This spring, the Chicago Schweitzer Fellows Program welcomed 31 superb health professional students as Fellows, our largest and most diverse group ever. Soon after orientation, the Program Office scheduled a Service Day to help the new Fellows become acquainted with an underserved community – and each other.

Fellows make safety a matter of childsplay

Sultry summer weather was no match for the new Schweitzer Fellows who volunteered to clean up two children’s playlots in Chicago’s Little Village neighborhood. Both playlots had previously “flunked” safety inspections because of broken glass and other debris, and the lack of cushioning to prevent accidents.

The service day gave the Fellows an opportunity to work as a group in the community. At one of the playlots, many neighborhood residents – including children – started working alongside the Fellows.

The volunteering opportunity was organized in conjunction with the Friends of the Park, a nonprofit organization working to preserve, protect, and improve Chicago parks and forest preserves for all to enjoy.

(At right: Fasika Alem, a University of Illinois student pursuing a PhD in Public Health. In back, Kameka Brown, a UIC PhD nursing student.)

10th Year Celebration & “Fellows for Life” Reunion

This year marks the Chicago Area Schweitzer Fellowship Program’s first decade anniversary, and so the theme we’ve selected for our annual celebration event is “Ten Years of Fellowship and Beyond: Answering Schweitzer’s Lifelong Call to Service.” We’re thrilled to have Mr. Ron Huberman, Mayor Richard M. Daley’s Chief of Staff, and a former Chicago Schweitzer Fellow (1998-99) as our keynote speaker. Thanks to a generous grant from the Baxter International Foundation, we will also be launching a new “Fellows for Life” initiative, with a reunion and other activities during the year ahead designed to strengthen our ties with ten classes of Fellows.
Welcome to the Chicago Schweitzer Fellowship Newsletter!

This year’s class of Fellows (our tenth), chosen from a large group of applicants, have launched themselves into their community projects with energy and commitment. They will have a year of satisfaction in serving their communities, but will also learn much about other health-related professions than on their own—the Fellows come from 21 different university programs in the Chicago area. They will also have many opportunities to demonstrate and develop leadership skills, with support of their community site and academic mentors, and to learn about the difficulties and challenges in developing meaningful services for people in need. They have chosen to add 200 hours of community service and engagement with their peers to their already jammed graduate education schedules—a truly remarkable commitment! I am confident that from the 2005-2006 Chicago Schweitzer Fellows will come many future leaders in health services to those in need, and add to the illustrious group of their predecessors—and become, as they have, Fellows for Life. I wish to thank the site mentors for their commitment to the Fellows, the academic mentors, and the donors who make this Chicago Schweitzer Fellows program possible.

Arthur Kohrman, MD
Health & Medicine Board Advisor
The Schweitzer Fellows Program

Chicago Schweitzer Fellows Newsletter
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Wanted: Graduate Health Students with Pith and Vinegar

The Chicago Area Schweitzer Fellowship invites applications for the 2006-07 Program Year. We seek to recruit a diverse group of outstanding health professions students who are interested in helping address health disparities and unmet health needs in Chicago area communities. The Fellowship experience is an opportunity to be part of an interdisciplinary group of like-minded students who are committed to helping others. We draw upon Dr. Albert Schweitzer’s ethic of “Reverence for Life” and his vision that a wealth of idealism and altruism exists in communities that can be tapped as a powerful instrument against problems facing the poor and underserved.

Schweitzer Fellows:
- Design and implement innovative direct service projects totaling 200 hours within a 12 month period
- Work with other Fellows to plan and organize symposia and service days
- Attend monthly meetings to share information and encouragement
- Become part of a network of Fellows for Life committed to humanitarian service
- Receive a stipend of $2,000

Deadline: Feb. 3, 2006. Application guidelines are available at www.hmprg.org/sch-appinfo.html, or contact Ray Wang, Program Director at rwang@hmprg.org or 312 372-4292.

Lessons learned at summer camp

Each year, Camp Horizon in Hershey, PA provides children from around the country with severe skin disorders a much needed recreational outlet along with the medical and social support their conditions require. In August, Lauren Taglia (University of Illinois, Combined Physiology and Biophysics PhD) worked on arts projects with children attending the camp who were from Chicago’s Children’s Memorial Hospital. Her Fellowship project involves continuing therapeutic arts-related activities with the participants in the coming year to promote their quality of life.

