

# COALITION OF CAMPUS YMCAs



FOR YOUTH DEVELOPMENT  
FOR HEALTHY LIVING  
FOR SOCIAL RESPONSIBILITY

Coalition of Campus YMCAs

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## LETTER FROM THE CHAIR

"In every community there is work to be done, in every heart there is power to do it" became words to live by the first two weeks of January for myself and 12 others from the YMCA at Virginia Tech as we ventured to the Dominican Republic for an Alternative Service Break. For those who have been able to experience an ASB trip, through the campus Y or other organizations, you can attest to its inspiring and energizing effects! I hope to spread the inspirational message of trips such as my trip to the Dominican Republic, and CCY's trip to New Orleans lead by Vice-Chair Garrett Brolsma, throughout the new semester of service upon us! I urge each of you to remember an encouraging and energizing experience to renew your dedication to our organization and approach this new semester with enthusiasm. The Executive Board eagerly awaits the CCY conference this May and can't wait to share our stories or passion and service together in Toledo.

**Melanie Kiernan**  
2011 CCY Chair  
[chair@ccyusa.org](mailto:chair@ccyusa.org)

## ENJOY THIS ISSUE?

Feel free to share this newsletter  
with anyone who you think may  
find it useful.

## QUESTIONS, COMMENTS, IDEAS?

Contact Ashley Vaughn, the  
editor at [secretary@ccyusa.org](mailto:secretary@ccyusa.org)

## GARDNER WEBB STUDENT Y: DEDICATED TO SERVICE

The topics of literacy, hunger, poverty, and homelessness have dominated student service experiences with The Student Y @ Gardner-Webb University over the past few months. From Gardner-Webb University's HopeFest this past fall, to the most recent MLK Day of Service Challenge, students have spent time learning more about topics that impact our community and our world.

In October, the Gardner-Webb University Office of Community Engagement, along with The Student Y, Alpha Chi - North Carolina Zeta Chapter 123, College Democrats, Amnesty International, GWU Art Club, Religious Studies Association, the Foothills Farmers Market, the Cleveland County Potato Project, and various community partners came together for a weekend of education and awareness for those who are in situations of homelessness, poverty, and hunger. Through a "Night Without a Home;" a daylong music, craft, and awareness festival; and an Oxfam American Hunger Banquet, students and community members spent time learning about the struggles facing our friends and neighbors locally, nationally, and globally. The Student Y was a co-sponsor for this year's Hunger Banquet and also supported several groups to make HopeFest 2010 a success.

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*The Group at St. Margaret Nursing Home Left to right: Chelsea Taylor, Elizabeth Nugent, Lauren Emery, Garrett Broolsma, Matt McDonald, Kyle Bean, Miss Sadie, Katherine LaBelle, Martin Zaldivar, Jordan, Hollie Badger, Maryam Palma, Laura Chua, Ashley Ryan*

## 2011 CCY ASB: SERVING THE COMMUNITY OF NEW ORLEANS

This year's Coalition of Campus YMCAs Alternative Service Based experience was created to enact social change in an area of economic depression due to disasters such as Hurricane Katrina and the recent BP Oil Spill. Because of the devastation the city of New Orleans and its surrounding communities have felt in the past six years, much of the area has not come back to the original form it once had. This was due to several different factors that can be summed up to citizens in one way or another as losing their "home". With that being said, as Vice Chair of the 2011 Coalition of Campus YMCAs Conference, I found it beneficial for YMCA students to travel to New Orleans, study the effected community, and provide real, tangible help. The original group that had planned to go was a total of 15 students, but due to winter illness, only 13 were well enough to stay for the entire trip. The final 13 students to participate include 8 Springfield students; Garrett Broolsma, Matt McDonald, Kyle Bean, Chelsea Taylor, Katherine LaBelle, Lauren Emery, Hollie Badger, and Ashley Ryan, one student from Lindenwood University; Martin Zaldivar, one student from Washington State University; Elizabeth Nugent, two students from the University of Hawaii; Laura Chua and Maryam Palma, and Erin Friedman, Assistant Director of the Springfield College Office of YMCA Relations. I cannot begin to explain how delightful and fulfilling it was to travel with 12 other extraordinary individuals. They made service, reflections, night activities, and little things such as van rides an incredibly enjoyable experience, like most Y students do.

