

Cover story



By Rebecca Tavernini

How thousands of NMU students are getting their feet wet, and hands dirty, as leaders in and contributors to the local community and beyond...

”I learned much from being an engaged citizen, but most importantly, I learned that there is more to college than the classes. Obviously classes are important and there is no substitute for good grades, but I was reminded that I needed to be responsible for my personal growth as well ... to appreciate my communities much more and look past my own needs to see the needs of others.” So writes NMU senior Christina Boncyk, who took part in one of Northern’s many programs that blend service with learning.

While volunteering to help people in Marquette, supporting causes in Washington, D.C., or launching efforts to feed refugees in a third-world country is nothing new at NMU, the role of service and experience as a vital part of an education has recently taken center stage. Not only has increased “service learning” become a goal of the

university, it has been eagerly embraced by students.

Consider Superior Edge, for instance. It was launched two years ago with the goal of having 1,000 students enroll in the program. In the first year alone, 900 registered, and today 1,738 students are actively participating in it, with many more expected. That’s 17 percent of the student body voluntarily taking part in a program that requires 100-400 hours of activities, often above and beyond their packed class schedules.

Christina’s “edge” experience was with the Alzheimer’s Association, hospice and the hospital’s psychiatric ward. Ironically, by giving more, she got more. She says, “When I started volunteering regularly, just a couple of hours a week, I realized how others with much greater needs than me were coping.”

The benefits of Superior Edge, the Student Leader

Fellowship Program (SLFP), academic service learning classes, and other campus-community involvement and volunteer activities radiate in many directions—and they are long lasting. For one, (and for those who like quantitative proof), graduates in programs where engagement is heavily integrated have high employment or graduate school admission rates. Furthermore, adds NMU President Les Wong, “Students who have a record of service learning help employers see that their investment in a student is going to pay off sooner.”

But there’s so much more. Here’s an overview of these programs at NMU, and how they’re changing students, faculty, organizations and communities, and will surely make the world a little bit better.

Superior Edge

“Learning to live a life that matters.”

Superior Edge gives students the opportunity to combine in- and out-of-the classroom experiences in a way that will provide them an “edge” with employers or graduate schools. Students can participate in any number of the program’s four edges: citizenship, diversity, leadership and real world experiences. To complete an edge, students must devote 100 hours to it, log the hours and complete a reflection paper. So far, 100,000 total hours have been logged.

“I learned that being uncomfortable in a situation isn’t always a bad thing. I overcame that uneasiness and had one of the best summers of my life. It was great. This edge helped me to take a chance and discover who I was. Maybe this is what the Superior Edge is all about, taking chances.”

—Tyler Weber



While a number of universities have leadership programs, what’s unique about this one is that it offers such a variety of exploration in one program, and allows students to design their own experiences, using a combination of courses, research, service, internships, work, involvement in organizations and other possibilities. This program is open to all students, regardless of major, class standing or grade point average. Completed edges are noted on a student enrichment transcript, which accompanies their academic transcript.

“Superior Edge is providing a transformative experience for participating students as they discover that

a meaningful life is built on a foundation of hard work, service, and the courage to take chances,” states Rachel Harris, Superior Edge associate director. “Their hours of work, volunteering, and commitment represent a priceless investment in confidence, self-esteem, and the future.”

It’s been rewarding building this one-of-a-kind initiative to prepare our graduates to be effective in their work and in society, to help employers thrive, to solve problems, take risks, and embrace responsibility.

In the citizenship edge, students might do such things as assist with a fund-raiser for the Humane Society, work with YMCA programs, volunteer with hospice, harvest on an organic farm or take phone-in questions during public TV programs.

The diversity edge may find students learning dances from New Zealand, taking part in discussions on Islam, helping coordinate a Native American food tasting event or exploring Japanese art.

In leadership edge activities students might tutor students, help create a school newspaper, intern with a program getting high school students interested in careers in geriatrics or lead a team of entrepreneurs in securing funds for a new business.

And in the real-world edge, students may expand their business skills at an insurance agency, teach Spanish, build homes or even dress up as Paul Bunyon for a lesson in Michigan history.

Superior Edge graduates possess a “value added” degree that says to employers or grad schools that they’re not only smart, they can also communicate, lead, work in teams, analyze problems, work hard and manage their time.

“During the medical school admissions process, my involvement in the Superior Edge and SLFP was one of the central topics of many interviews,” writes **Amanda Moraska ’08 BS**, who is attending medical school at Mayo Clinic. “It set me apart from pools of thousands of other applicants. With the growing need for effective leadership in health care, admissions committees were

particularly impressed with the diversity of my leadership knowledge and experiences combined with real world applications of these skills, which they felt were an invaluable supplement to my academic preparation.”

