



Friday, January 31, 2003

Volunteer opportunities abound at OU

Volunteering is as routine for Jocelyn Baldwin as brushing her teeth and combing her hair. The **OU Golden Key International Honour Society** member has played bingo at senior citizen centers, helped make 1,000 peanut butter and jelly sandwiches for shelters, and spooned out lunch at soup kitchens.

"I could sit home and watch television, but this makes me feel like I'm making a difference," the junior psychology major said. "It keeps my mood up."

Baldwin is one of thousands of Americans and hundreds of Oakland University students responding to President George Bush's call for more volunteerism. Bush invited OU senior education major Lenny Compton to join him as his guest at his Jan. 28 State of the Union address because of Compton's extensive volunteer work.

Through **AmeriCorps**, Compton tutors elementary boys in his native Pontiac, Mich. As a role model, he hopes to influence students to stay in school, believe in themselves and improve their lives. Before he finishes his two-year AmeriCorps commitment, he will have given more than 1,800 volunteer hours.

The organization – the equivalent of a domestic Peace Corps – provides community service needs and mentoring for children. While it is one of OU's most visible volunteer groups, it is not the only such organization. Student groups including Reach, Circle K and Golden Key sponsor dozens of group community service projects each year, said Sara Crampton, OU's coordinator of Student Leadership Development.

"It's pretty important today to take time out to help others. Even an hour of your time once a week or once a semester can be important in the lives of others," Crampton said. "I encourage students to think of things happening in their classes and in their major and then search out volunteer experiences that will complement their studies."

This year, Crampton helped develop an incentive program for volunteers. More than 80 students signed up. Students track their volunteer hours and earn points for each hour spent helping the community. "We will have awards from bronze to platinum that we'll hand out during a volunteer reception in April."

Crampton organized a posting board in the lower level of the Oakland Center for some 50 community organizations to promote their volunteer needs.

"Students have a central place to go," Crampton said, "to find out some of their options and contacts if they want to volunteer."

Options range from serving as environmental educators for Rochester's Dinosaur Hill Nature Preserve or helping with youth sports programs through Think Detroit to mentoring children through Big Brother Big Sister or building houses through Habitat for Humanity.

Some options require experience. The Women's Survival Center of Oakland County needs people to provide counseling and legal advice, but they also need individuals to help with childcare or answer phones. Waltonwood Assisted Living asks for volunteers to provide their time to "heal some lonely hours" for the elderly in their care. The opportunities go on.

For more information on volunteer opportunities at Oakland, contact Crampton at (248) 370-2024 or crampton@oakland.edu or visit the **Center for Student Activities Volunteer Opportunities** Web site.

SUMMARY

President George W. Bush invited OU senior education major Lenny Compton to join him as his guest at his Jan. 28 State of the Union address because of Compton's extensive volunteer work. Several volunteer opportunities are available at OU and in the surrounding community for students, faculty and staff to become involved.

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