

ACE Initiatives Re. Poverty & Human Capability

Highlights from 2009 to 2004

The Middlebury College Alliance for Civic Engagement (ACE) is committed to providing assistance to help meet local needs identified by partnering agencies and organizations to help minimize the effects of poverty and maximize the potential for human capability, thereby supporting community-wide efforts to transition from poverty to prosperity. ACE-related actions primarily take the form of community service; community-connected teaching, learning and research; and internships.

AY2008-2009

AmeriCorps VISTA

ACE was again successful in its application for an AmeriCorps VISTA member through the Vermont Campus Compact RFP process. A huge help to the office, Ashley Calkins '06 renewed her membership for a second year. The benefits of a second year VISTA member, especially one who also graduated from the College and is so familiar with on- and off-campus partners, alike, has been unprecedented. Ashley focuses her efforts on meeting local needs and developing student leadership through community service initiatives. Ashley also facilitated a "Teaching ESL" workshop during January term designed to help students build skills for teaching English as a Second Language both domestically and abroad.

Charter House Transitional Housing Shelter

In November and December 2008, meetings were held with ACE to explore Middlebury College's support for and involvement in a new temporary emergency housing shelter at Charter House, sponsored by a coalition of volunteers representing 6-8 faith-based communities. In late December, in a process spearheaded by ACE, applications for winter term for-credit internships were reviewed and four interns were selected to serve full-time throughout January term 2009 (three at Charter House, one at the John Graham Shelter in Vergennes). This was a profound experience for the interns and a huge aid to the shelters. One of the Winter Term interns at Charter House "graduated" mid-year and continued to work with the shelter through May.

Economic Crisis Response

ACE is an active participant in community meetings focused on ways for Addison County to deal with increased need for human services during this economic crisis. This work included a "Food and Fuel" community crisis meeting held at the Congregational Church in November 2008.

ACE/Addison County Summer Poverty Internships

To support local organizations in their work against poverty and to give students opportunities to take part in this important work, ACE funds internships each summer in which Middlebury College students take active and meaningful roles in the community by working first-hand with poverty-related issues in Addison County. Summer 2009 interns will be selected in April 2009.

Shepherd Poverty Alliance Internships

Each summer, approximately fifty students are selected from around the nation to learn first-hand about the multiple dimensions of poverty in the United States by working for agencies that strengthen impoverished communities and assist poor persons to participate more fully in society. These agencies are located in urban and rural sites throughout the Eastern United States, and serve the educational, healthcare, legal, housing, psychological, social, and economic needs of individuals and their communities. For the summer of 2009 Middlebury College nominated Julia

Szabo '10 who will serve with Washington D.C.'s Public Defender's Office and Mikaela Lefrak '10 who will serve with the Social Service Unit of Bread for the City.

Shepherd Poverty-Related Federal Consortium Grant

Middlebury has been participating for the past several years in an 11-campus initiative led by Washington and Lee University, pursuing a federal consortium grant that would enable participants to create and support interdisciplinary poverty-related programs on their respective campuses (since 2003). The initiative would include the development of as many as 20 summer internships to engage Middlebury students educated about issues of poverty to help not-for-profits fight against the challenges of poverty in local communities. The initiative, included in the reauthorization of the Higher Education Act, was signed into law by President George W. Bush in August 2009. After review by the Allocations and Appropriations Committees, it is hoped that the new campus-based programs could begin as soon as the fall 2010 semester.

Giving Trees

ACE and Community Service Intern Whitney Hanson '11 participated in Helping to Overcome Poverty's Effects (HOPE)'s Giving Trees Program to gather holiday gifts for children from local low-income families. Students, Staff, and Faculty bought presents for approximately 75 children, with overall contributions totaling over \$5,000 dollars.

"Fight the Cold" staff-faculty auction

Commons Resident Advisor Josh Chan '08 organized the fourth annual "Fight the Cold" staff-faculty auction to raise funds for ShareHeat, an organization that provides vouchers for heating oil to low-income residents. Staff and faculty donated handcrafted items, homemade meals, and other things for the silent auction that raised about \$800.

Student-Led Anti-Poverty Initiatives

The Volunteer Services Council, advised by ACE, granted almost \$6000 to individuals and groups of students in support of local, national, and international volunteer service projects. These projects included support for supporting early college awareness events for low-income students with College for Every Student. ACE-advised Volunteer Service Organization (VSO) trick-or-treated for canned and boxed goods to benefit the local food shelf over Halloween. ACE funded VSO president Whitney Hanson's '11 trip to the inaugural United Way Student Leadership Retreat in Washington D.C. to strengthen student engagement in anti-poverty work with the local United Way.