Student Leader Fellowship Program

“Building Blocks for Your Future”

With a mission to develop competent, ethical, community-centered leaders, this two-year program takes a select group of about 50 students each year, trains them in leadership theory and practice, exposes them to at least 15 different “skill builder” workshops, matches them with a leadership mentor in the community and then culminates in a year-long community service internship, which each student independently plans, organizes and implements.

This year the program was one of four state finalists for the Jimmy and Rosalyn Carter Partnership Award for Campus-Community Collaboration.

“It is truly remarkable that each year 50-60 more NMU students commit to setting aside approximately four hours every week throughout two academic years for the sole purposes of developing themselves and enhancing the community,” says Jon Barch, assistant director for the Center for Student Enrichment. “It is equally remarkable

of which were new project sites. This year’s block marks the 17th year of the SLFP. Over this time, 653 leaders have been nurtured, 535 community members have served as mentors, and more than 73,000 hours of service have been performed at 302 different internship sites.

Not only are the experiences life-changing at the time, but they serve students well as they move on.

“Graduate school admissions drilled me with questions about my experience in leadership, management, volunteerism, and with questions that went something like, ‘What kind of familiarity do you have working with a diverse group of people?’” says **Amanda Lobsinger ’08 BS**. “Luckily, I could tell them all about my SLFP Community Service Internship at Superior Hills Elementary School and how I spent 100 hours working towards my diversity edge. Without these extracurricular experiences, I’m not sure I would have been able to answer half of my interview questions with such confidence and ease. I will be bringing what I learned with me down whatever path I take in the future.” She is pursuing a master’s degree in higher education at Illinois State University.

Barch adds, “The talent and dedication of our Student Fellows is truly impressive. They leave me reassured that our world, with all of its challenges and problems, is in good hands with the leaders that are emerging.”

“After two years in the program, I look back at my younger self and see motivation without purpose, drive without direction, and a person not quite sure of what she could do with her time to give. Two years later, I feel confident, strong in my leadership abilities, and extremely self-aware with a clear idea of what I can do to make a difference, no matter how small.”

—Kara Granroth



that 50-60 civically involved members of the Marquette community join in to mentor the first-year student fellows and 30-40 staff members at various community organizations commit to offering advisement and support for second-year student fellows in their internships. This program, a one-of-a-kind partnership between NMU and the Marquette community, is just one example of how NMU is an extraordinary place for developing citizen leaders.”

Each cohort chooses a “color block” to represent themselves. Students in the Mint Block, who graduated from the program in May, performed approximately 4,500 hours of service at 30 different internship sites, 19

Academic Service Learning “Connecting the Community and the Classroom”

A relatively new and growing teaching methodology, academic service learning is a course-based, credit-bearing educational experience in which students participate in an organized service activity that meets identified community needs. Students reflect on their service activity in such a way as to gain further understanding of course content, a broader appreciation of the discipline, and an enhanced sense of both personal values and civic responsibility.

“Well over 50 percent of students learn best from hands-on experiences. Many students have expressed how much better their experience is in a class when it includes active learning,” explains Dave Bonsall, director of the Center for Student Enrichment. “A number of students have found that an academic service learning experience affirms their choice of a major/career. There have also been cases where this type of experience has helped students come to the realization that the major they are in is not the right one for them.”

President Wong echoes that sentiment: “Academic service learning enables students to test drive a career before they enter it. It adds the emotional element to an education. And it allows students to discover their self-identity.”

HPER associate professor Bill Connor agrees. “When you get the kids out there you can see the fire in their belly—or you can see ‘this isn’t for me.’” In his ASL classes that pair his students with K-12 students in gym activities or in which they create and instruct individualized aquatics lessons for handicapped children, he’s seen students who were scared and unconfident turn into students with a passion for their subject and a gift for teaching. “It’s a win-win collaborative program,” he adds.

Currently, 52 courses at Northern have an ASL component. Official designation began in the winter 2008 semester, so there are likely many that include service learning, but are not yet registered.

recently-retired Bob Kulisheck, were honored with awards in 2007 from the Michigan Campus Compact (along with six NMU students) for being champions of academic service learning.

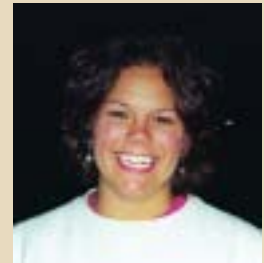
“I like ASL projects because so many people benefit from the work,” says Charles Ganzert, Communications and Performance Studies professor and ASL faculty liaison. “Students try harder when they know their projects mean something. The community participants enjoy the chance to share their work with young people and get assistance on a project. As a faculty member, it is more fun to come to work when you know you can make a difference in your town.”

