

# The Catalyst

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As the season of giving approaches, the ASUI Civic Engagement Leadership Committee would like to recognize those groups that are giving their time to help people in need. Statistics show that hunger and homelessness are growing sharply in the US due to the recently weakened economy. Groups such as the Gepetto Tree Project Committee, the Alternative Break Association, Circle K and the National Society of Collegiate Scholars have already put forth huge efforts to alleviate this ever-present problem in our community. Also, the Oxfam Hunger Banquet recently completed an event that educated many students, staff, faculty members and guests about the enormous hunger crisis going on in the world. However, with nearly 33 million people experiencing hunger nationwide and over 5,000 people below the poverty line in Latah

County alone, there is still much to be done. Within this issue, we have provided descriptions of projects that seek to make this holiday season more enjoyable for people who do not have the means to do so and have provided information about how to get involved in these activities. Also, you can find December activities and more events listed on the back of this issue, which are open to anyone who wants to get involved. Make sure to read about the Residence Hall Association who has earned the spotlight of service award for their donations made to needy families, which is located on the back page. We wish everyone a safe and happy holiday; and hopefully one of the articles found inside will inspire the spirit to give into people who will devote themselves to the those who are in need.

~Peter Stegner

## CONTENTS

UI Hosts Oxfam Hunger Banquet, 2
Alternative Breaks Association, 3
Circle K, 3
Human Rights Day, 3
National Society of Collegiate Scholars, 3
Spotlight on Service, 4
Civic Engagement Opportunities, 4

**SPOTLIGHT!**  
RHA Adopt-a-  
Family Project

5,186  
Latah County  
residents live below the  
poverty line.

148,732 Idaho Residents  
(11.8% of total population) live  
below the poverty line.

Idaho is the sixth hungriest state in the nation.

36.4 million Americans live in poverty,  
40% of which are children.

700,000 to 2 million Americans are homeless on any given night.

1.2 billion people around the world live in poverty.

## UI Hosts Oxfam Hunger Banquet

Jose Gonzales is a laborer in the coffee bean fields of South America. Recent drops in the coffee price have forced Jose's employer to let go of several coffee bean laborers, including Jose. Jose's meager income was only enough to feed his small family, so now with no job and no savings Jose will join approximately 55% of the world population in the low income group of the world. "Jose, will you please move across the room to the low income group?" This is just one of the many scenarios played out at the Oxfam Hunger Banquet sponsored by the Civic Education Project on November 19<sup>th</sup>.

Oxfam Hunger Banquets were developed by Oxfam International, an organization dedicated to confronting poverty in all nations, to raise awareness of the unequal distribution of food and wealth in the world. Over forty hungry students, staff, faculty and guests gathered in the Aurora/Horizon rooms just a week before the biggest "food holiday" of the year in order to receive this brief glimpse into what the world looks like for many people.

At the door every participant exchanged their dollar ticket and the saved money from their 24-hour fast for a new life and identity written on slips of paper and drawn at random out of a bowl. On the slips of paper were the person's new name and a small biography, including occupation, nationality, and a short description of some significant past events. Based on this new identity, the participants were shown to their "place" in the room. Fifty-five percent of participants were shown to a corner in the room where they could sit on the floor and drink dirty water; they were in the low-income group that makes up about 55% of the world's population and survives on \$2 or less a day. Thirty-five of the participants were shown to the other side of the room to sit at long plain tables with clean water in paper cups; they were the middle-income class of the world that makes just enough to feed their families and provide for their basic necessities. The remaining 15% were shown to round tables located in the center of the room filled with plates, silverware, candles, linens, lemon ice water, and caesar salads

they were the high-income group that is marked by consumption and waste.