RESULTS

Student Anika James '11 started a chapter of RESULTS on Middlebury campus after hearing founder Sam Daley-Harris speak on campus in spring 2008. RESULTS is a nonprofit grassroots advocacy organization committed to creating the political will to end hunger and the worst aspects of poverty. RESULTS members at Middlebury have participated in two subsequent lectures from Sam Daley-Harris, and skill-building workshops on poverty issues and lobbying.

ACE-Supported Local Service

First-Year orientation included six "Volunteer Initiative" trips where approximately 50 first-years participated, working with 20 different community partners, including United Way and its "Financial Stability Outreach Day" for local residents. More than 30 Midd students participated in the United Way/Middlebury College Student Day of Caring on September 27, 2008 organized by ACE with United Way. Over 50 students participated in the February 2009 Martin Luther King Jr. Day of Service at 10 community worksites including the John Graham Emergency Shelter, Helping Overcome Poverty's Effects (HOPE), the community lunch and dinner program, and the Vermont Foodbank in Barre, VT.

Community Friends Mentoring Program

ACE matched 40 new local children with college student mentors, bringing the total to 65. Community Friends held events for College students and their mentees at the Organic Garden and the observatory. The Alliance for Civic Engagement received a Vermont Mentors! Grant from the Permanent Fund for the Well-Being of Vermont Children to support expansion of the Community Friends program through December 1, 2009. In addition to efforts to expand on our program, we are also working with area mentoring programs and related human- and social service agency representatives and school officials to improve collaboration and help strengthen mentoring programs county-wide.

Middlebury Alternative Break Trips (MAlt)

In addition to four international and domestic trips, this year MAlt offered two Vermont trips, one during October break and one during part of spring break. These trips focused on 1) sustainable agriculture and harvest gleaning to meet local food needs, and 2) resettlement issues facing the Burmese refugee population in the Burlington area.

Local Response to State Budget Cuts

ACE is working in partnership with our county human- and social service agencies in determining how best to respond to State budget cuts and the corresponding elimination of staff positions.

Addison County Farm Worker Coalition

ACE funds a student to serve both in the office and with the Addison County Farm Worker Coalition, an extension of one of the summer intern positions. ACE also advises the evolving student group, Juntos, that provides ESL training, playgroup activities, medical services translations, Spanish mass support, Mexican Consulate visits, etc., in order to best support local farmers' and their farm workers' needs. In March, ACE hosted Mary Jo Dudley of the Cornell University Farmworkers Program to learn from their vast experience and their programs and services.

6th Annual Civic Engagement Forum

ACE will again sponsor the annual Civic Engagement Forum. This year's speaker is Cheryl Mitchell, who will speak from her experience as the former Deputy Secretary of Human Services and the past Executive Director of our regional partnership of human- and social service agency representatives (until the State cut funding as of Dec. 31, 2008). Building upon a focus that has evolved out of Bridges Out of Poverty training and a forward-looking view toward prosperity and hope for all, Cheryl's keynote will explore how the county can work together during these trying economic times.

Community Response Fund

Middlebury College launched an endowment fund called the Community Response Fund, which seeks to raise \$200,000, to be used to respond to local needs. This initiative evolved out of help for Butch Varno, a man with cerebral palsy who has been in close association with the College for almost fifty years.

Service-Learning Courses

Examples of this year's service-learning courses exploring aspects that relate to poverty include:

- (a.) Prof. Jon Isham's Environmental Economics course, looking in part at "green" affordable housing initiatives, and
- (b.) Prof. Svea Closser's Medical Anthropology course, looking at health care and current impacts on residents of emergency shelters and assisted living facilities, health clinics for uninsured and low insured individuals and families, a statewide access to health care initiative, and more.

(c.) Prof. John Elder's course "Portrait of a Vermont Town," assisted Starksboro, VT with community planning through interviews with residents.

AY2007-2008

Hunger & Homelessness Awareness Days

Middlebury College student Prerna Seth '10 worked with fellow students on a series of events designed to increase knowledge surrounding issues of hunger and homelessness. Events included an Oxfam Hunger Banquet followed by a discussion with community partner Cheryl Mitchell, a fundraising campaign for local anti-hunger organizations, and volunteer worksites at the Parent/Child Center, the John Graham Shelter and Helping to Overcome Poverty's Effects (HOPE).