Basically, ASL makes learning fun and meaningful for all involved. A few recent activities include:

- Student teacher candidates in three education courses created “book bags” containing books, art materials and ideas for first graders, to promote literacy development at home.
- A construction management class, CN 450 Project Control, took on the conceptualization, planning, scheduling, budgeting and design of a renovation of the local American Legion post. A group of 35 students worked on the project for about seven weeks, presenting different options to the Legion group. “The student effort was phenomenal,” says instructor Mike Andary. “And they learned a lot about the importance of client

“For the last 24 months, I’ve learned theories, practices and cases that relate to public relations. Academic service learning in my PR 330 Message Design course allowed me to apply those concepts in an area of interest. By working alongside an actual client, I was able to experience breakthroughs and setbacks, like a professional PR practitioner.”

—Andrea Jerabek



While faculty report that ASL is a great way to engage students who are different types of learners, improve content learning and student-to-student camaraderie, students aren’t the only ones who benefit from ASL courses. Instructors also find rewards in improved student-to-teacher camaraderie and job satisfaction. As ASL becomes more prevalent (and understood) on campus, there’s more collaboration between faculty on curricula and outreach efforts.

Also, fifteen \$500 “action grants” are provided by the provost’s office to help facilitate some of the courses. Two NMU faculty members, Sandra Poindexter and

relationships.” As far as the client goes, Post Commander Frank Donckers affirms, “They brought a lot of expertise and enthusiasm I hadn’t expected. This plan had been on the table for years, but once they got involved, it got done. And the end product is outstanding.” Student Jamie Martin says, “It was a living, breathing experience. As a class it gave us pride to take part in a community project. Personally, it was a real stepping stone in my career.” This semester the class is evaluating which one of three new projects to undertake.

- English Prof Kia Richmond used a \$6,000 grant to implement a “Good Books” project that paired her

students with high school students from Teaching Family Homes (a facility for neglected and abused children) to explore books together.

- Many activities live on after a semester is over. In courses offered through the Nursing and HPER departments which have taken students to Honduras over the past three years to practice public health, students are now undertaking the development of a Web site to raise funds for a new hospital there, which adds another dimension of skills to apply to real-world situations.

NMU Volunteer Center

The NMU Volunteer Center is another way that Northern connects with community. Needs are e-mailed or phoned in to the center, which is staffed by three student employees. An e-mail update is sent out weekly to 2,000 students, faculty and staff who have registered to receive the list of volunteer opportunities and events. The center also runs a program that matches agencies to student organizations committing a certain number of hours a month. The center sponsors a number of annual projects that include blood and bone marrow registration drives and Special Olympics.

“A good estimate is that there are a couple thousand students volunteering doing about 100,000 hours a year,” says student Nicole Weber, the center’s assistant coordinator.

are not aware of what is located in Marquette. It is important to instill a sense of service and community in students while in college so that they will continue to volunteer as a lifelong passion.”

• • •

Whether it’s Working with the Wongs for Habitat for Humanity, a student group raising \$22,000 for cancer research, Art and Design students creating Web sites for small towns or a geography class partnering with the Nature Conservancy to monitor a watershed, a fervent osmosis of service and engagement is occurring at NMU.

With “Community Engagement” and “Meaningful Lives” as two of the four driving forces in the university’s strategic plan, The Road Map to 2015, it’s clear those goals are already in motion.

As collaborations expand, an important distinction has emerged. “In discussing potential programs with agencies, we’ve been changing the language we use from ‘volunteer’ to ‘partner,’” explains President Wong. “When we talk about ‘co-instructing’ there’s a real excitement, and more of a sense of responsibility attached to it.”

“Service-related activity is being embraced at NMU and is rapidly becoming a distinguishing feature of this university for some very good reasons,” says Bonsall. “We have a very genuine student body with a strong service



Make a Difference Day



Good Books for Teaching Family Homes



Stream restoration partnership

One of the biggest activities the center coordinates is the annual Make a Difference Day. Last year more than 90 student organizations and 900 students participated, doing painting and yard work for elderly or disabled residents. The center hopes to implement a spring edition of Make a Difference Day in April.

“Service can be such an integral component of higher education and can help students develop community-minded thinking and life skills,” adds Nicole. “Many students move here from outside of Marquette and are interested in volunteering but can find it overwhelming or challenging to find opportunities on their own since they

ethic, a supportive faculty and an engaged, welcoming community. But the rapid growth of learning through service has created one of those ‘good problems’—we simply do not have the staff or resources needed to fully develop all of the opportunities that are available to us.”

