

Reflections

Spring Semester 2021

SLCC Service-Learning and the Pandemic

by Rebecca Van Maren, Thayne Center Community Partnerships Coordinator

When the COVID-19 Pandemic hit our community in March, there was an incredible amount of uncertainty. Every aspect of how our community functions was impacted as we were asked to stay home to stay safe. Things that we had taken for granted quickly seemed out of reach with ever changing guidelines. There's no denying that the impact of the pandemic was being felt by everyone, with varying degrees of severity.

The spectrum of reactions and responses that vibrated through our community were felt by those involved in our service-learning and community engagement programs. We quickly started hearing from community partners that they were having to halt operations, pivot quickly to remote operations, and implement other strategies in the moment. Other organizations didn't have the luxury of stopping or slowing. When the community experiences crisis, their operations ramp up and provide basic human services that are needed, especially in those critical moments. As we navigated the initial shutdown of the international pandemic, many of the challenges our society faces amplified their presence. Domestic violence was ever prevalent as the safe haven of schools were shut down or pivoted to remote learning, reducing the number of mandatory reporters helping to keep eyes on the situation. As people lost their employment, the number of people seeking food assistance or temporary shelter grew, but the volunteer teams needed to process the donations and support operations couldn't be there. Organizations who so deeply depend on volunteer support had to pivot operations as we navigated what precautions needed to be set in place to bring their supporters back.

Through this pandemic, I've watched organizations close their doors, lay off staff, and drastically reduce operations. I've also seen organizations succeed as they innovate and rise to the challenge. An example of an organization rising to the challenge was the American Red Cross- disaster response is at their core and they've been preparing for moments like this since 1881 when they were created. An earthquake hit the Salt Lake area and our local Red Cross chapter was the first in the country to respond to multiple emergencies at once. Other organizations innovated new approaches to relationship-based opportunities like virtual mentoring and tutoring or innovating creative projects to do at home to help pass the time. These innovations shouldn't be taken for granted; it's helping us to lay the foundation for more inclusive opportunities even as in person options become available again.



Rebecca Van Maren

Engaging with our community helps us to understand the complexity of lives that are different than our own. It also offers an opportunity to leverage our knowledge, skills and experience to support those who might be navigating similar situations that we have personally experienced before. It helps us to cultivate skills that we might not gain through other experiences. It helps to create community leaders who understand empathy and compassion.

Service-Learning helps us to go beyond our textbooks, to take a look around and uncover lessons that we need to learn as a community. It helps us to deepen our understanding, to learn and grow in a more comprehensive way. However, just like other semesters that have come before, to students juggling work and life and other classes it can also be viewed as just "one more thing." We've heard from faculty members who realize their students don't have the bandwidth to navigate one more thing as we are all trying to survive through this pandemic. We've also heard how much they miss the depth that the community experiences bring to classroom conversations and discussions. Just like the pandemic is amplifying these disparities in our community, it's also amplifying them across campus as well. Maybe one day engaging in our community can help to be that stability we seek in an ever changing world.

English 2100 Student Selected for Engaged Learning Celebration

by Lucy Smith, Engaged Learning Coordinator

One of our fantastic Engaged Learning Celebration service-learning student award winners this year is Gino Gazani. Gino is originally from Peru and is a first-generation college student. He is a Nursing major and plans to earn his RN eventually. Gino took Daniel Baird's ENGL 2100 and is being recognized for his service-learning efforts at Esperanza Elementary. As a part of professor Baird's class, he translated documents from English to Spanish, including active shooter procedures, fire and evacuation protocol, earthquake protocol, and chain of command for reporting abuse. The goal was to create a safer environment at the school.



Gino Gazani

Gino has also volunteered at Malihch Free Clinic and has gone on humanitarian missions with the military to Honduras and Guatemala to provide medical and dental care to residents. Gino is on active duty in the U.S. Army and has been awarded various achievement and service medals.

Join us at the Engaged Learning Celebration on February 5 from 12:00-1:30 p.m. to celebrate these accomplishments. The event is virtual, and the Zoom link is found via email or in SLCCtoday. You can also contact the Engaged Learning Office at 801-957-4694 or engagedlearning@slcc.edu for more info.

