Featured Article

Robyn Handley ('15) and Tabatha Holley, an exchange student in fall 2014, share with the Smith community their experiences at Homework House.

Do you have a story to tell? Please contact Aixin Li at ali31@smith.edu.

My Homework House Experience

By Robyn Handley ('15)

One day, I was struck by the question-"what is your biggest accomplishment?" This immediately brought me back to my experience at Homework House and the friendship that I built with three of the students I worked with.

Without knowing what to expect, I joined Homework House in my sophomore year and started to tutor three boys- Luis, Jadel, and Aldeberto. They were energetic, enthusiastic, troublemakers, and incredibly loveable. Aldeberto, in particular, loved learning. He constantly wanted to do extra math problems and read more stories. Over the year that I tutored at Homework House, the three of us did a lot of studying, had a lot of fun, and gradually grew close.

When I went abroad last year, I was sad because I could not return to Homework House. However, I was surprised and excited to receive an email from Sister Margaret, who supervised the classroom I had worked in. She expressed her best wishes for my year abroad and mentioned that Aldeberto, in particular, was missing me and wanted to know about my life and tell me about his.

I cannot explain how deeply I was
The CSO hosted its second blood drive of the school year on February 24 and 25. 132 units of blood were collected, exceeding the goal of 126 units. Thank you to all the donors and volunteers who participated in this blood drive.

Volunteer in Northampton Schools (VINS) hosted its annual Dog Show on Sunday, March 7. Seven volunteers participated in this short-term project and helped out in the VINS Dog Show. Thank you to all the volunteers who helped out.

Big Brothers Big Sisters (BBBS) came to the CSO and talked to students about the Kids to Campus program and volunteering opportunities in the program. BBBS matches children ages 7-14 into one-to-one mentoring relationships with a caring volunteer. If you are interested in volunteering with BBBS, please contact the CSO or visit the office.

A Day in the Life of a Homework House Tutor: My Joys and Pleasures

By Tabatha Holley

It has most certainly been a joy and a privilege to serve as a tutor to the next generation of young leaders in Holyoke. My most memorable moment working at Homework House has been watching the progress of the hard-working students as they have grown both physically and academically despite such a challenging semester.

Our goal is to work hard, do our very best, try hard even when the odds are against us, and have fun have resulting in a successful semester for the two students. It has been much more than a service project. It has been a learning experience that I will cherish for a very long time, and for that I am grateful.

A Message from Christie Elman, Homework House Education Coordinator

A Message from Tori Wolf, Homework House Fellow
Homework House provides free after-school tutoring and mentoring for children in Holyoke, Massachusetts who are at-risk for academic failure and dropping out of school. We work towards rekindling their interest in learning and self-improvement- one page at a time. The strong relationship enjoyed by Homework House and Smith College allows us to have a positive impact on the academic and social needs of some of the most disadvantaged children in Holyoke. The Smith tutors are the backbone of our Chestnut Street program and their care and compassion displays every day in the smiles of the children with whom they work.

As a tutor and the Homework House fellow, I have met so many incredible people, including the tutors, the staff, and the students whom we help. The tutors are incredibly devoted, skilled, patient, and kind. They help students with any homework that students might have, read with the students, and participate in math activities. They also serve as role models and demonstrate how the children can approach schoolwork, peers, and teachers. The staff do everything they can to assist the tutors and students, from providing back-up when challenges occur, and helping the tutors come up with activities to reinforce learning concepts.

Then there are the kids themselves. The students come every day wanting to share their lives and learn about their tutors', which is important in forming a bond that promotes learning and growth. They have a strong desire to learn, though often frustrated because they do not come in reading at grade level. District wide for 2014/15 only fifteen percent of third graders in Holyoke read at a third grade level, which can make it extremely difficult for students to understand and complete homework.

Even through all the difficulties, homework house has shown significant growth through the ability of the students - this year sixty nine percent the kids grades K-3rd have met or exceeded their reading growth levels, some jumping as many as six reading levels. Twenty one percent who were below grade level at the start of the year currently read at, or above, grade level. Twenty-six percent of K-3rd graders are now reading above their level. With the help of their tutors, the students always try harder. Every time I volunteer I am inspired by their enthusiasm and happiness, and I look forward to seeing my tutee every week.