

2012 Spirit of Service-Learning Award

(Descriptions of K-12 and Higher Education Winners & Finalists)

*Co-sponsored by the Returned Peace Corps Volunteers of South Florida,
the Miami-Dade County Teacher of the Year Coalition, and the Armando Alejandro Memorial Foundation.*

Purpose: Encourage and celebrate K-12 and college/university educators who integrate service into the curriculum to improve learning, address community needs, and foster civic responsibility and lifelong civic engagement.

K-12 Award

Winner:

Sandra Bryant, Kathy Hendrix, Clara Malagron, Ericka Babilonia, Nicole Valiente, Jade Giourgas, and Yvette Kaige – the 4th grade teachers at Redland Elementary School, Homestead, FL

Description: All seven 4th grade teachers joined forces to create and implement a comprehensive sea turtle conservation project that encompasses all subject areas in their instructional program. Students read books and study about sea turtles, write essays and stories, and become well-versed on the complexities of sea turtle conservation. Each 4th grade class partnered with seaturtle.org to adopt and track a turtle. Students make pop-up books using Into the Sea by Brenda Guiberson as their springboard for writing about why these animals are endangered. 4th graders visit other classes and use a loggerhead puppet and their original stories to capture the younger students' attention and inspire them to care about these endangered creatures. Students created bulletin board with visual reminders such as a plastic soda can which is a danger to turtles and a bottle cap which is the size of a hatchling, and simulate the six week incubation process. Students are making bookmarks with their original artwork to sell as a fundraiser for the Turtle Hospital in the Florida Keys.

Nominees/Finalists:

Jill Vizcaino, Springview Elementary School, Miami Springs, FL, Gifted and 4th Grade Department Leader, BA and MA from FSU, Teacher of the Year in 1994 and 2011

Description: Partnered with a teacher in the country of Vanuatu through the Peace Corps-sponsored Coverdell Wise Program as part of her school's character education program. Ms. Vizcaino's students became pen pals with Vanuatu students. When first Vanuatu letters arrived, Ms. Vizcaino's class "was so excited to begin writing back to their new friends we could hardly finish that day's lessons." Students researched Vanuatu, and studied their customs and language and everyday life, and solicited donations of school supplies, photos, and gifts which they sent to new friends. Students also were able to call and speak to the teacher in Vanuatu. Ms. Vizcaino's students were able to experience life through another person's eyes, and "not a day of class goes by that one of them doesn't mention Vanuatu or their pen pal."

Katerina Nadel, Hialeah Gardens Senior High, Hialeah Gardens, FL, MDCPS teacher since 2004, has used service-learning since 2007, has written and received multiple service-learning grants and trained others in service-learning methodology.

Description: Multiple projects including 1) training 75 students in Tools for Success classes as HIV/AIDS peer educators, who in turn made awareness and prevention presentations to 8th graders at Madison Middle School; 2) partnering with the Non-Violence Project to create the Peace Begins at Home project. Students learned conflict resolution and then organized non-violence education events at local elementary school and in the community; and 3) the State Farm funded Saturday Service-Learning Days (STEP) program where her students learned about a community issue and then engaged in service related to that issue. Ms. Nadel guides her students to select and address issues they are passionate about, and through reflection connects the service to academics covering topics such as life-skills, communication, teamwork, resourcefulness, patience, perseverance, writing, research, and other skills.

Lauren Zelniker, North Miami Senior High, North Miami, FL, 24 years of teaching experience, registered nurse, lead teacher for the Health/Science/Emergency Medicine Magnet programs at her school, more than 10 years of experience with service-learning.

Description: Multiple projects including 1) students took fingerprints, hair samples, and medical history from elementary students and created DNA/ID kits for their parents so they are prepared for abduction or other emergencies with a kit to give to police; 2) students visited senior centers where they created hurricane preparedness kits and organized medical history into carrying cards for seniors; 3) Sisters on a Mission – students created a performance with monologues and spoken word that stresses abstinence and the importance of education; they have educated thousands of youth about HIV/AIDS, teen pregnancy, and self-respect; they perform regularly in myriad venues; and they partner with the Young Women’s Academy to mentor their students. The magnet program has been designated a model academy for their excellence with service-learning and civic engagement.

