

Fall 2017

## SLA Newsletter, Volume 8, Issue 1, Fall 2017

UNO Service Learning Academy

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UNIVERSITY OF NEBRASKA AT OMAHA  
SERVICE LEARNING ACADEMY

# NEWSLETTER

VOLUME 8 | ISSUE 1 | FALL 2017



UNIVERSITY OF  
**Nebraska**  
Omaha

## MEANINGFUL CONNECTIONS

Not only do service learning projects provide connections to curriculum for UNO and P-12 educators, but many also align directly with six areas that encompass the community engagement work at UNO and in the Omaha community:



EDUCATIONAL SUPPORT



SOCIAL JUSTICE



HEALTH AND WELLNESS



ENVIRONMENTAL STEWARDSHIP



ECONOMIC SUFFICIENCY



INTERNATIONAL SERVICE

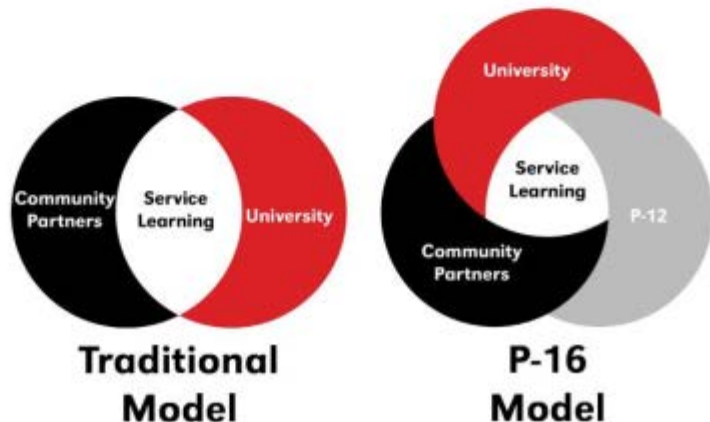
Throughout this newsletter, these indicators will show a project's connection to one of these six issue areas.

## INSIDE THIS EDITION

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## SLA APPROACHES

We are very excited to include both traditional and P-16 service learning projects in this edition. What exactly is the difference between the types of projects? The traditional service learning projects focus on a collaboration between community partners and a UNO class. The P-16 Initiative focuses on the collaboration between a P-12 class, a UNO class, and a community partner. Throughout the newsletter, projects will be identified with a (T) or (P-16) to differentiate projects.





## LETTER FROM THE PAUL SATHER DISTINGUISHED DIRECTOR

I hope this newsletter finds you 2018 full of enthusiasm for a new year, because we have much to do together! The subsequent stories of students and community partners collaborating to make our local and global communities the healthiest possible will hopefully inspire you as well. The stories represent students from elementary, middle and high school collaborating with UNO students and community partners that address issues relating to social justice, economic sufficiency, educational support, health and wellness, environmental stewardship and international service. No matter the age or issue area—when we come together and share assets through service learning, community change and student learning are significant.

This newsletter, like many transitions in our office, looks a bit different. This year we have expanded the newsletter to represent the many programs, services, and supports the Service Learning Academy provides. The stories you are going to read include service learning courses from both traditional and P-16 service learning projects, the Stephenson Harrington Internship, data and staff introductions. One major transition this year was the retirement of Paul Sather, who served as the Director of the Service Learning Academy since 2005. Paul and his wife, Linda, are enjoying retirement together traveling and having adventures. I was honored to be named the Paul Sather Distinguished Director of the Service Learning Academy on July 3rd, and the addition of several new staff members bring us to a full team. You will have the chance to meet them in the pages of this newsletter. While our staffing has changed, I want our partners to know that our approach to rigorous, quality service learning instruction will continue to innovate and co-create reciprocally.

As I look into the New Year and reflect on 2017, I want to thank the partners who have participated in environmental scanning sessions, listening meetings, surveys and provided feedback about opportunities for future growth for the Service Learning Academy. In the New Year we will have additional opportunities for partners and collaborators to help us build our new strategic plan. We truly cannot do this work without the trust and engagement of our partners. Thank you for your partnership and collegiality, and we look forward to learning and serving with you in 2018.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Julie Dierberger".