Partnership with the John Graham Emergency Shelter

This year over 70 involved students were sent weekly emails with student-coordinated opportunities to participate in volunteer events with the Shelter in Vergennes. Activities included weekly dinners funded by ACE and the Volunteer Service Council, a Martin Luther King Day of Service brunch, Saturday children's reading hours, and a "Game Night" fundraiser on campus to raise money for the Shelter.

ACE/Middlebury College/Addison County Farm Workers Coalition

The collaboration between Middlebury College and the Addison County Farm Workers Coalition was selected for recognition by Vermont Campus Compact at its annual Gala event in March 18, 2008 for its *Campus/Community Partnership Award*. Participating organizations in this on-going partnership include: the Open Door Clinic, People of Addison County Together (PACT), Addison County Home Health, the College's ACE office, as well as "students, Middlebury faculty, doctors, dentists, business people and community members, who are working together to provide support and service and give voice to Mexican and Central American workers in Addison County...the coalition addresses a variety of human services...(while the College) incorporates service, academic service-learning, cultural events, individual student and faculty research, co-curricular outreach, public meetings, independent study, and even informal soccer games.

Service-Learning Courses Offered in Spanish

Professors Gloria Gonzalez and Ana Martinez Lagé both taught Spanish courses that involved collaboration with area agencies and provided opportunities for students to utilize their language skills to help meet translation and ESL needs. Prof. Gonzalez has taught such courses as *The New US Latino Narrative*, *Latin American Perspectives on the US*, and *The Latin American Transnational Experience*. Ana Martinez Lagé served as an advisor, teacher and mentor to 15 new students through a first year seminar exploring *Life in Two or More Languages*. Through these combined courses and additional co-curricular service students provide translation, tutoring, and clerical support services to Mexican and Central American workers in Addison county farms with the purpose of learning first hand the issues such a population faces and how the students can deploy their language and cultural competence into in enhancing a segment of Vermont's population's quality of life. In addition, students provide essential assistance to area hospitals and healthcare providers through their translation services. These courses are part of the larger effort described above to help meet area needs that relate to this particular population.

"Fight the Cold" staff-faculty auction

Student Emily Nelson '08.5 organized the third annual "Fight the Cold" staff-faculty auction to raise funds for ShareHeat, an organization that provides vouchers for heating oil to low-income residents. Staff and faculty donated handcrafted items, homemade meals, yoga lessons and other things for the silent auction that raised about \$1,200 dollars.

Giving Trees

ACE and Cook Commons Community Service Liaison Caitlin Maxwell '09 participated in Helping to Overcome Poverty's Effects (HOPE)'s Giving Trees Program to gather holiday gifts for children from local low-income families. Students, Staff, and Faculty bought presents for approximately 85 children totaling over \$4,000 dollars.

ACE/Addison County Summer Poverty Internships

To support local organizations in their work against poverty and to give students opportunities to take part in this important work, ACE funds internships each summer in which Middlebury College students take active and meaningful roles in the community by working first-hand with poverty-related issues in Addison County. Summer 2008 interns are Chris Mutty with the Addison County Housing Coalition/United Way, Ben Weir with the Addison County Farmworker Coalition, and Joseph Brent Allen with the John Graham Emergency Shelter.

Shepherd Poverty Alliance Internships

Each summer, approximately fifty students are selected from around the nation to learn first-hand about the multiple dimensions of poverty in the United States by working for agencies that strengthen impoverished communities and assist poor persons to participate more fully in society. These agencies are located in urban and rural sites throughout the Eastern United States, and serve the educational, healthcare, legal, housing, psychological, social, and economic needs of individuals and their communities. Middlebury College nominated Hannah Rabinovitch '09 to serve with the Rockbridge Area Hospice and Robert McKay '09 to serve with The Food Project, Boston.

Shepherd Consortium Federal Poverty-Related Grant

Middlebury has been participating for the past several years in an 11-campus initiative led by Washington and Lee University, pursuing a federal consortium grant that would enable participants to create and support interdisciplinary poverty-related programs on their respective campuses. The initiative would include the development of as many as 20 summer internships to engage Middlebury students educated about issues of poverty to help not-for-profits fight against the challenges of poverty in local communities. The initiative, included in the reauthorization of the Higher Education Act, was signed into law by President George W. Bush in August. The new campus-based programs will begin either in the fall of 2009 or 2010, depending upon the successful movement through the Allocations and Appropriations Committees.

