The Ralph and Mary Regula Center for Public Service and Civic Engagement

Since I assumed the interim director’s role of the Ralph and Mary Regula Center for Public Service and Civic Engagement last summer, I have been asked numerous times, “What exactly is the Center?”

It is a valid question since many people think of centers as buildings, but in this case, the Regula Center is a program, or rather, a series of programs that will help Mount Union students become ethical leaders in government jobs as well as the non-profit sector.

The Center was actually founded in 2003 to provide undergraduate students and professionals with the training, skills and experience essential to effective public sector employment. The Center was recently expanded to include the areas of service-learning and civic engagement, areas in which Mount Union has excelled.

With this expanded vision, more students are able to avail themselves of the campus activities that partner with area agencies to provide meaningful outcomes. As you read this newsletter, you will note numerous activities that give our students hands-on experience and access to real-life situations that transcend classroom boundaries.

It has been the vision of Ralph ’48 and Mary (Rogusky ’49) Regula, two of Mount Union’s most prominent public and social servants, to provide opportunities for Mount Union students to enter the fields of public and social service by having the proper resources and encouragement in preparation for these exciting occupations.

Clearly, there is a need for public and social servants and the Regula Center is here to provide the academic and real-world experiences to help fill the need.

Upcoming Spring Events

February
9 Community Coffee Hour
10 Regula Breakfast
10 Have a Heart Service Project
15 Up Close and Personal
19 Super Service Saturday
22 LINC Luncheon

March
1 Women’s History Month Dessert
5-13 Alternative Spring Break
16 Community Coffee Hour
17 Eisenhower Series College Program,
US Army War College
22 LINC Luncheon
31 Up Close and Personal

April
3 Girls and Sports Day
13 Community Coffee Hour
14 Regula Breakfast

May
4-5 United Way Benefit Recycle Sale
11 Community Coffee Hour
Alumni Spotlight: Lorie Miller

Lorie Miller ’02, the director of community education outreach in the Regula Center, was this year’s faculty/staff recipient of the Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. award.

From her nomination letter: "Lorie has been and continues to be an integral part of all community service, service-learning and public service activities, programs and events on campus. In the 20 years that Lorie has been running the Dowling Mentor Program on campus and in the Alliance City School District, she has had amazing success stories. The low-income and high-risk city school children that she has worked with have come from some of the toughest situations possible, including difficult home lives, violence, food insecurity and a lack of dreams and aspirations. Yet, Lorie and her hand-selected team of mentors have come together to work with these children to give them hope, love and a future. Lorie’s students have gone on to not only earn bachelors, masters and doctoral degrees, but to become doctors, veterinarians and positive role models themselves. Lorie and the Dowling Mentor Program have also touched the lives of each Mount Union student mentor, by preparing them to live fulfilling lives, do meaningful work and be responsible citizens in the truest sense of Mount Union’s mission statement.

Lorie Miller’s work far surpasses the confines of a single program however. Her involvement in campus events such as Trash to Treasure, National Neighborhood Day, Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. Day of Service and the Community Service Coffee Hour have brought a diverse range of people together to do incalculable good, both for the campus and the community."

She is a wonderful example of how being an alumna as well as staff or faculty member can have a positive impact on the campus and the community.

Help 2 Others (H2O)

This past holiday season, Raider Relief, a student-driven organization at the University of Mount Union, got creative when it came to fundraising for a cause. They encouraged individuals to spend less on unnecessary holiday gifts and redirect their spending to provide clean water to residents of third world nations.

Students involved in this year’s project, H20 (Help 2 Others), sold small test tubes of purple tap water for $10. All proceeds went to support the mission of Living Water International, a faith-based, non-profit organization dedicated to providing 884 million impoverished people worldwide who lack access to safe and clean drinking water.

According to Living Water International's website, 5,000 children under the age of five die every day from water-related diseases – that’s one child every 15 seconds. Nearly 90 percent of all diseases in the world are caused by a combination of unsafe drinking water, inadequate sanitation and poor hygiene.

The project was inspired by Advent Conspiracy, a movement launched several years ago by Living Water International. The premise of the movement is that, if just a fraction of the money Americans spend on needless holiday gifts was redirected to providing clean water to residents of third world nations, millions of lives could be saved.

“The holiday season is supposed to be about giving,” said Sean Cook, a senior business administration major from Alliance, OH and student advocate for the project. “I don’t think I can ignore the needs of people far less fortunate than myself, especially when all they want is water – something we take for granted every day in the United States.”

