Civic Engagement
Public Service, Personal Responsibility
Nov./Dec. 2011

RUTGERS | School of Public Affairs and Administration | spaa.newark.rutgers.edu

Reaching Out Through a Lens
Students learn to serve the needs of their community from behind the camera
Civic Actions Bring Good Cheer During Bleak Times

If there were ever a time for civic engagement, the “Occupy Wall Street” demonstrators and their colleagues across the country remind us that it is now. Too many citizens teeter on the edge of financial disaster. Too many of the very wealthy refuse to share that wealth. Too many members of Congress refuse to take the actions that virtually all mainstream economists recommend.

If government will not or cannot act, individual citizens must. That menu of possible actions is demonstrated daily, and includes:

- Voluntary contributions to such efforts as the New York Times Neediest Cases Fund.
- Clothing drives organized by individuals, some of whom have been collecting coats and other clothing for years.
- “Secret Santas” who as anonymous benefactors pay off store account balances for distressed families.
- People who give small amounts of food and cash to homeless veterans and others.

These are exemplars of the civic actions that our secular and religious institutions promote in spirit, but that depend on many, many acts of kindness. As dismal as the economy may be, each such action is a cause for optimism. May we all demonstrate such concerns for our fellow citizens in our daily actions.

Marc Holzer, PhD
Dean and Board of Governors Professor
School of Public Affairs and Administration (SPAA)
Rutgers University-Campus at Newark
111 Washington St., Newark, NJ 07102

On the Cover
Reaching Out Through a Lens
Students learn to serve the needs of their community from behind the lens of a video camera........... pg. 10

Pass It On
Janet Latuga ’11 sells Nicaraguan crafts, sending the profits to the artisans .............. pg. 14

HoChiMinh Gets with the Program
How an American public health researcher helped shape AIDS law in Vietnam .............. pg. 16

WATCH Housing Advocacy Clinic
Serving community needs ..................... pg. 22

Healing Vessel
Amy Lehman envisions treating patients from isolated African villages aboard a hospital boat .............. pg. 24
Engaging Citizens: Innovative Public Participatory Method

From People and Participation. Net

21st Century Town Meeting

These events involve a large number of citizens (between 500 and 5,000) in deliberating on local, regional or national issues and make use of modern technology, including wireless voting pads and networked laptops. They combine the benefits of small scale face-to-face discussions with those of large group decision making.

Description: 21st Century Meetings are forums that combine the intimacy of small-scale face-to-face deliberations with the impact and power of large-scale interactions and collective decision-making. This methodology has managed to overcome the common tradeoff between the quality of discussion and size of group involved through innovative use of technology.

During the event participants engage in small group discussions at tables of 10-12, working with an independent facilitator who uses a networked computer to instantly collate ideas and votes from the table. This information is sent via a wireless network to a central point where a theme team distills comments from all tables into themes that can be presented back to the room for comment or votes. Each participant has an electronic keypad which allow them to vote individually on themes or questions. The results of these votes (often involving thousands of people) are presented in real time on large video screens for instant feedback for participants.

This “back and forth” between the small- and large-scale dialogues is powerful as it allows participants to discuss the issues in a small manageable setting whilst maintaining the link to a larger group. The immediacy of the vote creates transparency during the meeting.

The computers and voting pads generate volumes of useful demographically-sortable data. This information is often quickly edited into a report which is printed and given to participants, decision-makers, and journalists at the end of the event.

Used For: 21st Century Town Meetings have been used to create recommendations around a number of different issues, including what to do with the site of the destroyed Twin Towers in New York, how to rebuild New Orleans following hurricane Catrina and finding solutions for healthcare in California.

These meetings are especially useful for engaging citizens in planning, resource allocation, and policy formulation. 21st Century Town Meetings are a big commitment and are therefore only really suitable where real change can happen as a result of the process.

Suitable participants: Most events are open to all citizens, although it is often necessary to target hard-to-reach sectors of the population especially to ensure a balanced and representative group of participants.

One of the key distinguishing features of 21st Century Town Meetings is the high number of participants involved, whilst maintaining a deep and meaningful discussion and an overview of what the participants as a whole think.

The scale of the meetings means that they often generate substantial interest from the media and public authorities.

Cost: High

A 21st Century Town Meeting is a very intensive process. The individual tables need to be run by skilled facilitators. The voting pads, laptops and other technology required increases the cost as well. Designing, planning and coordinating an event involving hundreds or even thousands people requires a substantial budget of tens of thousands of pounds.

Time Requirements: High

The scale of the events and the amount of information generated which needs to be themed, distilled into key themes and presented back to the room requires a lot of staff time and planning. The high profile of most 21st Century Town Meeting means that there are additional task around liaising with the media and decision makers.

When To Use / What It Can Deliver: You should use a 21st Century Town Meeting when:

- The process can make an impact on the issue on discussion
- When you have the budget and capacity to deliver such a large-scale event
- When you want to engage a large number of participants without compromising the quality of the deliberation.

21st Century Town Meetings can deliver clear recommendations and decisions, clear data on what different groups think about an issue before and after deliberation, a deep and constructive discussion despite large groups involved and a compelling event which can capture the imagination of the media and the public more widely.

When Not To Use / What It Cannot Deliver: You should not use a 21st Century Town Meeting:

- Unless the issue selected is sufficiently “ripe” to allow the process to have an impact on real and current policy and/or resource decisions
- If you do not have credibility with citizens and decision-makers
- Unless you can get a diverse group of participants to attend, including commonly marginal-ized groups

Strengths:

- Combines large number of participants with considered dialogue
- Gathers clear and instant information on what participants think about an issue, including demographic data on what different groups feel
- The immediacy and scale of the event can energize the participants

Weaknesses:

- High cost
- Can raise expectations to unrealistic levels if not managed well
- Reliant on technology

The 21st Century Town Meeting Methodology was developed by the US nonprofit organization AmericaSpeaks in 1997. Since then they have delivered 21st Century Town meetings in over 30 US states and other countries. 21st Century Town Meetings is trademarked by AmericaSpeaks. “21st Century Town Meeting” is trademarked by AmericaSpeaks, a nonprofit organization based in the United States.

For further information: www.americaspeaks.org

Open Space Technology

Open Space Technology is often referred to as “Open Space.” It is a meeting framework that allows unlimited numbers of participants to form their own discussions around a central theme.

Description: Open Space events have a central theme, around which participants identify issues for which they are willing to take responsibility for running a session. At the same time, these topics are distributed among available rooms and timeslots. When no more discussion topics are suggested the participants sign up for the ones they wish to take part in.

Open Space creates very fluid and dynamic conversations held together by mutual enthusiasm.
Organizations | Resources | Jobs

for interest in a topic. A trained moderator can be useful, especially when people are used to more structured meeting methods.

The fundamental principles of Open Space are:

- Whoever comes are the right people (the best participants are those who feel passionately about the issue and have freely chosen to get involved);
- Whenever it starts is the right time (Open Space encourages creativity both during and between formal sessions);
- When it’s over it’s over (getting the work done is more important than adhering to rigid schedules);
- Whatever happens is the only thing that could happen (let go of your expectations and pay full attention to what is happening here and now).

There is also one “Law”: The “Law of two feet”: (If participants find themselves in a situation where they are not learning or contributing they have a responsibility to go to another session, or take a break for personal reflection.)

It is vital that there are good written reports from all discussions, complete with action points, available at the end of each day. Feedback and implementation structures are important to carry the suggestions forward after the event itself.