As the event proceeded, some different economic forces came into play as people from the low-income group received better jobs while those from the middle-income group lost their jobs. After some rearranging, everyone was fed a typical meal in their income class group, which is where a lot of the real learning began. At the low income group, they had a small pan of plain white rice to feed them all, while the middle income group had a little more with just enough steamed vegetables and white rice for everyone. At the high income table, they enjoyed caesar salad, pasta primavera, breadsticks, key lime pie, coffee, iced tea, and lemon water.



Throughout the event the high income group was very generous to the low income group by first donating all their salads and continually giving portions of their meal to many in the low income group. However, there were still many in the low income group that were very hungry and reverted to stealing from a vacant high income table and even the occupied high in-

come table. Meanwhile, the middle income group remained very quiet in the other corner of the room. After hearing from Mike Thompson of University Dining about food waste on the UI campus and Marie Vogel from Sojourner's Alliance Food bank in Troy and Leslie Reckord from Meals on Wheels in Moscow about different hunger issues in the Moscow area, participants completed a brief discussion about some of the different events that occurred throughout the night.

The Oxfam Hunger Banquet is held yearly to create awareness about the different issues faced by the world and how every individual person plays a role in promoting or preventing these issues from continuing. While many participants in the Oxfam Hunger Banquet will spend the majority of their life enjoying the luxury of the high-income group, their ability to see the impact of their choices on the rest of the world can help them to become educated members of an increasing global system and economy.

~Casandra Byington

### **Alternative Breaks Association**

Alternative Breaks Association's mission is to broaden students' perspectives and foster civic activism in Moscow and neighboring communities. We seek to accomplish this mission by providing service trips to university students during breaks in the academic schedule as well as by promoting leadership in participants through planning and implementing trips and other service opportunities within Moscow.

Last year, Alternative Breaks Association (ABA) ventured two days in a fifteen-passenger van to San Francisco, California to provide acts of community service to the local community. While we were there, we stayed in a German Lutheran church and had the opportunity to help them with small acts such as painting and cleaning up around the outside of the church. However, our group's main focus was placed upon the Peninsula Habitat for Humanity located in Redwood City, California, about thirty to forty-five minutes from our church. We spent three full days helping to build homes which included anything from painting trim to putting up siding. We also spent parts of two days at the San Francisco Food Bank. Placed in a not-so-wonderful spot of the city, the bank's efforts to reach the community around them are huge. We sorted food and household products that otherwise would have been thrown away by local retail stores, such as K-mart, that were then used for distribution to area shelters and soup kitchens.

The best experience of the entire trip was realizing what we had actually been doing was helping others who are not as fortunate as we are. Hunger affects 90,000 people in San Francisco alone, and between 11,000 and 14,000 people are homeless on any given night in San Francisco. Just being able to know that ten students from the University of Idaho, nearly 900 miles away from home, were helping individuals such as these had a great impact on all of us; undoubtedly, one that we will never be able to forget.

~Ashley Reid

**The National Society of Collegiate Scholars** is a national organization that works heavily with civic engagement projects. Our chapter's Planning for College Success program is part of a nationwide project that aims to motivate academic excellence while encouraging students to go to college. The program works primarily with area junior high students. Mentoring relationships and many fun and wonderful opportunities are created to help out the kids within our community. We also work on projects for Make a Difference Day and Saturday of Service. We plan various community service events year round, so that everyone may find a way to become involved. We welcome any project ideas and people who want to help (members or not). Please contact Crystal\_j00@yahoo.com if you would like to get involved.

~Crystal Jones

### **Circle K**

Circle K is an international community service club for college students. It is a member of the Kiwanis Family of clubs (other members include Key Club, Builders Club, K's Kids, and Aktion). The University of Idaho Circle K was chartered this January, but the club has been involved in many community service projects before and after chartering. Making Valentines for Vets with the elderly, helping with local Easter egg hunts, visiting animals at the local animal shelter, Trick-or-Treating for IDD, helping the local Kiwanis club prepare Thanksgiving food baskets for local families, and Christmas Caroling are a few of the many projects the club has participated in. Members also participate in ASUI-sponsored community service programs such as Saturday of Service. The most recent of our projects involved helping the American Legion hang flags on Main Street in Moscow for the observance of Veterans Day.