Julie Dierberger  
Paul Sather Distinguished Director



## LEARNING, LANGUAGES, AND LAUGHTER (T)

By Jenna Greene

As part of his *Autobiographical Reading and Writing* course, UNO faculty member Daniel Wuebben partnered with the Learning Community Center of South Omaha (LCC) to build autobiographical videos. Students in Wuebben's class were paired up with LCC community members to create a digital literacy narrative to understand the process of language and literacy. This began with storyboarding and script building and ended with the creation of autobiographical videos that the community member got to keep. A UNO student commented, "The project makes me want to learn more languages. I definitely want to continue learning Spanish, but I also want to learn Karen now! This project helped me see the value of multilingualism."

Not only did students learn about video production and autobiographical methods, they also fostered lasting relationships with the community partner. Throughout every stage of the video making process, the pairs worked together to create the autobiography. "This video allows us to bring awareness that people who don't speak English still have to go through barriers big or small when it comes to their business," said a UNO student. "I've noticed that big and small things impact our lives every day!"



UNO students edit video for the final celebration.

## STOP BULLYING THROUGH PEER-TO-PEER EDUCATION (P-16)

By Megumi Makisaka

UNO faculty member Courtney Gillotte's *Public Speaking Fundamentals* students collaborated with Peter Kiewit Middle School's (PKMS) 7th and 8th grade students. The project promotes students' leadership skills and peer-to-peer education. UNO and PKMS students gathered into eight groups to prepare presentations on various anti-bullying themes such as acceptance, empathy, inclusion, and personal responsibility. Throughout the semester, UNO students mentored the middle school students by coaching speech writing skills and techniques they learned in their public speaking course.

Gillotte highlighted that UNO students were able to sharpen their speech writing skills by supporting the PKMS students to develop dynamic presentations. "The UNO students' collaboration allows the students to have confidence in what they have created and allows them the opportunity to better prepare for when they teach their peers," noted Melissa Frans, one of the PKMS teachers engaged in this project. Their presentations will be used in building-wide programming and was incorporated into the 2017-2018 anti-bullying curriculum at PKMS.



PKMS students pose for a group photo after giving speeches to the UNO public speaking students.

## A COMMON GROUND (P-16)

By **Lindsey Kreikemeier**

Imagine the excitement of teaching your favorite games to others. That is what UNO faculty member Don Bowen's *Photography* class and teacher McKenna Methe's class from Montessori Co-Op School did! The Montessori students taught their favorite games, such as Mancala, checkers and Jenga, to seniors from the Intercultural Senior Center (ISC). The seniors then provided games from their childhood and taught the UNO and Montessori students how to play.

The Montessori students were intrigued by the exciting and unique games the seniors brought with them. The UNO students participated by playing games and interacting with the ISC seniors and Montessori students. The UNO students photographed the interactions for a book that included the game instructions. The UNO and Montessori students later worked together to incorporate the pictures and game directions into a book, which was translated into English, Spanish and Nepali so all of the participants could read and enjoy the new games they learned.

“*This service learning project showed that no matter how different we are, we can always have fun together!*”  
*McKenna Methe*

This project had academic goals, but some of the best results of this project went beyond coursework. With patience and understanding, partners were able to share games and laugh together, even without speaking the same language. All participants were pushed outside of their comfort zones to interact with people from different backgrounds than their own.



A Montessori staff member teaches a UNO student, a Montessori student and an ISC senior how to play Yahtzee.



Weitz Fellow Jenna Greene views Scarpello's art.

## GOING BACK TO HER ROOTS

By Amanda Anderson

Katherine Scarpello is a senior Studio Arts and Nonprofit Management student at UNO. Scarpello plans to become an artist, arts facilitator, and educator and hopes to inspire her students to create a new understanding of the world.

Her spark of inspiration began three years ago in a service learning course in partnership with Blackburn Alternative Program. Scarpello had previously done service learning projects through the UNO Department of Education with Blackburn

Alternative High School and has a passion for including service learning components in her future education plans.

For a class project this semester, Scarpello decided to partner with Blackburn Alternative High School. As a former Blackburn student, she hoped to give students an outlet to be creative and express how they feel about America today through art. Scarpello and the Blackburn students sat down to discuss "What does it mean to be an American today?"

The students were encouraged to draw, doodle, write, paint, and collage in order to visualize their responses. Scarpello put her teaching skills into action and created lesson plans and team building exercises to help facilitate the process. Scarpello said about her project, "I actually want to hear what they have to say. I want to have this time where the Blackburn students can get a break and talk about real world things and make something cool." The artwork was displayed during the month of October at the UNO Art Gallery.