“As we grow, we need to find ways to better document and share these activities, to organize and coordinate our efforts,” states Provost Susan Koch. “These are critical experiences at our university. It’s more than volunteering—it’s an intellectual activity. It’s part of our identity.” ■

Running the Race

By Kristi Evans



Andy Gregg, MQT Photo

The U.P. 200 Sled Dog Race will reach its 20th anniversary milestone in February. Thousands of visitors will descend upon Marquette and join with local residents to line downtown Washington Street for the start of this Iditarod qualifier. They will cheer as each 12-dog tandem—with musher and sled in tow—eagerly lurches from the chute and begins carving through the snow with rhythmic precision before disappearing down the darkened trail. For spectators, the race is poetry in motion. For organizers, it is a smooth operation, thanks in large part to the work of 1,000 volunteers. Many are NMU students or employees.

“We can and have run the race with less support, but it’s much easier and there’s better coverage all around since we’ve been able to mobilize the university community,” says Cori Bodeman, U.P. 200 volunteer coordinator. “Of the 600 people I’ve got working the start and finish, half are NMU students.”

Volunteers also help with set up and take down, vet checks before the race and at checkpoints, dog handling, road crossings, crowd control and bag checks to ensure mushers comply with the rules and carry the required gear.

“Several student organizations and the Greek system help out and it’s nice to see the legacies they’ve created by taking on the same jobs or helping at the same locations each year,” Bodeman says. “The constructors group builds the barricades, the rugby team helps erect them and groom snow, the crew team helps with the take down and other groups follow a similar pattern each year. The volunteer registration has also improved. With the help of NMU, almost all of it’s done online now.”

The U.P. 200 injects more tourism revenue into the local economy than any other annual event, according to Pat Black, director of the Marquette Country Convention and Visitors Bureau. “My guess is that the race brings in about \$2 million in spending in the county over the three days. It certainly generates out-of-town visitors. Hotel rooms are generally sold out well in advance.”

While many NMU individuals and groups volunteer on their own accord, there are also coordinated class activities. One is an academic service learning course that allows students to apply classroom theory to real-world situations and write a reflection paper on the experience. It is taught by College of Business professor Carol Steinhaus.

She started volunteering for the race in part because of her professional interest in organizational behavior and how people function in group activities.

“I met with the volunteer coordinator and we talked and I became excited about the prospect of initiating some student involvement,” Steinhaus recalls. “The first year, I had a few students from my classes help out. But then we created a one-credit, special topics teamwork course.

“Of the 600 people I’ve got working the start and finish, half are NMU students.”

Students applied concepts they learned in a prerequisite management course to actually managing aspects of the race.”

This year the course has morphed into a pair of two-credit sessions—one in the fall that covers event planning and one in the winter that focuses on event management. Students will assume major planning and leadership roles for both the Noquemanon cross-country ski race in January and the sled dog races in February. The latter includes the U.P. 200 and the shorter-distance Midnight Run and Jack Pine 30.

Steinhaus says her students originally helped in setting up and

taking down barricades along the route, serving as road crossing guards and performing key activities at checkpoints and the finish line. This year they will also take on major roles in Munising to mark the finish of the Midnight Run, and in Gwinn, the start of the Jack Pine 30. The class also will supervise other student groups in race operations.

“It is important people realize that NMU students support the community like the community supports NMU,” Steinhaus says. “The sled dog folks have been very happy with the students’ work and some students have even received job offers from people who were impressed by the effort they saw. Overall, this partnership of a wonderful community group, a rather unusual event and an NMU class of energetic, committed and focused students has been a fantastic success.”

The students do everything—they’ve even helped sled dog teams that have stopped get back on track. In Munising, one student had her NMU laptop with her to study during the slow periods. When the race coordinator’s computer crashed, they

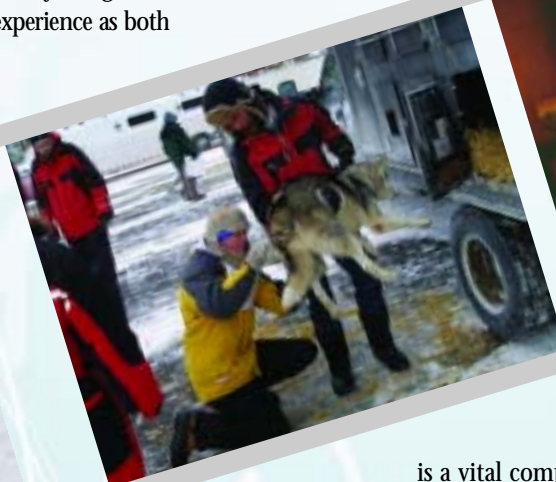


computers to use. They work with Terwilliger and U.P. 200 Web site manager **Bev Stroh '98 BS '00 MPA** to conceptualize story ideas and conduct necessary interviews before writing content that is posted online.