AY 2006-2007

Addison County Anti-Poverty Partnership

The core mission of its predecessor, the Addison County Poverty Task Force, lives on in the newly-organized Addison County Anti-Poverty Partnership (ACAPP). ACAPP meets on the third Tuesday of each month, and is composed of institutional founders ACE, PACT, and the United Way of Addison County, and seeks to involve individuals from the business, legislature, social service, faith based, agriculture, and education sectors. Having recently hosted a series of public discussions on affordable housing and homelessness in Addison County, ACAPP is now in the preliminary stages of developing awareness-building and other programming on the issue of a livable wage.

Domestic Poverty and the Environment

ACE AmeriCorps*VISTA Matt Carluzzo, designed and taught a winter term workshop designed to explore and highlight points at which the pro-environment and anti-poverty movements are conceptually aligned, and not necessarily in conflict as is sometimes asserted. Workshop participants worked to identify ways in which certain pro-environmental measures concurrently and directly help our nation's poor, thus isolating single measures with the potential to effectively advance both movements.

Hunger & Homelessness Awareness Week

Middlebury College student Sarah Laung '07 and ACE AmeriCorps*VISTA Matt Carluzzo recruited and facilitated a team of student peers in developing and running a series of awareness, activist, and fundraising programs during National Hunger and Homelessness Week (Nov. 13-18, 2006). Events included a student-led discussion on international poverty, visual displays illustrating the comparative amounts of food consumed worldwide, food-conservation pledges, letter-writing campaigns in support of anti-poverty legislation, a screening of "City of God," and a "Dining Hall Dinner Drive" fundraising contest that raised over \$700 for those in need in the community (through a donation to the Addison County Community Action Group (ACCAG)).

Student Conferences Against Hunger & Homelessness

In November 2006, ACE accepted applications from students wishing to attend the National Student Conference Against Hunger & Homelessness in Los Angeles. ACE selected and fully funded two students, Qiaqia Qu '08 and Emma Moros '10 to attend the conference. Similarly, in February 2007, ACE sponsored 11 students to attend the East Coast Conference on Hunger & Homelessness in Boston, MA.

Public Discussions on Affordable Housing & Homelessness in Addison County

Throughout November 2006, ACE along with PACT and UWAC organized and hosted three public discussions on the issue of affordable housing and homelessness in Addison County at public locations in Bristol, Middlebury, and Vergennes. The program consisted of a screening of two short videos on the issues, followed by comments from panels consisting of local representatives from the social services, legislative, and business sectors (and in one case, a former shelter resident). Open Q&A and discussion sessions followed, and all comments and suggestions were compiled for presentation to Vermont lawmakers to inform future legislation designed to address these serious issues.

ACE/Addison County Summer Poverty Internships

To support local organizations in their work against poverty and to give students opportunities to take part in this important work, ACE funds two internships each summer in which Middlebury College students take active and meaningful roles in the community by working first-hand with poverty-related issues in Addison County. Requests for internship proposals were sent to community partners in February 2007, and internship host-sites and student interns will be determined by early April, 2007.

Shepherd Poverty Alliance Internships

Each summer, approximately fifty students are selected from around the nation to learn first-hand about the multiple dimensions of poverty in the United States by working for agencies that strengthen impoverished communities and assist poor persons to participate more fully in society. These agencies are located in urban and rural sites throughout the Eastern United States, and serve the educational, healthcare, legal, housing, psychological, social, and economic needs of individuals and their communities. Middlebury College nominated Rayna Rogowsky '10 and Emer Feighery '09 to participate in the eight week summer poverty internships, with their exact agency placements to be determined by May 2007.

AY 2005-2006

Community Study Circles on Poverty

ACE cosponsored two community study circles along with UWAC and PACT. Each study circle met three times for wide-ranging discussions on poverty and the four key issue areas: livable compensation, affordable housing, access to healthcare, and affordable and quality childcare. The two study circles comprised of twenty-six community members and all comments and

suggestions were compiled into a report that will help inform the work and planning of the Poverty Task Force. The findings were reviewed at a presentation to the public on October 11th.

Forum on Civic Engagement: “From Poverty to Prosperity”

On November 29, ACE along with PACT and UWAC held their third annual public forum to review the successes of local agencies on addressing the 10 outcomes areas for evaluating health communities. Steve Maier, Vermont House of Representatives (D), discussed the “Seventy-Two Hours of Light” project and keynote speaker, Jessica Holmes, Assistant Professor of Economics, addressed how to meet a community need through coursework.

