



CIVIC ENGAGEMENT NEWSLETTER

Fall 2009

Powershift

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Washington DC— Nine students from SUNY Oswego were sponsored by Student Association’s Director of Civic Engagement to attend the Powershift conference. Powershift was held from February 28th to March 2nd in Washington, D.C. Powershift brought young people from across the country to converge on Washington D.C. to take a message of bold, comprehensive and immediate federal climate action to Capitol Hill. At Power Shift, the students not only delivered their message of change to elected officials, but they strengthened the climate and clean energy movement by infusing our nation's young leaders with new ideas, skills, connections with each other, and opportunities for employment and action.

The students learned a great deal during the conference. It varied because there were numerous workshops for the students to attend. However, all of the students have plans to carry on what they learn in DC. There have been efforts made on campus to conserve energy, to become greener, and to become more sustainable. Students are working with campus administration so that students can have a voice in what is happening on their campus. One student went to workshops about campus community relations. As a result, she is now working with the Oswego High School Environmental club. Another student attended lobbying workshops. She hopes to be able to work in politics and make a stand by lobbying elected officials. All the students enjoyed being able to go and lobby their elected officials and rally on Capitol Hill at the end of the conference.



Science Café/Focus the Nation

Oswego, NY— Over 200 people including county officials and members of the community and campus community expanded their knowledge of eco-friendly opportunities in business during the Science Café held in Sheldon Hall Ballroom on March 26th. The event was titled “Global Climate Change and the Energy Future of Our Community”. Kestas Bendinskas started the event by saying, “It is time to stop chatting about the dangers of diesel fuels and time to do something about it”.

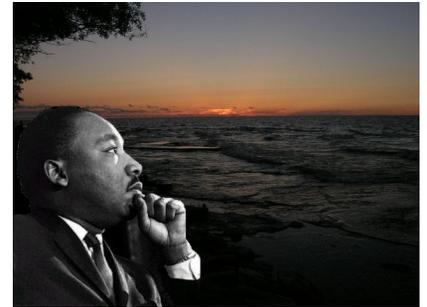
Bob Bechtold, president of HARBEC Plastics, Inc., was the guest speaker of the night. HARBEC runs on 59 percent renewable energy, preventing hundreds of tons of greenhouse gases from entering the atmosphere. Bechtold commented that in his opinion energy is subsidized too much making energy much cheaper than it should be. This results in people using more than they should.

After the talk by Bechtold, elected officials gathered in small groups with community and campus community members. They generated ideas on how the county can further incorporation a “greener” community in a economically viable fashion. Just prior to the event, the county legislators had recently talked about implementing lake source cooling to city and county buildings. A conclusion was drawn that more action need to be taken



AID Conference Call

Oswego, NY— Americans for Informed Democracy (AID) is a national non-profit organization that empowers and equips young people in the United States to address global issues—poverty, health, climate change, peace and security—through awareness-raising and actions that promote just and sustainable solutions on their campuses, in their communities, and nationally. AID held a videoconference as part of their ongoing efforts to strengthen connections between young people in the U.S. and their peers in developing countries to discuss perceptions and solutions to pressing international issues and opportunities. Youth-centered organizations from Cameroon, Kenya, and Ghana will join students of SUNY Oswego and Georgetown University shared stories of their work, identify policies at play in development, and discuss points of entry for increased youth involvement in moving our institutions closer to eradicating poverty and inequality.



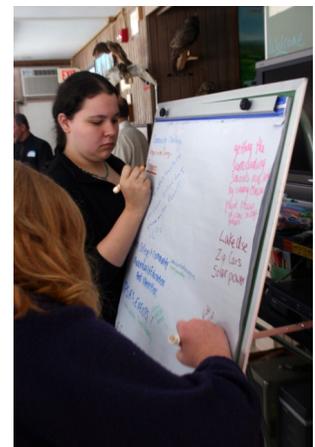
Martin Luther King, Jr. Celebration

Oswego, NY— The 20th annual Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. celebration kicked off the semester. The weeklong celebration was from January 27 to January 31. Throughout the week, there were various films shown about King as well as dance workshops and discussions. The Civic Engagement Coalition hosted one of the panel discussions, “Yes I Can: Community Organizing as a Career”. The panel was led by Nola Heidlebaugh and presenters included Charlotte Holstein (from F.O.C.U.S. Greater Syracuse), Sheena Solomon (from the Glifford Foundation), and Barbara Locke (from Southern Hills Preservation Corporation). Community organizing offers an affirmative response to the question, “Can I, as one person, be an agent of change in my community?” Martin Luther King’s legacy honors the work of community organizers seeking social justice. And yet (as we learned during the recent Presidential election) few people understand what community organizing is. Moreover, because there is no single clear route into community organizing, few think of it as a career option. The panel addressed the interest of students who seek collective social change and are curious about achieving it through community organizing. The three panelists have had successful careers engaging others in action on such concerns as citizenship participation and fair housing.