*“Taking your theories that you’re learning in classes and applying it to the real world is the most important thing. I think service learning should be a part of every class. You’re not just talking the talk, you’re walking the walk.”*  
Katherine Scarpello



## ENGAGEMENT WITH A PURPOSE (P-16)

By Sami Morford

Students from Jeff Knapp's *Social Work and Civic Engagement* class partnered with Heartland Family Service Family Works to create recreational outings and family bonding events for the clients. Family Works is a long-term residential substance abuse and mental health program in Iowa and Nebraska for women with children. Outings included visits to the Henry Doarly Zoo, the Bob Kerrey Pedestrian Bridge, and the Omaha Children's Museum, as well as on-campus bonding events such as decorating cookies.



A young future Mavenick puts her finishing touches on her Halloween themed cookie.

The events, created by the UNO students, allowed clients to practice parenting skills in a real-world setting. The UNO students had the opportunity to practice what they were learning during class and develop their leadership skills. Ninth graders in the Heartland Family Service Student League program also joined the group. Carol Durand, Program Coordinator at Heartland Family Service said, "I think the greatest impact [with this project] is in the partnership between the school and the agency. HFS is passionate about interns and students, and we often hire our volunteers or practicum students. Thinking over the last 10 years, in this program alone we have hired at least six UNO students and at least seven of our undergrad/foundation/MSW interns." Durand hopes that the relationships built over the course of the project will inspire the women within the programs to pursue education, while providing UNO students a chance to explore a possible career in social work.



UNO students work with their buddies on math and counting skills.

## A LASTING IMPACT (P-16)

By Kai Sears

The Down Syndrome Enrichment Program is the blended name of two supplemental learning groups for children and families who have been touched by Down syndrome. Students from UNO faculty member Jeff Knapp's *Social Work and Civic Engagement* class were able to participate in two programs offered by the Down Syndrome Alliance of the Midlands, the Learning Program and the School Enrichment Academy. While at the Learning Program, UNO students assisted educators in working with four to seven year-olds to introduce literacy and math skills.

At the School Enrichment Academy, UNO students assisted educators with children in kindergarten through fifth grade. The curriculum included sight words, spelling, literacy, math skills, and handwriting, among others. The UNO students contributed to the educators' ability to provide the Learning Program and the School Enrichment Academy students with more one-on-one time. UNO service learning students created a short video highlighting the School Enrichment Academy, which will remain on the program's website for many years to come. This experience will have lasting impact, not only for the student participants of all ages, but for future enrollees of the program.



## ACHIEVING OUR ABILITIES (P-16)

By Socorrito Salcido

A long-running service learning project is back at it again! Melissa Frans, a teacher from Peter Kiewit Middle School (PKMS), and UNO faculty member Imafedia Okhamafe, chair of the Goodrich Scholarship Program, have been collaborating on "Reading Buddies" for four years. The PKMS students partnered with Okhamafe's *Intro to Reading and Writing Autobiography* class. This year, they read the book "Fall Down 7 Times, Get Up 8" by Naoki Higashida together. During their visits, the students met to discuss the book and the topic of perseverance. Students also participated in team building activities. The PKMS and UNO students were taught by Okhamafe the difference between ability, disability and inability and ultimately learned the importance of treating everyone the same despite differences.



PKMS students listen to Dr. Okhamafe's instructions during an *anigami* activity.

Along with group discussions, Lacy Studnika from Lutheran Family Services of Nebraska and Marilyn Sims from the Refugee Empowerment Center presented information about their agencies and the communities they serve. After the presentation, the students brainstormed how they can best serve refugees in Omaha. They decided to write letters showcasing various resources in Omaha that may be helpful to refugees. The PKMS students spent time with their UNO buddies to write letters that included things a refugee may need to know, such as, library services, where the grocery stores are and different fun activities to do with the family. A UNO student, Leigh Little, said, "The service learning project was a unique experience. I think service learning projects are a great way to get kids thinking about college."

## GROWING FROM THE GROUND UP (T)

By Jenna Greene

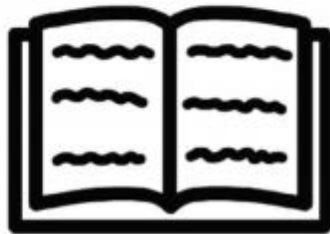


This semester, students from RJ Redden's *Information Technology for Development* course partnered with The Start Center to share knowledge about technological solutions for entrepreneurs. The Start Center helps people take action on their ideas to start a business and provides professional development opportunities for entrepreneurs to grow their business. While The Start Center focuses primarily on educating clients on business plan creation and strategic planning, students from *Information Technology for Development* course provided technical knowledge and resources to the entrepreneurs.

