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S.O.S.
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Edited by
Claire Bolton

Love cannot remain by itself— it has no meaning. Love has to be put into action and that action is service.
-Mother Teresa

Staying Involved
By Elizabeth Wolfson ’08

Last year I worked on the SOS Board with Katy Means as Fund Drive Co-chairs. Our topic, as you may recall, was aiding local foster children by providing emergency placement supplies and funds for extracurricular activities. Our drive was a huge success! We raised almost $5000, which was an SOS record, and actually were able to donate close to $6000 thanks to a matching extra fund from the SOS budget. We chose the Northampton agency Friends of Children to receive the grant because of their pre-existing programs and potential to expand. We had also worked closely with director Jane Lyons during the drive and felt comfortable entrusting her with our mission. Katy and I were extremely proud of our accomplishments and extend our thanks to the entire Smith community for all of the help we received.

As a result of my work with the 2005-2006 Fund Drive, and of discussions with Jane, I learned about a need for foster children that often goes unrecognized: lack of computer access. Many of us had access to at least one computer when we were in high school that was essential for writing papers and doing research. Some of us even had our own computers. But foster children move frequently and often have difficulty with their assignments. Especially today when there is such a focus on typing papers and completing research online, foster children without access to computers are at a severe disadvantage. Although they can use their school computers, the hours when they are able to do so are limited. For this reason I set up a computer drive with the help of SOS and Jane Lyons last spring. I sent out E-Digest listings and made flyers and mailbox stuffers requesting that students and staff who were getting rid of older computers donate them instead.

Within the last few weeks of the spring semester, we received about ten computers and several printers. More came in over the summer, and I just found out that a few more have been donated this fall. I am so excited that this project has taken off and I encourage everyone to consider donating.

(con’t page 4)

Just a Walk Down the Street: Babysitting at Grace House
By Brittany Diaz ’09
(names changed to protect confidentiality)

When I walk across campus on my way to Grace House, I notice an extra skip in my step. Grace House is located at 143 West Street in Northampton. The house is a residential treatment program from addiction issues for women and their children run by the Center for Human Development of Springfield. The women in the home spend about nine months in an intensive intervention program. The program includes twelve-step fellowships, psycho-education, parenting skills, life skills, budgeting, and case management for the residents. After completing the program, the families are assisted in their transition to independent living.

My role at Grace House is a babysitter for the children while their mothers attend nightly 12-step group meetings. I began volunteering at Grace House in October of 2005 after receiving an email from Tierza-Leah Schwartz in the SOS office requesting for volunteers interested in working with children. Grace House is conveniently located directly off campus just a few meters past the Physical Plant building, so I quickly found my way to their office for an interview.

Last school year and again this year, I would babysit for two brothers, ages four and seven, named John and Jack. Their mother, Melissa, is originally from Boston, but has been in the home for about a year. She has completed the program and officially graduated, but she and her children are staying at Grace House until she is able to find housing nearby. Melissa still attends nightly meetings, and I babysit John and Jack every Saturday and Monday night from 7:00 pm to 9:45 pm. According to the rules of the house, the children must be in their rooms by 8:30 pm (7:30 pm for the younger children). When I arrive at the house, being a regular volunteer, I am able to walk directly in through the side door.

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Message From the Chair
By Barbara Calvert ’07

So you want to become involved in community service? So you want to help out the community? We’re here to help you! Service Organizations of Smith (SOS) is a comprehensive umbrella community service program that helps Smith students become involved in community service as they desire. We have approximately 70 partner organizations, with which we have a direct relationship. This allows students to become involved with community service organizations ranging from environmental organizations, tutoring children, helping the elderly, the underprivileged, and many other causes.

SOS is structured in a way that will help us reach as many students as possible. We have at least one house representative in every house who helps students in their house become involved in community service, and informs them of everything going on with SOS. In addition, we have an SOS board that helps run the organization. SOS wants to engage students in intensive community internships, such as the CARE (Community Advocates for Reflective Education) program. The board plans short term community service projects for other students to become involved in, helps groups such as houses and sports teams organize their own community service projects. Board members also help students become involved with long term community service placements, where students volunteer with an agency 1-2 times per week.

