

Service Learning

St. FRANCIS XAVIER UNIVERSITY • ANTIGONISH, NS

2015-2016 Newsletter

Issue 18 May 2016

Quote from ISL Participant

“I have a better awareness of how I consume, and how it impacts others around the world.”

Quote from CB Participant

“I am grateful for the teaching opportunities the program has given me as well as the lifelong lessons.”

Quote from Community Partner

“Service Learning is playing an invaluable role in this community.”

Quote from StFX faculty

“Service Learning enables students to truly engage in experiential learning of the social determinants of health.”

New Community Partnerships and Projects for 2015-2016

Every year, Service Learning engages in collaborative projects and responds to current issues as identified by the community. Through the **Antigonish Women’s Resource Centre (AWRC)** Newcomer Support Program, **YMCA Y-REACH** program, **Syrian Antigonish Families Embrace (SAFE)**, and the **Town of Antigonish Office of Special Projects**, community partners worked with students from a variety of courses to address the complexity of challenges faced by newcomers, immigrants and refugees in the areas of **Development Studies, Human Nutrition, Religious Studies and Sociology**.

Through a **Business/Development Studies** course taught by Dr. Monica Diochon, Social Entrepreneurship initiatives provided support locally for non-profit organizations. These include: **Breaking the Silence Maritimes Guatemala Solidarity Network (BTS)**, **Antigonish Community Energy (ACE)**, **Antigonish Skate Association (ASA)**, **Heatherton Group Home**, **Veith House Future Roots program**, **Northwood Foundation**, **InTerreConnected Ghana Canada Solidarity Network**, and **Sekaf International**.

A Development Studies course also provided students with an opportunity to work with **StFX Extension Department Innovation Centre** on social enterprise for an upcoming conference in the area.

Service Learning also celebrates the first year of the **Health Studies Colloquium**, which offered students in their first year **Psychology, Sociology and Biology** classes with Service Learning experiences that are connected to course material focusing on a broad spectrum of health issues.

StFX Celebrating 20 Years of Service Learning

Service Learning is celebrating its 20th anniversary! There will be lots of opportunities to reflect on the program’s accomplishments and to celebrate our community and international partners, current and past student participants, faculty and friends. Please check out our website in the upcoming months for more details.

Marla Gaudet has moved into the position as the **Director of Internationalization at StFX**. Marla has worked with the Service Learning Program for 15 years and brought so much leadership to the program. She will be greatly missed but we wish her all the best in her new adventure.



Awards and Prizes

OceanPath is a community-based learning experience available to 12 graduating students from StFX, Ottawa U, McGill and Queen's Universities. This year, 3 StFX grads were awarded fellowships, all of whom gained experience through the Service Learning program.

One project will be based here in Antigonish. **Jason Fitzpatrick**, (BA Sociology (Honours)) will continue the work from his Service Learning placement with **Sustainable Antigonish** mobilizing people to engage in action surrounding environmental issues that they are already concerned about.



“Through working with Service Learning groups such as Breaking The Silence and Antigonish Community Energy, I have learned many lessons, including learning of the importance of letting communities take control of their own destinies and offering assistance when they want it as opposed to trying to make decisions for the community”.

Becca Bishop (BA Development Studies), will be working in **Arviat, Nunavut** addressing issues with local youth surrounding healthy relationships, improving communication, self-esteem, goal setting and self-reflection. *“Providing safe and positive spaces for interaction and discussion is critical, especially in Arviat where the community experiences high rates of domestic violence, addiction, teenage pregnancies and suicide”.*

Katie Gunn (BA Development Studies), will work to address issues of food justice through community food rescue programs in Halifax. *“Not only does food rescue help ensure that people of Halifax will have access to quality meals, but it is also a key to helping combat food waste. This program is a commitment to hunger relief and improving our environment”.*

Fall Convocation 2015 Community Partner Recognition Award

At the 2015 StFX Convocation, **The Park Bench Players** were awarded the Community Partner Recognition Award for their ability to inspire faculty, students, staff and community.

StFX students have been part of the project from the very beginning and continue to this day to be an important component of this four-year community collaboration.



One professor describes their impact as follows: “The Park Bench Players help our community bring mental illness out of the darkness and into the light of education and enlightenment about what it’s like to live with a mental illness. This show has changed the culture of our community. It has made it possible to talk openly about mental illness.”

Community Engaged Scholar Award

This prize recognizes a student who has completed one or more service learning experiences and has demonstrated a personal

commitment to community development.

This year's recipient of the Prize for Excellence as



Community Engaged Scholar are **Jason Fitzpatrick** and **Zachary MacNeil**. Both students have been very engaged in the community as volunteers during their four years at StFX. Jason participated in Course Based Service Learning with the **RK MacDonald Nursing Home, Breaking the Silence and Antigonish Community Energy** and Zachary participated with the **Red Apple Children's Centre and Parkinson's Support Group**.

