

MICHIGAN STATE UNIVERSITY

Center for Service-Learning and Civic Engagement Marks 40th Anniversary by Celebrating the Past, Present, and Future

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EAST LANSING, Mich. - In 1968 a gallon of gas was 34 cents, *60 Minutes* on CBS began its reign as the longest-running prime-time television news magazine, and the Grammys' Album of the Year was *Sgt. Pepper's Lonely Hearts Club Band* by the Beatles.

It was also a year of turmoil, unrest, and change for the United States. The civil rights movement, the Vietnam war, the "War on Poverty," the assassinations of Martin Luther King, Jr. and Robert Kennedy, and the emotional 1968 presidential election all contributed to what historians refer to as a pivotal change in public attitudes and beliefs. And within this framework, Michigan State University established the Office of Volunteer Programs, with the belief that MSU students could make a difference "at home" and see some results.

Forty years later the modern day result is the Center for Service-Learning and Civic Engagement (CSLCE), the oldest, continuously operating service-learning center in the country. From its inception, the CSLCE, a university-wide initiative, has worked closely with MSU colleges, academic departments, student affairs and services units, pre-college programs and others to offer mutually beneficial, quality service, service-learning and civic engagement opportunities linking faculty, staff, and students with community.

In 2006-2007 the CSLCE received and accommodated 13,825 MSU student applications for service and 417 not-for-profit community partners utilized service-learning support.

"My experience as a student volunteer from 1970 to 1972 helped to shape my future," said Karen McKnight Casey, director of MSU's Center for Service-Learning and Civic Engagement. "I volunteered on a non-credit basis at the campus infant day care with Associate Provost Hiram Fitzgerald, who was at that time an assistant professor of psychology. I served in a for-academic-credit opportunity at Leshar Place, a shelter for youth offenders and abused



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and neglected children in Lansing. These encounters affirmed for me that all, regardless of age and experience, can engage with community and address causes in positive and proactive ways.”

Growth and change has been a constant companion for those involved in the national service-learning movement, and Michigan State University has been a pioneer and leader. In the 1970s the goal was to look at voluntary service as purposeful, planned and reciprocal contributions to the community for the public good, rather than as simply “volunteerism.” MSU’s view of service-learning included, and continues to include, both intentional curricular and co-curricular service.

In the early 1990s MSU student leaders sought to revitalize student activism and action in response to the “Me Generation” and created MSU Campus Outreach and Opportunity League (COOL), resulting in popular programs such as Alternative Spring Break, Into the Streets, and Martin Luther King Day of Service.

Lisa Devereaux, an accounting junior in the Eli Broad College of Business, served as a site leader in Amealco, Mexico during the 2008 Alternative Spring Break.

“The ‘me’ perspective subsides when you visit impoverished areas that have polluted wells for drinking water, and a few dollars can feed one child school lunches for a month. Now it’s something I think about every time I spend money. An international service experience has led me to ask how I can contribute to similar social issues in the future, and how I might convey these experiences to others and make them more aware,” said Devereaux.

Many MSU students have more than one service-learning encounter, finding interesting and challenging opportunities that bring an added dimension to their college education.

“This is my third semester in the CSCLE and I’ve found the experience to be so rewarding, both for personal and professional development,” said Jessica Burdick, of Livonia, a psychology junior in the College of Social Science. “The opportunity to work in my field, as well as contribute to the community, has helped define what I want to do beyond my time at Michigan State University.”

An official 40th anniversary celebration will be held on Tuesday, April 1, 2008 from 2:30 to 4:30 p.m. at the Kellogg Center on MSU’s campus. Highlights include:

- Recognition of MSU’s own “pioneers” in service-learning, including Mary Edens, Lana Dart, John Cauley, John Duley, and others.
- The First Annual MSU Curricular Service-Learning and Civic Engagement Awards, bestowed to 13 faculty representing 11 of the university’s 17 degree granting colleges.
- “Forty Years in the Academy: Service-Learning’s Pioneers, Programs and Promise” Engaged Scholar presentation by internationally recognized service-learning scholar Dwight E. Giles, Jr. Discussion includes service-learning’s evolution from an obscure pedagogical practice into an institutional priority, and reflection on its journey from the margins to the mainstream and toward maturity both nationally and at Michigan State University.

Dr. Giles’ session is part of the Engaged Scholar Speaker Series sponsored by the National Center for the Study of University Engagement.

Event registration is available online at ncsue.msu.edu

More information about the Center for Service-Learning and Civic Engagement is available at their Web site, servicelearning.msu.edu.

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