**Used For:** Good for harnessing the creativity that is stifled by more structured forms of meetings, and creating new forms of working relationships, for example cross-functional collaboration, self-managing teams, community building, conflict resolution, strategy development and implementation.

**Suitable participants:** Open Space is highly flexible in the number and nature of participants. It can be run with a handful of people up to 2000 participants or more.

**Cost:** This varies.

The approach can be very cheap, but it requires a venue with space to accommodate all participants in one or several concentric circles.

**Time Requirements:** Flexible an event usually lasts between one and five days and can be run as a one off event.

**When To Use / What It Can Deliver:** You should use Open Space when large and diverse groups are involved, when you require creative thinking around an issue, when you want an open discussion and collective decisions, when you want to develop ownership over the results, when you want to develop better working relationships or when you want to build a sense of community.

**When Not To Use / What It Cannot Deliver:** You should not use Open Space when you are unwilling to give up control over the direction of the meeting, if you are not prepared to follow through with the recommendations or if the achievement of a predetermined specific outcome is essential.

**Strengths:**
- Extremely flexible process
- Participant driven approach
- Unleashes creativity

**Weaknesses:**
- Cannot be used to direct people to a specific outcome

Open Space Technology was created in the mid-1980s by organizational consultant Harrison Owen when he discovered that people attending his conferences showed more energy and creativity during the coffee breaks than the formal sessions. Open Space is structured in a way that recreates this informal and open atmosphere combined with a clear sense of purpose.

For further information: www.openspace-world.org

---

Join the Public Service Research Panel

We invite you to be among the first to join this online research panel of public service professionals who sign up to participate in studies about the important work they do, the organizations they help lead, and the approaches they use to better serve the public.

For more information or to sign up today, go to: www.PSRpanel.org

---

www.PSRpanel.org
Public Service Coast to Coast

Cans Around the Oval
It started with one student wanting to make a difference; 25 years later over 16,000 people from the Colorado State University campus and local community are continuing the tradition of this canned food drive and making it even more impactful every single year.

Turkeypalooza
Wake Forest University Campus Kitchen hosts Turkeypalooza to provide Thanksgiving meals to the needy in the Winston-Salem community. Students deliver meals on Tuesday, Nov. 15, 2011. More than 200 dinners were delivered to The Children’s Home, Azalea Terrace Senior Apartments, Prodigals Community, AIDS Care Service, and The Potter’s House. When they deliver the food, volunteers also take time to share the holiday spirit. Students used donated food to cook meals for the elderly, infirm and other area residents in need. The Turkeypalooza event was sponsored by Wake Forest Campus Kitchen, started in 1999 by then-juniors Karen Stephan Borchert and Jessica Jackson Shortall. Campus Kitchen is a food recycling program that uses cooked but never-served food from the campus dining halls to make healthy and nutritious meals for those in need. Currently there are more than 30 Campus Kitchens in operation across the country.
Focused on creating socially responsible media, an innovative Visual and Performing Arts course at California State University San Marcos (CSUSM) is empowering students to learn about and serve the needs of their community from behind the lens of a video camera. Developed and taught by professional filmmaker professor Kristine Diekman, “Video in the Community” is a course that connects students with nonprofits to identify critical social problems and produce high-quality videos that bring about social awareness and change.

“It’s a two way street,” said Diekman, “one that goes beyond the course and truly speaks to the heart and vision of CSUSM to simultaneously develop the strengths of our students and our community.”

Since the course’s introduction in 2003, Diekman’s students have filmed, edited and produced more than 30 videos for different nonprofits at no cost to the partnering organizations. Whether creating public service announcements or an educational video, students help bring awareness to a variety of social issues from homelessness and gang violence to education, health and nutrition.

“It’s an inspiring experience to hear and capture the stories, struggles and triumphs of people in my community, and then, using their testimony, produce a video that empowers others to take action,” said senior art and technology student Lauren Radel.

Working in a production team of four, Radel and her classmates partnered with the Transitional Youth Academy (TVA), a gang prevention and intervention program for at-risk teens. To emphasize the positive impact the program has on its youth, the crew of students filmed the video from the perspective of the teens. In addition to the final three-
minute video which was produced to share with potential donors, the team edited 15 hours of interview footage to create several short vignettes of student stories that the nonprofit could also use for promotional purposes.

“With funding sources dwindling, this is the time when we really need to shine and communicate the value of our program,” said Jeannine Guarino, program manager for TYA.

For many of the partnering nonprofits, like TYA, finding the resources or funding to develop a professional video had previously been well out of reach. Through this unique course, video services are provided for free to help nonprofits connect with broader audiences and share their mission. Past partnering organizations have included Casa de Amparo, San Diego County Office of Education, Palomar Family YMCA, and Operation HOPE, a homeless winter shelter based in Vista.

“Using socially responsible media to drive civic engagement is not just about advancing one nonprofit’s mission, but rather advancing our entire community forward and affecting positive social change in North County,” said Guarino. “Video in the Community is an important catalyst making that change possible.”

For Sarah Taylor, a junior studying theatre arts, the opportunity to give back while also earning academic credit was what initially piqued her interest in Video in the Community. Working full-time and going to school full-time leaves little opportunity for community service, she explained.

“The course enabled me to learn video production skills and apply those techniques in a hands-on environment while also helping better my community,” said Taylor, who helped produce an eight-minute video for the Vista Community Clinic’s teen center.

While working on her group’s video, Taylor also enjoyed being able to contribute her unique skill sets to the creative process, including utilizing her theatre experience to coach the teens as they role-played different scenarios on camera.

“It’s those little subtleties in our body language that visually communicate so much when on stage or in front of the camera,” described Taylor.

Filmmaker and Professor Kristine Diekman teaches students the art and technical skills of film production while they work to produce high-quality videos that fuse artistic expression with activism.

“Working with the teens, I was able to help our novice actors feel more comfortable and ensure that their reenactments appeared natural.”

Bringing together students from diverse fields of study strengthens the creative process and produces a well-rounded video, explained Diekman. More than 250 undergraduates from a variety of majors, including business, psychology, computer science, and performing arts have taken the upper-division humanities course, which is offered each year for the spring semester. On average, students dedicate upwards of 70 hours to create a three- to five-minute professional video, which is in addition to classroom instruction and online writing assignments.

“In many ways, the community becomes the teacher,” said Diekman. “For these students, the experience is not only academic, it’s eye-opening and gives them confidence that they can contribute in shaping their community.”

“Video in the Community is nothing short of inspiring,” reflected Radel. “It’s given me a perspective that I would never have experienced in a traditional classroom setting and enabled me to use my passion for art to empower positive change.”
Pass It On
Janet Latuga ’11 sells Nicaraguan crafts, sending the profits to the artisans

(Editor’s Note: This article appeared on the Fairfield University Magazine)

BY CAROYNN ARNOLD

Fairfield University strives to instill in its students a global outlook, and a desire to serve the common good. Janet Latuga ’11 spent her senior year putting these values into practice.

Latuga, a marketing major in the Dolan School of Business with minors in English and math in the College of Arts and Sciences, appropriated a small on-campus business selling authentic handmade pottery and craft goods made by indigenous Nicaraguan artisans. All profits are sent back to the artists.

“The crafts range from small and large vases made out of clay, sugar bowls, and vase-shaped crafts made out of pine needles as well as picture frames and jewelry boxes,” the East Williston, N.Y. native said.

