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# Intentional Learning: The Faith-Justice Institute Newsletter, Spring 2014

Saint Joseph's University

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## INTENTIONAL LEARNING THE FAITH-JUSTICE INSTITUTE NEWSLETTER

### Inside Poverty Awareness Week

Poverty Awareness Week (Nov.4-8 2013) is an opportunity for the SJU community to collectively raise its awareness of the causes of poverty nationally and globally. For example at the fair trade market where vendors came to sell products that promote a fair wage for the people who made them. The vendors travel to local campuses to sell their products and they said that students at most schools just come by to see what they have to sell. The vendors commented several times how curious the SJU students were about the issue of fair wages: that they were not only interested in the products but how they impacted the lives of the people who made them and the conditions of the countries they came from.

During another event Joe Sperlunto of Philabundance, came to speak on campus and thanked SJU for its continued help and support through food drives and service. He explained the concept of a “food desert” as an urban or rural area without access to fresh, healthy, affordable food. It was said that often times the lack of food due to the amount of money needed for large commercial trucks to take the time (or use the gas) to maneuver the city streets and deliver fresh produce to small convenient stores. We then learned what a domino effect this has on the health and wellbeing of those who live in the city. One of the choices is to go to a convenient store which stocks processed foods that are extremely high in calories, salt, and sugar at a cheaper rate. This has led to generations of people with high obesity rates and other health issues such as diabetes and heart problems. The alternative is for people to go to the larger grocery chains that are much farther away than the local corner stores. Driving a car uses precious gas, time and money saved for other bills. Without a car, this task can take several hours, different busses and a lot of patience and physical strength to carry groceries home again. Philabundance is working to build food stores to give people in these areas alternatives to give their families the healthy, fresh food that we all want and deserve.

Another learning opportunity for SJU students came when members of the Old Saint Joe's Parish group “Food Faith and Friends” came to speak in two of Fr. Dan Joyce's Service-Learning classes. This group of men from limited means receive nourishment-both physical and emotional at the church. They form friendships, are treated respectfully and attend learning labs. The men of FFF feel strongly that they want to “give back” to the community. They travel to schools, clubs and organizations to discuss the realities of “living poor”. It is transformative for these men to share their stories-especially to students. They hope to dispel fears, myths and prejudices about people who are homelessness. The students receive invaluable life lessons impossible to get from any textbook.

Education is a crucial part of unravelling any social justice issue. Poverty Awareness Week seeks to inform, educate and introduce students to the issues of poverty. Food insecurity does not exist because the United States does not have enough food. It is the result of unfair wages, unemployment and poverty. Only through examining, questioning and facing these issues do we have any hope of making a change.

-Elizabeth Norberg

## Coming Together at Covenant House

Imagine being on the streets this winter. It is common to hear complaints about the snow on campus, but the cold certainly brings graver hardships to those with no shelter or resources. The greatest number of deaths of homeless Philadelphians in 2009-2010 was in January, with 14 fatalities (<http://www.phila.gov/health>).

Now imagine a typical college student night. Monday night comes around, and it's been a long day. Classes, meetings and homework. For me there is a great addition as from 6-8 when I have my ALMAS meeting. ALMAS means 'souls' in Spanish. It is certainly an appropriate name for this SJU Faith -Justice Institute volunteer program. The program runs with a group of 9 students who go to Covenant House on Monday and Thursday night. Each visit is a two-hour session. We split into twice a week to be a dependable source of friendship in the lives of the youth there. Covenant House is a shelter for homeless youth ages 16-22. There are houses located in many cities in the United States, Canada, and Latin America. The youth at Covenant House are looking for stability, support, and shelter at the house. Many tell us about how they are applying to jobs, going to interviews, working on college plans. Yet others tell us how Covenant House is a way for them to be off the streets and take care of themselves. When we spend time with the youth, they ask others if we get credit for a class, or if we have to volunteer for something. We simply say, "No, we just came to be with you."

