May 2009

Events:
- Thurs. 4/21, 6:30 pm, Volunteer Recognition
- Thurs. 4/23, 5:00 pm, Final HR Meeting, Bodman Lounge, Chapel
- Tues. 4/28, 4:30 pm, HCSS Tea, College Club
- Fri. 5/1, Somali students visit from White Street School, Springfield
- Fri. 5/1, last day of classes
- Tues. 5/5, Final exams begin
- Sun. 5/17, commencement

Smith College and the Interfaith Emergency Homeless Shelter
by Yvonne Freccero, Friends of the Homeless

The Friends of Hampshire County Homeless Individuals, Inc., the non-profit corporation that organizes and funds the interfaith emergency shelter at 43 Center Street, Northampton in cooperation with ServiceNet, is grateful for the enormous contribution Smith College makes in support of the interfaith shelter.

Our annual financial goal is to raise $30,000 to cover the operating expenses of the shelter and various programs that assist the hundreds of guests that benefit from its shelter each year. For many years a collection has been made at the two sessions of Smith College Vespers in December. The beautiful service of readings and song provides a wonderful setting for the Christmas season and is eagerly anticipated by the Northampton community. This year the Vespers donation amounted to $4,400, more than ever before, contributing over ten percent of our budget.

However, Smith’s contribution goes well beyond financial donations. Each evening of the semester, through a partnership with the Community Service Office, two students come to the shelter at 7:30 to help with chores and spend time with the guests. Those who come to the shelter for food and safety after a day on the streets are amazed and delighted that these young women are willing to take time from their studies to bring them comfort and friendship. The arrival of the students also brings relief to the volunteer teams who have brought meals and served the guests, often after a long working day. Given that these teams come not only from all walks of life in Northampton, but also from seven surrounding communities, the reputation of Smith students for caring and generosity has spread far and wide. Many administrators and faculty members also volunteer, and some have assumed significant management roles, in addition to their regular working days.

Lastly, this January we were given the privilege of being the agency studied by the Lewis Leadership program under the direction of Professor Nancy Whittier. In the space of two weeks students in the program studied three important aspects of our organization: History and Organizational Model, Organizational Structure, and Outreach and Education.

They spent hours interviewing members about all aspects of the shelter. Their final report was detailed and professional, providing many excellent suggestions for restructuring, detailed material to study, and a history to be shared with other communities wishing to follow in our footsteps.

Smith College’s involvement in this program exemplifies its commitment to the City of Northampton and surrounding towns. The Friends of Hampshire County Homeless Individuals, Inc. is extremely grateful for this support that enables it to continue to provide shelter to increasing numbers of homeless people.

Volunteering at the Cot Shelter
By Elizabeth Moncure

On any given day between November 1st and April 30th, one can wander downtown to the Interfaith Community Shelter and find a few Smith students playing cards, dominos, and scrabble; shouting out jeopardy answers; or helping load the dishwasher. The shelter, located on 43 Center Street, is open during the 6 coldest months of the year as a resource for the homeless. There, they receive hot meals and other necessities. Continued on page 3
Over the course of the past five months, I have been living, working, and studying in Madrid, Spain as a Fulbright Scholar. The Fulbright is a grant funded by the United States government (Department of State) and the government of a grantee's host country. I began applying for this opportunity at the end of my junior year at Smith, and finished the process in mid-October as a senior with the help of Donald Andrew, our fellowships advisor, and many of my professors. My proposal was for a teaching project (grants are also available for independent research and occasionally for graduate school abroad), which would place me in a bilingual school as an English language Teaching Assistant (ETA). While writing the application, I drew heavily on insight I'd gained in my four years as a classroom assistant and tutor in elementary schools in Hadley (through the America Reads program) and Springfield (through the CARE Internship, offered by CSO and the Smith College School for Social Work). That time, especially in Springfield where I tutored Spanish/English bilingual students, has served as the foundation of my experience in Spain. Not only has it informed the relationships I have with my students, fellow ETAs, and the teachers with whom I work, but teaching has become the focus of my life for a year. This article is meant to serve as a brief look at how my experiences as a Smith student working in communities that neighbor the College have contributed to my first year as an alumna. At school, I work with third graders, first graders, and two classes of 4-year-old "infantil" students (in Spain, this blanket term refers to the first three years of primary education). In first grade, I was assigned by the Spanish Fulbright Commission to work with children ages three to five, and is similar to the American concepts of preschool and kindergarten.). In third grade, I teach groups of six students their science lesson for the day (many of Spain's public bilingual schools require that science be taught in English). In first grade, I teach groups of six students their English lesson for the day. In infantil, I assist an English teacher as she conducts her classes three times per week, and twice a week I design lessons and teach the classes by myself. Outside of school, I am self-employed as a private English tutor. I work individually with both elementary school-aged children and teenagers on science and English. Additionally, I take Spanish courses at a language school near my home every day for an hour in order to hone my skills. In the midst of all of these commitments, I regularly enjoy the culture and wide array of activities that the wonderful city of Madrid offers, socialize with my friends and flatmates, learn and try new things, and travel in Spain and Europe.

