

SPECIAL POINTS OF INTEREST:

- Happy Birthday Garnesha
- Welcome Amiel!
- Important Dates
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- Worst Gift Ideas

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Soundly Bound



Caroline Nichols, St. Edward's University

*Let us turn our thoughts today
To Martin Luther King
And recognize that there are ties
between us
All men and women
Living on the earth
Ties of hope and love*

*Sister and brotherhood
That we are bound together
In our desire to see the world be-
come
A place in which our children
Can grow free and strong
We are bound together
By the task that stands before us
And the road that lies ahead
We are bound and we are bound*

These are words from James Taylor's song "Shed a Little Light" and words that remind me of my humanity. Just yesterday, I watched students participate in a service project with senior residents from a nursing and rehabilitation facility. As I busied

myself with details, cameras and nametags, I caught glimpses of the "ties between us" that Taylor sings about. I saw that laughter has no age, friendship knows no bounds and community can be created. I watched a room of strangers quickly become a room of mutual friends.

I smiled when I placed a nametag on Gary Anderson and he looked up to say, "When you get a nametag you know you're going to have a riot... because there's a chance you could forget your name!" The delight and joy

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Give & Lack Nothing



Paul Felarca, St. Mary's University

The wind has a crisp, chilly feel to it now. Red, green and white lights mark the way home. More pews are being filled by local visitors (only to be vacant again until Easter). Shelves in stores

are quickly becoming bare, as eager children promise to be good "forever times infinity." Santa Claus now begins to make his many appearances in many places . . . all at the same time—something is noticeably different about Old St.

Nick. Alas, 'tis the season is upon us—a time for family and friends, fellowship, the birth of Jesus and to think of those in more difficult circumstances than anyone can imagine.

One group we all think about

during this season is the children. The thought of any child not delighting in the same joys as many of those his or her same

"I will be kind to the poor, for they are alone. Kind to the rich, for they are afraid." -Max Lucado

age pains most, if not all, Americans. It has been my (overall) wonderful experience to know how thoughtful and caring the St. Mary's University community is.

In years' past, the University Police Department (UPD) held

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Amie Lewis, Texas Christian University

Important Dates

Dec. 1: Rosa Parks Human Rights Day

Dec. 3-7: VISTA Leader Training in Lombard, IL

Dec. 6: Project 4 due

Dec. 10: International Human Rights Day

Dec. 25: Garnesha's Birthday

Dec. 28: Activity Reports due

Jan. 3: TXCC state office reopens

Jan. 10: Quarterly Reports & Member Evaluations due

Jan. 15: MLK National Day of Service

Jan. 17: Project 5 due

Jan. 18: Conference call for supervisors re/applying for VISTA

Jan. 21: MLK Birthday (observed)

Other Worldly Experiences

Two years ago, when I packed my car and drove eighteen hours from Southern Illinois to Sheridan, Wyoming, if someone had asked what the next three years of my life would entail, I would never have predicted that I would have found my way to Texas Christian University in Fort Worth working for Texas Campus Compact.

My VISTA career began in a nonprofit in a small town in Wyoming in November of 2005. I cannot begin to describe the impact that year had on me personally and professionally, but I am certain that the growth and development that occurred that year only

infused my passion and refined my sense of purpose and commitment to social justice.

At that time, a recent graduate of McKendree University, just outside of St. Louis, Missouri, with a B.A. in political science, I already knew that I wanted to dedicate my life to social justice issues. Therefore, making the decision to become an AmeriCorps VISTA was an easy one-leaving everything I had ever known was quite another.

After completing my year as a VISTA, I decided to move to South Korea and teach English as a second language. It seemed as though the move to

Wyoming had only served as a stepping stone for more challenging things to come. I lived in South Korea from February to October of this year, but prior to my return to the States, I was drawn to the idea of serving another year as a VISTA. Thus, making the choice to move to Texas seemed so easy when compared to my previous experiences.

I know that the next year will bring many new people and experiences, and although I am certain that this year will hold many challenges, I am excited about its possibilities and the chance to create another chapter in my journey.

Six-hundred Miles or More



Ann Lewandowski, Texas Campus Compact state office

On November 18, Liz Tengalia and I traveled to Dallas to visit two of our VISTA host sites, Brookhaven College and Southern Methodist University and meet with eight representatives from member institutions and one potential new member. We arrived in Dallas late Sunday night, checked into our hotel and promptly fell asleep. I spent Monday morning and afternoon touring Brookhaven Community Col-

lege and meeting with Sarah Bonilla and Linus Spiller.