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Most recently, the Student Y has partnered with the Ruby C. Hunt YMCA to offer volunteer opportunities to Gardner-Webb students in the Community Library at the Ruby C. Hunt YMCA. A one-of-a-kind institution, the library is a community-supported organization with over 14,000 volumes, free computer access, and classes and opportunities for college prep, job finding, resume building, adult literacy, arts and crafts, writing, reading groups, and more. Over 30 Gardner-Webb students and alumni have contributed close to 150 hours to catalogue donated materials, sort books, rearrange stacks, and help the library operate more effectively.

The group stayed with an organization named Operation

The Student Y is looking forward to more service opportunities in the future and further development as 2011 progresses.

**Tyler McCall**  
Office Manager  
THE RUBY C. HUNT YMCA  
2009-2010 CCY Board Chair

**APRIL 16TH  
2011: GLOBAL  
CITIZENSHIP  
DAY**

**LOOK FOR MORE  
INFORMATION IN  
NEXT MONTH'S  
NEWSLETTER**

**"BE THE CHANGE  
YOU WISH TO SEE  
IN THE WORLD."**

The group stayed with an organization named Operation Nehemiah, which is an extremely grassroots, non-profit organization. We stayed in one of their volunteer houses known as St. Jude Community Center, located on 400 North Rampart Street in New Orleans, which is the very northern edge of the French Quarter. The point people from Operation Nehemiah in which we worked with extensively included the Director; Fred Franke, Chef and Handyman; Bob Brown, and Contractor; Tommy Brigs. These three gentlemen were dedicated to giving our group, and all other groups who volunteer with Operation Nehemiah, a remarkable and influential experience. For more information on Operation Nehemiah, please visit their website and learn more about the mission and projects this organization is dedicated to fulfill (<http://operationnehemiah.com/index.html>).

As the group arrived periodically between Sunday, January 2<sup>nd</sup> and Monday, January 3<sup>rd</sup>, students began to explore the French Quarter and get acquainted with the city of New Orleans. We had a chance to bring the group together for a discussion of expectations Monday evening and we called it a night. But, once Tuesday, January 4<sup>th</sup> came around, all participants were up and ready for service at 6:30am. The group was eager to get their hands dirty and begin to feel a deeper impact. Our site coordinator was the afore mentioned contractor, Tommy Brigs. Tommy was going to lead us to do a landscape job at a person's home, but due to a miscommunication, the dirt was not delivered on time and we had to improvise.

While creating new plans, Tommy was gracious enough to share his experiences of life before, during, and after Hurricane Katrina, which was



*The group outside of Miss Chris' home; (Left to Right) Chelsea Taylor, Tommy, Elizabeth Nugent, Hollie Badger, Martin Zaldivar, Maryam Palma, Ashley Ryan, Laura Chua, Miss Chris, Garrett Brotsma, Kyle Bean, Lauren Emery, Matt McDonald, Katherine LaBelle*

extremely impactful and connected the group with Tommy on a much deeper level. After deciding on our new project of visiting the St. Margaret Nursing Home, Tommy took us to the Lower Ninth Ward, which is where the levies broke and where the primary source of devastation was. The Lower Ninth Ward is also where Brad Pitt's eco-friendly houses have been built and are still in the process of being built. The "Brad Pitt Housing" became a topic of much debate and discussion throughout the experience as we received differing input from various members of the New Orleans community. *Continues next page...*

Start collecting supplies for the CCY 2011 SAIL program drive now! The School for Autistically Impaired Learners needs your help. Check the registration packet and <http://www.sailohio.org/index.htm> for more information!

## ASB 2011 TESTIMONIALS

"Reflecting on our trip, I have taken back with me the memories of the people I met in New Orleans. I met people who have every reason to be negative and to have given up on their lives after losing close to everything they had. But one thing they didn't lose was their faith and hope for a brighter and better day. I have already tried to infiltrate that into my own life, seeing the big picture, and realizing a situation could be worse, and I need to remember what is truly important to me. I am so inspired by Tommy and Bob (from Operation Nehemiah), who lost everything they had, and are still resilient and not only living their life, but living a GOOD, SELFLESS life to make sure that others don't have to live like they once did. That amazes me. I came back home and things my friends or parents were worried about seemed so miniscule. I hope to keep this "big picture" feeling with me for a long time, and practice what I preach by giving back to others with a smile on my face just as Bob and Tommy did. I see now how much "good" people have in them and that a smile and the ability to open up, love and trust someone is a beautiful trait of the human race. I feel a little bit of sunshine shining on my shoulders as I walk around now, knowing that a small group of people that care can really make a difference."