There are several ways that you can give back to your community! We organize many things throughout the academic year. First we organize a blood and bone marrow drive each semester. If you are unable to donate you can volunteer to help staff the blood drive! Second, during the holiday season we partner with the Hill town Churches pantry to sponsor a gift drive for children in need. Each house has the opportunity to sponsor a child. We also have a fund drive in the spring, designed to educate the Smith community about a local need or issue to collect donations for local agencies to further the cause. If you want to become involved in community service contact (x4595) or come to the SOS office in the basement of the Chapel!

Successful Fall Blood and Bone Marrow Drive
By Caredwen Foley ’09

I want to thank everyone who donated or volunteered at the fall Blood Marrow Drive, and to let you know how it went. 214 people came to give blood, and 148 were successful—turnout has been growing steadily with each semester! The pints of blood that were collected were taken to the Red Cross Testing labs for testing and separation into components. Red cells are used for surgical bleeding. Plasma is used to help treat victims of burns, shock or dehydration. So three patients may benefit from one pint of donated blood, meaning that 444 lives could be saved with the blood from this drive alone! Also congratulations to 150 Elm and Hubbard House for having the highest percentage and number of donors.

In addition, 21 people elected to have their tissue typed so that they can enter the National Marrow Donor registry as potential marrow donors in the future. SOS looks forward to working with the National Marrow Donor Program again in the spring, and we hope that even if you’re ineligible or don’t want to give blood, you’ll enter the registry next time!

So, again, to everyone who could come out to donate or volunteer, thank you so much. Our spring semester drive will be on February 14th and 15th. I hope to see you there!
Welcoming New Students
By Julie Esterline AC ’07
and Claire Bolton ’08

Smith offers a variety of “pre-orientation” programs intended for first-year students. S.O.S. specifically offers a program called First Link to introduce Smith community service to incoming students. This year, 51 first-year students and eight team leaders participated. Upon arrival, all pre-orientation participants assembled in Sage Hall for a quick meeting to get started and to say good-byes to parents. From there, the team leaders (Sara Bolduc, Sable Cady, Barbara Calvert, Julie Esterline, Dane Kuttler, Emily Melchin, Zephaif Schumacher, and Elizabeth Wolfsin) walked all 51 participants over to Gillette House where “Get Acquainted/Build Bridges” projects were set up in the dining room consisting of t-shirt decorating and journal making. This was a fun bonding activity for the first years to do as they transitioned into the next phase of their lives.

After dinner, a lottery was held in Cutter living room to see which service organization the participants would be with the next day. From there, the groups were split up and they met with representatives from each agency. The discussions that night were very lively and revolved around the first year reading, Tracy Kidder’s “Mountains Beyond Mountains,” as they talked about Paul Farmer’s ability to connect with people very different from him, and how they in return could learn from his example as they reached out into the Pioneer Valley community.

The first night concluded with several participants and team leaders heading over to Herrell’s for some yummy ice cream! and went out to five different organizations in the community: On the second day, the students were split up into their respective groups

- **AIDS CARE/Hampshire County:** In the morning, participants weeded, watered, and harvested the community garden. In the afternoon, they stuffed newsletters and listened to a speaker from the organization.
- **Food Bank Farm:** The students harvested and weeded vegetables all day, which were then distributed to local food pantries.
- **Greater Springfield Habitat for Humanity:** Students worked on painting the interior of a house, and some were able to do landscaping around the house in the afternoon.

- **Nuestras Raíces (Our Roots):** Students picked up trash along the road, weeded along the fencing on the farm, and helped to build a stage “the tree house” for community events.
- **Prison Book Project:** Participants completed book requests from prisoners in Texas and New England. This involved choosing from a selection of donated books, wrapping the books, and writing personal notes to be included in the packages.

The First Linkers then returned to Smith ready for a good long shower and light nap before dinner!