About Reflections

Reflections is a newsletter for and about civic engagement and service-learning in English, Linguistics & Writing Studies (ELWS) published twice a year by the SLCC ELWS Department. We welcome submissions on students experiences, faculty perspectives, pedagogical insights, community partner engagement, civic involvement, staff profiles, and upcoming events. Send photos, events, flyers, or articles to estone@bruinmail.slcc.edu. **Editors:** Elisa Stone, Daniel Baird, and Clint Gardner

ELWS Department Service-Learning Committee: Benjamin Solomon, Jason Roberts, Daniel Baird (chair), Lisa Packer, Andrea Malouf, Lucy Smith, Elisa Stone, Tonja Vincent, Kati Lewis, James Celestino, Brend Sieczkowski, Christie Bogle, and Clint Gardner

Upcoming Events

- February 5, 2021: Engaged Learning Celebration; 12:00 noon to 1:30 pm.
- February 19, 2021: Engaged Faculty Retreat. Register at <https://www.weber.edu/ccel/engaged-faculty-retreat.html>.
- February 24, 2021: African American Read-in. Zoom <http://bit.ly/slcc-zoomaari2021>
- March 2021: Womxn's Heritage/History Month. SWRC Womxn Writers Poster Display.

ELWS Civically Engaged Students in Action

Community Partners: Civically Engaged Scholars (CES) and Esperanza Elementary School

by Jazmin Meza De La Cruz

I been working with Cristobal Villegas, I did a brochure for the program because that way would be easy for students to know all the information of CES and the opportunities that students have. I'm part of CES and I know that the program it is a good opportunity for all students, but much of the students don't know about. The brochure it would be easy for them to get the main information and how to be part of the program. The handbook of the CES program have too much information and many students when they see many papers would not read it all and would think that would be harder to be part; that is why we did a brochure and thinking about all students. I'm doing my service hours in Esperanza Elementary School; I help students to read and understand the topics. I work with 3rd grade students all Friday for 3 hours, I been having fun working with Esperanza Elementary School and I learn a lot about the knowledge of the children.



Jazmin Meza De La Cruz

TeensAct

by Grace Larsen

I participated in a service-learning component for my English 2100 Technical Writing class with Professor Daniel Baird. I worked alongside an organization called TeensAct that serves marginalized and at-risk students in high school so that they may be provided the resources necessary to graduate. These resources include college and career preparation, credit recovery and assistance, and even parent outreach! I was writing a grant application that TeensAct would then submit to a foundation that would potentially award them funding to continue their services in the high schools that they are already established in. The work that TeensAct does is very significant to the populations that they serve. They have helped over 500 students since they were first established in 2007! This work applied to me because I am majoring in a field that works a majority with grant funding. I had an amazing experience working with my facilitators and receiving plenty of feedback so that I could better my technical writing skills for the future! It feels amazing that my work will be utilized to be able to provide under-served high school students with these resources for multiple years to come.

United Way of Utah

by Morgan Mecham

This semester, I completed a Service-Learning project for Dr. Baird's ENGL 2100 class. For my project, I decided to volunteer for United Way of Salt Lake who matched me with West Kearns Elementary. Each Monday and Wednesday, I virtually met with two students, a third grader and a sixth grader, for 45 minutes each. During our sessions, we would complete a Reading in DYAD lesson where I would assist the students with reading and tracking their progress with one-minute fluency passages and counting their correct words read. United Way stands to promote social change for poverty, poor health, and lagging educational achievement. By volunteering for this organization, I am contributing to the strive to assist students who are falling behind educationally. The volunteers for West Kearns Elementary help these students get extra focus on reading and individualized, personal help in the areas they need. Meeting with the same students consistently throughout the school year helps them to feel comfortable and we, as tutors, promote a positive learning environment that will stick with the students throughout the rest of their education. It has been an amazing experience for me. Seeing the resilience of the children who have to participate in tutoring through a computer screen this year rather than in person. They have already improved so much this semester alone and I will continue to tutor through the rest of the school year.

Learning to by Doing

by Jacob Xu

My community partner for English 2100 is United Way. At beginning, I did service what a high school freshman math class on Friday morning. Which is during a teacher lecture. Her name is Ms. Smith, she is really good teacher. But usually she need to do the lecture at first, then the last half hour to an hour she will let students do class homework. So I felt that I have been less used in that class. Because it is a freshman math class, it not really hard, and Ms. Smith is great at teach them. That's why they doesn't have lots of questions over the class.