Liz spent the day touring Southern Methodist with Joe Macchia and meeting with Stella Mulberry. Joe then accompanied Liz to Dallas Baptist where they promoted the upcoming student institute and VISTA program to Jay Harley, Dean of Spiritual Life, and Gail Linam, Provost. The three of us then zipped up to University of Texas at Dallas to meet with Terry Hockenbrough, Service-Learning Coordinator.

On Tuesday morning, we accompanied Joe and the entire Office of Leadership & Community Involvement staff to their service project at a homeless shelter. We had a wonderful time, everyone was welcoming and we were able to wear such stylish hairnets!

Next, we headed to Texas Wesleyan to discuss the benefits of Campus Compact membership (fingers crossed we may have a new member). We then dashed back over to Brookhaven to meet with Service-Learning representatives from four of the Dallas Community College District. Molly Bewley and Linus Spiller coordinated this meeting where we encouraged each campus to consider applying to host a VISTA next year.

Our last appointment was at the University of Texas in

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Learning Through Service



Jennifer Huesers, Blinn College

Here at Blinn College, we have developed a nice nickname: Blinndergarten. I can only assume it was started by Texas A&M students in the neighboring town, who consider themselves smarter than a lowly community college.

However, these Blinndergarteners are doing a great deal of work in the Service-Learning program and

have noticed a trend of their services.

When I arrived at this campus, Service-Learning was already well developed. There are approximately thirty professors involved every semester and about a third of them involve kids from the community. A geology class created an exhibit for The Children's Museum to teach them about rocks and volcanoes.

The dental students host a Dental Hygiene day where they teach oral hygiene to children, provide toothbrushes and toothpaste and donate free teeth cleaning. The astronomy and oceanography courses have produced inflatable planetariums and traveling reefs that they show to classrooms.

Several subjects work with the HOSTS (Helping One Student To Succeed) program, where they pair a volunteer with a child for 30 minutes every week. Spanish courses help with the ESL children, math courses help preteens with math skills and sociology courses helps teach children to read.

I was inspired enough to join HOSTS this semester and I helped a first grade girl with her letters.

When I was a student at Texas A&M University, I thought Blinndergarten was a clever, degrading pet name. Now whenever I hear the name, I think about all the involvement they have with our community's children.

¡Feliz Cumplianos!

Garnesha Beck

celebrates her birthday

December 25.

Admittedly, she cannot

live without TiVo, the

internet or her cell

phone. Garnesha likes to

stay connected. She also

likes her new pet rabbit,

Roger.

Recommended birthday gifts:

batteries, wireless G USB network adaptor, a rabbit fur coat and a pair of Dalmatian slippers.

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Next issue's theme

A New Year, a Fresh

Outlook: *Una Vista*

Nueva

Lack Nothing

their own campus toy drive, directly competing with the Service-Learning Center's (SLC) annual Giving Tree toy drive. This year, UPD and SLC collaborated on having one large toy drive, "Marianist Miracle Workers present: Miracle on 36th Street" (an obvious take from the classic Christmas film, as well as the fact that one of the main thoroughfares surrounding the university is named 36th Street).

Members of the Marianist Miracle Workers included a sergeant and an officer from UPD, a student

volunteer with SLC, my Assistant Director Jerry Parker, a freshman Greehey Scholar and me. Having no experience with running a toy drive, much less running an institutionalized tradition at St. Mary's, the members voted me to coordinate the Miracle on 36th Street toy drive and related activities.

This year, we will be supporting nine community partners: Battered Women's and Children's Shelter of Bexar County, Chaminade Apartments (low-income housing complex), The Children's Shelter, Guadalupe Home (young mothers and

pregnant teens Catholic Charities agency), Loma Park Elementary School (many students of low-income families), Pan American Apartments Head Start program, St. Peter-St. Paul Home (abandoned, abused or neglected children's shelter), St. Vincent de Paul Society-Holy Rosary Parish and Seton Home (young mothers, pregnant teens and their children).

With a slow start and some miscommunication with other entities

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Six-hundred Miles

Arlington. Here we met with Shirley Theriot, who has been a champion of Service-Learning and the Compact. It is our hope that we will find an incredible VISTA to place at UTA next year (do you know anyone who may be interested?). After two days of great meetings and tons of driving, we hopped back in the car and headed home.

Holiday Happiness

Holiday Dos and Don'ts:

- **Do think about what's important.** Happiness and fulfillment lie in the balance between self-care and caring for others.
- **Do socialize.** If you're feeling lonely, find a social group or community center where you can be with other people.