Lauren writes: “I had no idea what to expect prior to arriving at camp and spent most of my time thinking about how I, someone without a skin disease, could stand before these brave kids and ask them to draw their emotions. To my surprise, the campers taught me more than what it feels like to walk around looking different. They taught me about respect, bravery and confidence. I asked each camper to fill out a short information sheet including their name, skin disease, and how their condition made them feel while in public, around friends and with family. I encouraged the kids to draw a picture about how they felt about their disease, as if they were artists preparing a museum piece. Each child addressed the issue uniquely. Some drew pictures of nature and animals while others drew complicated figures. The children amazed me. As a future physician scientist, their willingness to share deep emotions inspired me. I am honored to have attended Camp Horizon as a Schweitzer Fellow and consider this experience life changing.”
Kimberly Vander Griend (Univ. of Chicago, School of Social Services), conducted her 2004-05 Fellowship project with Music Theater Workshop (MTW), a nonprofit performing arts organization serving at-risk youth. Kim worked on MTW’s “Fabulous Females” productions that provide incarcerated girls with exposure to theater arts as well as a positive outlet by which they can build self-esteem, socialization and coping skills. In addition to helping the girls with writing and producing plays about their lives, Kimberly focused on addressing the girls’ psycho-social needs by means of conflict resolution interventions, positive reinforcement, and discussions about appropriate group dynamics.

Ray: Please tell me about your background, and how and why you gravitated to the field of social work.

Kimberly: I went to undergrad school at Calvin in Grand Rapids, where I was a theater major. I thought I was interested in professional musical theater performance, but after some soul searching, I realized my calling was to do social work. I did a lot of prayer and meditation. I happened to see a job listing for a foster care case manager, and in reading the description, I felt called to do something in that direction. This was a radical departure from what I was previously involved with. For two years I did foster care management in Chicago, and worked with severely and profoundly developmentally disabled adults in a vocational program. I found that extremely discouraging and draining. After that, I did foster care management. It was very enriching, challenging, emotionally draining at times, but very rewarding. I then went back for an MSW in the School of Social Service Administration.

Ray: When did you considering using musical theater as a tool for your work with youth?

Kimberly: I had had voice lessons for 9 years, and trained in musical theater. At the same time, I’ve always been interested in social justice, and in college I minored in social work. When I applied to become a Fellow, I knew that I wanted to work in juvenile justice. Kristin Lahurd, who was the Schweitzer Program Director at the time, suggested that I conduct my project with Music Theater Workshop as a way to use my talents and skills for social justice purposes. What really drew me to MTW was the opportunity to work with emotionally scarred and vulnerable populations, using art as therapy to promote their well-being and mental health. I liked the idea of using art as a creative tool to reach disadvantaged youth.

Ray: Please talk a little about MTW, and what it was like working with them.

Kimberly: MTW works with a variety of disadvantaged youth in correctional youth programs, schools, park districts and neighborhood settings. They work with youth using art and music as a means for kids to have self-expression. They do expressive writing workshops: the youth write narratives of their personal stories, and then they compile them, make a script, and then put on a production based on that. Kids perform, are involved in production, and also work on their writing skills.

I worked at 2 sites. Both were part of the Fabulous Females program, involving incarcerated female offenders. One was the Cook County Temporary Juvenile Detention Center (CCTJDC), the other was the Warenville Youth Center, a correctional facility for females.

At CCTJDC, some of the girls are there for as little as a week’s detention, while some are there for as long as a year. Typically the girls are there for 60 days. With that much flux, it was a challenge to create a feeling of safety and trust. The sentences are longer at Warenville, ranging from 90 days to 9 years. Maybe a year is average, some girls were there for as long as 4-5 years.
Some of the girls were there for violent crimes, like felonious assault, robbery, murder. But in a lot of ways they were very normal. They craved attention. Some had been abused, victimized and traumatized as children.

This is a population that always has trust issues. Some of the girls were from different gangs… We made a lot of strides towards trusting each other, learning how to work as a team, becoming self-aware. The girls love the experience. It’s a big deal for them. They like that opportunity. They invite their parents, probation officers, even judges.

