

Social Responsibility

Through the Mount Union Volunteer Network and other campus opportunities, many students are volunteering their services to make the community a better place

In a world seemingly full of self-centered people, Mount Union College students are reaching out to help others.

The Mount Union Volunteer Network (MUVN) was recently organized by a group of Mount Union students to provide information and contacts to those interested in volunteering. Funded by a grant from the Board of Higher Education of the United Methodist Church, the group is directed by Anna Richardson, a sophomore from Dover, and advised by Mount Union's Chaplain, the Rev. Martha CashBurless.

"Our mission through the Mount Union Volunteer Network is simply to coordinate; to bring individual students and student organizations together with places in the community that need their help," CashBurless said. Places such as the Slimak Shelter for the Homeless, McCrea Manor Nursing and Rehabilitation Center, and the Domestic Violence Shelter are just a few of the local sites where students assist.

MUVN has sponsored several drives to encourage students to

become involved with volunteering. "MUVN Out Week", which places a week-long emphasis on community service, has been one effort that has been very successful. About 130 students became involved in the most recent week-long campaign. "Citizenship is active, not passive," CashBurless said. "We're trying to set a standard for students to take with them when they leave this campus."

Many campus organizations donate much of their time to volunteer work in the community. Blood drives with the American Red Cross are annually sponsored by the Associated Women Students (AWS) organization and groups like Campus Crusade for Christ assist in the literacy program at Alliance High School. Other groups are involved with Homework Assistance Program at two area churches.

Fraternities and sororities are also active in volunteer work, participating in many philanthropic projects every year. Some well-known fraternity projects include Sigma Nu's Mike Hardy Basketball Marathon and Sigma Alpha

Epsilon's 48-hour volleyball tournament to support the United Way.

Students have many other opportunities to become involved in volunteer work. The Dowling Mentor Program, funded by an anonymous donor, matches a select group of college students to act as mentors to selected middle and high school students in the community. The mentors and students meet at agreed-upon times during the week for tutoring and recreational activities. "This is an exciting opportunity for both the college students and the younger students," said Lorie Miller, director of the program. "The foundation has been laid for a positive, meaningful relationship to exist between the College and the young people in Alliance."

Another way that students are able to donate their time is through an annual spring trip taken by the Social Responsibility class. Dr. Stephen Kramer, professor of psychology, embarks on the trip each spring with his students in order to do volunteer work in other countries. A recent trip to Jamaica involved helping to rebuild a

F E A T U R E S

church that was partially destroyed by Hurricane Gilbert. A trip to Haiti is planned for this spring.

"In my class I try to have students realize that 'community' has a much broader range than our local surroundings," Kramer said. "We have to look upon the entire world as our community and see how we can help."

Kramer also coordinates Mount Union's multi-cultural retreats. The retreats take place each semester at an off-campus location and involve many international and American students. The purpose of these multi-cultural retreats is to broaden the awareness and acceptance of other cultures within our student body.

Mount Union currently has 61 international students from 18 countries. Many of these students are involved with volunteering in the community. "One area that the international students have helped is the literacy program," CashBurless said. "They understand the limitations of language and literacy because some of them are learning the language themselves. It has really enriched our programs to see students cross those cultural barriers and assist the needs in the community."

CashBurless said she hopes that the MUVN will be able to get an even larger portion of the campus student body involved with volunteer work. The group recently published a brochure, distributed to students, which describes MUVN's purpose and informs students how to get involved -- as well as where their help is needed. The group also plans to present community service awards this spring to an individual and organization on campus.

According to CashBurless, it is crucial for everyone to volunteer their services to worthwhile causes and to be receptive to the many lifestyles and cultures that can be found in the world we live in. "We can't close our eyes to the problems

around us; we're a part of it," she said. "Mount Union students are giving back to the community to help it become a better place."

— Written by *Cristine Hackney*, a junior communications major from Deerfield, Ohio.



Under the new Mount Union Volunteer Network (MUVN) organization, college students work with area youth in a Homework Assistance Program.



About 40 Mount Union students, faculty and staff members attended a recent Multi-Cultural Retreat, designed to broaden the awareness and acceptance of other cultures within the College's student body.