Lisa Schwartz, Skyway Elementary, Miami, FL, more than 10 years at Skyway, Reading Coach, Title 1 Resource Teacher, Reading Leader, Reading Curriculum Specialist, Academic Activities Director, Reading is Fundamental Coordinator.

Description: Projects include vegetable garden with limited English proficient students; water conservation program; “do the right thing student of the week program”; elementary students implemented Earth Day activities with kindergarten students; thanksgiving basket project for the needy; games and books drives with donations to local non-profits; holiday canned food drive; Haitian relief campaign; etc.

Teresa Augustine, Redland Middle, Homestead, FL, Science Department Chairperson

Description: Mobilized students to create and sustain two vegetable gardens, a pineapple garden, a butterfly garden, and native trees and fruit garden that serve as outdoor science classrooms and enhance the beauty of school. Students study concepts of planting, caring, mulching, harvesting, and healthy nutrition, and then plant, water, and care for the gardens. Participating students engage the neighboring elementary school to appreciate the importance of gardens and healthy eating habits and will be helping them create their own gardens. Redland students wrote and produced brochures about these topics to disseminate to the elementary students, while other students prepared PowerPoint presentations about their findings from field research to present to their elementary and middle school peers, and their information is also used for morning announcements to educate the entire school. Students hold taste-testing events with fruits and vegetables to introduce healthy foods and good nutrition. The entire project is integrated into the science curriculum in a variety of ways, and students take a field trip to the Everglades to learn about the local ecosystem. Ms. Augustine has also partnered Redland Middle with the Fairchild Challenge and the Alliance for a Healthier Generation.

Higher Education Award

Winner:

Dr. Erin Kobetz, University of Miami, Assistant Professor, Department of Epidemiology and Public Health at UM's Leonard M. Miller School of Medicine, and a member of the Braman Family Breast Cancer Institute at UM-Sylvester. Teaches courses on social medicine and health equity and emphasizes empowerment, community participation, and cultural competency.

Description: Teaches courses focused on community-based participatory research and encourages students to reflect on their roles as medical practitioners in distressed communities and to consider the impact of social, political, and economic aspects of the local community environment on possible health interventions. Students focus on medically underserved communities including Liberty City, Hialeah, West Perrine, and Little Haiti. Students study and write about potential social determinants that drive health and may be amenable to change, and explore how to present health information in a culturally and linguistically relevant ways. Students are trained to be advocates and learn how to use the powerful voice they will eventually wield as physicians to lobby for change in communities disproportionately affected by adverse health outcomes. Students also work with community advisory boards and other community stakeholders, and they are taught how to do a community needs assessment, how to engage stakeholders in the research process, and to move from assessing needs toward action and medical intervention.

Nominees/Finalists:

Dr. Alfonso A. Pino, Miami Dade College, Kendall Campus, Biology, Health and Wellness Department, has used service-learning for eight years in Anatomy and Physiology courses.

Description: Engages students in Anatomy and Physiology courses in myriad projects such as a 1) Swine flu campus education campaign that included dissemination of information about clinical manifestations, prevention, and treatment, and campus panel presentations by prominent health officials; 2) Campus Wellness Center high blood pressure and cholesterol screening campaign; 3) service hours at senior centers, hospitals, and centers that serve people with disabilities; and 4) HIV awareness campaign that educated other students about the symptoms, transmittal, and effects of sexually transmitted diseases. Students conduct extensive research in preparation for their service and present their findings to educate the campus via table displays, PowerPoints, and panel presentations.

Carlos Gonzalez, Emily Sendin, and Alejandro Salinas, Miami Dade College, InterAmerican and Kendall Campuses, 10-year collaborative effort among three English Department faculty.