Community Based Research Award

This prize is awarded annually to the best community-engaged research project presented at Student Research Day. This

year's recipients are **Natalie Lesco** for her research project with **REDress** entitled *Beyond invisibility: A REDress (Project) collaboration to*



raise awareness of the crisis of missing and murdered Aboriginal women and **Maggie Edwards** for her research project

Shifting towards food sovereignty: A case study of power imbalances and the Northern Farm Training Institute (NFTI).



Our New Service Learning Student Leaders

Service Learning welcomes our new Student Leaders for the upcoming 2016-2017 academic year.

Sarah McLeod is going into her fourth year Sociology and Development Studies double major. She was part of the Immersion Service Learning **Belize** experience in 2015, has been part of the **Service Learning Student Society** with the **RK MacDonald Nursing Home** and **Heatheron Activity Centre**, participated in Course-Based Service Learning with the **StFX Extension Department Innovation Centre** and **Breaking the Silence Maritimes Guatemala Solidarity Network (BTS)**.

Darshana Sridharan will be in her final year with Business Administration in the Co-op program. She has experiences working in the community in both the UK and India. Darshana has been involved with **St. Martha's Regional Hospital** Fundraising and with **Cultural Connections** (formally International Community Potluck).

Joseph Pereyras will be starting his second year Bachelor of Science program. Joseph was a student in the **Health Studies Colloquium**. He is in the Xaverian Leaders program through the McKenna Centre for Leadership and is also on the StFX Rowing Team. He has done Course-Based Service Learning with the **Men's Health Centre**.



Reflections from our past Student Leaders

We would like to wish our 2015-16 Service Learning Student Leaders the best of luck in their future endeavors. **Nicole Grewal** has been selected as a dietetic intern in Central Newfoundland which she will start in September for a year and **Katrine Chiasson** returns to StFX to complete her final year in her Bachelor of Music program. In true Service Learning style we asked them to reflect on their experience as Student Leaders.

"My involvement with the Service Learning program this year as a Student Leader has been rewarding in many different aspects. There are so many remarkable organizations that work towards developing a better, more inclusive community, and the active involvement of community members in activities and events, gives students an even better experience. I love hearing the wonderful feedback from students about community partners and the real life connections they can make with their academic learning. Personally, I have become inspired to constantly work towards social change and appreciate the relationships I have built within the university and the community. Working as a Student Leader has allowed me to develop various professional and leadership skills and I was able to grow into a confident and compassionate leader and learned a lot about myself."

Nicole (2015-2016 Student Leader)

" I have spent the past 8 months in the student leader position, and it has been an incredible learning experience for me. To sum up my learning into three points; I've realized how important effective and compassionate communication is important in developing cooperative community relationships that benefit everyone. I've also learned the importance of being present during your everyday experiences. And finally I've been reminded of the importance of reflecting deeply on your experiences at the end of the day."

Katrine (2015-2016 Student Leader)

New Immersion Experiences and Partnerships

Halifax

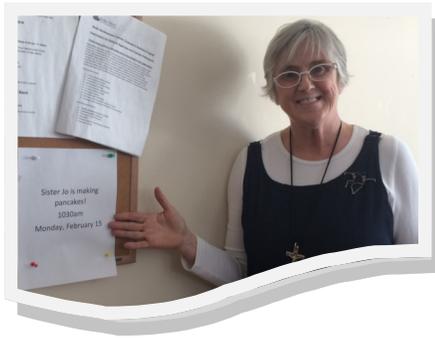
The Immersion Service Learning program introduced three new experiences, two over the February Reading Week, to Halifax and to Peru and an experience to Ghana for two months to work with community partners in the north of the country that is also paired with a new Service Learning Course.

The new immersion experience to Halifax offered students an opportunity to learn about poverty and homelessness in our own country and communities. The impact of this experience is aptly captured in one participant's reflection.

“Participating in the **Halifax Immersion Service Learning Experience** was an opportunity that I will never forget. It was eye opening to see social justice issues such as homelessness and poverty that is taking place in our own community and the struggles those affected face on a daily basis. The Halifax experience challenged us to think deeper about the root

causes of the social injustices we see throughout our country. Each day we participated in meaningful reflections relating to issues such as addiction, mental health, food insecurity, health inequities, policy and government. The folks we met graciously shared their stories of misfortune and resilience with us. Hearing these unforgettable stories strengthened our passion for social justice and inspired us to make a change in the system. Working with **Sister Jovita** and the **Sisters of St. Martha's Street Ministry** was absolutely remarkable. The compassion and determination displayed by everyone we met along the way will always be a part of me.”

Nicole Grewal (Halifax ISL, Feb 2016)



Ghana

Eight students will spend May and June in Ghana. IDS 398 is the first 6 credit course, open to students from all disciplines and years of study, to be offered as part of Service Learning.

Development Studies' Dr. Jonathan Langdon will be teaching IDS 398 in Tamale. The course will look at the history, politics, social and economic fabric of Ghana, as well as explore the dynamics of local change through experiential learning. In partnership with Venceremos Development Consulting, each student will be able to work with one of several local non-profit organizations to enhance their understanding of various aspects of community development.