Members of the Fairfield community would have seen her selling the crafts at the Barone Campus Center during the fall 2010 semester, and, of course, during the important Christmas shopping months.

The Nicaraguan artisan project actually began before Latuga was a student at Fairfield. Dr. Winston Tellis, professor of information systems and operations management began the project in 2004 when he led a student trip to the country to study global- ization and its effects. The students followed up on the hands-on trip by creating a business model to sell the local artisans handcrafted pottery in America.

Years later, when Latuga was a sophomore, she applied for and was awarded an E. Gerald Corrigan Scholarship to work on her own project with the help of a faculty mentor. E. Gerald Corrigan ’63, the former President and CEO of the New York Federal Reserve and Managing Director of Goldman Sachs, is a strong advocate of Jesuit education and donated funds to establish the E. Gerald Corrigan ’63 Scholars Program as well as the E. Gerald Corrigan ’63 Professor in Humanities and Social Sciences. The Scholars Program matches undergraduates with faculty members who serve as mentors.

Dr. Tellis became Latuga’s mentor when she received the grant and suggested she adopt the artisan business as a social entrepreneurship project and Latuga eagerly signed on. Funds were borrowed from the scholarship and used for the shipment of products. Anything left over was saved to build capital to order more crafts.

At the end of Latuga’s junior year she began seeking further funding from outside sources. This time she was helped by alumnus Marco Ambrosio ’07, whom she met while he was visiting campus and she was selling the crafts.

Latuga applied for a grant from the Emily C. Specchio foundation. This was on the advice of Ambrosio who had also received a grant from them when he was a student. The funds from this grant were used to help acquire new merchandise.

It’s no surprise that Latuga took to managing her own business so easily. Her parents own a store that is a canine dog and pet bakery boutique. While remodeling the store the family was trying to think of a more upscale name and Latuga came up with “Dog Delights.” After the selection was warmly received by the family, her father told her that she might like to study marketing at school. Latuga agreed.

“Like marketing because it allows you to be creative and you have the opportunity to come up with new ideas,” she said. “I’ve had to think of a lot of creative ways to alert students to my booth,” she continued.

In addition to Latuga’s marketing skills, her mentor, Dr. Tellis said that she was able to hone her skills in many facets of business.

“Janet has put a tremendous effort into this project, working with poor artisans, learning about packaging and shipping in a developing country, and in a different language,” he said. “She has developed a self-sustaining business on her own, for which she deserves a lot of credit. I know the artisans are very grateful for the regular income stream!”

Latuga’s work is also helping to put Nicaragua more on the forefront of the international craft market, according to Dr. Tellis: “The project is one facet of a larger effort to create a self-sustaining sales channel for the handmade craft items and artwork that will benefit and stimulate the Nicaraguan community and economy.”

In 2010, Latuga visited Masaya, Nicaragua, and met a family that makes some of the pottery she had been buying to sell at her booth. “Each member of the family has something they specialize in,” Latuga recalled. “Some of the family members go and dig for the clay in their backyard, some of them make the pottery, and some of them decorate it.”

Because she is a senior Latuga is working to ensure that her project will have a life beyond her Fairfield experience. “I’ve been talking to on-campus clubs and groups that might have an interest in this,” she said. This includes the Students for Social Justice and the Entrepreneur Club. The hope is that a fair trade business will be created to sell the pottery and crafts at Jesuit universities nationwide.

“I love that I’m helping families,” said Latuga. “In comparison to here we don’t understand how much we have. This is making a difference in their lives and I hope it runs indefinitely at Fairfield University.”

For updates on Latuga’s Nicaragua project visit her blog at: http://nicaraguancrafts.wordpress.com
Ho Chi Minh Gets with the Program

How an American public health researcher helped shape AIDS law in Vietnam

(Editors Note: This article appeared in the Bostonia, Summer 2011.)

By Caleb Daniloff

The turning point, Lisa Messersmith recalls, took place on a cold, windy street outside a two-story government building in Hà Giang town, capital of Hà Giang Province in northern Vietnam.

It was 2002, heroin was flowing across the border with China, and the number of HIV/AIDS cases across the country had quadrupled in the past four years.

In Hà Giang Province, more than half of the intravenous drug users were infected with HIV, the virus that causes AIDS. Medical anthropologist Messersmith and her colleagues had been sitting at a heavy wooden conference table in an unheated room inside the People’s Committee Building, trying to explain the benefits of a clean needle and syringe program.

Messersmith thought she sensed in the weary provincial party chief a willingness, perhaps born of desperation, to try such a program. She was less optimistic about the stonefaced security officials, who believed the best way to stem the flow of narcotics was to lock up users.

Did they question her motives? Did they suspect a hidden agenda? “I’m sitting across from the chief of police and deputy chief of police, who sat there quiet the entire time, didn’t say a word, and I thought, ‘Oh, boy,’” recalls Messersmith, a School of Public Health associate professor of international health and a faculty member of the Boston University Center for Global Health & Development (CGHD). “Finally, the party chief said, ‘We’ll think about it.’

Then, as Messersmith left the building and was walking to her car to begin the bone-jarring eight-hour drive back to Hanoi, something unexpected happened. She heard the chief of police call after her, ‘Dr. Lisa, I just have one question: when can we start?’” That, she says, was the moment when everything changed. It would lead to new health programs and policies in Vietnam, and within five years, to a national AIDS law raising the profile of human rights in the communist country. Ultimately, according to one prominent Vietnamese sociologist, it would contribute to a closer relationship between Vietnam and the United States.

“It was such a show of a willingness to take a leap of faith,” says Messersmith, whose work in Vietnam was conducted under the aegis of the CGHD, the Ford Foundation, and Harvard University’s Kennedy School of Government. “They knew the drug addicts. They were so-and-so’s son or daughter. These were people living in a small province; everybody knows each other. They were concerned.”

A year and a half—and thousands of clean needles—later, Hà Giang Province saw a 24 percent drop in HIV among addicts.

Not Yet Friends

In 1998, Messersmith arrived in Vietnam with her husband and two small children to begin a six year stint as the sexuality and reproductive health program officer for the Ford Foundation’s Office for Vietnam and Thailand. Relations between that country and the United States were just beginning to normalize. Pete Peterson had been installed as U.S. ambassador, the first diplomatic posting since the end of the Vietnam War in 1975. Peterson, whose plane was shot down during the conflict, had been held for six years as a prisoner of war at the notorious Hanoi Hilton. President Bill Clinton had begun reaching out a few years earlier, but in Vietnam, the communist party still held fast to the government reins.

Phones were tapped, informants lurked everywhere, journalists were muzzled, and socializing with the American community was discouraged. And here was Messersmith, the daughter of a Vietnam War veteran, looking to give away money. It raised eyebrows.

At the same time, the country’s AIDS epidemic was ballooning, driven by rampant intravenous drug use, and to a lesser extent, the sex trade. The first case of HIV was detected in Vietnam in 1990. In 2002, the government counted 15,000, but the number of HIV and AIDS cases reported each year in the southeast Asian country was far below the real number, says Messersmith. No one in the health sector was eager to follow the path of China, which had kept its burgeoning public health problem under wraps, resisted outside help, and would later see its blood supply become tainted, infecting tens, if not hundreds, of thousands of its citizens.