Following dinner, all the participants walked across the street to the Campus Center where they had a chance to tell their day’s stories through creative arts. Each group had the opportunity to present their project in a creative way. These projects are currently on display in the lower level of the Helen Hills Hills Chapel. We hope this was a worthwhile experience for all involved, and that First Linkers will continue to be a part of SOS!

First Link volunteers Nuestras Raíces Farm Project
Staying Involved
(con’t page 1)

Tiertza-Leah Schwartz, the director of SOS, recently told me that one of Jane’s assistants at Friends of Children came to pick up a computer this summer and shared with Tiertza how happy one of the social workers had been when she was able to give a foster child one of these computers. Stories like this one inspire me and bring to light the incredible difference each of us can make in someone else’s life.

To donate a computer please contact the SOS Office at sos@smith.edu or x 4595.

Just a Walk Down the Street:
Babysitting at Grace House
(con’t page 1)

I am immediately greeted by many residents in the house. For the most part, I become acquainted with all the women in the house, and they are cheerful and welcoming when I walk in. I meet with Melissa to sign the babysitting consent form, and then I am off to find John and Jack.

The children are typically in the living room watching TV or eating snacks when I arrive. Depending on how their days went, the children are fairly excited to see me. Every night one of the boys has a new reptile pet to boast about, and I love to see their faces light up when they realize that I am visiting just to be with them. While I babysit, there are other women and children in the house, for whom I am not babysitting, but I am still able to interact with all of the residents.

When it’s “bed-time” for the children, I round them up, ask them to say goodnight to the rest of the house, and I bring them to their room. Our typical nightly ritual is to read two or three short books while they lie in bed and settle down. Their moods fluctuate from day to day, and I’ll admit sometimes it is very difficult to calm the children. There are some nights that I am extremely frustrated and exhausted, and I have to hold back with the children so as not to be put over the edge. John and Jack usually fall asleep once I turn the lights out, and use a soft voice to coax them into silence.

After the children are asleep, I can leave their room and I sit in the living room with some of the other women watching TV. Usually the rest of the evening is quiet and uneventful while I wait for Melissa to return from her meeting, but I like being able to socialize with the residents. Many times I am asked about my studies and my personal history. I am comfortable speaking with the women about my experiences as a student, and I think they enjoy hearing about life outside the Grace House. The women rarely reveal to me for exactly what reasons they are in the house, but from time to time, I learn that they are recovering from alcoholism, methamphetamine abuse, or a variety of abusive and addictive behavior. I have also learned from the house staff, that some of the children suffered from an abusive upbringing. In the last year, there have been two tragedies involving past residents including addiction relapse and a suicide.

Some people might think that it’s very sad to work with these families, considering their history and where their lives have taken them. From my point of view, I am lucky to meet these women at a point in their lives when they are making positive decisions for themselves and their children. Rehabilitation programs are not perfect, and they are not always successful, but I feel that by becoming a babysitter and mentor to their children, I am being supportive and encouraging them in their process towards recovery.

I am thankful that I have become a part of the team at Grace House, and I look forward to continuing my services as a babysitter throughout my years at Smith College.

Reflection from Grace House Supervisor

Sonia Cruz, Clinical Director of Grace House, said “Brittany Diaz has been a great asset to our team. If I had one word to describe Brittany, it would be magnificent. Her continuous commitment to our program’s mission and to the families that she is assigned to baby sit for is above average. Brittany has been a great part of our healing and recovery mission here at the Grace House.”

First Link Volunteers Sorting Garlic at the Food Bank
Alternative Fall Break
By Julie Esterline AC ‘07J

What were you doing during your fall break?
One amazing group of women were...
...spackling sheet rock, painting walls, installing stairs, and
coupling baseboards at a local Habitat build!
...reading letters from prisoners and sending them books
through Prison Book Project!
...doing fun arts and crafts with the residents of Lathrop
Senior Home!
...playing with cats and dogs and raising over $90 at a dona-
tion drive for the Dakin Pioneer Valley Humane Society!

Who were these amazing women, you may ask?