Communication and Performance Studies professor Dwight Brady, along with students in an advanced field production course, shot and contributed video footage of the 2005 race to ESPN's "Timeless" series.

“It turns out to be a great experience for everyone,” Terwilliger says. “It provides real-world reporting and publication experience for students and solid content for Bev.”

Former feature writing student Nancy Longtine described the experience as both



only because there was a chance of having a piece published, but because we have been given the chance to work with community members who are involved in a huge community event. I interviewed a musher who invited me to attend her dog team’s pre-race vet check. That’s something I’d probably never have gotten the chance to do if it hadn’t been for this assignment.”

Communication and Performance Studies professor Dwight Brady, along with students in his advanced field production course, shot and contributed video footage of the 2005 race to ESPN’s “Timeless” series. They also produced a documentary titled “U.P. 200: A Community Pulling Together,” which won a Michigan Broadcasters Association award and—at this writing—could be viewed on the event’s home page at



www.up200.org.

Audio communication

is a vital component of the race. NMU employees and alumni affiliated with the Hiawatha Amateur Radio Association (HARA) provide a critical link between checkpoints along the route and the race headquarters in Marquette.

“The ham radios are unbelievably valuable,” says **Pat Torreano '68 BME**, U.P. 200 director. “Computers

challenging and rewarding.

“This has really been a sort of a trial by fire,” she says. “Each of us has had some experience writing in the past and we all bring different skills and ideas to the table when we workshop our articles. It was exciting, not

ended up using her laptop.

Students in English professor Cate Terwilliger’s feature writing course also put their notebook

can go down, so they're a big safety net. With the ham radio network and the computerized system, though, we've sure come a long way from the very first race. That was done with one telephone at the Holiday Inn ... and white trail markers."

One contingent of ham operators—including retired and current engineering and technology professors Carol Hicks and Mike Cauley and NMU alumnus **Pete Kotila '79 MS**—even constructed an igloo from scratch one year as a creative wind block at their remote location on the Rapid River truck trail off M-95.

"The operators report in all of the bib

says ham radios are more viable than cell phones for relaying the progress of the race, in part because there are no disruptions in signal or service between Marquette and Grand Marais (the farthest checkpoint of the 200-mile race).

"And unlike cell phones, which only allow point-to-point communication, ham radios are all tuned to the same frequency," Smith adds. "The information is shared among all of the operators simultaneously, so they can follow up with

NMU dean of Academic Information Services and a spare-time musher, competing in mid-distance events in Wisconsin and the Upper Peninsula, including the Midnight Run. Walch has seen university employees in action and has enjoyed watching students help mushers get their teams to the start line and assist with vet checks. She's also spotted at least one



numbers and times that sledgers come through our locations," explains Hicks. "They also take care of emergencies that come up. One time, a sled came through with no rider. We ran out and stopped the dogs and called it in. About a half hour later the driver jogged in looking for her team. Now and then racers also drop out, so you have to call in and get a support team to truck out there and haul the dogs and sleds away. We also assist with traffic control when teams cross a road."

Eric Smith '95 MA, director of NMU broadcast and audio-visual services, has assisted in the effort. He

questions or helpful feedback immediately, if needed. It has worked out very well."

Mushers are intensely focused on their dogs and the race, but that doesn't mean they are blind to the impact of volunteers they briefly encounter along the way.

"It wouldn't be a race without them," stresses **Pete Curtice '86 BS** of Chatham, a past winner of the U.P. 200 who is taking a year off from competitive racing. "Mushers are there to satisfy their own personal needs and some are there to hopefully win a share of the purse. Volunteers put up with the odd hours and frigid temperatures because they want to help out and they simply find the sport attractive."

Darlene Walch '90 MA is

NMU alum who returns to Marquette specifically for the race.

"**Lee Nowak '66 BS** and his wife, Claudia, come from Traverse City to volunteer," Walch notes. "When Lee interacts with current students, I think he serves as a role model for them, exemplifying continuing participation in the community. And he's a Wildcat fanatic, so I'm sure the students know he's a Northern graduate."