Students met weekly with clients to understand their businesses, the business's IT needs, and the types of technological tools that could help them grow. Students learned about client-focused and small business-centered IT solutions through this project as they worked directly with clients. At the end of the project, clients had the tools to grow their businesses, through a new email system, mobile schedule tracking app, or Excel spreadsheets. The course helped students learn how to bridge the gap between business and IT through communication and education. In addition, students learned to communicate, strategize, and implement a plan to build technological habits and skills for business owners to achieve IT self-sufficiency.

# DID YOU KNOW...

**Nearly 90 UNO courses offered service learning opportunities to students in fall 2017**





UNO students and Catlin Elementary students practice together for the final performance.

## PERFORMING AS ONE (P-16)

By Jessica Forman

If classic film scores aren't awesome enough by themselves, try students of all ages working together with Maestros to prepare and perform them! Partners in Performance was a musical collaboration between UNO's School of Music, the Omaha Area Youth Orchestra (OAYO) and three Omaha area schools, preparing students to perform at a concert with UNO's Heartland Philharmonic.

Orchestra students from South High Magnet School, Marian High School and Catlin Elementary School gathered at UNO's Strauss Performing Arts Center to work with UNO Orchestra students, where they explored communication, leadership, mentorship, and pedagogical skills. Students played songs alongside one another, such

as "Band of Brothers" by Michael Kamen and "March of the Resistance" from "Star Wars," by John Williams.

They were directed by UNO faculty member Mary Perkinson, UNO Orchestra Director Aaron Breid, and Omaha Area Youth Orchestra Music Director Aviva Segall. Catlin Elementary Orchestra teacher, Mary Amador shared, "It warmed my heart to see UNO students approach my elementary students to say hello and give them hugs because they remembered each other from the workshop that we went to last spring at UNO. For some of my students, this was the first large orchestra experience they have ever had which was really inspiring." While on campus for the musical clinic, students had the opportunity

to enjoy a meal together in the Milo Bail Student Center, and students from Catlin Elementary participated in a campus tour.

Later in the semester, South High School and Marian High School orchestra students returned to UNO to perform alongside UNO's Heartland Philharmonic. Family, friends, and community members attended the concert, which was the culminating event of Partners in Performance.

*"I really like giving my students the chance to play in a large orchestra. I was very glad that my students had the opportunity to experience being in a full ensemble."*  
Paul Niedbalks, Marian HS Orchestra Teacher

## RUNNING TO WIN THE VOTE (P-16)

By Alex Bauer

Have you ever wondered what it would be like to serve as an elected official? Young women from Omaha area high schools had the opportunity to explore what being in politics is all about by meeting with female elected officials, past and present. Running and Winning, a bi-annual event, uses elected officials' rich experiences to introduce young women to the political process and encourage them to run for office.

More than 50 young women from Omaha South, Omaha Central, Westside, and Northwest High Schools attended the event. Throughout the semester, students from UNO faculty member Rita Shaughnessy's *Public Speaking Fundamentals* class worked to make the event successful. The UNO students were responsible for preparing policy issue briefs and coaching the high school students on the campaign speeches during the workshop. During the event, the elected officials were interviewed by the high school students.

“*I want the young women to feel like they can make a difference.*”

*Linda Duckworth, League of Women Voters*

In order to gain insight about their life in politics, their educational path and professional experiences. After the interviews, students worked in small groups to produce their own mock political campaigns, including speeches and campaign slogans. The teams also created a platform around voter identification laws.



Two Omaha area high school students work on their campaign slogan.





A student from Westside Boys & Girls Club focuses on her reading test while her UNO buddy guides her through the questions.

try it out with the kids." The pairs played reading games, and talked about school, friends, interests and family with one another. A UNO student commented, "I'd say this is one of the best experiences I've had at UNO. I learned more about how to interact with young children and how to build my interpersonal skills with young students. I was able to relate what I learned in class to my experiences at the Boys & Girls Club."

## CONNECTING THE DOTS (P-16)

By Meghan Perrin

Building on a three year partnership, UNO students from faculty member Brian McKeivitt's *Psychology in the Schools* class collaborated with students from the Boys & Girls Club, Westside Unit. For nine consecutive weeks in the fall, UNO students provided consistent mentorship with Boys & Girls Club students through weekly visits. The UNO students worked one-on-one with a Boys & Girls Club student to assess their current reading skills. Upon identifying opportunities, UNO students implemented various reading intervention practices with the students to build their reading abilities.

