Teambuilding and Leadership

One of the cornerstones of the Albert Schweitzer Fellowship is building leadership skills and learning to work in interdisciplinary teams. The 2013/14 Fellows had a teambuilding activity filled day on Sunday, January 12 at Discovery Green. All their hard work was followed with some ice skating, where some more organic teambuilding had to occur to keep their fellow Fellows from falling. They had three different activities that were meant to show the importance of communication and of adapting your communication style to fit the situation and other team members. The first was a blindfolded obstacle course. Each team, comprised of two people, had to verbally guide their blindfolded partner through an obstacle course. The second activity, a photo scavenger hunt, split them into two teams. Each team had half of the alphabet and were to find things that represented each letter to the group. It was very interesting how the two teams reached their goal so differently. One very literally and the other very liberally. This activity was followed by a discussion of why they chose the things and methods they did. The third activity was for the whole group, The Human Knot is literally a tangle of arms that have to be maneuvered back to a circle. Though not possible to get back to the original circle, they ended in an infinity symbol, which is much more fitting. While on the rink, though, after all the activities, is where the real teamwork began. Many of them had very little to no experience ice skating and they really came together to get everyone off the wall. It was both touching and hilarious!

For photos or more information on the activities contact Jennifer Cook.

-Jennifer Cook, ASFHG Staff

American Leadership Forum

On January 23, 2014 the ASFHG Fellows had the opportunity to meet and network with the ALF, American Leadership Forum, Fellows. It was a wonderful opportunity for both groups to connect with like-minded professionals that are doing great work all over Houston. The American Leadership Forum (ALF) is a nonprofit organization whose mission is to join and strengthen diverse leaders to better serve the public good. They do this through a yearlong Fellows Program in which leaders can engage in dialogue, differ, and build relationships. ALF strengthens Fellows’ capacity to address public issues collaboratively and builds a strong leadership network to work for positive change in our community.

ALF was founded in 1980 to create a regional network of diverse senior-level leaders across private, public and nonprofit sectors. ALF Fellows and Senior Fellows now number more than 3,500 nationwide. In Houston, they have created a network that brings together a broad cross-section of leaders committed to building a stronger community.

They use collaborative leadership skills to identify and deal with complex regional issues, model servant leadership, and create opportunities to work together in ways that make a significant difference to Houston and its surrounding communities.

There were some great connections made that will hopefully turn into mentorship opportunities or future professional collaborations. Follow the link for more information on ALF.

-Jennifer Cook, ASFHG Staff
Announcing the 2014 Humanitarian Award Recipient—

Dr. Bernard Harris

We are proud to announce the recipient of the 2014 ASFHG Humanitarian Award, Dr. Bernard Harris. Dr. Harris is an astronaut and President of the Harris Foundation as well as a fellow Texan.

Dr. Harris worked at NASA for ten years, where he conducted research on musculoskeletal physiology and disuse osteoporosis. Later as Head of the Exercise Counter Measure Project, he conducted clinical investigation of space adaption and developed in-flight medical devices to extend Astronaut stays in space.

He is also the founder of the Harris Foundation, a non-profit organization that supports math/science education and crime prevention programs for America’s youth. The Harris Foundation has five primary educational programs aimed at making a difference in the lives of students in America. These grassroots initiatives reach into some of the most economically disadvantaged schools in the country and give students real hope for using education to move beyond their current environment.

Dr. Harris’ goals in life have been achieved through self-empowerment and self-determination. He believes that education and effort will allow anyone to meet any challenge in life, inspiring others to reach for the stars.

Dr. Harris truly embodies the spirit of the Albert Schweitzer Fellowship as a hard working and determined man with a strong drive to help others and give back to the community.

We are all excited to have Dr. Harris as the face of ASFHG’s Humanitarian Award and look forward to hearing him speak at the 2014 Luncheon on April 17, 2014. Contact Jennifer Cook for more information.

Feature FFL—David Savage

This past December marked an important anniversary for me. It was two years ago that I sat down to write my application for the Houston-Galveston Albert Schweitzer Fellowship Program. I could not have imagined at the time how much the experience would change my life. In the months that followed I applied, interviewed, and was selected in March 2012 to be an ASF program Fellow. My first thoughts were filled with excitement, but then reality hit me. Was I really qualified and capable to execute a 200 hour project? Or had I oversold my abilities to the selection committee? I immediately started working with my agency, the Alliance for Multicultural Community Services, to create a plan to address the health access needs of resettled refugees in Houston. At first there was some uncertainty, but after about three months of work and investigation, I found a rhythm that worked for the rest of the year.

My project would not have been possible without the help of Lori, my very dedicated site mentor. The first few months she helped me to set up focus groups where I could interview male and female refugees from different ethnic groups to learn about their health needs. In early fall 2012 I began the first set of weekend classes to talk about applying for health benefits in Harris County. During those classes I learned that one of the biggest problems was language: my clients could not read the forms. This led me to create a YouTube video later in the year that walked clients through each field of the form in both English and Nepalese. Each week thereafter, Lori would call me on Mondays to ask if I was going to do a class the following Saturday. Then she’d work to arrange an interpreter, while I planned the class, solicited volunteers, and reserved a classroom at an apartment complex.

As the Fellowship year ended, Lori had found a new job but told me that she would not have stayed with the Alliance as long were it not for my project. That meant the world to me. The other big element of my project were refugee health fairs.