Community Partner Highlight: Alliance for Children and Families

The Alliance for Children & Families, Inc. (ACF) is committed to helping children, individuals and families lead lives of stability, self-sufficiency and enhancement. Located behind Thorne’s at 624 Scranton, ACF is a long time partner of Mount Union, accepting volunteers and interns as well as employing Mount Union graduates.

ACF operates a shelter for the homeless, provides transitional housing for people in danger of becoming homeless and maintains a list of housing opportunities for clients who may have difficulty obtaining housing due to past rental history. ACF also partners with the Stark County Department of Job and Family Services and the Aultman Foundation to provide the STEP program which assists foster children in becoming self sufficient as they exit the foster care system.

An exciting development for ACF and Alliance is the groundbreaking for the AFIRST project, a 10 unit campus-like community serving homeless families and individuals using a holistic approach that includes facilities for counseling, education, training and medical and legal services. This facility will be located across the street from the main office.

There are many opportunities to volunteer with ACF and these will increase as the building of AFIRST continues. In addition, ACF relies heavily on donations from individuals and area organizations, whether these be monetary contributions or donations of much needed food, clothing or household items. All donations are tax-deductible. To view its needs list, visit www.allianceforchildrenandfamilies.org/needs.htm. To visit its wish list, visit www.allianceforchildrenandfamilies.org/wishlist.htm. If you wish to volunteer, contact Tammy Geiger at (330) 821-6332 or tammy@allianceforchildrenandfamilies.org.
One Book, One Community

For the past seven years, Mount Union has played a major role in the successful One Book One Community program in Alliance.

The concept of the program is to try and get as many people in the community to read the same book and then providing forums for meaningful discussions, followed by a visit from the author. Alliance's program has been highly successful with nearly 1,000 citizens and students participating annually.

This year promises to be another success. The book Make the Impossible Possible by Bill Strickland has been selected as the featured read of the One Book One Community program for 2010-11.

Strickland will be in Alliance for a Regula Center sponsored event during the afternoon of April 7 followed by a public evening event on campus. He will then visit area high schools to interact with student readers the following day.

The book chronicles the life of the author who went from being a malcontented high school student to entrepreneur, following the establishment of Manchester Bidwell, the jobs training center and community arts program in Pittsburgh. The book attempts to demonstrate how people can build on their passions and strengths, achieve meaningful success and inspire the lives of others.

Strickland had a connection to Alliance early in his career when he worked with Mount Union students as part of the Upward Bound Program.

He currently serves as president and chief executive officer of Manchester Bidwell and its subsidiaries -- Manchester Craftsmen's Guild and Bidwell Training Center. He received the prestigious MacArthur Fellowship “genius” grant in 1996.

The selected books for the past seven years have been The Color of Water by James McBride, Riding the Bus with My Sister by Rachel Simon, Real Time by Pnina Moed-Kass, Beyond the River by Ann Hagedorn, Plenty by Alisa Smith and J.B. MacKinnon, Blood Done Sign My Name by Timothy Tyson and Three Cups of Tea by Greg Mortenson.

Service-Learning with TOMS Shoes

When I started my service-learning project, I was in Dr. Nicole Johnson’s Christian Ethics course. Dr. Johnson required that every student do a project that reflected a social issue. I had wanted to do a TOMS project on Mount Union’s campus and I figured that Christian Ethics was the perfect opportunity.

I was sent to the Regula Center to get some funding and was so surprised at the positive response. I immediately started planning with the support of the Regula Center. I planned to bring a TOMS Style Your Sole Party to Mount Union’s campus. At this event students could buy TOMS Shoes and decorate them while listening to great music and eating great food.

TOMS Shoes is a company that gives a pair of shoes to a child internationally for every TOM shoes purchased. I felt a connection to this cause because it requires responsible and ethical spending of money. It requires you to think about someone other than yourself.

Through the planning process and serving in this leadership role, I have learned how to deal with people and volunteers as well as being responsible for an event on campus. I have also learned that in helping others, others have in turn helped me to grow as a person. I have gained confidence in my ideas and passions.

This ties into my class because treatment of the poor is an issue we had discussed, along with how important our money decisions are in the world. Being a Christian dips into our wallets, not just our hearts and ideas. It is a life commitment and it needs to be seen when we decide what to buy ourselves.

