much interest in tutoring and mentoring for both agencies. If you are interested in taking part in these volunteer opportunities next year, please contact the following:

Girls Inc.:
Tamara Adkins
TAdkins@girls-inc.org

Springfield School Volunteers:
Maria DeAngelis
maria@springfieldschoolvolunteers.org

Blood Drive Chair
Jamie Wilcox

The Smith College and American Red Cross Spring Semester Blood Drive was held February 16 and 17 in the Campus Center. 188 people came to donate blood and 135 were successful donors, exceeding our Spring semester goal! The pints of blood that were collected were taken to the Red Cross Testing labs for testing and separation into components. Three patients may benefit from one pint of donated blood, meaning that 405 lives could be saved with the blood from this drive alone. The sincerest thanks to all those who donated or volunteered. You helped to make this drive an exceptionally smooth one!

Message From the Interns
Meng Li and Emily Knaphus

Community Service Fair follow-up

Thanks to those of you that showed up at the Community Service Fair on February 8th. If you are interested in getting in contact with any of the agencies that attended the fair, or any other agencies for that matter, don’t hesitate to contact us here at the SOS office! We’d love to help you make a difference in our community!

Short-Term Co-Chairs
Susan Chun and Lindsay Sears

To start off the second semester, visitors of the Community Service Fair made Valentine’s Day cards for residents at Calvin Coolidge Nursing and Rehab Center. Thanks to all who took the time to make a card!

Keep your eyes open for these exciting projects coming up!

- On March 26, there will be a project with Nuestras Raices clearing brush on new farmland. Nuestras Raices is a grass-roots organization that seeks to promote community development in Holyoke through urban agriculture.
- Attention all animal lovers! We are looking for volunteers to play with animals at the Greenfield Humane Society on April 2, 1:00-3:00pm.
- Tired of the snow and itching to feel the green grass on your bare feet? On April 16 from 9:00am-12:00pm you can, by helping out at the Food Bank Farm. The Food Bank Farm is one of the largest community supported agriculture farms in the country, with the primary mission to feed those in need.
- You have the chance to provide a meal for the Wednesday evening meal program organized by the Interfaith Community Cot Shelter. We are looking for cooks to prepare the meal on Tuesday, April 19 from 7:00pm-9:00pm, and people to serve the meal on Wednesday, April 20 from 5:30pm-7:30pm.

If you are interested in volunteering for any of these upcoming projects, please contact the SOS short-term co-chairs Susan Chun and Lindsay Sears at schun@email.smith.edu, x5599 or lsears@email.smith.edu, x7065

Transportation will be provided.
The annual fund drive sponsored by the S.O.S is now in full swing! Focusing this year on educational and supportive services for breast cancer, the drive had its kick-off on February 11 and will run through March 24. The S.O.S fund drive is an annual event that focuses on a different issue every year. Our funds are primarily collected by our house reps, however we also receive the Rally Day performance proceeds and hold various campus events. Last year, the S.O.S fundraiser "Living with Aids" raised over $4,000.

This year’s fundraiser chairs hope to match the 2004 fundraiser, perhaps we can exceed that amount through the help and participation of community conscious Smithies! S.O.S will be donating the proceeds to local organizations via a mini grant application process for programs focusing on supportive services and educational outreach.

The issue of breast cancer is a topic not only particularly pertinent to an all-women’s campus, but a devastating disease that effects brothers, sisters, husbands, wives, mothers, fathers and friends. One in seven women in the United States will be diagnosed with breast cancer in her lifetime. This year 43,000 people will die of the disease and 182,000 cases will be diagnosed. Breast cancer is the leading cause of death for women ages 40 to 55. There is an essential and urgent need for funding to fill existing service gaps. Massachusetts’s statistics for breast cancer are higher than the national average and as members of this wider community it is important to help those who are coping with emotional and physical debilitations.

S.O.S House Representatives will be collecting donations within their houses, and the chairs of the fundraiser, Camaren Subhiyah ’07 and Deborah Rogal ’05, held a Community Educational Luncheon for March 22 and a Benefit concert on March 23. Some houses also held educational teas focusing on Breast Cancer. S.O.S. is offering various prizes for fundraiser donations. We are offering a breast cancer ribbon for any donation, a raffle ticket for a $5 donation and a pink awareness bracelet for a $10 donation.

As educated and community-conscious individuals, we each have a responsibility to aid those in need. Breast cancer threatens to touch all our lives, so please extend your heart and participation to the individuals who will ultimately benefit from our collective efforts.

Donate NOW by contacting your house rep, calling S.O.S at x4595, or the fund drive chairs, Deborah Rogal (drogal@email.smith.edu) or Camaren (csubhiya@email.smith.edu).
The Importance of Service Learning: an interview with Professor Libby Wheatley

By Meng Li

Libby Wheatley, a professor in the Sociology department, is one of the faculty members on campus who encourages students to engage in volunteer work through service learning projects. In her Introduction to Sociology and AIDS and Society courses, service learning projects make up a portion of the course work and the grade. In the introductory course, students apply sociological perspectives to the study and analysis of a series of social problems, including educational inequalities, addiction and substance dependencies, homophobia, hunger, and homelessness. In her AIDS and Society course, students are given the option of doing a “service learning journal” in replacement of a traditional research paper. Students may volunteer at a local HIV/AIDS related agency such as Arise for Social Justice, Tapestry Health, AIDS Care/ Hampshire County, the AIDS Care Garden Project and write a journal reflecting on their experiences at his/her respective agency.

