

Summer 2015

Engaged: Lifetime Leadership Begins at Linfield

Laura Davis
Linfield College

Follow this and additional works at: https://digitalcommons.linfield.edu/linfield_magazine

Recommended Citation

Davis, Laura (2015) "Engaged: Lifetime Leadership Begins at Linfield," *Linfield Magazine*: Vol. 12 : No. 1 , Article 5.

Available at: https://digitalcommons.linfield.edu/linfield_magazine/vol12/iss1/5

This article is brought to you for free via open access, courtesy of DigitalCommons@Linfield. For more information, please contact digitalcommons@linfield.edu.

Engaged

Lifetime leadership begins at Linfield

The most important hours of the week for Special Lovincey '16 often involve walking and talking aimlessly.

It's Tuesday afternoon, and Lovincey is at the middle school with a 12-year-old friend. They laugh. They walk. They talk about music, lunch, school, friends. Everything and nothing.

"She didn't really like going to class at first and it was hard to talk with her because she was sort of standoffish," recalls Lovincey. "By the end of the semester, she was proud to tell me she was turning in her homework and got her grades up. She was excited about high school, which she had been dreading."

Lovincey hears similar stories from the other 45 Linfield mentors in the WISE mentorship program that serves some 75 McMinnville eighth graders. A mass communication major, Lovincey was president of Students Advocating for Gender Equality (SAGE), and has mentored students since high school. Casey Thein '15, co-coordinator of WISE, is equally involved – a biology major who will attend dental school at Oregon Health & Science University in the fall, a Colloquium peer advisor and member of the Biology Club.

Lovincey and Thein are active, invested and engaged in the world. And they are not alone. Hundreds of Linfield College students are taking part in meaningful service learning projects – both on campus and in the community – that will change their futures and their communities.

Engaged students, engaged citizens

Linfield's Office of Community Engagement and Service is a lively hub of activity. At any given time, half a dozen students sit at desks and tables in the open space, laughing and talking as they coordinate service projects via phone, email and social media. The office maintains partnerships with more than 100 community-based

organizations and sponsors numerous community service programs and events. In a very real sense, it is carrying out Linfield's mission of "Connecting Learning, Life, and Community."

Director Joni (Claypool) Tonn '06 is the face of community engagement at Linfield. Bubbly and approachable with a contagious laugh, she juggles the demands of the busy office with calm, organizing volunteers and heading up Change Corps, a dynamic student leadership program (see sidebar, page 11). She works with community partners and listens to their volunteer needs, then relays the information to Linfield students.

"What do you care about?" she asks students, and then matches them to their passions. "It's important to be engaged in what matters to you because that's what will make a difference long term. Students will develop relationships and skills they wouldn't have if the project is simply for a resume."

Tonn speaks from experience. As a Linfield student, she was a resident advisor, a member of the track team and volunteered in the Start Making A Reader Today program. But her real passion is helping people.

"I love education and value community, that's why I'm in this position," said Tonn, who also coordinates First CLAS, a week-long service learning and leadership pre-orientation program for incoming first-year students. "The fact that I can share this with others in so many different ways is why I love this work."

Engaged students are more likely to become engaged citizens. College students with developed civic habits are critical to building a culture of citizenship, service and responsibility in America, according to the Corporation for National and Community Service, a federal service agency. Both educators and employers agree that personal and social responsibility should be core elements of a 21st century education for a thriving world.

"We are educating students to step into their role as citizens of the world," said Tonn. "No matter what their degree, they will

Natalie Nguyen '18 helps install siding with guidance from Cliff Probasco '69, Habitat for Humanity site supervisor, during Alternative Spring Break in March. Linfield organizes the annual spring break projects so that students have the opportunity to perform meaningful service in partnership with a nonprofit organization, learn about a specific social issue and develop strong civic leadership skills to learn the importance of being an active citizen.



"It's important to be engaged in what matters to you because that's what will make a difference long term. Students will develop relationships and skills they wouldn't have if the project is simply for a resume."

*– Joni (Claypool) Tonn '06
Director, Community Engagement
and Service*



“No matter what we study, particularly at a school with a liberal arts core, there is a way to engage in issues that are relevant to our community. The thinking skills that are developed in mathematics can help focus and frame many real-world problems. While we may not necessarily find the perfect solution, we can at least help to better understand the situation.”