This is hardly an exhaustive account of NMU involvement and the U.P. 200 is among several annual events that draw student and employee volunteers. But the race is perhaps the most shining example of the university's impact in giving back to the surrounding community through service.

The 20th running of the U.P. 200 is scheduled for Feb. 20-22. ■



By Kristi Evans

The NMU Constructors working on a Habitat for Humanity project in New Orleans, where they happened to meet up with the crew of "This Old House," and were featured in an episode. They are pictured with the show's iconic carpenter, Norm Abram, bottom center.

Building a better world

Northern Michigan Constructors leave behind tangible proof of their commitment to community service at every project location.

In Escanaba, an injured marine and his family now have a home that is wheelchair accessible and more energy efficient. In the Hurricane Katrina-ravaged Lower Ninth Ward of New Orleans, hopeful facades emerged from the desolation because students willingly sacrificed most of their holiday break to install new roofs and siding. At the Suicide Bowl in Ishpeming, an elevated judge's stand offers an improved vantage point for ski jumping competitions. And in Marquette, the club's organization and design efforts contributed to a memorial overlooking the beach near Picnic Rocks. The resulting sculpted metal angel standing atop a stone monument was motivated by the tragic 2005 drowning deaths of two NMU students.

Activities like these helped the constructors earn

"Student Organization of the Year" at last spring's leadership banquet.

"Sure, it's nice to be recognized, but I don't believe that's the drive behind the members in the club stepping up to volunteer," says Colin Philipp, NMC vice president. "It's just who we are. We have some unique talents and when we pull all of our resources together, we can accomplish great things. I don't think that it's important if we are remembered for the work that we have done, but rather that we know personally and as a group what we can and have achieved as a team."

Co-adviser Daryl Delongchamp adds, "I'm extremely proud of what they've done in the past and they're just as aggressive this year. It's a very active and well-organized group. They've had a growth in members—30 percent or better over the last year or so. The Superior Edge helps with that because it gives incentives for students to join

and get involved.”

The Constructors group is composed mainly of construction management and building technology majors, but membership is open to anyone. Many of its service activities are facilitated through previously established relationships with local organizations.

Students have provided leadership and labor for Marquette County Habitat for Humanity projects. They helped the Kiwanis Club demolish its former pavilion at Sunset Point on Presque Isle and will rebuild it in the near future. Constructors also field requests from on-campus entities.

“We fabricated wood sign cutouts used to publicize the USOEC versus China event throughout the community and we’re helping to rebuild USOEC weightlifting platforms,” says Ben Herman, president. “We designed and built a new modular display wall system for exhibits at the Beaumier Heritage Center and a new display for the Student Art Gallery. We’ve also built a relationship with the hospitality management program, helping on several projects including the design and construction of props used at their dining events.”

Constructors expanded their outreach to the national level in the wake of Hurricane Katrina in 2005. That December, 10 members worked on a Habitat for Humanity house in Montgomery, Ala. Their efforts garnered an extensive feature story in the *Montgomery Advertiser*. Most recently—in December 2007—the organization raised \$10,000 to fund a trip to New Orleans for another Habitat project. Nineteen students made the trip and put in 640 hours.

NMC member James Conlin reflects on the experience: “We repaired three roofs, sided two houses, finished

trim work on two porches and did other miscellaneous jobs, yet it didn’t feel as though all that work made much of a dent in a city with so much left to rebuild.”

Constructors also partnered with Heroes at Home/Rebuilding Together, a national effort to assist military families who lack the financial or physical resources to complete home repairs and other necessary improvements. **Mark Bonovetz ’00 BS** recruited the club for this Escanaba project.

“We not only helped with the accessibility aspect of the home, but we also installed in-floor heating, more energy-efficient windows and insulation,” explains Philipp.

Despite many contributions of sweat equity, Constructors manage to inject some fun into their organization. “We like to work hard and play hard,” says Herman. “Each year we put on barbecues, softball games and an annual ice fishing outing at Harlow Lake. The club provides a perfect opportunity for its members to evolve both professionally and socially. It’s a great way to meet new people and take on new leadership roles.”

NMC secretary Jake Supa agrees: “I have made many lifelong friends being involved with the club. Being with so many amazing individuals on different volunteering projects is awesome. You really grow as a person, but your personality and hard work help others grow, too.”

The organization’s motto—“Service, Leadership, Respect”—doubles as its mode of operation.

“It’s not a matter of having to help; our members have a drive to help,” Philipp says. “We are construction people. We are about building a better world for everyone, not only for ourselves.” ■

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Emerging as Butterflies

By Cindy Paavola, '84 BS

Inspirational writer Richard Bach once penned, “All we see of someone at any moment is a snapshot of their life, there in riches or poverty, in joy or despair. Snapshots don’t show the million decisions that led to that moment.”