Description: Collectively engage 500 MDC students each semester. All their classes have service-learning and/or civic engagement component. Focus on three primary projects. 1) Roots in the City, Overtown – students assist at community garden that provides jobs and fresh produce. Students also learn about racism, social justice, gentrification, and social movements as part of the experience; most of the students previously had no experience with Overtown. 2) I Have A Dream, Overtown – the three professors and their students have provided support to 50 children (dreamers) from Overtown in this program since they were in 2nd grade eight years ago, including mentoring, creating an organic garden, field trips, etc. The professors also held their MDC classes in Overtown with the dreamers at Phyllis Wheatley Elementary for several years, and have continued to provide tutors and mentors for the dreamers in high school. 3) The three faculty

and their students raised \$8000 to build houses in Nicaragua, started an I Have A Dream program in Nicaragua to sponsor 34 children from Kindergarten through college, and raised funds to start a secondary school that now serves 100 children, and more than 60 of their students have gone to Nicaragua to participate in the project.

Clifford W. Young, Miami Dade College, Kendall Campus, Professor in Social Science Department, served in the Peace Corps in Tunisia as an English teacher from 1966-68, MDC Kendall Campus service-learning faculty member of the year in 2005, has guided more than 600 students through service-learning in the last six years.

Description: Aims to help his students see the needs and opportunities around them to help others, and to learn about others and themselves in the process of service. His Social Environment and American History students discuss community needs and explore possible solutions, and the importance of participatory citizenship. Students receive extensive preparation and reflection prior to and while serving, including office visits to discuss their service and what they are learning, written essays about the impact of their service, and class discussions. Students sign up to serve with partners like Gelber Adult Daycare Center, Kiwanis Horses and Handicapped, and numerous tutoring programs. Professor Young often goes with his students to serve meals at the Homeless Assistance Center, Habitat for Humanity or similar venues. Students become problem solvers and many make a lifelong commitment to service, and some have even joined Peace Corps and City Year as a result of their experiences.

Dr. Deanne Butchey, Florida International University, Assistant Dean, College of Business Administration and professor of Finance.

Description: Beginning in 2008, Dr. Butchey integrated service-learning into her online finance courses. Over 100 students each spring and fall teach financial literacy skills to new immigrants in South Florida at places such as the Chapman Homeless Center and myriad community centers, churches, libraries, and schools. The goal is to give these individuals the capacity to plan ahead, keep track of finances, respond to market signals, and be responsible with their money. Students have to create a “project overview statement” that describes the mission, vision, scope, and success criteria for their service projects, and a “conditions of satisfaction statement” that requires them to understand the needs and conditions of their target population. They create flyers, marketing materials and assessment surveys. Students also complete a personal reflection statement which describes how their knowledge from the course is applied to help others and how their project developed leadership and team building.

Dr. Susan R. Massey, St. Thomas University, Assistant Professor and Coordinator of Reading Program, Institute of Education and School of Leadership Studies at St. Thomas University.

Description: Includes service-learning in her graduate and undergraduate courses. She introduces the concept of service-learning to her future teachers and they engage in a variety of projects. For instance graduate reading majors have used their knowledge of diagnostic testing and guided reading intervention to work with struggling readers, and undergraduate students have assisted K-12 teachers with best practices for reading instruction. Reading practicum students participate in an intervention program that helps diagnose and remediate struggling readers. Her students commonly report that a) the K-12 students had limited oral language and literacy skills, and b) the schools most in need are in low socio-economic areas. Dr. Massey and her students also created a Parents R Partners program in Opalocka to provide guidance and training for parents about literacy and nutrition so they can more effectively assist their children. This program entails a monthly event at Robert B. Ingram Elementary School led by Dr. Massey and her students. Parents learn new skills related to reading and nutrition, and apply those during the session with their children. The event culminates with the parents and children preparing a healthy meal together.

Dr. Celeste Fraser Delgado, Barry University, Associate Professor English.

Description: Created Carnival Arts learning program that engages Barry faculty and students in teaching the dancing, drumming, and costume-making skills associated with various Carnival traditions in the Caribbean to residents of youth crisis shelters. The program emphasizes the history of Carnival during the slave trade as a celebration of life at a time of crisis that sustained individuals and communities. Caribbean literature students, as well as others from theology and sociology participate. Students attend orientation and learn about the conditions that lead young people to live in crisis shelters and discuss the conditions of the slave trade and the role of Carnival celebrations. The Barry students complete structured arts-related learning experiences with the at-risk youth during each session. The program fosters respect for the traditional arts of the diverse communities who have carried these traditions across generations.