**Katherine LaBelle,**  
*Springfield College senior*

We then travelled to St. Margaret Nursing Home to serve food, mingle with the members of the home, and play BINGO! We had a great time and learned about many of the member's lives. The entire first day was a nice way to begin our service experience because it essentially served as an orientation for the group.

After service, we returned back to Operation Nehemiah to clean up, eat dinner, and have a small reflection.

On our way to our night activity, by chance we ran into an individual named Walter who was willing to take over two hours out of his night to show us historical aspects of the French Quarter. Walter shared facts, stories, but most importantly, his heart in his willingness to help out a group of strangers while asking for nothing in return. Meeting Walter was a great experience that I'm sure most of the participants will never forget! Walter truly embodied the spirit of New Orleans in his openness and generosity to helping others. We then proceeded 3 blocks down the road to Bourbon Street to experience some real New Orleans culture. The scene was extraordinary. This place was alive with music, street performers, and hundreds of people (Mostly Ohio State and Arkansas fans who were in town to go to the Sugar Bowl).

For the next two days, we were back with Tommy as we began a new project. The task we were assigned was to build a new wall and a new staircase with a railing for a New Orleans native, Miss Chris. Miss Chris had weathered the storm through the flood and a tree falling on her house, collapsing the roof. The staircase and wall we were building served as the final piece to an over five year project of repairing her home. The group took extremely well to Tommy's instruction and Miss Chris's wonderful hospitality and kindness. This experience with Miss Chris seemed to be one of the focal points of the group during reflections and post-service discussion. A connection was made with both Tommy and Miss Chris that made the experience exponentially better. We left after the second day of working with Tommy at Miss Chris's with the project almost complete. But, we had a different service project to do the next day, so we had to say good bye. After service on the first day at Miss Chris's, we decided to forego a reflection and make our way over to New Orleans Arena to check out a Hornets game. The Warriors came back in the fourth quarter and won, which was a bummer. After the second day at Miss Chris's, we went up to a place called Rock n' Bowl to listen to some amazing Zydeco music, dance until we couldn't stand, and then bowl a little bit. The group really seemed to enjoy the eclectic group of people participating in the festivities. Rock n' Bowl was named by many participants as one of the highlights of their experience.

The next day we travelled about 15 minutes outside of downtown New Orleans to work with an organization named HandsOn New Orleans doing a project called "Restore Our Wetlands".

When hearing the project name "Restore Our Wetlands", one would think that you would be knee-deep in water, but instead, our task was to propagate plants, restore the plant beds, and essentially prepare the plant-life to be moved to the wetlands. Our site coordinator Imna, from HandsOn New Orleans, provided the group with a detailed orientation on

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## ASB TESTIMONIAL

"Going into this trip i had no idea what i was going to experience. While we were there i got to explore an area i have never seen, meet people that changed my life and create a new group of friends. While we were there we spent a lot of time at this woman's house, named Miss Chris, rebuilding her staircase and painting her closet. we also had an opportunity to go to a nursing home, prepare plant for wetlands, and fixing up a community garden. One night while we were out we came across a man named Walter who showed us around all of New Orleans. The tour and information he gave us was an experience i will never forget. One of the most memorable experiences of the trip was just talking with different people from there and hearing their stories from Hurricane Katrina. Everyone had different story and they were all unique and some way. Some of the stories were just unreal and i couldn't picture anyone every going through something like that. I am fortunate enough to have had the opportunity to experience the life in New Orleans and it will be a trip i will never forget."

**Hollie Badger, Springfield College sophomore**

**We need student presenters for our workshops this year! If your Student YMCA has implemented a cool new program, event, or fundraiser you would like to share, or if you want to share tips, tricks, or your expertise in any area related to the Campus Y movement, let Ashley Vaughn know at [secretary@ccyusa.org](mailto:secretary@ccyusa.org)**

the importance of the job we were doing and gave us facts about the erosion occurring along the Gulf Coast.

One fact that stood out to the entire group and really made us think was that the Gulf Coast loses a football field of coastline each day. This is interesting because it seems that when the common American thinks about service in New Orleans, their first thoughts go right to building houses, but coastline erosion is a terribly deep issue amongst the New Orleans community. It is projected that within 50 years, the coastline will be to the edge of the famous French Quarter.

