

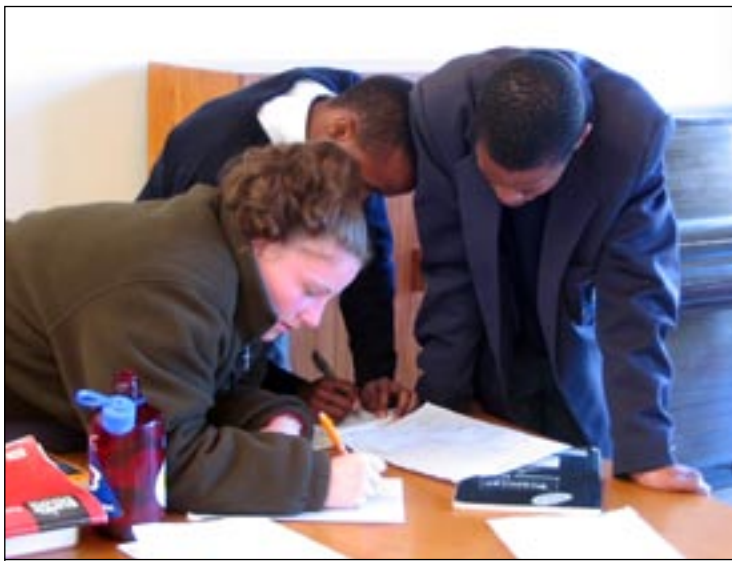
A call for service

A Connecticut newspaper recently profiled Kathryn Hencir '04 to highlight the community service work she has performed since graduating from Wheaton. In the past 10 months, Kathryn helped repair the roofs of homes damaged by hurricanes, tutored children at a Boys and Girls Club in North Carolina, and ministered to patients at the Arkansas Children's Hospital in Little Rock, Ark.

Kathryn says Wheaton helped launch her on this path. "At Wheaton, I served as a preceptor and a global peer advisor, helping other students, and that had a lot to do with my joining AmeriCorps. I felt as though I was using the skills I had developed at Wheaton to help other people."

Kathryn exemplifies one of Wheaton's distinctive qualities: a commitment to social responsibility and a willingness to act that is shared by students and faculty, alumnae/i, friends and staff. Wheaton excels at incorporating public service into its liberal arts curriculum. In fact, the Truman Foundation named Wheaton as one of its 2005 Truman Honor Schools for its record of promoting public service among students.

The college's record in encouraging community service reflects a tradition that stretches back to its founding. More recently, Wheaton chose to become a founding member of Campus Compact, a national organization formed in the 1980s that advocates using community service as a form of field learning for students. The college also is part of a national partnership of business, government and education organizations formed



Nearly every summer, Wheaton students and faculty spend six weeks in South Africa as volunteer secondary school math and science teachers in an enrichment program at the Vela School in Umtata.

to promote public service, and it was an early participant in a federal program that positions college students as teaching assistants for pre-school children attending Head Start. The Otis Social Justice Symposium established in 1990 publicly signals the college's dedication to the public good.

The many alumnae/i who have made community service and social responsibility part of their lives and work also testify to the college's long-standing commitment—from activist and philanthropist Jean Jones Beard '65 to entrepreneur Trish Karter '74 and long-time community leader Joan Duffy Murray '53. Right now, Kerry Broe '88 is working in Thailand as a volunteer with the Peace Corps, bringing aid to communities devastated by last year's tsunami. I could name many more examples, from among the alumnae/i I have come to know in the past

year. The tradition they represent continues with today's students. In fact, compared to their peers at other institutions, Wheaton students show significantly greater interest in making a significant "social" impact in the lives of others, according to a national annual survey of college freshmen. And in recent years, we have seen growing interest in AmeriCorps as well as continued interest in the Peace Corps from each graduating class.

This commitment to service reflects not only a concern for doing good but also the college's dedication to helping students learn well and more deeply. Service represents one way to link theory with practice, as do internships, jobs and research assistantships. Experience can be a powerful teacher and motivator. More than 60 courses at Wheaton include some form of community service as part of the formal

class syllabus, often in innovative ways. And every professor has pledged to incorporate some form of experiential learning, such as community service, into the curriculum. Professor of Biology Ed Tong, for example, asks his students to study the application of physiological principles while volunteering at a local emergency room, and he has written about the educational benefits of this work for the *American Journal of Physiology*.

The Wheaton community's interest in service resonates with me because I've made a conscious effort in my own life to incorporate volunteer work into my teaching and my learning. One of the most profound experiences I've had in service was through a program in which music students performed for patients with terminal cancer.

Ultimately, I believe, community service continues to be a vital part of Wheaton, because it is a powerful tool for learning and because it reflects a traditional commitment to social responsibility that moved the institution's founders and has been part of the college's story for the past 170-plus years. Wheaton's approach to the liberal arts clearly makes a difference—not only in the lives of our students, who develop the skills for personal and professional success as well as engaged citizenship, but also in the lives of all the people who benefit from the good work they do. 