*– Chuck Dunn
Professor of Mathematics*

impact others with their work. We want to develop the mindset of being socially conscious citizens. A service project may not be directly connected to their majors, but it is connected to their education.”

Linfield Change Corps

Some 805 Linfield students took part in community projects last year, completing more than 47,000 hours of service. In order to reach as many Linfield students as possible, Tonn oversees Change Corps, a nine-member student leadership team. They educate their peers about service-learning and active citizenship by coordinating service events and Alternative Spring Break programs focused on poverty, youth and the environment. Leaders are trained in communication, volunteer management, organization and social justice issues. In turn, they train their peers.

“Our Change Corps leaders empower other students to participate in leadership and service,” Tonn said. “Ultimately we hope students who take part in these programs become leaders in their own lives.”

Beyond helping others, volunteers hone essential career skills in time management, communication, professionalism, multicultural competencies and other areas, Tonn said.

For example, Alyssa Kaplan '17 gained experience in planning large scale events while organizing Make a Difference Day, one of four days of service she coordinates.

“Change Corps gave me the opportunity to learn those skills – organization, being prepared and flexible when things don’t go according to plan,” she said.

Sara Gomez '17, who worked on issues of sustainability and led an Alternative Spring Break project in Alaska, has honed her abilities in budgets and leading meetings.

“We are passionate about the specific areas in which we’re working, and that passion is driving us as we learn and explore,” she said. “Often, students look ahead to ‘after I graduate, I’ll be able to make a change.’ But we’re doing that now.”

Developing habits, good citizens

Linfield has long had a focus on experiential education. Using the community as a laboratory, students can apply knowledge they’re gaining academically to an issue in the community. Beyond that, experiential education is useful in developing habits around civic engagement, according to Susan Hopp, vice president of student services and dean of students.

“We want to predispose students to get involved in their communities and in public life,” she said. “Part of that is understanding the issues and being an informed voter. No matter what you choose in terms of a personal political belief, be informed, understand what you believe, and act on it so you’re engaged and part of the system.”

Service learning concepts are embedded in classes across the Linfield curriculum. For example, mathematical thinking can be used to better understand fairness and voting systems, according to Chuck Dunn, professor of mathematics, who teaches Intro to Voting Theory.

“I want students to understand that math can be used to promote social good or better social understanding,” said Dunn. He will spend part of his upcoming fall sabbatical expanding the class to include service learning principles and hopes to have students work with community groups to learn more about decision-making processes.

“No matter what we study, particularly at a school with a liberal arts core, there is a way to engage in issues that are relevant to our community,” he added. “The thinking skills that are developed in mathematics can help focus and frame many real-world problems. While we may not necessarily find the perfect solution, we can at least help to better understand the situation.”

Linfield faculty have involved students in dozens of community-based learning projects over the years. Ty Marshall, Brenda DeVore Marshall and six of their colleagues in theatre and communication arts included 74 students in a multi-year project documenting the history of the Pacific City dory fleet. Janet Peterson, health and human performance, and students educated a Bahamian community on Type 2 diabetes during a January Term class to the Bahamas. Rob Gardner, sociology, led students in conducting a homeless count in the McMinnville area; Nancy Broshot, environmental science, maps the urban forest with help from her students; Jeff McNamee, health and human performance, and students lead a weekly physical activity session for local home-schooled children. And these projects are only a sampling.

Community partners

Partnerships with institutions such as Linfield are crucial to local organizations, according to Elaine (Green) Burke '99, director of community engagement for A Family Place relief nursery, part of Lutheran Community Services.

This year, Burke worked with Lizette Becerra '18, an intern through the First Federal program.

“We’re trying to serve as many people as we can, so working with interns and partnering with organizations that have expertise in other areas is critical,” said Burke, who juggles a wide range of responsibilities to support at-risk families in Yamhill County. “We can’t do everything we want and partnerships allow us to do more.”

