



CQL Promotes Social Capital from Within

A Look at CQL's Social Capital Service Project



The Council on Quality
and Leadership

*Partners in Excellence;
Leadership for the Journey.*

Social Capital is an opportunity for demonstrating reciprocity and this program can offer benefits to CQL, our employees, and the community at large.

At The Council on Quality and Leadership (CQL), we are committed to enhancing the quality of lives for people with disabilities. We are experts at educating organizations on ways they can integrate the people they support into Community LifeSM and increase their social capital. So in 2004, we decided it was time that we evaluated our own social capital. We asked ourselves, “How can we connect others to the community if we ourselves lack the necessary experience?” We recognize that each and every staff member has something to contribute and could be a valuable resource for social capital ideas. We realized how wonderful it would be if any employee could offer personal experience to our customers. CQL made the commitment to helping our employees increase their own social capital by offering paid days off to participate in volunteer activities. We recognize that finding the time to participate in community activities can be a challenge, so offer our employees the opportunity to spend up to 10 days a year to volunteer. Although we highly encourage every employee to take advantage of this benefit, it is a voluntary activity.

What types of activities have CQL staff done with their Social Capital Service Project days? Here are some examples:

Liz Weintraub visited the **Johns Hopkins School of Public Health** to teach a class about intimate relationships with people with disabilities. She talked about marriage using her own experiences as a newlywed. Liz stressed that marriage and dating issues are the same for all people – with or without a disability.

Jim Simkins volunteered with the **Maryland Association of Nonprofit Organizations** to help update their Policy and Procedures manual that will be used as a model for other non-profits across the nation.

James F. Gardner continues his work as a Board Member for the **Community Assistance Network (CAN)**, serving on the Finance Committee. The current priorities for this Baltimore County, Maryland CAN are:

- 1) recruiting a new Executive Director,
- 2) securing a new office and support service resources, and
- 3) coordinating shelter services in anticipation for the winter weather and greatly increased gas and electric costs.

As a private, nonprofit, community action agency, CAN responds to local needs. Community action agencies were established over 40 years ago as part of President Lyndon Johnson’s War on Poverty. CAN provides services and supports that address issues such as homelessness, hunger, weatherization, eviction relief, work training and childcare.

If all CQL staff participate in this program,

we can make a contribution to our communities of \$100,000 per year.

CQL's main office in Towson, Maryland, sent a crew to Harford County, Maryland with hammers in hand to volunteer with **Habitat for Humanity**. **Melanie Fender, Shelly McLaughlin, Mary Middendorf, Cheryl Purisch and Pam Scheuermann** pounded nails, framed some walls and hung drywall in a three bedroom house-to-be.

Kevin Edwards and his band, along with 70 other Texas musicians, participated in a **24 Hours of Blues** to raise funds for Our Children's Center at Irving and the Family Outreach Center. Local businesses sponsored hours during the benefit, and together they raised over \$4,000 for local Irving children's charities.

Beth Mathis accompanied a group of teenagers to a **ranch in Elgin, Texas which is home for five people with disabilities**, and also serves as a summer camp. The ranch operates several enterprises, including a tree farm and annual poinsettia sales. Beth's group did construction projects, moving and securing the trees (about 500 of them) and preparing the greenhouses to receive a shipment of poinsettias (10,000!). Beth also volunteered at the **Arc golf tournament fundraiser** for the local Arc chapter.

Jeanne Beach manned the **Arts and Crafts table at the Sunset Picnic, sponsored by The Arc Northern Chesapeake Region**. Jeanne has also been baking casseroles to feed the hungry at St. John the Evangelist Catholic Church. Jeanne's church, in partnership with other churches and local organizations, also participates in feeding the hungry where Jeanne supplies food for brown bag lunches.

Dorothy Schroeder volunteered with the **US Forest Service through the Passport in Time program** on an archeological survey to locate possible sites of the Mineral Lake Village logging camp which existed from 1890 to 1897 near Mellen, Wisconsin.

Dorothy coordinates the **preservation and restoration work at her church cemetery** which dates back to 1795. The state matching grant she was awarded is now spent after two years of work. There still remains much work to be done restoring headstones. They have recently secured the services of the University of Kentucky Archeology Department which is using ground penetrating radar and other techniques to locate unmarked graves.

Dorothy is also involved with the **Franklin County, KY local health department Community Education office**. She has volunteered to team teach two sessions of classes on understanding and self-management of arthritis. Dorothy donates her time to another health issue — she volunteer with the local **Diabetes Coalition** whose purpose is community education and prevention of diabetes.

Dorothy also serves as a member of the Steering Committee for the **Longest Day of Play** – a community-wide effort to encourage “play” activities for the family. June 21, 2007, over 1,000 people attended, and 35 community organizations provided different activities for this first annual health education effort.

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Donning their best aprons, **Jim Gardner, Sylvia Nudler, Holly Morrison, Tammi Odom, Jeanne Beach and Melanie Fender** sorted donated food at the **Maryland Food Bank** to give Food Bank members (soup kitchens, shelters, pantries and similar community programs) a more organized “shopping” experience.

About two years ago, as part of his church, **Wayne Dawson** began asking non-profit organizations in a Burlington, North Carolina community about their service needs. Wayne **collected 52 separate service projects and compiled a database of need, contact information, etc.** The information was posted the church web site, with mixed results. However, in 2007 it was suggested that church members revisit this idea but with the goal of completing all service projects in one weekend. A committee was formed and again Wayne visited local non-profit service agencies, homeless shelters, sexual assault centers, Christian counseling, schools, group home providers, etc. and collected over 60 service project requests. Wayne helped to coordinate close to 500 volunteers to complete all but four of the projects in a single weekend. It was a great success and from this event the church has formed a permanent committee to address the needs of their community.