At first, I didn't realize this would be just as much fun for us as it is for them. We play board games, knit, chat, and find two hours of time to forget the stresses of our respective lives. Unlike other service trips I have done at SJU, being at Covenant House is more involved. The constant reminder that our tiredness, hunger, stress from school, and how to have that chat with the roommate who was too loud the last few nights are very minor in comparison to making yourself at home in a shelter.

-Lauren Rollman SJU'15



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-GANDHI



## Engaging Projects and Building Relationships

Larry Russock, Program Coordinator at My Brother’s House, commented: "Just because someone is experiencing homelessness does not mean that they have to be depressed all the time, just trying to get through each day. You can be happy and homeless at the same time. I want people to understand that these men are still people."

This is the lens through which My Brother’s House approaches their clients and SJU students, a lens that has proven invaluable to the experiential learning in the Service Learning Program. My Brother’s House is a home for men experiencing homelessness. It serves as a “safe haven,” a place that, unlike most city shelters, does not require its residents to currently be in recovery. This policy illustrates how My Brother’s House meets its clients where they are. Service-Learning students engage with the men in presence-based service that challenges them to break down social barriers and stereotypes while building meaningful and reciprocal relationships.

Recently, Mr. Russock initiated a project for SJU students to participate in to engage more deeply with social problems they witness during their service at My Brother’s House. These project ideas include gardening, voting registration, book club, sports and recreation, pet therapy, community organization, and opportunities for social reflection. Through this project, the students will be able to enrich their existing relationships and enhance their understanding of the social problems they are learning about in the classroom, through personal reflection, and in their engagement at My Brother’s House.

-Rachel Sellers SJU ‘14



## Holistic Health and Healing in South Philadelphia

Spanish for “Bridges of Health,” Puentes de Salud is a local nonprofit organization that serves to promote health and wellness among South Philadelphia’s rapidly growing Latino community. Although it is predominantly a medically oriented organization, Puentes defines health holistically, seeking to care for the physical, mental, and social well-being of its clients. Medical and dental care is provided at **low cost**, while a number of educational and social services are offered to community members of all ages.

I am very fortunate to have had a glimpse into the all-encompassing love and care that is shown to each (and subsequently given back from) those that Puentes serves. For about a year, I’ve worked in Puentes’ adult English as a Second Language (ESL) classes, offered at artist Nora Litz’s studio on Saturday afternoons. The program strives to meet its students where they’re at, driven mostly by the compassion of teachers and program coordinators. While classes run from 12:00 to 1:30, we operate on the students’ time, and most days I don’t leave until 2:30 or 3:00. When needed, extra volunteers are brought in to occupy the students’ children. While we try to focus the classes on life skills, explaining how to ask for help at the hospital, learning the vocabulary related to work, and how to get around the city. The primary goal is to provide a relaxing environment to answer the students’ questions every week. For instance, a current beginner student Yasaret brought her water bill this week, in order to learn how to properly dispute an outrageous charge.

The Service-Learning Program is able to further promote Puentes’ mission by working in two different capacities. In the past, students have worked with Nora to facilitate classes in authentic Mexican art. Many children in the community were born in the United States or arrived here at a young age, and as a result, they may not feel such a close connection to Mexico’s culture and history. Traveling to Mexico twice a year, Nora constantly has her students and their parents involved in fun and incredibly thoughtful projects to learn about a certain part of their culture. This semester, our students are working with Puentes’ after-school program that seeks to provide students with the extra help that may not always be received in the classroom or at home. Service-Learning students will work in whatever capacity and subject the students need that day and try to serve them in the most effective (and most fun) way possible.