In southern Vietnam, heroin had been a drug staple since the 1960s, fed in part by the interaction between locals and American G.I. drug users during the war. In the northern mountainous culture, smoking opium was once the high of choice. But in the 1990s, an eradication program partially funded by the United Nations wiped out over 90 percent of the poppy fields. While older villagers continued to “smoke the dragon,” the youth turned to the cheaper, more potent heroin seeping in from China.

Forget gateway drugs—young Vietnamese skipped straight to the tourniquet and needle. In the leafy Hanoi parks, Messersmith could watch young men openly shooting up. “When most people in Vietnam start using heroin, they don’t have their own syringe,” she says. “They’re sharing needles with more experienced drug users. Of course, many users are also sexually active. The efficiency of transmission by sharing needles is incredibly high, much higher than by sexual intercourse.”

The Ford Foundation, established in 1936 by the son of auto magnate Henry Ford, has distributed bil-
lions of dollars around the world, mostly focused on strengthening democracies and reducing poverty and injustice. When Messersmith touched down in Hanoi, there were no local nongovernmental organizations. “I spent a lot of time just building relationships with my Vietnamese colleagues, mostly government and party officials,” she says. “They’d ask us what we wanted to fund, and I’d say, ‘What are your ideas, what’s important to you?’ It was about what they wanted to see happen.”

Early projects included a “condom café” in Ho Chi Minh City, formerly called Saigon, where young people could pick up protection and sexual health pamphlets along with soda and coffee. Later, Messersmith funded a workshop for researchers in Hanoi to discuss the existing literature on health and sexuality, which was on the skimpy side. She knew the topic tended to freeze the faces of health officials in public, and she decided to try something different. To open the meeting, she nervously approached the lectern in the conference hotel, and in Vietnamese, recited “Jackfruit” by the 18th-century poet and concubine Ho Xuân Hu'o’ng:

I am like a jackfruit on the tree.
To taste you must pluck me quick,
while fresh:
the skin rough, the pulpf thick,yes,
but oh, I warn you against touching–
your hands.

Everybody in the room gasped,” Messersmith recalls. “Ho Xuân Hu'o’ng is such an important cultural and literary figure in Vietnamese history, yet she wrote about sexuality and gender so beautifully and openly. Bringing that richness of the culture into the conversation was like going from left brain to right brain. People were thrilled, happy. They started responding from the heart. It was an incredible transformation.”

The cobblestones of deeper, more fundamental change ran through the powerful Ho Chi Minh National Academy of Politics and Administration, the party’s leadership training institution, a place where aspiring officials convene to tackle master’s- and PhD-level topics such as philosophy, Marxist-Leninist theory, political economy, and international relations. “They were running the show,” Messersmith says. “And I said, ‘Well, thank you for your consideration.’ I’m never discouraged. If I took no for an answer every time, I don’t know where I’d be. It took a few tries, and by the second or third meeting they were convinced.”

Messersmith and her colleagues met with top leaders to discuss not only AIDS policy, but other sensitive issues, including the rights of people with HIV, gender issues, and the engagement of civil society. “They first said, ‘We don’t do health, we do political science,’” Messersmith says. “And I said, ‘Well, thank you for your consideration.’ I’m never discouraged. If I took no for an answer every time, I don’t know where I’d be. It took a few tries, and by the second or third meeting they were convinced.”

“Ho Xuân Hu'o’ng: is such an important cultural and literary figure in Vietnamese history, yet she wrote about sexuality and gender so beautifully and openly. Bringing that richness of the culture into the conversation was like going from left brain to right brain. People were thrilled, happy. They started responding from the heart. It was an incredible transformation.”

Starting Small

At first, local health officials were unimpressed with research showing the success of needle exchanges in other countries that Messersmith’s small group of Vietnamese and American researchers presented. Messersmith wasn’t surprised. At the time, as today, the benefits of needle exchange programs were the subject of debate even in the United States, with opinions divided largely along political lines.

“At first, local health officials were unimpressed with research showing the success of needle exchanges in other countries that Messersmith’s small group of Vietnamese and American researchers presented. Messersmith wasn’t surprised. At the time, as today, the benefits of needle exchange programs were the subject of debate even in the United States, with opinions divided largely along political lines. I’ll never forget my first meeting with the vice minister of health at the time,” Messersmith says.

“The minister took the study and basically went from province to province to promote it,” Messersmith says. “He ended up leaving the health ministry for the party’s committee on science and education and used the study as a platform to promote change in policies and started the discussion about whether harm reduction could be included in law.” While the response at the provincial level was encouraging, Messersmith and her Vietnamese colleagues knew that given the bureaucratic impediments of dealing with HIV/AIDS, it would take more than buy-in from the health sector to move the country forward. The cobblestones of deeper, more fundamental change ran through the powerful Ho Chi Minh National Academy of Politics and Administration, the party’s leadership training institution, a place where aspiring officials convene to tackle master’s- and PhD-level topics such as philosophy, Marxist-Leninist theory, political economy, and international relations. “They were running the show,” Messersmith says.

“I knew if they could be sensitized and learn more about what the issues were, they could be change agents.” Building on the trust and goodwill she’d banked in Hanoi and at the provincial level, as well as the relationship the Ford Foundation had established with the academy over other issues, Messersmith and her colleagues met with top leaders to discuss not only AIDS policy, but other sensitive issues, including the rights of people with HIV, gender issues, and the engagement of civil society. “They first said, ‘We don’t do health, we do political science,’” Messersmith says. “And I said, ‘Well, thank you for your consideration.’ I’m never discouraged. If I took no for an answer every time, I don’t know where I’d be. It took a few tries, and by the second or third meeting they were convinced.”

So far, Gruca thinks she knows why. In 2004, along with several other researchers from BU, Harvard, and Abt Associates, the associate professor of health and human rights at Harvard’s School of Public Health joined Messersmith’s Vietnam AIDS Policy and Planning Project, a joint Vietnamese international venture that has trained nearly 1,000 national and provincial...
The Shadow of the War

Messersmith traces her interest in public health to a café counter in the West African country of Burkina Faso, where she chatted with Ghanaian sex workers in the mid-1980s. As a Peace Corps volunteer from a middle-class household, she was fascinated to learn about their lives and the families that depended on their trade, their bodies. She made her way to other far-flung posts, including Mali, Nigeria, and Bangladesh, to tackle HIV/AIDS and sexual and reproductive rights as a grad student and researcher focused on program and policy development.

From 1994 to 1995, while a research associate in the Johns Hopkins School of Hygiene and Public Health department of international health, she served as the Women and AIDS advisor for USAID in Washington, D.C., and from 1996 to 1998 was the country program advisor for UNAIDS, the joint United Nations program focused on the global epidemic, in Bangladesh. When the chance to work in Vietnam presented itself, she jumped. “I’m an anthropologist,” Messersmith says. “So for me another culture, another country, another language was very exciting. But I also had this deep emotional connection to Vietnam.” Her father had served as a field surgeon in 1969 in the 24th Evacuation Hospital in Long Binh during the Vietnam War. John Messersmith had been deeply affected by the destruction he witnessed as well as the wounded bodies he had to operate on, to try and save. He later became a prominent trauma surgeon in Boston. Messersmith remembers that when her father died, many people he’d saved showed up at the funeral.

The brutal 20-year conflict that pitted America’s communism containment policy against Vietnam’s anti-colonial struggle killed somewhere between one million and three million Vietnamese soldiers, guerrilla fighters, and civilians. By the time the United States withdrew its combat forces in 1973, more than 58,000 service members were dead. Just three years later, North and South Vietnam were reunified.