Dr. Laura Kohn-Wood, University of Miami, Associate Chair and Associate Professor in the Department of Educational and Psychological Studies.

Description: Has long history of partnerships with community organizations that provide services to children and families in urban, ethnic minority, under-resourced communities in Detroit and Miami. Developed a partnership with a faith-based grassroots community and an elementary school in Liberty City to provide after-school and summer camp academic and personal enrichment programming to 150 children. Participating UM students reflect on their service via journaling, reflective dialogue with peers, self-reflective writing, and exams that require students to synthesize didactic reading with experiential processes to illustrate course concepts. Students explore their own motivation, competencies, values, beliefs, biases and beliefs prior to their service, and they enter service to observe, ask questions, and gently determine how to marry their unique competencies with the community's needs.

Dr. Michelle Maldonado, University of Miami, Associate Professor in the Department of Religious Studies.

Description: Created international service-learning course called "Guatemala: Its Land, Culture, and Religion" in partnership with the San Lucas Mission in Guatemala. The course introduces students to the reality of Guatemalan religious, cultural, and political context. Course participants study the history of the Mission in the context of Guatemala, the complexities of service, and possible situations they may encounter. Students engage in a combination of academic coursework and service, including participating in afternoon and evening talks with local Mayan leaders, and serving with a variety of sites including a fair trade coffee project, a reforestation project, a medical clinic, and a school. Students identify a research focus prior to the trip, gather information on their topic during the trip, and upon their return complete a final project incorporating their experiences in Guatemala with academic research. Professor Maldonado challenges her students' beliefs in their perceived authority and challenges the assumption that uneducated individuals cannot be transmitters of knowledge, and her students gain a strong sense of global solidarity and citizenship.

Dr. Pamela Hall, Barry University, Assistant Professor of Psychology, and Director of student volunteers at the Daily Bread Food Bank, the Haitian Youth Community Center, and Sinai Plaza Nursing Center.

Description: Leads Senior Seminar Psychology capstone courses and partners with many community organizations such as the Family Children's Faith Coalition, the Lanier-James Education Center, the Liberty City Revitalization Trust, and Mt. Tabor Missionary Baptist Church in Liberty City. Students apply the content, theory, and methods of psychology in the context of their service experience (e.g. exploring how concepts such as conformity, discrimination, stereotype, socialization, and self-sufficiency relate to their work in the community). Project examples include literacy tutoring with Haitian-American Head Start students; developing and implementing a free workshop for first-time homebuyers; and making recommendations for a grant proposal to provide Broadband and wireless services to the 750-unit Liberty Square

public housing project. Students learn an assets approach to community development and gain a greater appreciation of diversity and a stronger commitment to community causes.

Dr. Scotney Evans, University of Miami, Assistant Professor in the Department of Educational and Psychological Studies.

Description: Developed course called “Understanding Human Service Organizations” that engages students in organizational action research projects. The course focuses on helping students understand the complexities of community-based organizations working for social betterment. Students work in teams to identify and study a local organization. With guidance from the agency staff, students identify and seek to understand challenges the organization faces, and then develop thoughtful possible solutions and recommendations based on course concepts and outside research. Students complete a structured organizational case study, post reflections to share with their classmates, and are guided by Professor Evans to engage in deeper analysis of the complex issues identified. Students develop goals for their projects, present their findings, and develop a term paper connecting their service with course concepts. They also prepare a report to give to the organization that lays out the students’ conclusions and recommendations. Students gain a greater understanding of community needs and a greater willingness and capacity to be engaged in finding solutions to pressing community issues.

Dr. Maria Cendon, Miami Dade College, Kendall Campus, Professor, Natural Sciences.