-Katie Smith-SJU’14



# Thank you Dr. Chapman

## Dr. Judith Chapman



Dr. Judi Chapman, a remarkable presence on campus since she first arrived in 1988, and present chair of the Faith-Justice Institute Advisory Board will retire this May. Judi has received two merit awards for teaching, a merit award for research, a merit award for service, Faith in Action Award and the Fr. Ed Brady, SJ award. She has served as Associate Provost, Dean of the College of Arts and Sciences, and countless university-wide committee Chair positions including the Faith-Justice Advisory Board member and current Chair. All this while mentoring colleagues with sage advice and acting as a student-centered, dedicated professor in Psychology. Furthermore, Judi's contributions to the field of service-learning pedagogy are stellar. She developed and taught both *Violence and Aggression* and *Multicultural Psychology* as service-learning courses, published "Collegiate Service-Learning: Motives Underlying Volunteerism and Satisfaction with Volunteer Service" in the *Journal of Prevention and Intervention in the Community*, co-edited and contributed chapters in *Educating Students to Make a Difference: Community-Based Service Learning*. Judi's model of the Jesuit mission as a woman of "competence, conscience and compassion" is celebrated and will be greatly missed.

The poster features a central image of a vintage microphone on a stand, set against a dark background with silhouettes of people. Text on the poster includes: "SJU The Faith-Justice Institute presents THE SISTER FRANCIS JOSEPH R.A. OUTREACH LECTURE SERIES", "WIT OR WIT-OUT: Humor, Jesuits and Social Justice", "Somewhere between the Catechism and the Catskills lies the heart of humor in Jesuit Spirituality", "TUESDAY, MARCH 18TH 7:00PM FORUM THEATER", a photo of Tony Braithwaite, and a bio: "Tony Braithwaite is a 3-time Barrymore Award-winning actor, teacher, director, emcee, writer, and comedian based in Philadelphia who has been hailed by Variety as 'an all-purpose scene-stealing talent'. As an actor, he has performed at numerous theatres in Philadelphia, New Jersey, Chicago, and D.C. All the while, he has managed to find time to teach and direct at local educational institutions such as Quinn Institute, University of Pennsylvania, and his beloved alma mater, St. Joe's Prep." At the bottom, it says "Cospponsored by the Leadership, Ethics, and Organizational Sustainability (LEO) Program".

## The Sister Francis Joseph R.A. Outreach Lecture Series

Tuesday, March 18th

7pm, Forum Theater

Wit or Wit-Out:

Humor, Jesuits, and Social Justice

Speaker: Tony Braithwaite

Lecture in association with Dr. Ken Weidner's class

Social Justice and Serious Comedy

## STAFF NEWS

### **Jill Amitrani Welsh**

#### **Celebrates 10 Years at SJU**



This past year, Jill Amitrani Welsh was inducted into the SJU Chapter of Alpha Sigma Nu, the Jesuit Honor Society, along with her husband Chris ('01). Jill also received an Administrative Staff Council Award for her work in the Faith-Justice Institute with Poverty Awareness Week, the Ignatian College Connection, and the Office of Institutional Diversity. Her thoughtfulness and enthusiasm for students, faculty, and community partners help define the purpose of the Faith-Justice Institute's work. A colleague recently remarked that, "Jill is a true embodiment of being a woman with and for others. Her passion for making positive change in an intellectually thoughtful way inspires me."

### **Virginia Goulding Johnson, Ph.D**

#### **Celebrates 20 Years at SJU**



Colleagues describe **Virginia Goulding Johnson, Ph.D.**, as a creative problem-solver with an extraordinary commitment to students and particularly appreciate her picaresque sense of humor. Her vast experience as an educator includes teaching at the undergraduate, graduate and doctoral levels and teaching the first gender studies, service learning and faith-justice courses in Education. She played a key role in securing Special Education and Early Childhood Education certifications, navigating and sustaining courses for the new GEP, co-leading the establishment of the Alliance for Catholic Education at SJU pilot and establishing an External Advisory Board.

In recognition of her talents, Ginny has been awarded the Lindback Award for Distinguished Teaching, two University Teaching Merit Awards, the University Advising Merit Award, the University Justice Award and the Ed Brady Social Justice Award. Ginny is responsible for developing a "Peacemaker's Curriculum" which has been taught in private, public, and Catholic elementary schools over the past 15 years. She has served as an adviser to various student groups on campus, including Hand-in-Hand, Kappa Delta Pi, the Pennsylvania State Educators' Association, and the Education Society.