This is my first significant experience abroad. As a junior, I stayed at Smith to pursue personal interests in my studies (I have no regrets about this), and I traveled very little otherwise. Was I prepared to move to Spain for 10 months? Yes. Absolutely. I don't want to undermine the difficulty of making change, especially when everything in your life changes, from how you maintain your relationships to the language you speak every day, to the endeavors into which you pour your energy. Yet, I think 22 years teaches you a lot about gracefully navigating a new way of life, especially when you can build the present on a foundation made from a repertoire of past experiences.

Adjusting to Spain has been a process, but a rich, enjoyable one that has been informed by the past and my enthusiasm to be here. It is teaching that has been the most demanding aspect of living abroad. Although I spent many years as a teaching assistant, there is a constant need for strategy-development in education. For me, one of the joys of teaching is getting to know my students – finding out what makes them who they are and sharing learning with them. I may know the information I am responsible for imparting, but they come to know it uniquely. This is part of the reason why knowledge is not static; discovering, and therefore "knowing," are personal experiences for students. In my teaching, I have to learn how my students learn, as well as what influences the way they think about the world, in order to relate to them. Having a background in education (a minor) has been invaluable to my efforts this year, but it's a bonus compared to having had the opportunity to work with (for lack of a better word) my students while at Smith. I was ready to embrace the challenges I have been given. This is why I mention now only how challenging the job has been for me; while personal experience and college prepared me for the emotional and intellectual turmoil that Spain and teaching have added to my life, programs like America Reads and the CARE Internship prepared me for the reality of the dream.

The coordinator of the bilingual program of which I'm part calls our school "complex." This is an accurate description. Like many other public schools in Madrid, mine is a school that is vibrant with people from many cultures, throbbing with energy, and sometimes overwhelmingly loud in a "characteristically Spanish" way. It is also the daytime home to children ages three to twelve who come mostly from working-class (poorer) families and sometimes an array of struggles related for example, health and hygiene problems, lack of parental involvement in children's lives, and feelings of futility about or ambivalence toward education). Additionally, a large percentage of the student body is physically disabled and/or in need of special education or support services. I have grown used to the click of crutches in the halls. All day, I smile and greet the white-coated specialists going on their rounds to make sure that every child gets up and down the stairs to recess and lunch, and to the bathroom. I make way for wheelchairs. I see to it that the little girl with the walker gets to play the detective game right along with her classmates, and modify the Hokey Pokey for her. I pick up the four-year-olds who don't walk on their own and bring them to their chairs, buckle them in, ruffle their hair, and quiz them on their colors.