It’s a sentiment to which senior Betsy Ott and junior Richard Andersons can certainly relate. Today, they are viewed by student peers, faculty and staff as dynamic student leaders—a snapshot in time so different than the picture they have of themselves back in high school.

That was back before deciding to attend Northern Michigan University; before joining NMU’s nationally recognized Student Leader Fellowship Program (SLFP) and getting involved with the university’s new civic development Superior Edge program. It was back before life-changing international study and internships.

One could argue that all students change during the collegiate experience. Andersons and Ott can only add, “some more than others.”

Ott, who hails from Brooklyn, Wis., says that while she was “quiet” in high school, she was active in sports—basketball and softball—the marching band and art club.

“But I wasn’t the one you noticed and whose name you knew. I was that kid who didn’t really fall into a category. I was hard to describe,” she says.

Ott was set to attend St. Cloud State in Minnesota when her mom, a school psychologist, met an NMU admissions counselor and decided they had to check out Northern.

“I was so taken with the beauty

of the area, but what really got me was that as we walked around NMU on the campus tour, everybody kept saying hi to the student tour guide and most of them called her by name,” recalls Ott. “I thought that was amazing.”

Being impressed with a school that seemed high on interactivity among campus members, however, didn’t translate into an engaged and interactive first semester for Ott, who says she “didn’t do anything, didn’t join anything, didn’t make many friends.”



“I think the biggest difference in me is that I’m just confident now. I know I’m good at what I do. I can go anywhere and make a community for myself.”

“Toward the end of the year, I thought, ‘This is crazy. I need to get involved in something.’

She decided to run for an ASNMU student government

position and won. As an ASNMU representative, Ott met people all over campus and in the community, learned about issues and began taking steps on a service path. By the end of that year, she applied and was accepted into the SLFP program. She also arranged for a study abroad experience in the Czech Republic for the following winter semester.

“I was on a course to get involved, but being in SLFP gave me the kick to take things to the next level. It made me think about things differently,” the English major says. “Everybody hears about how change won’t happen on its own, but being in SLFP turned that from something you hear people say to a choice about how you live.”

Ott got involved with Greenpeace when an organizational representative came on campus looking for a coordinator of an event called the International Day of Action, which highlights the effects of global warming. She signed up for the job, then spent equal amounts of time organizing things and wondering what she had gotten herself into. But she was hooked; she’d found a calling: advocating for the environment.

The Greenpeace connection continued. Two weeks after arriving in the Czech Republic, she received an e-mail from Greenpeace about an event at a coal mining site and was asked to participate.

“I said I’d go and then once I’d committed, I thought, ‘Oh my God. I don’t speak Czech. I can’t do this.’ Forcing myself to get up and go, to walk into that group not knowing anyone and with the language barrier was one of the hardest things I’ve ever done, but I did it. Today, whenever I’m intimidated by something, I think about that day,” Ott says.

Ott’s SLFP community service internship was working with

Greenpeace. She attended numerous regional and national conferences on environmental issues and was soon called upon by different national organizations to help train other students on advocacy. Last spring, Ott was chosen by the Michigan Campus Compact for NMU's Commitment to Service Award.

With graduation just months away, Ott looks forward to a possible career in public policy, which makes her chuckle with irony, considering she never cared much for politics before coming to NMU.

"I think the biggest difference in me is that I'm just confident now. I know I'm good at what I do. I can go anywhere and make a community for myself," Ott says. "And I've learned how to be comfortable in uncomfortable situations. In fact, I've learned that the more scared I am about doing something, the more it means I should do it. To have programs where you can learn these kinds of lessons is a huge, huge asset to students. The bottom line is this: If I can learn to do the things I've done, anybody can do them. My advice: Just jump in."

Which is exactly what Rich Andersons didn't do in high school and had no intention of doing when he arrived at NMU from his hometown of Lawrence, Mich.

"In high school, I was very quiet," he says. "I got along with most people and I had friends, but none really close enough to do a lot of things with. Getting involved back then? I just didn't do it. And when I got to NMU, I wanted to go to class, study and stay in my safe dorm room."

Someone living down the hall, resident adviser and SLFP participant Jeron Schmidt, had other ideas.

"Basically, Jeron drove me nuts. He simply would not leave me be. He kept asking me to go to things

with him and others in the house. Finally I went to dinner with him just because I couldn't keep saying no. At dinner, he and the others asked me all kinds of questions about myself. I remember thinking, 'These people seem genuinely interested in me.' I didn't expect that."