The UNO students worked as motivating buddies to the Boys & Girls Club students as they completed the web-based reading program, Headsprouts. McKeivitt said, "This project enables my students to apply classroom learning to real-life situations. In class, they learn a theoretical model of how to address students' academic needs, but at the Boys & Girls Club, they actually get to



SHI recipients attend the African American Leadership Conference along with Jenna Greene, Barbara Weitz, and Kirsten Case (left to right).

Students were able to further develop these skills in their internship sites and reflect on their internship experiences in the seminar. Interns were able to choose from a variety of events to attend. These events are a staple component of the SHI. One UNO student, Jasmine Marr, had the opportunity to attend the African American Leadership Conference. Jasmine said, "I was taken aback when I first walked up the stairs. So many proud, black faces, it was beautiful. I felt so alive and present. I walked out of that conference and I wanted to do something, I wanted to make a difference. I'm grateful I was able to go." The SHI program began in 1992 as a women's leadership program, and has since developed into a community focused internship program. Since 1992, 178 students have participated. The program celebrated its 25th anniversary in 2017!

## STEPHENSON-HARRINGTON INTERNSHIP

By Jenna Greene

The Stephenson-Harrington Internship (SHI) program is a partnership between the Goodrich Scholars Program and the Service Learning Academy. This semester-long program includes a paid internship with a community organization and a weekly leadership seminar for a group of junior and senior Goodrich Scholars. This year, seven SHI students participated and were placed at internship sites ranging from Defy Ventures, which provides entrepreneurship training for currently and formerly incarcerated people, to UNMC's Munroe-Meyer Institute, which provides programming and services to improve the quality of life for people with disabilities. The students are paired with community nonprofit organizations whose goals and projects align with their own academic interests and goals. The students are also enrolled in a seminar focused on professional development and leadership.

## WORKING AT THE SLA

By Stephanie Diaz

Undergraduate student workers are a vital part of the Service Learning Academy team, but what exactly does their job entail and how do you become a student worker for the SLA? Michael Herndon, Karen Arreola Bravo and Adriana Carias work closely with the Service Learning Academy Graduate Assistants to help with P-16 project preparation. They can be seen meeting a bus, giving tours of campus or taking pictures. Ultimately, they work to seam together the final touches of a project and offer an extra hand in the office. One student, Allegra Hardin, works closely with the administrative technician. Allegra's job is to assist the SLA team with creating posters, fliers, invitations, updating MavSync and designing any logos or graphics SLA may need. She has a background in communication studies and journalism along with knowledge of Adobe software and University Communication guidelines.

Jen Hohenberger assists the Program Assessment and Evaluation Associate. Jen enters and processes data from pre- and post-surveys from project partners. The surveys help the SLA determine positive aspects of service learning projects and parts that need more attention. Jen's work also helps support the integration of data and evaluation into the day to day work of the SLA.



Student Worker Michael Herndon helps create name tags for a P-16 project.

Overall, student workers collaborate together to fulfill the SLA mission while getting experience in their fields. When asked about what he has learned as a student worker for the SLA, Michael Herndon stated, "During my time at the SLA, I have learned about the variety of community organizations that UNO partners with for projects. Working at the SLA has exposed me to more community partners in Omaha, especially ones that relate to community organizing and civic reform." SLA undergraduate student worker positions can be found on the Employment Opportunities page on UNO's website. We love hiring student workers who are passionate about civic engagement and the UNO community!

## DID YOU KNOW...

Students from over **20 different schools** and **7 different metro area school districts** participated in the P-16 initiative in fall 2017



Over **1,600 UNO students** engaged in service learning in fall 2017



Each backpack represents 100 students





Students tour historical locations of Omaha while riding Heartland B-cycle bikes.

## BIKING AROUND TOWN (T)

**By Jenna Greene**

Identifying Omaha's historic landmarks and areas can help to understand its rich history and move our city forward. UNO faculty member Lucy Morrison's *Honors Colloquium* focused on the City of Omaha this semester, partnering with the City of Omaha Planning Department to research historic areas and local historic landmarks. As part of a semester-long project, students researched and wrote reports on historic structures in North Omaha. These reports helped the City of Omaha identify properties that are eligible for historic tax credits or are labeled as historic, both of which identify neighborhood assets.