One of the most important concepts we talked about in the CARE Internship was how to listen. Listening is not easy, especially to someone who is trying to work out how to solve a problem, in their personal life, on their assignment, or otherwise. That is, it's not easy to refrain from offering solutions, or from flat-out solving the problem, rather than hearing anything someone wants to say and positively contributing to a reflection that helps them see themselves and their challenges or joys in new light. As a teacher, I spend my whole day listening. My students come from so many backgrounds that my ears are always registering a wide variety of sound waves that carry on their backs a wide variety of meanings. As a teacher, my job is to turn up the volume of those sounds and add a little music of my own. I say, "This is what I'm hearing you say. Now can I contribute to your sound? Let's see what we can do with both parts." Sometimes teaching is cacophony. But so is learning. Working in schools, and in the community, we have a chance to love questions. Reflecting together, we lay the bricks for a bigger picture. We put down the notes to a bigger song, and sing it till it sounds right. Or rather, until it sounds the way we want it to sound. Without interpreting and asking questions about our interpretations of what others think and express, the "conversation" between the teacher and student, volunteer and community member, doctor and patient, parent and child, will be between one voice and its echo. This is about harmonizing – when voices "make sense" together. And when your memories of one place make music with the sounds of another. Like at Smith and in Spain. Like at Smith and wherever you go next.
Broadening a Smith Education with First Call for Help
by Phoebe Camilletti, C.S.O. Intern

First Call for Help, a non-profit organization that serves those in the Franklin, Hampshire, and North Quabbin regions, provides people in need with access to resources such as food, public benefits, legal services, transportation, emergency heat and utility assistance, medical care, counseling, child care, and housing. First Call for Help also provides support and advocacy services in addition to general service coordination.

Smith student Faith Henion ’11 is currently working as a volunteer with First Call for Help by way of an opportunity presented in her education class. Faith says of the agency that “Many people call in regards to their inability to pay their bills--usually heating and electricity--and we connect them to charitable organizations, sign them up for payment plans, etc.” Faith also notes that people are able to get food stamps through First Call for Help, which is particularly significant because people typically have to go to Holyoke to obtain the stamps, and such is too hard a trip for many people.

Faith has benefitted from her experience thus far because it has offered her a unique perspective on poverty in the Pioneer Valley that she would likely not have gotten otherwise. She also notes that she has learned about the instability of the definition of “impoverished”; it’s important to know what resources are available to those who are struggling. Though extremely limited funding is available for those in need of the services First Call for Help helps to provide, Faith says that the agency is working on developing a work-study position so that she can continue her work after the semester is over. It is obvious that the work Faith does with First Call for Help is furthering both her own education and the lives of many in need.

Blood Drive Chair Thanks Donors
by Cora-lee Picone, Blood Drive and Bone Marrow Registration Drive Chair

The CSO, the Red Cross, and The National Marrow Donor Program would like to thank all of the Smith college students who participated in this semester’s drives. On The first day of the drive 68 blood donors presented and 40 pints were collected. On the second day of the drive 98 people presented and 73 pints were collected. Each of the 113 pints is separated into three components—red blood cells, platelets, and plasma. This means that the blood collected from this drive was able to help up to 339 patients! There was also great success in holding the Bone Marrow drive in conjunction with the Blood drive. Over 40 people signed up to be potential bone marrow donors. If you would like more information about what it means to be a Bone Marrow donor please visit the National Marrow Donor Program website at www.marrow.org. We were very excited to see that there were 50 first time donors! We hope all donors will consider donating again in the fall!