Messersmith’s father died just after she settled in Hanoi, but her father-in-law, a retired Army officer, visited in 2000 for the first time since serving as a province advisor in 1966 and 1967. The family toured various sites, including the ancient Cham ruins in the central part of the country, a sight her father-in-law had seen only from a helicopter gunship because the territory had been controlled by the Viet Cong. The tour guide, it turned out, had been a guerrilla fighter, a teenager at the time: “I’ll never forget this man helping my mother-in-law up the stairs to the temple,” Messersmith recalls. “It was amazing, some 35 years later. He was showing my father-in-law his wounds from the war and they were talking and shook hands. It was very emotional. My father-in-law was an army colonel, and it had a profound effect on him.”

For much of the largely young population in Vietnam, the shadow of the war has faded, but the wrenching piece of history bound members of Messersmith’s international research team. “The American men in our group and the Vietnamese men felt strongly about having to explain themselves as to who they were during the war,” Cruskim says. “One guy in our group had chosen not to go to war and was quite proud of that fact. The Vietnamese couldn’t understand that. Someone else in our group had been a fighter pilot who had bombed the hell out of them, and they understood that a lot more. It was quite different from what you’d have expected.

Those frank discussions were critically important to the partnership. “I do credit Lisa and the trust she built.” When Messersmith’s Ford Foundation tenure in Vietnam came to an end in late 2004, the government’s appreciation for her work was made unambiguously clear: she was awarded the People’s Medal of Health, “an incredible honor,” she says. Even after moving back stateside, Messersmith remained the public health figure that Vietnamese government officials wanted to consult as they began developing legislation around HIV/AIDS.

The Law Comes Around

The movement shaped by Messersmith and her Vietnamese and international colleagues led to the eventual enactment of a national AIDS law, which became effective in 2007, the same year she left a post at Harvard University’s Kennedy School of Government to join the Center for Global Health & Development.

The legislation legalizes needle exchange programs, protects people with HIV/AIDS from being forced to disclose their medical status, and criminalizes the denial of education, employment, and health care. “That law is a real progressive piece of legislation for any country,” Messersmith says. In fact, she says, the United States today could learn a lot from the changes made in Vietnam, where between 2002 and 2006 HIV rates among intravenous drug users dropped from 30 percent to 23.6 percent.

“Vietnam is family-oriented and traditional,” she says. “It’s about taking care of the family and the community, as well as the communist ideals of taking care of each other. It’s a cultural approach more than a political one.”

It’s also a mind-set that comes naturally to Messersmith. In 2006, she coordinated a study tour for several members of the academy to visit HIV/AIDS programs in Boston, New York, and Washington, D.C. In Boston, they met with health officials, including the dean of the School of Public Health. And even though it was an official public health visit, Messersmith couldn’t help but make it personal.

“We brought them to my home for a traditional New England clam bake,” she says. “The vice president of the academy, who I always thought was quite stern and a little bit scary, not only became a huge advocate for the work and very technically involved for someone in such a high-level position, but he told me that after that trip he felt that we were a big family. That was huge. It really changed our relationship with them.” Today, almost 89 percent of injecting drug users in Vietnam report using sterilized needles the last time they injected, according to UNAIDS. While other numbers remain troubling, Messersmith says the accuracy of reporting AIDS statistics in Vietnam has grown tremendously. Among a Vietnamese population of 90 million, almost 300,000 live with HIV/AIDS.

There is increased awareness of, and access to, antiretroviral drugs and therapies. “What you can show is changes in process, in the system,” says Cruskim, who believes that’s premature to talk about the full impact of their work on health outcomes. “There’s much more attention to the policy environment, more recognition of conflict between HIV laws and their laws that say it’s illegal to carry a condom because it shows you’re a sex worker. They’re aware of this stuff and trying to engage with it.”

At the CGHD, Messersmith continues her work in Vietnam. She is director of the Vietnam AIDS Policy and Planning Project, whose work has led to a decreased association of AIDS with “social evils,” increased integration of gender into policies and programs, and greater recognition of privacy and confidentiality rights. She is also the principal investigator on two studies: one looking at the health and social service needs of women living with HIV/AIDS, the other assessing the magnitude and types of discrimination experienced by people living with HIV/AIDS.

“It’s fantastic to see something go from research results to programs and policy and law,” she says. “After all, this is not about politics. It’s about saving lives.”

policy makers. Cruskim says Messersmith’s empathetic approach was key to winning people over. “Lisa’s incredibly smart,” Cruskim says. “But it’s about her personality. She doesn’t try to work from outside, which is what a lot of foreigners do. She has taken the time to really understand how the Vietnamese system works, and she works from within. As a result, she really is able to make, and support, change in some spectacular ways. What I’ve learned about how she engages is what I’m trying to replicate in other places.”
WATCH Housing Advocacy Clinic

Serving Community Needs

BY LAURA GOLDIN (WITH CONTRIBUTION BY ABIGAIL STEINBERG, STEPHANIE JOHNSON AND TYLER BELANGA)

Maria sits in the waiting room of the WATCH Housing Advocacy Clinic, her energetic toddler sitting restlessly on her lap. It’s frigid for early November and freezing rain is pouring down the exterior of the window into her apartment. But she feels she had no other choice; conditions are worsening in her apartment and the cold weather is coming. She’s had no heat for over two weeks, the roaches infesting her apartment, and the landlord is not responding. She has complained and objected to the lock on her front door being broken, and lately the landlord has been entering unannounced to “check on things.” She has complained and objected to the lock on her front door being broken, and lately the landlord has been entering unannounced to “check on things.” She has complained and objected to the lock on her front door being broken, and lately the landlord has been entering unannounced to “check on things.” She has complained and objected to the lock on her front door being broken, and lately the landlord has been entering unannounced to “check on things.” She has complained and objected to the lock on her front door being broken, and lately the landlord has been entering unannounced to “check on things.” She has complained and objected to the lock on her front door being broken, and lately the landlord has been entering unannounced to “check on things.” She has complained and objected to the lock on her front door being broken, and lately the landlord has been entering unannounced to “check on things.” She has complained and objected to the lock on her front door being broken, and lately the landlord has been entering unannounced to “check on things.” She has complained and objected to the lock on her front door being broken, and lately the landlord has been entering unannounced to “check on things.” She has complained and objected to the lock on her front door being broken, and lately the landlord has been entering unannounced to “check on things.” She has complained and objected to the lock on her front door being broken, and lately the landlord has been entering unannounced to “check on things.” She has complained and objected to the lock on her front door being broken, and lately the landlord has been entering unannounced to “check on things.” She has complained and objected to the lock on her front door being broken, and lately the landlord has been entering unannounced to “check on things.” She has complained and objected to the lock on her front door being broken, and lately the landlord has been entering unannounced to “check on things.” She has complained and objected to the lock on her front door being broken, and lately the landlord has been entering unannounced to “check on things.” She has complained and objected to the lock on her front door being broken, and lately the landlord has been entering unannounced to “check on things.” She has complained and objected to the lock on her front door being broken, and lately the landlord has been entering unannounced to “check on things.” She has complained and objected to the lock on her front door being broken, and lately the landlord has been entering unannounced to “check on things.”