By volunteering at local agencies, students are given the ability to see and understand these social problems in a real world context. Students who volunteer at agencies such as Arise for Social Justice and the Needle Exchange are able to conceptualize the social structural problems behind drug addiction and see addiction as a response to suffering, poverty, alienation and abuse. Students working at hunger prevention agencies such as the Food Bank of Western Massachusetts and the Northampton Survival Center learn the sociological, political and economic forces which produce hunger in the United States. Throughout the semester, students keep an analytic journal that chronicles their experiences in the field.

Professor Wheatley recognizes the value of field-based experience and observation for learning sociology and cultivating a “sociological imagination.” Professor Wheatley engaged in service learning during her years as a graduate student in Santa Cruz, California, where she worked as a community health outreach worker for the Santa Cruz AIDS Project. In that capacity, she did AIDS prevention outreach to men in gay bars, teenagers, sex workers, farm workers, and injection drug users. She also participated in a clandestine needle exchange program to distribute clean needles and harm reduction materials to injection drug users and street sex workers.

Wheatley explained that the practice of fieldwork, and the process of learning through participant observation, is central to the discipline of sociology, which includes both theoretical and empirical dimensions. She noted that the first sociology department in the United States was famous, in part, for the series of urban ethnographies carried out by students of the Chicago School. Wheatley noted that Professor Robert Park, a prominent member of the department of sociology at the University of Chicago at the time, urged his students to get out of the library and into the streets to learn sociology. Park viewed the city as a living laboratory available for sociological investigation.

Not only can social service agencies be great learning opportunities and beneficial for the students; students themselves are valuable to the agencies as well. “I like to think of Smith College as an asset and resource for the local community,” Professor Wheatley says. “It is important to make ourselves useful and visible in the community, since Smith students have many skills and talents that can be of service to agencies.”

Many of Professor Wheatley’s students have been greatly affected by the service learning projects he/she has participated in. One student who volunteered at the Needle Exchange in Northampton was able to move past her own personal social barriers and preconceptions after meeting and interacting with people from all different backgrounds. This student also got involved with the YWCA and proceeded to pursue a Master’s degree in Social Work and has decided to make AIDS-related work her life career.

Community-based service learning projects can be an integral part of a student’s education. It compliments and enhances academics by giving students the opportunity to apply theory and knowledge acquired in the classroom to current social contexts. If you are interested in finding out what courses are offering a service-based learning component, please contact the S.O.S. office at sos@smith.edu or X4595.

Other courses offered this Spring with service learning components:

Education 342: Growing Up American: Adolescents and Their Educational Institutions
Education 571: Introduction to Signing and Deaf Culture
Exercise Science 225: Education Through the Physical: Youth Sports

To learn about service learning courses offered next Fall, please contact the S.O.S. office after the first of April.
Mekkin decided to volunteer at Baystate primarily because she wanted to gain experience working in a hospital setting where there was more patient interaction. She wanted to volunteer at a medical-related agency that gave her the opportunity to do more technically challenging work. “It’s a way of volunteering where you’re actually doing something, rather than just wheeling patients around,” says Lynch. Interning at Baystate is also a way for Mekkin to garner experience for medical school. The Baystate Research Intern position was recommended to her by the CDO as a way of boosting her medical school application.

Volunteering at Baystate Medical Center has helped Mekkin differentiate between what aspects of the medical profession she likes and doesn’t like. “Volunteering at Baystate has helped me figure out that although I like the hospital environment, I don’t want to work in the ER. I would rather be a physician, than a researcher, because I don’t like that aspect of medicine,” says Lynch.

Mekkin’s volunteer experience at Baystate seems to be foregrounded by her professional goals, but is also related to her academic life. She says it compliments her academics by giving her something completely different to do during the week. Mekkin’s internship gives her access to knowledge that is very different from that gained from academics, but equally important and useful.

Baystate Medical Center is located in Springfield, a 20 minute drive from Northampton. Students interested in volunteering must make a commitment of 4 hours a day, 2 days a week. If you would like to volunteer at Baystate or want more info, please contact S.O.S. or the Medical Center volunteer coordinator, Del Blank directly at 794-8580.
Classifieds

Pioneer Valley Humane Society
Do you miss your animals from home? Make a difference in the lives of our animals. They need love and attention. Please call Martha at (413) 773-3904 or visit www.petz.org for more information.

Big Brothers/Big Sisters Bowl-a-thon
Want to have fun and make BIG difference in the community at the same time? Join the Big Brothers Big Sisters Bowl for Kids’ Sake Bowl-a-Thon! Saturday and Sunday, April 2nd and 3rd. Hang out with friends, classmates, or neighbors. Gather a team of 4-6 people, raise just $60 each, and join us for this fun-filled community event. For more information, please contact Big Brothers Big Sisters of Hampshire County at (413) 253-2591 or email bbbshc@chd.org

Opportunities for Ada Comstock Scholars and Smith Faculty and Staff:

Pride Zone
Are you interested in working with LGBTQQA youth? Pride Zone is looking for volunteers to: Help staff the center during open hours, tutor, chaperone events, advise support groups, and work with center committees. Volunteers need to be age 25 and up, as our youth are from ages 13-21. For more information, please contact Tracy Squires at 584-1116, email przone@valinet.com, or visit www.pridezone.com.

Be a Host For an International Student
The International Language Institute of MA, located in Northampton, is looking for area residents to host international students. Students come from a wide variety of countries and backgrounds and are 18 years or older. Students are enrolled in an Intensive English Program at the school. Programs are held year-round and the next program begins April 4. Hosts are expected to provide a private room, a warm and friendly environment and need to live within walking distance to the school or be near a convenient bus-line. ILI provides a weekly stipend. For more information call: Caroline Gear at (413) 586.7569 x 103 or email: caroline@languageschoolusa.org