We were the Alternative Fall Break group of 2006. With
the help of my co-chair Elizabeth Wolfson, we coordinated
the four-day community service extravaganza. This year,
there was an overwhelming response from Smithies who
were sticking around campus during the break who wanted
to give back to the community. Only twelve were able to be
selected, but we formed a dynamic group as we traveled
around the Pioneer Valley for a good cause. In addition to
the community service efforts, we also had several bonding
activities such as going to Claytonia, having a movie night,
baking cookies, and going apple picking.

Being part of our group and reaching out to the commu-
nity during our break was a way for Smithies who otherwise
might not have had a chance to get involved. As one Alter-
native Fall Breaker put it, "I was able to try out different
community service opportunities that I have always wanted
to try, but never had the chance to do - whether because I
didn't know how to get involved, or because I didn't want to
go by myself."

Another participant expressed the fun she had: "I'm so
grateful that I was able to participate in the 2006 Alternative
Fall Break program. I enjoyed every moment, and it was
great to hang out with other Smith students who have a
common interest in community service. This was a great
opportunity for Smith students hanging out in Northampton
during break, and I hope that it continues to be offered in
future years!"

I would like to thank all of the participants who were
involved in the four-days of volunteering, as well as Tiertza-
leah Schwartz, Naomi Ansbergs, Susan Zachary, my Co-
Chair Elizabeth Wolfson, and of course all of the partner
agencies who welcomed us into their "homes" or came here
to our home -- Smith!
My Summer in the Valley
By Claire Bolton ’08

In April of last year, I was wondering what on earth I was going to do in the upcoming summer. I had recently been offered a job as a major donor fundraiser for Habitat For Humanity of Boston, but I was starting to have doubts about taking it. The idea of working for Habitat, an organization I have volunteered with for many years, appealed to me – but I wasn’t sure whether I would enjoy making phone calls all day from an isolated office and never actually working on builds. Luckily, I found an advertisement for a volunteer coordinator for Pioneer Valley Habitat, an eclectic job that would involve a lot of volunteer contact and on-site involvement. I interviewed, was hired, got my Praxis stipend, and started work in June.

Pioneer Valley Habitat started in 1989, and since then volunteers have built (or are currently building) about 20 homes for families in the area. The difficulties of living at a low-income level in the Valley are often overlooked; the median home price here is around $250,000, which is far out of the price range of many in the area. A lack of affordable housing is one of the most significant deficiencies of Hampshire and Franklin counties. Pioneer Valley Habitat selects partner families for each house before it is built. The family is then closely involved with the building process, putting in at least 250 hours of work. A no-interest 15 to 25 year mortgage is provided, and mortgage payments are recycled to build houses for more families.

My job was to assist the current volunteer coordinator, and most importantly, to take her place when she went on a six-week vacation mid-summer. Our job was to organize volunteers and events pertaining to three worksites in Northampton, Amherst, and Turners Falls. Specific duties included scheduling volunteers and site supervisors, visiting youth groups onsite, leading volunteer orientations, submitting recruitment notices to local newspapers, helping arrange special events (such as a donor appreciation dinner), and other assorted activities that cannot be categorized. For example, one day we drove to Athol, a remote town in Franklin County, to collect birdhouses that a youth group had made to be put in the backyards of Habitat houses. Another time, I solicited food donations from local businesses for a group of volunteers who were building with us for a few days. The variation of my duties meant that I was rarely bored, and that I was able to see many aspects of how Pioneer Valley Habitat functions. I learned how the office works, how the sites function, and how volunteers and donors are brought together.

My favorite experiences as an intern were when I realized the full extent of volunteers’ dedication to Habitat, and the way everyone’s efforts come together to build house after house. One such occasion was at the end of June, when a church group from rural Pennsylvania came up to work on the Northampton site for a week. For a lot of them, the trip was half of their paid vacation time. I was so impressed that they would come to the Valley during their vacation to spend a week laboring under the hot sun. Another memorable occasion was also in June, when we took part in Habitat International’s “Operation: Home Delivery” effort. This involved constructing wall panels for a house (42 in total) and shipping them to a hurricane-devastated area in the deep South. We had expected that the build would take three days, but thanks to immense dedication from members of the Amherst community, it took only a day and a half. People were eager to contribute in all ways – building, making food, loading materials onto the truck – and it really paid off.