As an arts organization, MTW had been primarily focused on the theatrical product. As a clinical social work student, I saw the Fabulous Females productions as an opportunity to provide psycho-educational group discussion. But therapy was not part of MTW’s original program, and with the intensive schedule of rehearsal and production, it was difficult to incorporate treatment because of the time limitations. So I also had to work with the staff, develop a rapport with them, and sell them the value of what they were doing in a more treatment-oriented way. I worked at creating a sense of safety in the rehearsal process. I talked with MTW about adolescent development, and ways to interact with the girls that would be respectful of their development. I encouraged establishing group rules so that the girls would feel safe in the group. I emphasized giving the girls space, trying to normalize how difficult it is to write about their stories. I gave the MTW techniques for working with kids who have been traumatized.

I’m now working with the MTW development director; they eventually want to have an ongoing mental health professional on staff. Now they see the value of building more mental health components into what they do, such as behavior modification, self-esteem building activities, encouraging and facilitating group dynamics, and conflict resolution.

Ray: You had mentioned to me that a documentary film is being made about Fabulous Females. Could you talk about that?

Kimberly: Heather Ross, an independent film producer from Los Angeles who is very interested in using theater and film for social justice purposes and social action, is making a documentary film about the Fabulous Females. She documented all of our processes from conception to production, focusing on how the girls confronted their vulnerabilities, broke down their facades, and how they were catalyzed by an atmosphere that only amateur theater could provide. For the girls, the experience of having her there was very positive. It definitely changed the dynamic… it made the girls feel validated that somebody cares about them and their stories, that they are important.

Ray: Lastly, how did you find out about the Schweitzer Fellows Program? What are your impressions of it?

Kimberly: I had found out about the Schweitzer Fellows Program from a professor one week before the application deadline, and literally applied 10 minutes before it was due. I wasn’t sure whether I would do the application -- I didn’t know what to expect and wasn’t sure if I would be a good candidate. I guess I had some self doubt.

I knew that I wanted to work in juvenile justice, and I believed in what the Albert Schweitzer program stood for. I would never have gotten involved with MTW if it weren’t for Kristin (the previous Schweitzer Program Director). She knew about my interests and linked me with MTW. I had no idea that I would fall in love with my project. As soon as I went to MTW, I knew that was a match. I feel very very blessed.

It’s a ton of work… a ton of energy and time. But it’s so worth it. I’ve already recommended it to my friends.

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Attention All Schweitzer Fellowship Alumni

Dear Fellows for Life:

Please let us know what you’re up to. Our next newsletter will be about you. Please send us a recent picture and an article about what you’re doing now… tell us how your life is your example. Also, in the coming weeks you should be receiving a survey from us, as well as information about plans for an alumni reunion and other activities. Let’s stay in touch!

Sincerely,
The Chicago Area Schweitzer Fellowship Program
Chicago Area Schweitzer Fellowship Events

October 29 (Saturday) - Service Day
Fellows lend a hand (and skeletons perhaps) at the American Indian Service Center’s annual Pow Wow and Halloween community fundraising event at 1630 W. Wilson, Chicago, 6:00pm-9:00pm  
Tel. 312 372-4292  $2 donation

November 10 (Thursday)- Symposium
“Choose Your Adventure: International Health Opportunities” will be held at UIC School of Pharmacy, 833 S. Wood St., Room 134-1, Chicago, 6:00pm-8:00pm  
Tel. 312 372-4292  Free

December 6 (Tuesday) – Annual Schweitzer Celebration
Northwestern Memorial Hospital  5:30pm – 7:30pm  
By Invitation; RSVP required  
Tel. 312 372-4292

January 25 (Wednesday) - Symposium
“Current Issues in End of Life Care” will be held at Northwestern University, Robert H. Lurie Medical Research Center Auditorium, 303 E. Superior St., Chicago,  6:00pm-8:00pm 
Tel. 312 372-4292  Free

Example is not the main thing in influencing others. It is the only thing.
ALBERT SCHWEITZER

Thank You!

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We extend our gratitude to:
The Baxter International Foundation
Michael Reese Health Trust
Northwestern University
Polk Brothers Foundation
Rush University
The University of Chicago
The University of Illinois at Chicago
VNA Foundation
& the many individuals and families
who generously support the Chicago Area Schweitzer Fellowship Program