From club officer to district officer to international officer opportunities, there are many opportunities for leadership roles through the club. All students are encouraged and welcome to come to one of our meetings to get involved or just to learn more. Our meetings are every Tuesday at 5:30 on the fourth floor of the Commons. We hope to see you there!

~Lisa White

### **Gepetto the Tree Project**

This is a program designed by several UI students for the Sojourners' Alliance homeless shelter. On Saturday, December 14th, volunteers will help spread holiday cheer to the residents of the shelter by decorating the buildings, helping the people pick out Christmas tress, making holiday crafts, and hosting a holiday dinner with festive music.

If you are interested in participating in this project, please contact Marissa at arissamay@hotmail.com. Happy holidays!

# SPOTLIGHT ON SERVICE



The Resident Hall Association's Community Service Committee is sponsoring an Adopt-a-Family project for the winter holidays in conjunction with Sojourners' Alliance. Five local families in need will receive a laundry basket full of gifts, necessities, and household items. The gift baskets will come as a surprise to the families. In addition to the families, 71 local children in need will also receive gift bags with items such as hats, gloves, books, and school supplies. Over 100 people in our community will be served by this program. The funding for the RHA Adopt-a-Family project was raised during the annual Penny Wars Competition during GDI week this fall. Over \$2,600 was raised from this event. The University of Idaho Bookstore has also made a contribution to this project.

*If you would like more information, please email [angelviolet@hotmail.com](mailto:angelviolet@hotmail.com).*

~Megan Thompson

# Civic Engagement Opportunities


If you are available from 1:00 – 3:00 p.m. on Wednesdays and would like to help stock food and take inventory for the local Meals on Wheels program, please email [JessicaL@sub.uidaho.edu](mailto:JessicaL@sub.uidaho.edu).

**Sunday, December 8,** Circle K will be wrapping presents for local families in need at the Nazarene Church on Camas Street at 3 p.m. Meet in the SUB parking lot at 2:45 p.m. to carpool if you need a ride.

## International Human Rights Day

Students of Raul Sanchez's class entitled "Human Rights in the Americas" are hosting a tabling fair at the Commons from 10:00 - 2:00 on December 10th in observation of International Human Rights Day and the anniversary of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights. Campus and community organizations will be on hand to increase awareness of local and international human rights issues.

Also, on December 10th at 6:00 in the UI Law School courtroom, Raul Sanchez, Special Assistant to the President for Diversity and Human Rights will give a talk entitled "Is the Death Penalty a Human Rights Violation?"



*Are you up to the Challenge?*


Sign up to take the  
**ASUI Semester of Service Challenge!**

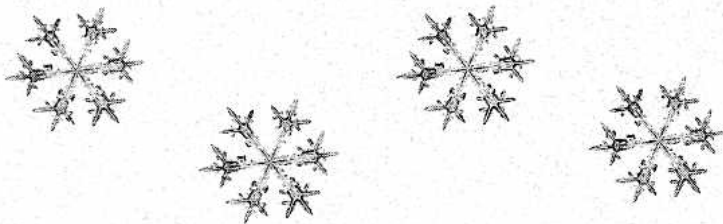
- ◆ Register at the Civic Education Project offices
- ◆ Complete 30 hours or more of approved community service volunteer activities
- ◆ Receive a certificate and award at an end-of-the-year recognition event

Contact the:

Civic Education Project  
Idaho Commons, Rm 302  
208/885-9442  
[Civic\\_Ed@sub.uidaho.edu](mailto:Civic_Ed@sub.uidaho.edu)  
<http://uidaho.edu/volunteer>

- ◆ Spend quality time meeting new people, and feel great about contributing to those who need your help





## Meet the ASUI Civic Engagement Leadership Committee

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