We ran four over the course of the year at the Alliance’s office building. Here again I would not have been nearly as successful were it not for Erika, a very committed medical student and leader for another service organization at our school. She helped me to find supplies and recruit volunteers for each of the fairs, and what we accomplished was much greater than what either of us could have done alone. Erika is now one of my best friends, and she and I presented the results of my project as co-authors at the Community Service Learning Conference in San Antonio in April 2013. By the end of my service year, my project had grown to include 10 regular medical student volunteers and three regular physician volunteers for my weekend apartment classes. We also began collaborating with the University of Texas School of Dentistry and the University of Houston Pharmacy School for health fairs and amassed nearly 30 student volunteers for each one. This team served over 500 unique refugees in 12 months, and they paved the way for a second Nepalese Mental Health project which was awarded $3,000 from the American Psychiatric Association in Summer 2013.

When I sat at my computer two years ago I would not have imagined how expansive the project I wrote about would eventually become. This was especially true during our very last class in March 2013 for Burmese refugees. There were over 30 clients, 6 medical students, 2 physicians, and an interpreter packed into a small classroom. All of them were there on a Saturday because they believed in my project and the needs of my clients, and none of them would have been there at all were it not for the Fellowship. In that tear-jerking and sentimental moment, I realized the substantial impact that the ASF program makes on our community, and I’ll forever be grateful that I was able to participate.

-David Savage, BCM, FFL 2012/13
Feature Fellow: Matthew Mullane

Matt Mullane has partnered with Urban Harvest and the I-Grow Houston Initiative to implement and evaluate community garden projects in Sunnyside, a neighborhood located southeast of downtown Houston. The community is known to have higher rates of obesity, diabetes, and heart disease than many other areas of Houston. Additionally, because there are fewer food stores in the area that sell fresh and affordable produce, Sunnyside has been termed a “food desert”. Urban Harvest started the I-Grow Houston Initiative in 2012 in order to transform some of Sunnyside’s abandoned lots into community gardens. While the project is relatively new, they have already succeeded in directly involving volunteers from the community in growing fresh, local produce. As part of Matt’s project, he is collecting a set of data to assist in reviewing the first I-Grow Houston garden. Using community mapping and needs assessments, his project will inform Urban Harvest in how to direct the project’s future direction in Sunnyside. A second effort in Matt’s project is to create and implement a nutrition & health workshop series for the community gardeners, focusing on nutrition and cooking with healthy ingredients. Thus far his project has proven to be a great learning experience. He has already come away with several lessons, including: the importance of listening and becoming part of a community before launching an initiative, the value in reorienting data collection efforts to suit the desires of a community, the challenges associated with discussing new nutrition practices with an elderly population, and the joys of learning how to grow some delicious vegetables! - Matt Mullane, UT San Antonio

Angela House—New Facility Same Great Program

Angela House was created in 2001 with the mission “to successfully transition women into society after incarceration.” Since then they have served 260 women transitioning out of the criminal justice system. On Sunday, January 26 they had the opening ceremony of their new and greatly improved facility. This program is supported by many in the community including ASFHG BOD Chair, David Buck, MD and ASFHG Mentor Andrea Link, MD. It was a beautiful ceremony and included remarks by Mayor Anise Parker and the Cardinal of Houston. The testimonies of clients were very moving. They spoke of how Angela House helped them get off the streets, respect and forgive themselves, and reunite with family, among other things. Angela House’s philosophy is to establish a community of women who respect themselves and each other, and who are committed in working for their own empowerment as well as the empowerment of their families and each other. The administration and staff work hand-in-hand with the residents to create a communal atmosphere in which each individual feels respected and valued. You can find more information about Angela House here http://angelahouse.org/

Meet the Board—Twila Ross

Twila Ross has been a Board member and supporter of ASFHG and its mission since the very beginning. She is a strong advocate for vulnerable persons and knowledgeable about best practices to reach those populations. Twila has been with The Harris County Protective Services since March 2009 working to better the lives of children and families as a Permanency Team Manager. Prior to that she was with Depelchin’s Children’s Center for 15 years. She holds a Master’s degree in Marriage and Family Therapy/ Counseling and is committed to the development and empowerment of teams. She says “The work we do in the field of therapy and social work is in my opinion done most effectively in teams. I am very invested in coaching and encourage-ment with many different populations both professionally and client based.” She has been coaching, encouraging, and mentoring ASFHG Fellows and staff for years now. Thank you Twila for all your work and support for the Fellows and Program. To be connected with Twila, please contact Jennifer Cook.

“"The greatest thing is to give thanks for everything. He who has learned this knows what it means to live” - Albert Schweitzer
The mission of ASF is improving the health of vulnerable people now and for the future by developing a corps of Leaders in Service—professionals skilled in creating positive change with and in our communities, our health and human service systems, and our world.

ASFHG has four overall goals:

- Develop Leaders in Service who are educated, experienced, and committed to addressing unmet health needs;
- Improve community health by providing direct service to individuals and strengthening the capacity of community-based organizations;
- Expand educational opportunities in partnering schools while raising awareness of the needs of underserved communities; and
- Maintain a growing and vibrant community of Schweitzer Fellowship alumni (Fellows for Life) committed to lives of service.

You can contact Jennifer Cook, Program Director for more information at Jennifer.cook@schweitzerfellowship.org

To give to ASFHG please follow this link: https://donatenow.networkforgood.org/1443402

Make sure you choose the Houston-Galveston tab or mail a check to the address below.

Albert Schweitzer Fellowship—Houston
Galveston
3701 Kirby Dr.
Suite 600
Houston, TX 77098

Save the Dates:

- FFL—Happy Hour, March 13, 2014 Hay Merchant
- Celebration of Service Luncheon—April 17, 2014
  11:30 am
  Veranda at 17

Look for other events and volunteer opportunities on Facebook and email announcements.