My experience with both service-learning and the Regula Center was very positive. I will be sure to work with both again, perhaps for even more TOMS events on campus.

I would like to thank the Regula Center for hearing my voice and believing in the TOMS dream. Due to this support, Mount Union gave away 23 pairs of shoes to children in need around the world.
For those who may be new to service-learning, the first question to answer is “What is Service-Learning?” The official definition used by the Regula Center is “a pedagogical model of experiential education that intentionally integrates academic learning with service to the community and civic engagement.” To help better understand this teaching tool, the Regula Center asked one of its professors who successfully integrates service-learning into her courses to discuss how and why she uses it.

Dr. Nicole Johnson, assistant professor of philosophy and religious studies, shared her insights on service-learning and how she utilized it in her Christian Social Ethics course last fall.

Johnson explained that she chooses to use service-learning in many of her classes where there is a natural fit. She believes that service-learning helps connect the dots and makes the learning tangible to her students’ understanding and experiences. Service-learning can help bridge the gap between the “head and heart” or the “thinking and doing” approaches to learning.

For the Christian Social Ethics course, her students took the abstract ideas that they were learning about and created concrete experiences to reinforce the knowledge from their textbooks. Each student was able to choose a different project that tied into Christian Social Ethics and the goals and objectives of the class. Some of the service-learning projects included working with the Alliance Pregnancy Center, building with Habitat for Humanity, serving meals through Feed My Sheep Ministries and partnering with TOMS Shoes. These projects allowed the students to see and interact with the social issues they were discussing in class while enabling the students to experience new perspectives and think critically about the issues.

Johnson is honest in her assessment that implementing service-learning into a course creates more work. It requires professors to give up a certain amount of control and necessitates extra thinking and use of reflection to be successful. Yet she knows that the positive outcomes for students and their educational experience at Mount Union more than balance out the work. These outcomes include not only learning what they are supposed to, but also creating a sense of pride in connection with the course and the students’ work. Service-learning allows students to get out of the “campus bubble” and into the community. It challenges and often reinforces students’ views, beliefs and understanding.

She shares the credit for her service-learning success with the Regula Center and the fact that the University has a director of service-learning. She explained that many similarly-sized institutions do not offer such valuable resources to faculty who want to integrate service-learning into their courses. She ended by celebrating the fact that “I can use service-learning as much as I want to because of the assistance that the director of service-learning and the Regula Center provide for faculty to make using service-learning easier.”

On January 17, the University of Mount Union held its 5th annual Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. National Day of Service during which more than 120 students, faculty, staff and community partners served at community locations such as the United Way, YMCA, Rodman Public Library, Empowerment Center, Alliance High School and Interfaith Child Development Center, among others. Projects included painting, cleaning, organizing, sending bulk mailings, carpet laying and raising awareness about the message of Dr. Martin Luther King Jr.’s life and teachings. The day of service continues to be a strongly-supported event on Mount Union’s campus and was extended to include morning and afternoon shifts this year.

Dr. King believed in a free and just nation, one where all citizens applied the principle of nonviolence in order to make this country a better place to live; his idea of the “Beloved Community.” The Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. Day of Service is one way that citizens can transform the teachings of Dr. King into community action, working alongside their neighbors to make positive changes in their communities. This work strengthens communities, empowers individuals, bridges barriers and creates solutions.

In his third year as a Dowling Mentor, Patrick Williams is a great role model for Mount Union’s mentoring outreach to the Alliance City Schools. Patrick has been paired with the same young man for all three years, and they will both graduate next year. Patrick’s sister also served as a mentor while at Mount Union.

A native of Canton, OH, Patrick is a junior business management major with a minor in sport business. When he came to campus as a freshman, he said that he wanted to get involved with helping the community. He certainly has done just that! Patrick volunteers at Feed My Sheep Ministries’ community meal each Thursday, volunteers with Beyond our Boundaries and is active with Fellowship of Christian Athletes service projects.

Patrick’s response when asked about his experience as a mentor:

“David and I have a lot in common. We both like playing basketball, lifting weights and playing video games. I truly enjoy the program because it gives me a chance to try and make an impact on a younger person’s life that I would otherwise never know. Another thing that I like about the program is that it shows the mentees what college should be all about — working hard to achieve success and giving back to the community in which you are living. This all goes back to trying to set a good example for kids to follow when the time comes that they decide to either go to college or jump into the workforce. Overall, the Dowling Mentor Program is a great opportunity to give back to the community and for personal growth.”