Maria is an all-too-typical client of the WATCH Housing Advocacy Clinic, a free drop-in service in a storefront along the busy downtown of Waltham. The Advocacy Clinic assists clients with fair and safe housing issues, including addressing lead, asbestos and other environmental exposure risks often present in low-income housing, and preventing evictions and homelessness. A wide variety of clients seek help at the clinic; advocates assist single mothers and fathers, teenagers, the elderly, the mentally and physically disabled. The Housing Advocacy Clinic also often provides the first critical point of contact for many in the low-income, often immigrant community for referral to other needed services such as food and fuel assistance, medical care, domestic abuse prevention and job training. In addition, the clinic serves as a link for clients to become involved with WATCH’s advocacy and organizing efforts for affordable housing, and connect them to weatherization programs, English and financial literacy classes and free vouchers for the local community farms organic outreach market.

The clinic began in 2007 with Laura Goldin’s Brandeis University undergraduate Environmental Law class as a novel partnership with WATCH, the local affordable housing and community development organization, in collaboration with the Boston College Law School Legal Assistance Bureau. The goal was to meet a real community need for tenant advocacy by leveraging the learning and energy of college students. The clinic has operated continuously since that time, with 250+ students assisting at least twice that number of individuals and families in the local area. The “staff” trained students and student leaders from Goldin’s further community-engaged learning classes, along with assistance from the undergraduate Martin Luther King Scholars and Friends club and others who assist as translators for the many Hispanic, Haitian-Creole and other non-English speakers.

Each semester and summer, two or three experienced student leaders serve as directed interns to supervise, organize, train and direct the clinic’s day-to-day operation. These leaders are key to the Advocacy Clinic’s successful and sustaining operation. Some have initiated significant improvements and additions, including creating and raising money for an emergency fund to provide small amounts of financial aid to clients at imminent risk of homelessness or other dire needs. Other students have helped to target issues of concern brought to light by the clinic, including patterns of discrimination in rentals and multi-family buildings with lead contamination. The Boston College Legal Assistance Bureau has been an essential partner for referral of cases requiring legal assistance beyond the Clinic’s purview.

The Advocacy Clinic has become a bustling place in serving community needs in its four and half years of operation; on any night it’s not uncommon for both narrow Clinic rooms to be overflowing into even narrower hallways with a procession of six to eight families. This need is no surprise; the densely-populated South Side of Waltham bordered by Brandeis and WATCH is home to more than half the city’s population and the majority of the city’s low-income immigrant families. According to the 2000 Census, nearly a third of those earn less than $25,000 per year (most who come to the clinic earn far less) and nearly 23 percent of South Side adults do not have high school diplomas. Twenty-five percent of South Side households with children are headed by single women, who historically face the highest levels of poverty.

The free clinic offers to that population and others a welcoming environment with caring student staff eager to educate and assist. To the students, it offers an opportunity not only to learn and grow as individuals.

Maria walks out of the Advocacy Clinic office after her hour-long visit with the students, knowing much more and feeling hopeful. She has learned that she has real rights as a tenant despite her lack of documentation, and avenues for immediate assistance to fix the critical problems in her apartment. She has also begun the application process for food stamps to ease her strained budget, connected with the utility to restore the heat at reduced rates, applied for English classes and learned about the many other resources available to her in the area. Most importantly perhaps, she has learned that she can solve many of her problems by asserting her rights, and that she herself can play an active role in joining with others to create a more just and empowered community.
Amy Lehman envisions treating patients from isolated African villages aboard a hospital boat

(Editors’ Note: This article appeared in The University of Chicago Magazine.)

BY RUTH E. KOTT

Amy Lehman was at a district hospital in Tanzania when a pregnant 16-year-old walked in, bleeding. Her undelivered baby was already dead. The girl had had an obstructed labor in Kala, a tiny village bordering Lake Tanganyika. "She was trying to deliver, and the baby [got] stuck," Lehman says. She had walked and ridden buses for three days, hemorrhaging, trying to reach the hospital to have a Cesarean section.

By the time she made it there, "it would have been hard to save this woman’s life if she had been at the University of Chicago medical intensive care unit." Without blood available for a transfusion, she died.

In the future, Lehman, AB’96, MD’05, MBA’05, imagines telling a very different story: the girl goes to the local medical dispensary, who calls a hospital boat on the lake. "Then we can pick up the woman or girl in obstructed labor on an outboard motor boat," she says, "and bring her back and do a C-section, and the baby lives and she lives."

In 2008 Lehman and Tanzanian-born Alwyn Andrew-Mziray, AB’94, MD’08, MBA’00 (who died unexpectedly in February), cofounded the Lake Tanganyika Floating Health Clinic, a nongovernmental organization that hopes to provide medical care to the millions of geographically isolated people of Lake Tanganyika, the world’s longest freshwater lake– people from Burundi, Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC), Tanzania, and Zambia.

The boat has not yet been built – the clinic first must raise $6 million for construction. But when finished, it will be a floating regional hospital, staffed by a crew of 30–35 doctors, nurses, and ship staff. The region’s understaffed and undersupplied health centers and medical-supply dispensaries will refer patients to the clinic, which could either pick people up on motor boats, "like a water ambulance," or air-lift them using a helicopter, which could land on the 200-foot-long boat. The organization also plans to help ramp up the first-line health centers, providing the medical supplies and manpower to deliver primary care and prevention services.

Creating a mobile hospital makes sense for several reasons, says Lehman, who first saw the dire state of the basin’s medical care while visiting the lake in 2007. First, given the region’s ongoing conflicts, hospitals "have been overrun by rebel armies, and all their assets have been taken." Second, the lake is the best way to reach lakeside villages. "Anybody who’s worked with lake communities," Lehman says, knows that boats are "culturally integral. It’s not only that it solves true logistics problems in terms of how you reach populations; it’s that populations recognize this as how they do things."

Lehman travels to Africa every few months to do medical outreach for the lakeside communities. To get to the southern Congo side, she takes three flights – Chicago to London; London to Johannesburg, South Africa; and Johannesburg to Lubumbashi, DRC. She then either drives for two-and-a-half days to the lake, gets a mining company to take her in a charter, or hops on a six-to-12-seat humanitarian flight. No matter where in the basin she’s trying to go, it’s several days of travel from Chicago.

Lehman never imagined she’d be working with African ministries of health, learning Swahili, and building a ship in eastern Africa. “Years ago, what I was planning on becoming was an academic general thoracic surgeon,” Lehman says, not “thinking about naval architecture and engineering, or how to build a ship in the middle of a landlocked lake in sub-Saharan Africa.”

As she raises the money to build, Lehman is helping the villages in other ways: providing mosquito nets to prevent malaria, still the top cause of death in the region (its grip has lessened in much of sub-Saharan Africa), training local community health workers, and planning to offer surgery to repair fistulas, prenatal care in the Congo and Tanzania, and treatment for eye diseases in Burundi. She’s made deep connections in the villages – one local even named her baby son “Dr. Amy Lehman.”

Lehman’s main goal is to reach more villages, helping as many people in the basin as her crew can. With her team, which includes the vessel consultant Brian Bartlett, MBA’09, as well as state-side fundraisers and African coordinators and consultants, Lehman has been focused on fundraising for the outreach projects. This fall she will launch a capital campaign to raise money for the ship. “If somebody plunked down [the $6 million] today” – not including an ideal endowment of $25–$30 million – “we could have the boat built in probably a year and a half,” says Lehman, who lives with her son, Max, a Lab Schools senior, in Chicago’s Bucktown neighborhood.