To see the buildings and landmarks they were working on in the context of the neighborhood, students went on an early-morning bicycle tour around North Omaha. They were led by staff from the City of Omaha and heard from local community organizations along the way, such as the Union for Contemporary Art and the Neighborhood Action and Facts Association, to understand the history and current development in the area. Hearing from neighborhood advocates gave students valuable information to incorporate into their reports and helped the students understand the importance of designating historic landmarks.

*“It was easy to imagine what the community looked like 40, 50, even 60 or more years ago. The beautifully ornate and unique designs of each home, paired with the large yards and porches, took me back in time to when the homes were just being built.”*

*Crystian Neaman, UNO Student*



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## MEET SLA'S NEWEST STAFF MEMBERS



### LATRINA PARKER

LaTrina Parker joined the SLA team in November of 2017 as the new P-16 Coordinator. LaTrina received a Bachelor of Science in Journalism with an emphasis in Public Relations and Advertising and a Master of Science in Secondary Education from UNO as well as a Doctorate of Philosophy in Higher Education Administration from Saint Louis University. Parker will be supervising the development and implementation of the service learning partnership involving UNO faculty, P-12 teachers, after school program instructors, and community partners. Parker has always been interested in experiential learning especially as a high school teacher. "I believe students learn best and benefit from lessons that engage them in a meaningful way," she said. "When I saw the position, I realized this would be a great opportunity to contribute to a team that combines service with learning and greatly impacts students in this community. I also feel at home at UNO as an alum so working on campus was a huge plus!"

When away from the office, Parker loves to give back to her community. She is a proud member of a public service sorority, Delta Sigma Theta Sorority, Inc. where they strive to impact communities through providing much needed service and development opportunities. She also loves to spend time with her family and friends, volunteering with her sorority, or shopping. "My goal is to add exercising to that list," she said, "but I'm a work in progress!" When getting involved with service learning, Parker believes that everyone should go for it!



WENDY KAISER

Wendy Kaiser joined the Service Learning Academy in June of 2017 as the Program Assessment and Evaluation Associate. Her primary role at the SLA is to examine the quality of service learning projects, assess strengths and weaknesses, and measure impact of both P-16 and Traditional projects, while supporting faculty research efforts related to service learning and community engagement. She also has the unique opportunity to help 'tell our story' and steps in to lend a hand on various projects as needed. This specific position was a perfect match for her skills in strategic thinking, analysis, and lifelong learning perspective. She has years of experience managing data and training initiatives that help contribute to the position. Kaiser has her Bachelor of Arts in Psychology from the University of Nebraska-Lincoln and a Masters in Public Administration from UNO.

Some of her passions include evaluating policies and programs to ensure they are effective, efficient, and impactful. She also has a passion for child welfare, food insecurity, Native American culture and sharing her faith with others. When not working at the SLA, she can be found cooking, remodeling her house, volunteering at her church, and raising her two children, ages three and seven. When asked what she would tell someone who is interested in getting involved with service learning, she said, "I would encourage them to reach out to our team. Our great team is willing to meet with you, answer questions, and connect you to others and support you as you do service learning."



JENNA GREENE

Jenna Greene is the 2017-18 Weitz Fellow. Annually, the SLA Weitz Fellow position is awarded to a Carleton College graduate. Greene graduated in June 2017 with her Bachelor of Arts in Environmental Studies with a concentration in Public Policy. If you stop by the office, you will see her supporting the traditional service learning projects, co-teaching the Stephenson-Harrington Internship seminar, assisting with qualitative research about the impact of service learning and helping with special projects. She will dabble in pretty much anything, which is part of the goal of the fellowship.

Greene has a passion for engagement. During her junior year, she had the opportunity to study abroad in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia, to study renewable energy in urban households. This service learning experience helped her clarify her academic and career goals of learning side by side with community members and working together to find solutions to environmental problems.

During her senior year she interviewed local farmers, legislators, and community advocates about their opinions and views of a new Minnesota agricultural policy for her thesis. These experiences solidified her view that universities are important pieces of the community and that when people at the university see their work being tied to community goals, amazing things can happen.



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## SERVICE LEARNING SEMINAR 2018

July 9-13, 2018

Register at: [sla.unomaha.edu](http://sla.unomaha.edu)

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# SERVICE LEARNING ACADEMY NEWSLETTER

Cover Photo: Students from UNO Thompson Learning Community and Partnership for Kids participate in a photo scavenger hunt to find visual representations of their strengths after taking the Gallup StrengthsFinder assessment. The students demonstrated their strengths and leadership through collaboration with Alliance for a Better Omaha on planning a multiple-site food drive at area grocery stores.



@UNO Service Learning Academy



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