As a Linfield student, Burke was involved in Linfield Activities Board and yearbook, and found her niche in community engagement after taking part in Alternative Spring Break projects in Bend and in New Orleans, La., following Hurricane Katrina. “In New Orleans, I saw firsthand that volunteers and groups can

From left, Olivia Marovich '15, Savannah Hurst '18 and Jacqueline Hurst '17 worked with other Linfield students on Prince of Wales Island in Alaska during Alternative Spring Break in March. They learned about environment and sustainability issues affecting Alaska and beyond, specifically working to clear the undergrowth in the campsite area at Eagle's Nest Campground in the Thorne Bay Ranger District.

make a big difference in a local community," she said. "That's when I realized this was what I wanted to do."

Community service has been a way of life for Mike McBride '72, Linfield trustee emeritus, and was bolstered during his student years.

In the 1970s, as Linfield enrollment hovered around 1,000 and the Vietnam War raged, McBride took part in blood drives, raised money for community projects and gleaned hazelnuts at a local orchard for the food bank.

"We were active, though not nearly with the scope or quality of opportunities Linfield offers now," he said.

He went on to a life of community service, volunteering with Kiwanis, participating on leadership boards and fundraising for community causes like YMCA and Twin Falls Center for the Arts. In 2011, he took part in a Linfield class in Guatemala, working side-by-side with Linfield students and other community members to build five homes for Habitat for Humanity.

"We moved 2,000 stone bricks up a hill to the building site,"

said McBride, who learned about the indigenous culture and was impressed by the students' willingness to serve. "They were hardworking and passionate about the experience."

Now chairman of the board of the Idaho Community Foundation, McBride knows those types of experiences will serve students well after their college years.

"Linfield is focused on lifelong learning and community service, something the world lacks," he said. "The college is right to prepare people for service to the world."

They couldn't agree more. He said his four-year involvement with the community engagement office has given him a sense of how easy it is to be involved, and the importance of remaining connected with the community.

"I'm a student at this college, but I'm part of the community as well," he said. "Twenty years down the road, I might not be as directly involved as I am now, but I will still be supporting community programs."

— Laura Davis



Nursing students Nathaniel Kyser '16 and Trang Bui '16 take the blood pressure of an elementary student during a nursing clinical at St. James Catholic School in McMinnville in March. Nursing clinicals, an important example of community engagement, enable students to gain valuable hands-on skills while providing health screenings to improve the health of a community.



Gearing up

Engaged students are essential to the engine of a thriving community. This year, more than 800 Linfield students participated in a wide range of service areas, contributing more than 47,000 hours.

 Watch video: youtube.com/linfieldcollege/videos

Meet the Linfield Change Corps

The student leadership team organizes service learning opportunities for their peers.

Erin Carson '15, international relations major, Camas, Wash.

Chandler Collins '15, psychology major, Portland

Mikayla Frei '17, political science major, Lostine

Sara Gomez '17, political science major, Ketchikan, Alaska

Alyssa Kaplan '17, elementary education major, Seattle, Wash.

Special Lovincey '16, mass communication major, Aloha

Casey Thein '15, biology major, Burns

linfield.edu/serve



Linfield's Habitat connection

When a group of Linfield College students arrived at the Habitat for Humanity work site for Alternative Spring Break, two retired Linfield professors were there to hand them their hardhats.

Doug Cruikshank, education, and Howard Leichter, political science, are two of a long line of Linfield-affiliated volunteers for the McMinnville Habitat for Humanity organization. They work three days a week and are part of a team of seven.

Founded in 1991, the organization has built more than 40 homes with families in the McMinnville area. Bernie Turner, Linfield trustee, was instrumental in the founding, and others with Linfield ties have been associated as well, including site supervisor Cliff Probasco '69, Marianne Mills '72, John Hare (biology), Jim Duke (psychology) and Jack Alin (mathematics), to name a few. Led by then-Chaplain Bill Apel, Linfield formed Oregon's first campus chapter of Habitat for Humanity in 1990.

Cruikshank joined the group after retiring from Linfield in 2001 with no prior construction experience. He is now a leader in the program, having served as president and a board member, and has worked on 14 homes.

"It has become a very satisfying second occupation," he said. "Not only am I helping a population that needs housing, I'm working with great people and learning new things for myself."

Leichter began volunteering after retiring from Linfield in 2008, and has since helped build seven homes. He said he was reminded of how dedicated and hardworking Linfield students are during their week of service in March.

"At Linfield, we are part of a larger McMinnville community and it's a very positive relationship," said Leichter. "This was an opportunity for me to continue to be engaged, and to strengthen the town-gown relationship."