Niagara University, a Catholic and Vincentian university has a long history of service to the community. The creation of the Niagara University Community Action Program (NUCAP) in 1965 formalized the involvement of Niagara's students in community service projects. In 1994, a grant from the Corporation for National Service enabled the University to expand community service efforts by establishing the Learn and Serve Niagara program, which encompasses the concept of service-learning. Service-learning is a method through which citizenship, academic subjects, skills and values are taught. It involves active learning for students who are able to reflect upon the experience of performing community service work within the structured context of course content. Students develop research, critical thinking and interpersonal skills and come to appreciate the larger social, ethical and environmental implications of knowledge. Service-learning enriches content areas by fostering social responsibility, intellectual and ethical reasoning. The Learn and Serve Niagara program promotes the mission of Niagara University by enhancing academic skills and life-long learning, by promoting and advocating social change, and by attempting to instill in students the value of service to others. Most importantly, it ensures the continued provision of necessary assistance to the poor, infirmed, aged and youth of the Niagara community.

Each year, faculty offer courses that have a service-learning component. In the academic year 2007-2008, several new, innovative classes were offered. Two of them were in the College of Business. In Dr. Peggy Choong’s (Professor of Commerce) marketing class, MGK 311, students collaborated with Junior Achievement to work with elementary students in Niagara and Erie Counties delivering the Junior Achievement curriculum. Each Niagara student taught approximately three hours during the semester. These business majors enjoyed their time in the classroom and came away with a new appreciation of the work of their classmates enrolled in the College of Education.

Dr. Craig Seal, Assistant Professor of Commerce, taught Management 341 where he encouraged his students to work with a local non-profit organization to aid that organization in developing business plans. This endeavor afforded Niagara students a valuable learning experience in applying material learned in the classroom to a real life situation. Additionally, the non-profits benefited by having much needed work accomplished.

Dr. Abigail Levin, Assistant Professor of Philosophy, incorporated a service-learning experience into Philosophy 399, Special Topics class. This particular ethics class focused on the issue of Animal Rights. Her students worked with the Niagara County SPCA, the Aquarium of Niagara and with other organizations that dealt with animal care. While the service-learning experience was an optional part of the course, thirty of the forty students in the class opted to participate in the service experience.

These are only three of the many service-learning courses offered each year by Niagara University faculty who are constantly innovating to improve student learning.

Dr. Marilynn Fleckenstein
5th-Annual Day Of Service

What was once a dream, again took shape in the service of over 90 people going out from the University to 21 sites in Niagara County. Professors and employees joined together to make a difference in agencies in Niagara Falls, Cambria, Lewiston and Lockport. We were in schools, preschools, hospitals, libraries, Girl Scout camps, gardens, aquariums, animal centers, nursing homes, offices and outreach agencies.

Here are some of the snatches of conversation overheard during the day:

The blueberry scones are the best,
I don’t even clean my house that thoroughly
I’m going back, I loved that place
Can’t we arrange to stay for the whole day? We just got started
They were so welcoming
That little old man was coloring and he seemed so peaceful
I’m going to sleep well tonight
This is my favorite day out of the whole year
OK, can we have brown shirts next year?
I could be there for the next month finishing up what I started this morning
I finally matched a face to the name that I’ve been hearing
So much to do, so little time
Very worthwhile.

MANY THANKS TO EACH AND EVERY ONE OF YOU

Some 90 NU members participated in the 5th Annual Day of Service

Marilynn Fleckenstein reflects on how successful the event was
On April 18, 2008 NU welcomed the eighth grade classes from three Buffalo Catholic Schools to campus. Students from Ambrose Catholic Academy, Notre Dame Academy, and Trinity Catholic Academy spent the day engaged in a variety of activities, all designed to give them a little taste of college life.

After a festive kick-off, the 125 students broke into small groups. An NU student volunteer guided each group through the day’s events which included engaging presentations from a variety of faculty, administrators, and students as well as a hands-on activity in either Castellani, Kiernan, or Career Development. The students were thrilled with lunch in Clet, as well as their souvenir NU calculator generously donated by our marketing Department. With the beautiful sunshine, the day couldn’t have been more perfect.

Ambrose principal, Laura Kazmierczak, graciously stated “The activities provided a great view of college life and the students had a wonderful time. It was an incredible experience! Your kindness and generosity was greatly appreciated by all of us. Thank you to all my friends at Niagara University.”

Learn & Serve extends thanks to those members of the NU community who made this day a memorable one for our school partners.
Now, students can access Service Learning information on the internet. Students can apply for Education placements, sign up for NUCAP events, and apply for transportation all online. Please feel free to check out our website!

Homepage: www.niagara.edu/learnserve

To Apply for an Education placement: www.niagara.edu/learnserve/tutor_placement.htm

To view and sign up for a NUCAP event: www.niagara.edu/learnserve/nucap.htm

For info on how to get your Service Learning placement: www.niagara.edu/learnserve/howtogetstarted.htm

To sign up for transportation once you have a placement: www.niagara.edu/learnserve/transportation_agreement.htm

Learn and Serve Niagara contact page: www.niagara.edu/learnserve/contact_l&s_staff.htm

Feel Free to Contact A Member of the Learn and Serve Office!

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“SERVICE LEARNING — PERFORMING SERVICE FOR THE BENEFIT OF OTHERS”