Addison County Poverty Task Force

The first meeting of Addison County Poverty Task Force was held on December 7th and the group is comprised of 18 individuals from the business, legislature, social service, faith based, agriculture, and education sectors. The ACPTF meets monthly and members will serve for a one-year renewable term. At the moment, the group is working on an affordable housing booklet entitled “Almost Home: Finding an Affordable Place to Live in Addison County” and starting a dental clinic in Addison County for residents who have little to no dental care coverage.

SimVillage 2006: What if Vermont Were a Community of 100 people?

ACE and AmeriCorps *VISTA member, Meredith Billings, designed and taught a winter term workshop to explore how poverty affects the community of Addison County. At each meeting, participants explored a different issue area about poverty and completed a direct service opportunity at a local agency or organization.

Knit for the Need! project

Middlebury College student, Jenny Schneider '07, initiated a J-term project to hand knit and crochet garments for low-income children of Addison County. Supported by a grant from the Tree House Fund and staff members of ACE, Jenny collected 44 items to donate to the John Graham Emergency Shelter in Vergennes.

The Red Wagon: Facing Hunger Screening

On March 8, *The Red Wagon: Facing Hunger*, a documentary that chronicles the story of Vermonters struggling everyday to feed their families, was screened at Middlebury College. The film was followed by a Q&A session by the film’s directors, Jim Ritvo and Dave Raizman, and a discussion of the community need led by Joanne Heidkamp and Emily Wexler, representatives from the Vermont Campaign to End Childhood Hunger (VCTECH).

Dialogues on Poverty: The Conversation Continues

ACE, PACT, UWAC co-sponsored a community poverty event on May 15 at the Middlebury American Legion. The event included a keynote speaker Emma Mulvaney-Stanak, Director of the Vermont Livable Wage Campaign at the Peace and Justice Center, an update on affordable housing initiatives, and a group workshop on the *Best Practices in Advocacy for Your Cause* led by Drew Hudson, the field Director for the Vermont Public Interest Research Group (VPIRG).

ACE/Addison County Summer Poverty Internships

ACE sponsors two Middlebury College students to work in the community to help local agencies and organization help alleviate poverty. Vijay Chowdhari '09 was selected to work at the Family Services Division of the Department for Children and Families. Alex Hall '08.5 was selected to work at the John Graham Emergency Shelter.

Shepherd Poverty Alliance Internships

Middlebury College nominated Marie Lucci '08 and Rachel Sommer '06 to participate in the eight week summer poverty internships. Marie is working at the Rockbridge Area Social Services in Lexington, VA, and Rachel at the House of Ruth in Baltimore, MD.

AY 2004-2005

Are Tupac and Johnny Cash Talking about the Same Thing? Using Music to Explore Urban and Rural Poverty in America

AmeriCorps *VISTA and ACE member, Sarah Johnson, created a winter term workshop to explore the cultural and social aspects of American poverty. The class met four times and included two student presenters, a guest workshop leader, and a local service project.

Community Summit on Poverty in Addison County

ACE along with United Way of Addison County (UWAC) and People of Addison County Together (PACT) cosponsored the daylong event to bring community members together to hear keynote speaker, US Congressman (I-VT) Bernie Sanders, a “Local Voices” panel of Middlebury residents currently living at the poverty level; and Ken Perine, president of the National Bank of Middlebury. Attendees also had a chance to participate in several interactive breakout sessions.

The Many Faces of Poverty-Local, National, and Global Perspectives

ACE supported six Middlebury College students in creating the student-led symposium, which spanned eight days and included eleven events. The goal of the symposium was to get beyond statistics, assumptions, and theories and examine what living in poverty really means. Highlights include: refugee camp stimulation, lectures, Middlebury College faculty panel, local service projects, Oxfam Hunger Banquet, and a local voices panel.

ACE/Addison County Summer Poverty Internships

ACE sponsored two full-time 10 week internships to address poverty and other social needs in Addison County. ACE selected Christine Winkler '07 and Lemar Clark '08 to conduct research on poverty in Addison County, focusing on outcome based planning.

Shepherd Poverty Alliance Internships

Middlebury College nominated Rachel Fong '07 and Welcker Taylor '06 to participate in an eight-week summer internship in collaboration with the Washington and Lee Shepherd Program for the Interdisciplinary Study of Poverty and Human Capability. These positions work directly with impoverished people and communities in the eastern and southeastern United States. Welcker interned at the Department of Public Advocacy in London, Kentucky, and Rachel with Cabin Creek Health Center in Dawes, West Virginia.