- **Do exercise every day.** That's especially important when you're eating more. It's hard to be sad if you're physically fit.
- **Don't watch TV.** Most programs are not designed to make you a better person, or even feel better.
- **Don't spend so much.** You don't have to buy electronic entertainment equipment that far exceeds the human sensory capability to detect the difference.

Bound

spilling from faces and eyes was enough to bring a spirit of goodwill to any holiday Scrooge. But, it was a few hours later when the full impact of my human connection to others made the most sense and sadness.

After all the decorations were stashed obnoxiously in offices and students rushed out to their next evening obligation, my assistant and I gathered all the crafts, cookies, and ornaments and delivered them to the nursing facility. It was after dinner, and the residents were getting ready for bed. Something about the stone walls was so different from the warm blood I felt rushing to my head.

I know the residents will remember and talk about the wonderful field trip to St. Edward's long after many of the students forget, but the real encounter with humanity is to meet people exactly where they are. To see what you'd ordinarily ignore. To look where you'd otherwise turn your head. And then to love all that you've found.

Taylor writes that we are bound "by the task that stands before us and the road that lies ahead" and I believe it's true. Our humanity binds us all together.

Lack Nothing

on campus, the first Miracle on 36th Street event, "Angel Tree in the UC Kick-off," had a large turn-out in the university center. Passersby had the opportunity to take pictures with Santa Claus and his elves, decorate their own cookies, drop off toys and take a wish list for a child from Pan American Head Start. I even bought toys for two children, buying almost everything they wished for.

The second event, "Giving Tree Wrap Party," was another success. Throughout the day, twenty faculty, staff and students helped wrap many of

5	3			7			
6			1	9	5		
	9	8					6
8				6			3
4			8		3		1
7				2			6
	6					2	8
			4	1	9		5
				8			7
						7	9

Holiday Sudoku

the donated gifts received from the alumni association and university employees' parties, and from boxes placed around campus. So far, we have received approximately 1,000 gifts and 250 pounds of non-perishable food. SLC staff or student workers daily check the boxes around campus to pick up more toys and gifts.

Our last 36th street miracle-sponsored event, "Santa Claus at Loma Park," will take place on Monday, December 17, at Loma Park Elementary School. Traditionally, this event has been a UPD-sponsored program in which Santa Claus and UPD arrive at Loma Park to distribute wrapped gifts to all the students. This year, the entire St. Mary's community has been invited to help Santa spread cheer and give smiles to the children at the school.

Despite some behind-the-scenes glitches, concerns and other stresses, Miracle on 36th Street has been a tremendous success.

Partnering with another campus entity has brought some problems, but nothing we could not smooth out. Working to bring in more donated items to support all of our agencies was a main concern, but the community pulled through. Seeing the smiles on the children's and young mothers' faces is always a feather in our caps, but this is nothing new or foreign to the good

works committed by St. Mary's University.

I am blessed to be part of a community that realizes how the roles of faith, social justice and active civic engagement play a great part in all we do and everywhere we go. St. Mary's Catholic and Marianist mission statement can be expressed in this most basic assertion from Max Lucado: "I will be kind to the poor, for they are alone. Kind to the rich, for they are afraid. And kind to the unkind, for such is how God has treated me."

And so, this Christmas the story will be the same. Lovers will sit underneath the mistletoe and wait to see how much they love each other. Parents will take note of which toys their children "ooh" and "ah" over, tucking away that secret list deep into their pockets, out-of-reach and out-of-sight of the little ones.

Pastors will be praying that their sermons will bring congregants back time and time again (and not just every other time or once in a while). Snowmen will be dressed, sleds will be ridden and presents will keep trees company.

Sadly, another story will be the same for many children and families who have lost the hopes and dreams that others have found or were given. It is our charge to help change that story.

...Worst Gift Ideas

Framed Pictures of Yourself

Loving yourself is important, but sending framed pictures of yourself is an odd gift. Including a photograph in with a holiday card will keep everyone updated on how you look, without making them add on a new room to the house just to display your picture.

The "Good Intentions" Gifts

What you think might be filled with good intentions could ignite deep resentments. Gifts which target a specific short-coming is generally not appreciated.

Such gifts could include:

- A gift certificate to the newest diet craze.
- Coaching tapes on how to be successful to someone who is unemployed or in a dead-end job.
- A month's supply of Nicorette to a chain smoker.
- Hypnosis tapes for overeaters, smokers, aggressive Type A personalities.

Regifting is a wonderful way to save money and when done tactfully and with thought, we can accomplish the goal of why we are giving a gift to someone in the first place - because we want them to have something they will enjoy.

Ho ho ho