Anne Buechner recently volunteered as a **sponsor and host for four youth (and their adult leader)** who visited Orlando for a nationally sponsored gathering of 25,000 youth from around the US. Anne’s group came from Texas and was involved in a national, faith-based get-together supporting the development of these young leaders, not only in the faith-based organization but within their communities. Hosting activities included accompanying the teens on their pre-gathering activities, making connections with people within the Orlando organization, providing transportation, housing and meals. Getting connected with young people willing to make commitments based on values shared by Anne was refreshing and motivational for her.

In early August, Anne will **facilitate a group of medical professionals in a day long planning session.** The team has been tasked with developing and formalizing strategies for their work plan for the next three years. Targeted objectives for Anne’s time with them are to prepare the day’s agenda as well as facilitate the development of action plans to be presented to their leadership team. This group has the potential for impacting thousands lives. Not only does Anne hope to support them to achieve their work objectives, but she also hopes to make connections and build a foundation for potential new reciprocal relationships.

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Beth Mathis has been serving as the Chair of a Christian Formation Committee called “Welcoming all Families” at St. Timothy’s Episcopal Church in Lake Jackson, Texas.

The committee is charged with making recommendations that will help support families that have children with autism and other disabilities. Currently there are two families in the congregation that have faced challenges with attending church as a family because the Sunday School classes aren’t staffed with teachers who have experience with children with different learning abilities; the nursery isn’t an appropriate alternative; and their children have difficulty sitting through the church service.

Consequently, the parents either end up staying home, or alternate their Sunday attendance. Neither option encourages inclusiveness and the families are not happy. And, neither family wants “special” classes for their children.

The committee has presented specific ideas for implementation:

1. Congregational awareness, beginning with an overview of the committee’s recommendations during the announcement portion of the church service. The church would then provide a short series of classes during the Sunday School hour with a discussion around the issues of inclusion. Possible speakers include inviting a “professional” to talk about disability in general during one session, and autism specifically another week. Class participants can talk about what church members can do at St. Timothy’s and what they can do individually outside of the church.

2. The committee identified the need for a designated place with trained/experienced people willing to support children with disabilities for children not wishing to sit through the service. All children, with or without disabilities would be welcome. Possible locations include the computer rich Library or playground. Support people could be paid or volunteers.

3. If start-up funds are needed, the committee suggested investigating possible resources through the Diocese.

4. Looking ahead to the congregation’s future, the committee recognizes the need for a formal “assessment” tool to help church members get to know families with children with disabilities so they may explore ways to offer support in the most meaningful manner for the child as well as the family as a whole. This would help them address issues such as: How can we best support siblings’ spiritual development? What about adults with disabilities? As more unique support needs are discovered, additional and perhaps more involved training might be identified for the parish and for specific people in the parish.

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A “Volunteer Village” in Biloxi, Mississippi, has brought two long-haul helpers, Habitat for Humanity and The Salvation Army, together to help in the Gulf Coast rebuilding effort. For a week in May 2007, **Sylvia Nudler**, along with 44 fellow Marylanders of all ages from college to late 60’s traveled to Biloxi to join **Operation Home Delivery – a joint venture of the Salvation Army and Habitat for Humanity**. Americorps volunteers are also playing a major role in the effort to build 100 houses each in both Harrison and Jackson Counties over the coming year.

Following the 2005 devastation caused by Hurricanes Katrina and Rita, Habitat for Humanity started Operation Home Delivery, a task force composed of Habitat veterans, building industry leaders, and corporate executives. This eclectic group is working hand in hand with Habitat affiliates throughout the Gulf region and, as the recovery effort continues, Operation Home Delivery is also coordinating with dozens of other organizations and building on existing partnerships to meet the ongoing needs.

In Biloxi the hurricane destruction is very evident along the shore line. For miles all you see are concrete foundations and twisted girders where buildings used to be. The debris has been cleared and a few places have been rebuilt. The casinos are reopening – at least that is a source of income for the area and jobs for people. There is so much left to do – it will take years.

Dreambuilders is an interfaith community of teens and adults building homes for those in need. Since 2002, volunteers from four churches and one synagogue in Howard County,

Maryland have worked in West Virginia, New Mexico and Mississippi. The group also volunteers with The Arc of Howard County on home repairs and upkeep.

Dreambuilders focused on three sites, lending their skills in such areas as siding and hammering beams in the roof. One group worked on a house that was being built on the family’s property while they lived in a trailer next door. Sylvia’s group went to a third area in the town of Gautier – well inland, away from the water. Habitat purchased 17 empty lots; each slated for a new house. Some were near finished and others were in various stages of completion. Each day Sylvia’s group of about 12 went to different houses to do whatever was needed, including caulking, paint touch up, doorknobs, insulation, lots of clean up, and on the last day they helped build sheds. By Friday of that week, Sylvia’s team had six houses ready for occupancy and four more very close. The group met one of the homeowners, whose house they finished. His family, including a son with cerebral palsy, moved into their new home in June.

The homes may seem basic, but they are well-designed and put together with a lot of care and love. For the people who will get these homes, the Dreambuilders are sure these homes will be feel like palaces to their new owners.



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