Regardless, Imna had many facts, great stories, and overall interesting and different insight on social issues in the area that we had not previously heard. Being a group of young, socially aware individuals, it was beneficial to get a different perspective from Imna, another socially aware young adult.

After finishing the "Restore Our Wetlands" project around noon, we decided to surprise Miss Chris and go back to finish what we had started two days prior. Miss Chris was elated to see us, a mutual feeling. The group got right back to work on the stairs, railing, and wall. Four or five hours later, we had finished what we started. We packed up the van, took pictures, and said a tearful good bye to Tommy and Miss Chris.

We then made our way back to Operation Nehemiah to clean up, head out to eat dinner at the Camellia Grille, and then make our way to the Mississippi River for a nice evening reflection. Post-reflection the group got another chance to mosey (the word of the trip) around the French Quarter.

The final morning, we had one last project with HandsOn New Orleans named "MLK: Work at a Community Garden". For this project, HandsOn New Orleans collaborated with NOLA Grass Roots which is another non-profit organization dedicated to providing food and recreation to those in the flood-damaged urban center of New Orleans. The Community Garden project was formulated to provide community members with fresh produce each month. The tasks we served included planting, watering, and harvesting the gardens that were formed.



*The finished project at Miss Chris'; (Bottom to top) Martin Zaldivar, Katherine LaBelle, Matt McDonald, Chelsea Taylor, Elizabeth Nugent, Hollie Badger, Laura Chua, Lauren Emery, Kyle Bean, Miss Chris, Ashley Ryan, Garrett Brolsma, Tommy, Maryam Palma*

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## ASB TESTIMONIAL

"I never would have thought I would have had an opportunity like this. CCY 2011 was an amazing trip for both community service and recreational activities. I had my doubts and skepticism prior to the trip but once I arrived I knew it was going to be one of the best weeks of my life. I never really watch the news because I find it bias so going to New Orleans and actually hearing the peoples take on what occurred, going to the Hurricane Katrina Museum Exhibit and seeing the area was more informative than any news or radio broadcast. I will never forget the people we met and their powerful stories. Even though New Orleans is still in some disarray, I believe they will bounce back soon due to their strong sense of culture and heritage. It's an amazing place, it was an informative trip, and I would like to return in the future. Thank You YMCA for giving me this opportunity."

*Laura Chua, Chaminade  
University of Honolulu*

This 2 hour project was a fun and unique way to finish our volunteer experience in New Orleans. After service, we drove around for a bit to explore different parts of the city that we had not yet seen, and then went back to Operation Nehemiah to regroup. The group then had the day for themselves to go souvenir shopping, grab a Po-Boy or Muffaletta, watch street performers, hang out in Jackson Square, have coffee and a beignet at Café Du Monde, or watch the Saints unfortunately lose to the Seahawks (I think Liz was the only person in New Orleans happy about the Seahawks win). We all met up later in the night at a jazz club called Café de Negril on Frenchman Street to listen to the Lynn Drury Band (Most of the group enjoyed the music so much that they purchased their album).

After the band finished and seeing as most of the group had 6am flights the next day, the group made its way back to Operation Nehemiah and hit the sheets for an early departure in the morning.

After creating this experience that was shared by 13 remarkable individuals, I have to thank so many people for their support. The names that come to mind include Erin Friedman and Harry Rock from the Springfield College Office of YMCA Relations, Sue Mackey and Deb Salls from Y of the USA, the entire CCY Executive Board, but mainly, the participants of this trip. It would have been nothing if it hadn't been for all you wonderful people! One thing that I did want to bring to the attention of all Campus Y's is that the organization we were housed by and worked with, Operation Nehemiah, is looking for interns for the summer, fall, and next spring. They provide housing, meals, and an opportunity to make a great difference and serve others. As Y students, I encourage you all to consider this as an option in your future endeavors. If you are interested at all in this possibility, please contact me via email at [gbrolsma@spfldcol.edu](mailto:gbrolsma@spfldcol.edu) or call me directly, (201) 602-8897. Thank you all for your support and interest in making this service experience possible!

*Garrett Brolsma  
2011 CCY Vice Chair  
[vicechair@ccyusa.org](mailto:vicechair@ccyusa.org)*

**REGISTRATION PACKETS ARE OUT!  
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C/O THE YMCA AT THE UNIVERSITY OF  
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