To get involved with Pioneer Valley Habitat for Humanity at Smith, contact Chandler Patton at: mpatton@smith.edu

To get involved with Springfield Chapter:
Pioneer Valley Habitat for Humanity
250 Albany Street
Springfield, MA 01105
413-739-5503

Habitat Volunteers onsite
CLASSIFIEDS

Community Service Opportunities:

Health in Harmony

Health In Harmony is an innovative international human and environmental health program which partners with rural Indonesian communities to protect threatened rainforest environments, provide critical human health care to poor people, and promote environmentally sustainable economic development. Our organization is based in Northampton, and student Interns and volunteers will be responsible for critical projects for the organization. You will be working together with volunteers locally, from around the country, and in Indonesia. Your work will be done through the use of conference calls and computer access. Strong writing, research, and organizational skills a must. Student’s who are inspired by Paul Farmer in “Mountains Beyond Mountains”, are particularly encouraged to volunteer. For more information, see our web site at: www.healthinharm.org or email us at jriseman@healthinharm.org

Grace House (Northampton)

Grace House, a shelter for homeless women in recovery and their children, is looking for volunteers to help baby-sit during the evening while mothers attend 12-Step meetings on Mondays, Wednesdays, Saturdays or Sundays. For more information, contact Sonya Cruz at 413-586-8213.

The Food Bank Farm of Western MA (Hadley)

On-going Projects: Volunteers needed to sort donated food. Help is needed on Monday and Friday from 12-4pm and Thursday from 12-7pm. Saturday shifts from 8am-noon are also available. Clubs, households and organizations are welcome to schedule a group activity. For more information contact: Kate at katea@foodbankwma.org or Fern at ferns@foodbankwma.org, or call 413-247-9738. You can also check out our website at www.foodbankwma.org.

Girl’s Inc. (Holyoke)

Girl’s Inc. is a non-profit organization that is working to empower girls by providing the opportunity for them to learn many skills. We are looking for fun and compassionate people to donate their time to tutoring middle school and high school students. Our aim is to raise the grades of the girls in our program and encourage a successful graduation for them all. If you enjoy helping young people shine, please contact: Krista Bajgier, Youth Conflict Resolution Coordinator, Girls Inc. of Holyoke, 413-533-0697 ext. 206

New Course Offering!!!!

SPEECH 105: BREAK OUT: SPEAKING ABOUT YOUR COMMUNITY SERVICE

This course will provide students with an opportunity to do community service during Spring Break as well as to reflect on and speak about their experiences through various oral presentations both inside and outside the Smith community. Readings on and discussion of such topics as community service and social justice will provide the practical and academic foundation for the students’ community service which will require a minimum of 10 hours of volunteer work at a local agency such as The Interfaith Emergency Cot Program. Enrollment is limited to 10 students. Spring Semester only. S/U only. 1 credit. For more info, contact Mary A. Koncel at mkoncel@smith.edu

Update on Computer Donations and Fund Drive to Friends of Children

Ever wonder exactly how your donation impacted the people who benefited from it? Here is an update on the impact of the ’05-’06 Fund Drive. Jane Lyons, Executive Director, Friends of Children, said that the money we donated through the fund drive grant was greatly appreciated. Lyons, said that a foster child who had a job was trying to pay for his Driver’s Ed class; but could only come up with about $150.00 and FOC funded the balance. Another Foster child made the football team and only had $50 to pay for his football jacket, so FOC paid the rest. Lyons states, FOC got a really nice thank you note from him. One of the Laptops that was donated is being used by a Foster child for College.

For more opportunities, check out the S.O.S. directory on our website: www.smith.edu/sos

Update: The SOS office has moved to Tilly Bldg. 2nd floor for the near future.
Volunteers Working Food Bank Farm

SERVICE ORGANIZATIONS OF SMITH
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