Description: Integrates service-learning into her Microbiology and Anatomy & Physiology courses. Students identify and discuss community needs in terms of health education to prevent diseases such as sexually transmitted diseases and heart disease. Students apply course concepts, skills, and knowledge in the community. Many students serve in hospitals including Mercy, Doctors, and Miami Children’s, and South Miami. Students have the opportunity explore possible health careers as part of their service. Students also create and implement campus and community health education presentations and panels. Since 2006, more than 400 of Professor Cendon’s students have contributed more than 10,000 hours to the community.

Dr. Marlene Groomes, Miami Dade College, Homestead Campus, Professor of Psychology, Social Work and Pre-Law. Completed doctoral dissertation on service-learning pedagogy, and has used service-learning since the mid-1990s.

Description: Organizes a service-learning fair each semester which brings community agencies on campus to showcase their opportunities for students in her Psychology and Human Growth & Development courses. Students must complete 20 hours with one of the partner agencies. Students engage in multiple reflection assignments to connect their service with course learning objectives including journaling, creating PowerPoint presentations, oral presentations, written assignments, and group presentations. Specific service examples include serving at a transitional shelter for at-risk teens and engaging the youth in journaling about their thoughts, feelings and experiences. Students have organized a child abuse awareness and domestic violence prevention conference where they focused on the traumatic effects of family violence and identify and present prevention strategies. Other students completed a crime reduction project with the Homestead Police Department where they researched crime in the Homestead area, created and implemented a community survey, and created and presented recommendations on how to reduce crime. These are but a few of the myriad projects and successes. In the last seven years alone, more than 600 of professor Groomes’ students have completed 10,000+ service-learning hours.

Dr. Miriam Del Campo, Miami Dade College, Kendall Campus, Professor of Biology, has used service-learning for more than 10 years, serves as her campus' service-learning faculty coordinator.

Description: Has engaged more than 350 Biology students over the last six years in service-learning, contributing in excess of 7000 hours to 125 community partners. She created a "Service-Learning Action Project" through which students become involved with course material in-depth and have the opportunity to apply their knowledge for the common good. She has also developed many green challenge projects in collaboration with MDC's Earth Ethics Institute. Her students regularly serve with myriad community partners including the USDA (United States Department of Agriculture) where they assist research scientists with chemistry, genetics, hydrology, and entomology projects; Fairchild Gardens where students assist with the classification, propagation, and conservation of palms and other native plants, as well as compiling data at the herbarium; Bill Baggs Cape Florida State Park where students assist with ecological restoration and field biology; and many other projects.

Suzanne Pearl, Miami Dade College, Wolfson Campus, Faculty member in College Prep (Developmental/Remedial Studies).

Description: Engages MDC's most at-risk and underprepared students in service-learning through her remedial education reading courses every semester. Uses service-learning to engage, inspire, and help her students improve their reading and prepare for college-level courses. Her students have been involved in many service projects including those addressing HIV/AIDS and STD prevention, and domestic violence awareness. She created the FreeRice.com project to improve her students' literacy and address hunger-related issues. In partnership with the United Nations World Food Program, students learn vocabulary and at the same time donate rice to combat world hunger. Students read articles about global and local hunger issues and complete guided reflection activities such as classroom discussion and written assignments about hunger and homelessness. Students promote freerice.com with their peers, make sandwiches and bring in canned foods for the homeless, and write advocacy letters to the President of the United States regarding hunger and famine funding.

Dr. Susan Kass, Miami Dade College, Medical Center Campus, Professor of Dental Hygiene.

Description: Created community dental health curriculum and integrated service-learning into MDC's dental hygiene program to ensure that every MDC dental hygiene student participates in two semesters of service-learning. Developed Community Dental Health course and lab (DEH 2701 and 2701L) that all students in the program take. Students develop and implement dental health plans with marginalized and underserved populations throughout Miami-Dade County. Students work in groups to identify an underserved population, assess their dental health behaviors and needs, and develop and implement a dental health education plan for their chosen population. Students have to develop presentations and assess the effectiveness of their efforts. Dr. Kass' students gain a broader perspective of the community and a heightened awareness of the health needs of marginalized populations. Target populations have included the visually impaired, low-income children, seniors, and people with disabilities, among others.