Peru



This spring a new immersion experience to Peru was introduced. Ten students, with business faculty member Mary Oxner, spent reading week on the outskirts of Lima. The StFX group learned about the work being done, by **Nexos Comunitarios**, to facilitate and implement Responsible Human Development in Peru. Immersion students visited schools in urban and rural settlements in situations of poverty and social exclusion, and assisted with summer inclusivity programming being offered to local children.

During the week, participants also had the opportunity to experience Peruvian food and dancing, dip their toes in the Pacific, tour the city of Lima and visit the Truth and Reconciliation Center and other historic sites.

More News

Service Learning is very pleased that **Mary Oxner** has been appointed as the new Service Learning Faculty Coordinator, effective July 1st, while Ann Bigelow is on sabbatical



Mary M. Oxner PhD CPA CA CFA, Associate Professor, Schwartz School of Business, StFX

Mary volunteers in her community by serving as Treasurer of the **VON Antigonish Branch**, as the Past Chair of the Antigonish **Guysborough Early Childhood Intervention Program (AGECIP)** and as a Board member of the **Creative Wellness Project** which organizes the **Friendship Corner**, mental health workshops and peer support groups in Antigonish.

Service Learning is very pleased that **Megan Turner** was appointed as the new **Service Learning Program Manager**, effective January 1.

Megan has been at StFX since July 2012 in the role as Student Conduct Coordinator with the Student Life Office. Prior to coming to StFX, Megan worked as an Instructor/Internship Developer and Student Advisor for adult international students.



Service Learning Student Society

The Service Learning Student Society is a student-led initiative that assists students to get involved in the local community, often in one-time or monthly events. It is a great way for all students to build relationships with community organizations, especially those students who have not had the opportunity to be involved in Course-based or Immersion Service Learning.

The society connected with several local organizations by providing support at events or by developing others in partnership with community organizations. Some events and organizations that they supported were the **RK MacDonald Spa Night**, the **Manor Bingo**, **Cultural Connections International Potlucks**, **Christmas Caroling at Heatherton Group Home** and attended the **Dr. J.H Gillis Wellness Day**. The support of the Society would not have been possible without the incredible leadership of **Co-Presidents, Ashley Allen and Taylor Samson**, and **Vice-President, Karina Stanley**. Ashley and Taylor graduate this year with Bachelors of Science in Biology. Karina will return to support the work of the Society in the Fall.

Special Event for Welcome Week in September

This year our office is looking to organize an event for students during frosh week. If you would like to be part of any of these ideas or have an event that you would like the service learning to organize, could use extra support, or have an idea or questions, please contact our office.

Who was involved in Service Learning in 2015-2016?

- 102 Community Partners
- 777 Student Experiences

- 27% 1st year
- 8% 2nd year
- 25% 3rd year
- 40% 4th year

- 38% Arts
- 8% Business
- 5% Bed
- 49% Sciences

- 51 Courses
16 Sections

- 32 Professors

- 27% Optional
73% Mandatory

- 26% Group Experiences
74% Individual Experiences

The StFX Service Learning Program would like to thank the following community organizations who partnered with us in providing service and learning opportunities for students in 2015-2016:

<p>A Partnership in Caring Active Kids, Active Minds Adult Friendship Corner Amnesty International Antigonish Badminton Club Antigonish Challenger Baseball Antigonish Community Energy Antigonish Community Food Bank Antigonish County Adult Learning Association Antigonish County Recreation Antigonish Education Center Antigonish Food Security Coalition Antigonish Interagency Committee on Family Violence Antigonish Manor Antigonish Minor Basketball Association Antigonish Parkinson's Support Group Antigonish Poverty Reduction Coalition Antigonish Public Library Antigonish Senior Safety Program Antigonish Skateboarding Association Antigonish Skating Club Antigonish Therapeutic Riding Antigonish Town Recreation Antigonish Women's Resource Centre BaBE Black Educators Association Blue Dot Movement Breaking the Silence Maritime Guatemala Solidarity Canadian Association for Community Living Canadian Breast Cancer Foundation Cathy's Place Cancer Resource Room CFXU Radio Children Place Day Care Children's Place Learning Centre Cultural Connections Dr. J. H. Gillis Regional High School Early Years Committee</p>	<p>Fit 4 Life & Fit 4 Tots FoodARC Heatherton Activity Centre Heatherton Group Home Highland Crest Home Highland Hawks InTerreConnected IWK Teen Mental Health Jumpstart Kids First, Antigonish Family Resource Centre L'Arche Antigonish MAX Program Men's' Health Centre Misty Hills Farm Northwood Foundation Nova Scotia Department of Agriculture Nova Scotia Department of Health Nova Scotia Health Authority Our Food Store PHAST Red Apple Children's Centre Responsible Energy Action RK MacDonald Nursing Home SAFE Sekaf International Sisters of St. Martha, Bethany House SPCA, Antigonish Special Olympics St. James United Church Tearmann House The Life Shelter The Park Bench Players Town of Antigonish Transition House Veith House VON Antigonish</p>
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Contact Us:

www.mystfx.ca/academic/servicelearning/

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