

Service Learning

The Office of Service Learning has enjoyed one of the busiest semesters in its existence. The Montevallo Chamber of Commerce became their newest officemate, new initiatives were born, and long-standing ones continued to flourish.

As UM students are learning about serving others, they are sharing those lessons with younger students in local middle and high schools, extending the reach of service learning far beyond the gates of the University.

A group of 30 Montevallo Middle School students from the Gifted Resource Class (GRC) gathered at the John W. Stewart Student Retreat recently for the inaugural David Mathews Center for Civic Life Students' Institute, coordinated by the Mathews Center and UM's Office of Service Learning. During the two-day institute, students deepened their understanding of what it means to be an engaged citizen. They focused on the community issue that concerns them most – retaining youth in Montevallo.

Members of a GRC English and literature class at MMS also learned about civic engagement. Pursuing an idea put forward by a UM sociology class,

Service Learning and MMS, they have collaborated to publish the first issue of the *Prentice Village Voice* newsletter. The *Voice* spreads the word about the progress of revitalization in this neighborhood while providing the students with an educational experience as well as a means to bring members of the community together to bridge generational gaps.

The Blueprints College Access Initiative, an early college awareness program, coordinated by Alabama Possible and UM Service Learning with the guidance of AmeriCorps*VISTA Courtney Bennett '11, successfully completed five sessions with Montevallo High School 9th graders this semester. Approximately 30 UM students served as “near peer” mentors to the 9th grade class, covering topics such as study habits and how to pay for college. The program culminated in a campus visit to the University, where the students experienced a college class first-hand.

Throughout the fall, more than 20 Falcon Scholars in Action served at eight agencies including the Montevallo Boys and Girls Club, Safe-house and the Shelby County Arts Council.



Blueprints mentor Andrew Mechum discusses college options with MHS 9th graders.

Other students involved in service projects included a group of biology students who helped city workers spread mulch in a local park and playground and the brothers of Lambda Chi Alpha, who assisted with the annual golf cart maintenance at the Montevallo golf course.

The faculty and staff of the Office of Service Learning are “practicing what they preach” as they go into the community to promote the concept of “neighbors helping neighbors.” Hollie Cost and Deborah Lowry, two members of the Service Learning faculty, along with Bennett, presented a program on the revitalization projects in the Shoal Creek Prentice Village neighborhood. Bennett and Montevallo city councilwoman Dee Woodham co-hosted a workshop at Montevallo High School encouraging students to be civically engaged.

In the ultimate position of community service, Hollie Cost, Service Learning Coordinator in the Department of Service Learning and Community Engagement, was recently elected mayor of Montevallo. In this role, she will be able to take the “town and gown” concept to new heights.



Montevallo High School students participating in Blueprints College Access Initiative, an early college awareness program coordinated in part by UM Service Learning.