“Everything is planned out,” Lehman says. The clinic has local partners, and Lehman and her crew know where to get the raw materials. To design the ship, they’ve hired Alien Science and Technology, which does business with the Department of Defense, and they will use a Tanzanian shipbuilding organization. “We know everything about all this stuff,” says Lehman, “so it’s [just about] pulling a trigger.”
Do Something Awards Finalist, Adam Lowy

From DoSomething.org

Adam’s great-grandfather started a moving company over 90 years ago, and in working with his family, Adam has seen firsthand the amount of food that people throw away when they move. He recognized the potential of this wasted food and founded Move For Hunger, which works with moving companies to strengthen our nation’s food banks. Move For Hunger currently works with 130 moving companies across 32 states and has collected 150,000 pounds of food for food banks.

About “The Do Something Awards”

Since 1996, DoSomething.org has honored the nation’s best young world-changers, 25 and under. Do Something Award nominees and winners represent the pivotal “do-ers” in their field, cause, or issue. In 2012 the (up to) five finalists will be rewarded with a community grant, media coverage and continued support from DoSomething.org. The grand prize winner will receive $100,000.

Interview with Adam Lowy

DoSomething.org: How did you feel when you first learned of the problem you’re addressing?

Adam Lowy: Growing up, I never really thought about hunger. Hunger was always “somewhere else” or “not in my community.” I feel this is a common thought for many people in America who have never known what it is to go hungry. However, once I started to delve into the issue of food insecurity in this country, I was shocked to discover that 1 in 6 Americans do not have enough to eat. Out of this number, 17 million are children. As a country typically known for all we have, it is really upsetting to think of all those kids who go to bed hungry every night.

DS: How do you feel about it now?

AL: I have had the opportunity to visit a ton of food banks across the country since founding Move For Hunger. Growing up, I used to think that food banks were sad places handing out food to homeless people. Boy, was I wrong! In fact, the majority of people visiting food banks are the “working poor.” These individuals have one or two incomes, however, after paying for rent, gas, and utilities, there is simply not enough money left to purchase food.

I have found food banks to be some of the most inspirational places I have ever visited. They serve an important role in closing the poverty gap and offering people the support they need to get back on their feet. While I’m upset there is such a great need, I am happy to be a part of the solution!

DS: What person or experience sticks with you from when you first started your project?

AL: My family has owned a moving company in New Jersey for over 90 years, and I remember suggesting to my Dad to ask some of the people he was moving to donate their unwanted food. That month we collected over 350 lbs for our local food bank. Bringing that much food to the food bank was a feeling I’ll never forget. If our one little moving company in New Jersey could collect so much, I couldn’t help but think what could thousands of movers do?

DS: Who or what is your inspiration to keep going?

AL: I quit my job marketing luxury cars and setting up golf events to try and make a difference in this world. Here I was with a great job, which should have felt like a great accomplishment, but somehow it just didn’t feel like I was doing anything productive. Just knowing that my idea has the power to feed people is more than enough inspiration to keep going. My goal is to build Move For Hunger to become one of the largest, year-round food service organizations in America. Every day, I challenge myself to engage more people and collect more food.

DS: Can you describe the moment you knew that you were actually making a difference?

AL: Before we really started moving (pun intended), we tested our idea with about seven other movers across the country. The first time we saw one of our test movers collect food for their local food bank, I knew that what I was doing would work. This was no longer just me and my family’s moving company serving our community. We had created something sustainable that other movers could be proud of as well. To date, Move For Hunger works with over 145 movers in 35 states. Together, we have collected nearly 200,000 lbs of food for food banks across America. We’re only two years into the organization, and I’m really excited about continuing our momentum for the future.

DS: What was the most difficult roadblock you faced when you tried to start your project? When you were growing it?

AL: The most difficult roadblock I faced when starting Move For Hunger was the realization that not every moving company would want to participate in what I feel is a very simple idea. I made tons of phone calls in the beginning and some people were just not interested in getting involved. It’s really hard to hear that kind of rejection when you’re so excited about something, but I feel it motivated me to prove that Move For Hunger was something that could make an impact. The biggest challenge in growing an organization based on goodwill and philanthropy is keeping our network of movers motivated. This is something new and different for the moving and transportation industry. We are literally mobilizing this entire industry for change. It is only now, after two years, that we have been able to change the way we communicate with our movers and keep them enthusiastic about hunger relief on a daily basis. Seeing the food donation receipts come in is my favorite part of the day!

DS: What has surprised you the most about the journey that has taken you here today?

AL: The biggest surprise has been the incredible need for hunger relief in this country and how much it has risen. This really hit home when I looked at some of the statistics in my own community. Over 127,000 people living in Monmouth & Ocean Counties received emergency food assistance in 2010. 40 percent of those in need are children. This is an 84 percent increase since 2006. It’s still hard to believe that there is such great need in a community surrounded by wealth on the Jersey Shore.

DS: What advice do you have for other young leaders who are having a tough time getting their ideas off the ground?

AL: Dream big and act bigger. If you truly believe in your idea, you’ll be able to talk about it with honesty and enthusiasm, and people will listen to you. There are a million ideas out there; don’t be afraid to make yours heard. Your job is to show people why you are the best at what you do.

DS: If you could have done one thing differently based on what you know now, what would it be and why?

AL: I would’ve put more time into a formal strategic plan in the beginning rather than focusing just on our organization’s mission. My board and I have been working to complete our strategic plan now over the past few months, and already it has shown us great insight into our strengths, weaknesses, capabilities, and goals for the future. While I’m excited to move forward on this now, it definitely would have been easier to dedicate more time to this roadmap in the beginning stages rather than two years down the road.

DS: What’s next for your project?

AL: We hope eventually to partner with every major moving van line in the country. These partnerships will offer not only financial support to our organization, but awareness and engagement on the part of their moving agents. The more moving companies we get involved, the greater our impact will be. Every move is an opportunity to give back.

This interview was conducted by DoSomething.org. Text DOSOMETHING to 38383 to find out how you can take action around issues in your community.
Narratives Of Citizenship: Indigenous & Diasporic Peoples Unsettle The Nation-State

Margaret R. Somers (Cambridge Cultural Social Studies Series; 350pp; July 2008)

Genealogies of Citizenship is a remarkable rethinking of human rights and social justice. As a global governance is increasingly driven by market fundamentalism, growing numbers of citizens have become socially excluded and internally stateless. Against this movement to organize society exclusively by market principles, Margaret Somers argues that socially inclusive democratic rights must be counter-balanced by the powers of a social state, a robust public sphere and a relationally-sturdy civil society. Through epistemologies of history and nativism, contested narratives of social capital, and Hurricane Katrina’s racial apartheid, she warns that the growing authority of the market is distorting the non-contractualism of citizenship; rights, inclusion and moral worth are increasingly dependent on contractual market value. In this path breaking work, Somers advances an innovative view of rights as public goods rooted in an alliance of public power, political membership, and social practices of equal moral recognition - the right to have rights.

E-Governance And Civic Engagement: Factors And Determinants Of E-Democracy

Arun Manoharan and Marc Holzer (IGI Global; 481pp; October 2011)

E-Governance and Civic Engagement examines how e-government facilitates online public reporting, two-way communication and debate, online citizen participation in decision-making, and citizen satisfaction with e-governance. The book explores the impacts from governments that have engaged their citizens online, discusses issues and challenges in adopting and implementing online civic engagement initiatives globally, and helps guide practitioners in their transition to e-governance.