"Before getting involved, I thought a leader had to have just the right credentials, but I know now that anyone and everyone who wants to lead can. If you're inspired and choose to step up, you can change things."

Schmidt later convinced Andersons to take the hall treasurer's position, which made him the only freshman on the hall government executive committee. The new experience left Andersons with another unexpected situation—an outright hunger to get involved. Different student organizations were next on his agenda, which led to a shocking discovery.

"I found out I like being around people. I mean I really, really liked people," he says.

When Andersons first considered applying for SLFP, he thought, "Am I up for this?"

"For me, applying to SLFP was a challenge. It was kind of surreal. I knew if I applied and was accepted that it would be a whole new place for me. I would be making a statement.

"I remember the interview. I was sure I wouldn't be chosen. I told myself, 'They're looking for people who are more outgoing, people who can talk in front of a group, people with lots of leadership credentials already on their resume,'" he says.

But he did get in and spent last year with the rest of the cerulean block in the leadership theory course, meeting with his mentor, attending Skill Builder workshops, choosing a community service internship and stretching his definition of leadership. He also served as president of Hunt's hall government.

"Before getting involved with programs like SLFP and now Superior Edge, I thought a leader had to have just the right credentials, but I know now that anyone and everyone who wants to lead can. If you're inspired and choose to step up, you can change things."

That new-found confidence served him well in an internship with Zurich Financial Services in Schaumburg, Ill., last summer, writing about insurance business technology integration.

"Keep in mind that I've never worked in a business office in my life and I didn't know anything about insurance! But since coming to NMU and getting involved in all of the things I've gotten involved in, I've learned how to talk to be people, so that's what I did. Before I wrote anything, I'd find the person in charge of it and go and talk to them. They were so impressed that this intern was taking such initiative. That's just one example of what I've been learning to do here at Northern that I didn't even really realize I was

learning to do.”

This year, Andersons remains involved in several student groups and he’s now resident adviser for Hunt’s Arctic House. He’s also completing his SLFP community service internship, which consists of weekly after-school writing camps at Bothwell Middle School.

“When my old friends visit now, they are like, ‘Who are you?’ and I think that’s hilarious, but something that really moves me more is that even my parents have been impacted

by my activities at NMU. I think

I’ve kind of motivated them to get



This artistic demonstration outside of Cohodas Hall was part of the campus project Ott organized for Greenpeace to build awareness of global warming.

out of their shells, too. My mom has started volunteering at the local school and my dad is getting out

more in general and becoming more active in the community,” he says and can’t help but smile.

Andersons says that being an RA has given him a chance to be the “Jeron Schmidt” for other NMU students.

“I tell other students, ‘You can be something different than who you were in high school. Look for opportunities you think you might like and just go for it. Break out of your box. Take up a leadership role.’ Some just nod their heads, but some are taking my advice. I’m living proof that it doesn’t take much to get started—sometimes nothing more than a decision to go to dinner!” ■

Dedicated mentor

By Rebecca Tavernini

The demands of being a student can be rigorous, and it’s easy to get so caught up in school that having a life outside of it seems barely possible. The same goes for adults wrapped up in their busy careers. But **Gloria Clocklin ’75 BSN**, a nursing professor, not only thinks it’s important to create a fuller life, she makes it happen—for herself and the many students she has mentored through the Student Leader Fellowship Program. “I was involved in several different groups in the community and I saw that I might help students see the possibilities for not only professional development after school, but also how to have a life outside of nursing,” Clocklin recalls about initially volunteering as a mentor.

She has been matched mostly with nursing students—about eight of them over the years—and they’ll do things they’re both interested in, like take Skill Builder workshops together, perhaps go hiking, biking or snowshoeing, meet for lunch or coffee, volunteer at an event, and maybe do some baking and bring goodies to a local homeless shelter or safe house for abused women. “The students who live in the dorms especially enjoy the cooking part!” she jokes. “They learn that it doesn’t take a huge commitment to make an impact on people.”



Gloria Clocklin with student fellow mentees Heather Lanenga ’99 BSN and Jenny Petiprin ’99 BSN, volunteering together at the Special Olympics.

Clocklin says her involvement with the Junior Red Cross in high school was an experience that influenced her whole life, and not just her career. Serving as a mentor is a continuation of that, and a chance to pay back mentors she had along the way. “Just spending time together, being there for them to bounce ideas off of, or to talk about breaking up with a boyfriend, or challenges at school—I find that very rewarding,” she says. “It’s also exciting to watch them grow, become student leaders and start their careers. Many of us keep in touch long after the mentorship is over.”