Volunteering at the Cot Shelter
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meals, support, and a roof over their heads. Every night, various groups and organizations from the community come to serve food at the shelter. Following dinner, 1 or 2 Smith students arrive to finish up remaining chores and keep company. In my second year volunteering at the interfaith shelter, I have done everything from playing fast-paced games of Clue, to having deep conversations about politics and religion.
Volunteering at the interfaith shelter has allowed me to connect with members of the Northampton community on a more personal level. The residents at the shelter dispel any stereo-types one comes in with. Although I would love to say that the first time I visited the shelter I had no reservations; that would be a lie. I had no idea what to expect. However, I’ve come to learn that the homeless do take showers, know English, and are not anymore lazy than the average human being. In fact, some are incredibly ambitious. I’ve recently become interested in one motivated resident’s pursuit of a job. John* is a hardworking photographer who, through a series of unfortunate events, has resorted to staying at the shelter. He aspires to work at a gallery in New York City, and is gearing up for his second interview at a New York gallery while also preparing for a first interview at another prominent New York gallery. Then, there’s Tom*, a single parent with a daughter at Princeton, meanwhile continuing his education at Holyoke Community College (HCC). Tom continuously talks about his involvement with HCC’s student government and his daughters’ achievements. My Wednesday evenings are an opportunity for me to listen to these stories, and see the successes despite the many problems the homeless face.

I strongly encourage everyone to volunteer at the interfaith shelter at least once during their experience at Smith. For more information, contact Yvonne Frecce at yfrecce602@comcast.net, or Barbara Blumenthal at bblument@smith.edu.

* Name has been changed
Welcome to the 2009-2010 Community Service Board! Next year's board will consist of:

Chairwoman: Rachel Hanlon
Short Term Projects co-Chair: Dana Steuhling
Short Term Projects co-Chair: Phoebe Camilletti
Fund Drive co-Chair: Kate Vaiknoras
Fund Drive co-Chair: Yisi Lu
Recruitment Intern: Paola Tineo
Blood Drive Chair: Hanna Meghji
Head of House Reps: TBA
Community Education Chair: Caroline Yachan
Newsletter Chair: Elizabeth Moncure (fall semester only) and Molly Sauvain (spring semester only)

If you are interested in being on the Board next year, there is still an opening or if you know of anyone who may be interested, please encourage them to apply. Application information (including an application, reference form, and job descriptions) is available at [http://www.smith.edu/cso/board.htm](http://www.smith.edu/cso/board.htm).

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**Thank you House Reps and Fund Drive Donors**

CSO Fund Drive Chairs and CSO House Reps were hard at work raising money for local food pantries this spring. They collected over $2000 in donations from Smith Houses. A BIG THANK YOU to House Reps who collected money for this worthy cause. Houses participating this year include: Albright, Baldwin, Capen, Chapen, Chase, Cushing, Duckett, Gardiner, Gillett, Haven/Weaseley, Hubbard, King, Lamont, Park, Parsons, Scales, Sessions, Tyler, Washburn, Wilder, and Ziskind. Thank you to all of our donors from the Houses! Also, thanks to the Sociology Department for your donation and thank you President Christ for yours!

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**CSO Tea, Pastries, and Conversation about Hunger Issues**

April 24th from 4-5:30pm in Bodman Lounge (Helen Hills Hills Chapel), there was tea, food, and a speaker from the Northampton Survival Center leading a discussion on hunger in our community. The event was free, but the Community Service Office was also raffling off gift certificates and other items from area restaurants to raise funds for organizations that support the hungry. Local businesses who donated to this great cause include River Valley Market, Starbuck’s, State Street Fruit Store, Serios Market, Pizza Amore, Paul and Elizabeth’s, Petals in Bloom, Sylvester’s, Local Burger, and Bistro Les Gras. Raffle tickets were sold at the interfaith ice-cream social, outside the CC Cafe, and at the Coming to the Table Event and Tea. Between the raffle, House donations, and other generous donors, nearly $3000 was raised and all funds raised will go directly to community programs: $1100 each for the Northampton Survival Center, the Hilltown Pantry, and Gray House in Springfield. Thanks to all who participated.

Never doubt that a small group of thoughtful, committed citizens can change the world; indeed, it’s the only thing that ever has.  
*Margaret Mead*

Volunteers are the only human beings on the face of the earth who reflect this nation’s compassion, unselfish caring, patience, and just plain love for one another.  
*Erma Bombeck*