CASC Student Town Hall

Oswego, NY— The Climate Academic Steering Committee held their first student town hall on February 7th to kick off the campus Focus the Nation activities. The purpose of the town hall was to seek ways to reduce our carbon footprint and to create sustainable communities. The town hall was held at the Rice Creek Field Station and was attended by numerous students, a few faculty and staff. Discussion included student-led initiatives such as a composting proposal, ways the college is trying to reduce its carbon footprint and brainstorming for how to do more.



Alternative Winter Break

In January, eight students and two staff members traveled to Treasure Beach, Jamaica, to volunteer with VIJON. The group provided such services as working with preschool children, assisting in classrooms at a primary school, painting at a different primary school, building a set of monkey bars at the preschool, teaching computer lessons to local children, constructing a thatched hut to eat meals in, and doing various tasks to prepare a camping area for future volunteer groups and tourists to the area to be housed. In total, approximately 640 hours of service was provided in Jamaica, and SUNY Oswego students had the experience of a lifetime.



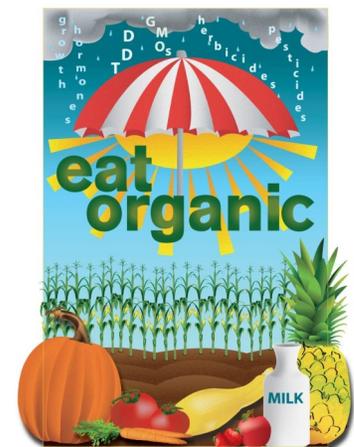
Alternative Spring Break

This year, 48 students and five staff members chose to spend their spring break week in March volunteering at various locations across the United States. Over 2500 hours of service was provided during the week at the following sites: Operation Helping Hands in New Orleans, LA; Habitat for Humanity in Jackson, TN and Bridgeport, CT; Head Start in Bridgeport, NJ; and Crotched Mountain Rehabilitation Center in Greenfield, N. The work students did included providing repairs to hurricane-damaged homes, constructing new homes for low-income first-time homebuyers, assisting in low-income preschool classrooms, working with children and teenagers with developmental disabilities, and working with adults who have acquired brain injuries. These were completely new experiences for most of our students, and many say they hope to participate again in the future.



“Visions of Green”

The exhibit, "Visions of Green," included posters by students from majors as diverse as Art, Education, Business, and Technical Education. The students were asked to produce a graphic response to an aspect of environmentalism that each found meaningful. The posters reflect each student's unique "take" on the assignment, with some commenting on noise pollution, some on the virtues of organic farming, and some more generally on the various threats to the earth's well being. The works in the exhibition successfully incorporated aesthetics, language, and imagery to produce visual statements about the environment.



AARP

On Tuesday evening, April 14th, students from Laura Brown's Fundamentals of Gerontology class joined residents of the retirement community Springside at Seneca Hill for a community conversation on affordable health care policy. The conversation was facilitated by William Armstrong of AARP. Topics included the pros and cons of health care reform as well as the costs of health care. The conversation was part of AARP's "Divided We Fail" effort to achieve bipartisan action on health care. The Community Conversations offer an opportunity for people of all ages and from all walks of life to come together for dialogue on this controversial topic.

“Hiroshima Speaks”

On Tuesday, April 28, from 5:45 till 7:30 p.m. in the same Lake Effect Cafe in Penfield Library, there was a panel discussion. Called "Hiroshima Speaks and We Respond," it was a panel discussion inspired by the Exhibition and made up of faculty and a Japanese student.

All of the panelists argued that the Exhibition is about peace not war; it stresses the need to settle disputes nonviolently. Since April 13th, when the Exhibition opened, Hiroshima did speak to us; at the panel discussion on April 28th, we listened. Hiroshima said peace.

Dr. Nola Heidlebaugh, coordinator of Civic Engagement, moderated the discussion. Panelists included Dr. John Kares Smith, Professor of Communication Studies, Dr. Alok Kumar, Professor and Chair of Physics, Dr. Gregg Parsons, Assistant Professor of History, Dr. Steve Rosow, Professor of Political Science and Director, Global and International Studies, and Kosuke Kisaka, a Japanese student from Hiroshima province. All spoke briefly about their connection to the Hiroshima bombing, facts about nuclear weapons, and the history and future of nuclear weapons.

Hunger Banquet

On March 30, 2009, 42 members of the campus community and 10 student volunteers participated in SUNY Oswego's annual Hunger Banquet. This event, supported by the Center for Service Learning and Community Service, the Office of Civic Engagement, Hall Newman Center, and the Habitat for Humanity Campus Chapter, provided an interactive experience for attendees to learn about global and local hunger. With the support of Auxiliary Services students were able to eat a meal together, and then listened to Doug Anderson from Church World Service speak about his experiences working to combat hunger worldwide. This included sharing information about the CROP Walk, which took place in Oswego on October 25. This year's Hunger Banquet was once again a powerful experience for all those in attendance.