Do More Than Give: The Six Practices of Donors Who Change the World

Leslie R. Crutchfield, John V. Kania, and Mark R. Kramer (Jossey-Bass; 272pp; March 2011)

Do More Than Give provides a blueprint for individuals, philanthropists, and foundation leaders to increase their impact. Based on Forces for Good, this groundbreaking book demonstrates how the six practices of high-impact nonprofits apply to donors aiming to advance social causes. Rather than focus on the mechanics of effective grantmaking, reporting, or evaluation, this book instead proposes that donors can become proactive catalysts for change by rising to meet the challenges of our increasingly interdependent world.

Civic Engagements: The Citizenship Practices of Indian and Vietnamese Immigrants

Caroline R. Brettell and Deborah Reed-Danahay (Stanford University Press; 292pp; October 2011)

For refugees and immigrants in the United States, expressions of citizenship and belonging emerge not only during the naturalization process but also during more informal, everyday activities in the community. Based on research in the Dallas–Arlington–Fort Worth area of Texas, this book examines the socio-cultural spaces in which Vietnamese and Indian immigrants are engaging with the wider civic sphere.

As Civic Engagements reveals, religious and ethnic organizations provide arenas in which immigrants develop their own ways of being and becoming “American.” Skills honed at a meeting, festival, or banquet have resounding implications for the future political potential of these immigrant populations, both locally and nationally. Employing Lave and Wenger’s concept of “communities of practice” as a framework, this book emphasizes the variety of processes by which new citizens acquire the civic and leadership skills that help them to move from peripheral positions to more central roles in American society.
Renae Townsend

ESL teacher in Goochland County, VA

(Editors Note: This article appeared in the University of Virginia Magazine.)

Last summer, I visited a children’s home in Santa Cruz, Bolivia, called the Stansberry Children’s Home. The trip was full of unexpected coincidences and on the first day, I discovered surprising connections to both the University of Virginia and Canada, my country of birth.

Two years ago, I volunteered as a teacher and coordinator for an after-school Spanish club along with several parents. Ms. Stansberry attended the club meetings with her two children. Her grandparents, Elena and John Stansberry, founded the orphanage in Bolivia in 1954. With this fortuitous connection, my sister Jennette and I applied to volunteer there.

We arrived in Santa Cruz in June 2011 and were chauffeured to our destination by ‘Tio Carlos’ Uncle Chuck, one of the co-directors of the orphanage. As he drove us through the streets to our destination, close to the ‘quinto ahí’ or fifth ring of the city, we had our first dose of culture shock. The streets of Santa Cruz are littered with garbage, the buildings are cinderblock, and the roads eventually transition from pavement to mud.

Santa Cruz is the largest city in Bolivia, an urban sprawl of 1.5 million, divided into seven “rings.” Our first few days in Santa Cruz were filled with the unique sights and sounds of this bustling community. The orphanage is in the ‘Barrrios de Misiónes,’ a community of sprawling neighboring houses and businesses, two Evangelical churches and one Catholic Church. In addition to the voices of children, the orphanage is endlessly serenaded by sound from these churches. We were lulled to sleep or roused in the mornings by Catholic hymns or Evangelical drums and electric guitars amplified through loud speakers in cinder block structures.

In the first week, we learned the orphanage’s routines and structures. The Stansberry Children’s Home is divided into two parts, supported by churches and a board of directors in the United States and Canada. One part is the children’s home and orphanage. The other is the “The Guardaria” or daycare. ‘Tio Carlos’ and ‘Tia Cindy’ are the co-directors of the establishment.

The first coincidence of our trip was as soon as my sister and I met Tio Carlos and Tia Cindy, we instinctively recognized their Canadian accents. My sister and I are both Canadians by birth and still have family in Canada. Our first dinner in Bolivia was at Tio Carlos and Tia Cindy’s house. While I had expected to eat beans and rice for my first meal, we were instead served meat loaf and potatoes – a familiar Canadian dinner. Our host’s daughter, Ana, had recently graduated from a private school in Bolivia and acted as our tour guide.

The children’s home is divided into three separate houses ‘casas’ that each provides shelter for 12-15 children. Each casa has caregivers who are native Bolivians. Papa Mario and Mama Eva took care of the children in casa one. Tia Marta had casa two, and Tio Alberto and Tia Hilaria had casa three.

While touring the casas with Ana, we discovered the second coincidence. As I crossed the heath of casa three, I noticed a plaque bearing the name of Chi Alpha and the University of Virginia. I was told later that a team of students from Chi Alpha had contributed to the funding and building of the casas at the orphanage. Casa two bears the name “Katie,” the sister of the director of Chi Alpha, Pete Bullete. Katie tragically passed away from cancer and casa two is named in her memory.

After settling in, we were given our job responsibilities. We were to care for one casa each day. Wednesday through Friday we babysat the little children, helped the older children bring their lunch from the central kitchen to their casas in a garden wheelbarrow, and served it out to the children at a large table. We made sure the children showered, dressed and combed their hair before going to school. In Bolivia, school-aged children only attend school in the afternoons from 1 to 5 p.m.

Jennette assisted me with these duties, but she also spent several hours each morning and afternoons assisting workers at the ‘guardaria’ or daycare. While the Stansberry Children’s Home accommodates children from infancy all the way through their college years, the daycare is a community service for children who live outside the home. It was specifically added onto the orphanage several years ago with the intent of providing community outreach to single mothers or fathers in the community. The daycare also employs local Bolivians who care for the children during the day and provide them with basic education, hygiene and healthy food. The daycare is very important because it provides an extension of its much-needed services to children in the local community, who suffer from the effects of poverty and lack of education. The orphanage also offers a ‘biblioteca’ library program, a before- and after-school tutoring program for children who live in the orphanage and the surrounding community. I spent my extra time working with the biblioteca’s educational psychologist and taught English to the children of the biblioteca. I was invited by the school psychologist to help her research and compile a presentation on Fetal Alcohol Syndrome. We presented our facts about Fetal Alcohol Syndrome and strategies that teachers and parents could use with the children, some of whom suffer from the syndrome.

I met beautiful children who will always have a special place in my heart. My sister and I had pizza parties for each casa, and the highlight was the soda that we bought. Soda was a special treat at the home because it was seldom an item on their menu. It was a big job to gather up ingredients from meat suppliers and make pizza – from scratch – for more than 30 children. But to hear their prayers prior to the meal made the extra labor worth it. The children were always eager to pray and thank God for every blessing they could think of. Their pure and simple prayers revealed the voices of children who were blessed, loved and provided for. They also revealed that the children longed for families and parents of their own.

I feel lucky to spend my summer at the children’s home. All the unexpected twists and turns of the journey seemed to lead right back home. And while I set out on this trip to help others, I found that I was the person who had been helped the most. Learn more about the Stansberry Children’s Home here: http://www.stansberrychildren.org/home/about.htm

Share Your Service Story
Share your public service photos and stories with us so we may include them in a future issue. Contact us at pubserve@andromeda.rutgers.edu

Personal Reflections

School of Public Affairs and Administration | Rutgers University-Newark

Civic Engagement | Nov/Dec. 2011
The Alliance 4 Public Service actively promotes public service and personal responsibility across the public, private, and nonprofit sectors.

The Alliance’s work is published on the Alliance website, http://publicservice.newark.rutgers.edu, along with up-to-date information on public service news, events, organizations, research, publications, and more.

Join the Alliance now for updates on events, publications, and professional development opportunities.

Email today: pubserve@andromeda.rutgers.edu

http://publicservice.newark.rutgers.edu