Then I connect with the community director Sarah about this issue, and she give me a advise to go to promise and join after-school program. She said usually students need more help in there. So I did it few weeks ago, and I felt it was great. I tutor math for them, there is also a teacher named Ms. Madsion walking around and help students have work with some tutor instead of just sitting there. While I was helping students with math homework, sometime I jump steps or maybe can't explain very well. Then Ms. Madsion will come and help me with student. I felt so much useful in after-school program. Teachers and students are great. I enjoyed it a lot.

4-H

by Abdul Bari Ayubi

I did a lot of volunteering, but the service project with the 4-H program (weaving sleeping mats for homeless people) means a lot for me and I am so happy that I was part of the project. I started that project in 2019 and it is still continuing in 2020.

I am part of the collecting team and our job is collecting plastic bags, tracking how many people are bringing bags, how many bags we have, and how many we need for the next event. We are doing this project every third Monday of the month at the Utah Refugee Education and Training Center. The reason I am doing this project is to help the homeless community; as all of us know, we have a community that, because of unexpected situations in their life, became homeless and right now, it is really hard for them to come back to their normal life again. In this project, we are making sleeping mats for homeless people so they can sleep on top of it; we use 500 plastic grocery bags to make one mat.

The positive points about this project are people from the different communities are working together to help another community, networking and having fun. The good point about the sleeping mat is that it is so light, easy to carry and keep in a backpack. We should always help people in need, even if they can't do anything for us.

The second project I was involved in, and it was 100% my responsibility because I experienced those moments, was the teacher-parent conferences held by the Granite School District for the parents, informing them about the grades, attendance, behavior, and progress reports. My role was interpreting for my community on those days. I did that responsibility for two years in a row and I am so happy for doing that. I helped around 10 families on those days, and I played an important role, which was interpreting for those families because they can't speak English very well. So, I was there to connect families with the teachers. If I was not there, I don't know how people from my community might solve their problems on those days.

This is my belief that this world will be over one day, and no one knows what things might happen in their life tomorrow, so it is better to be a positive person in our community and everyone receive our goodness. I can't forget those smiles and emotional words from the parents and teachers for being a bridge for them, and that service changed my view about being human in this wonderful society. A smile is worth more than everything in this world, so let's try to bring a smile to the faces of everyone!



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The Goal is Always Goodbye: Managing Chaos and Upheaval Through Kitten Fostering

by Stephanie Maenhardt, Professor of ELWS

While this service work isn't tied to any particular course at SLCC, I am a faculty member in ELWS.

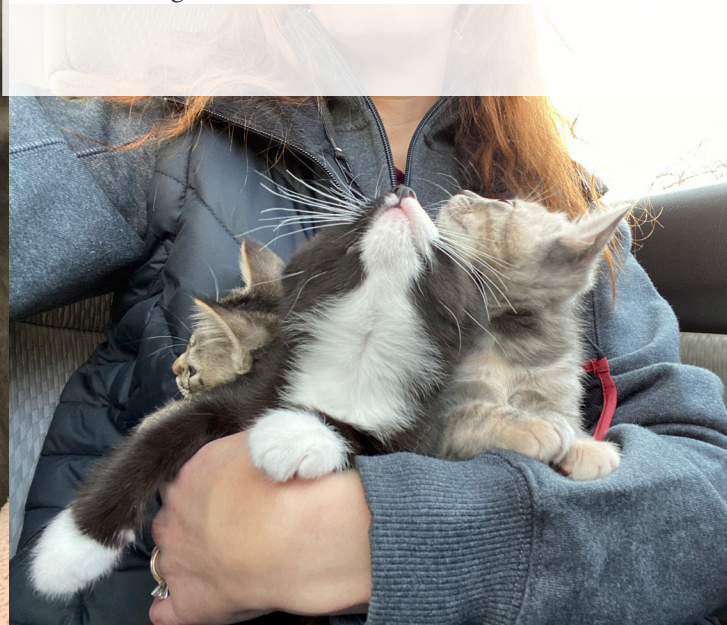
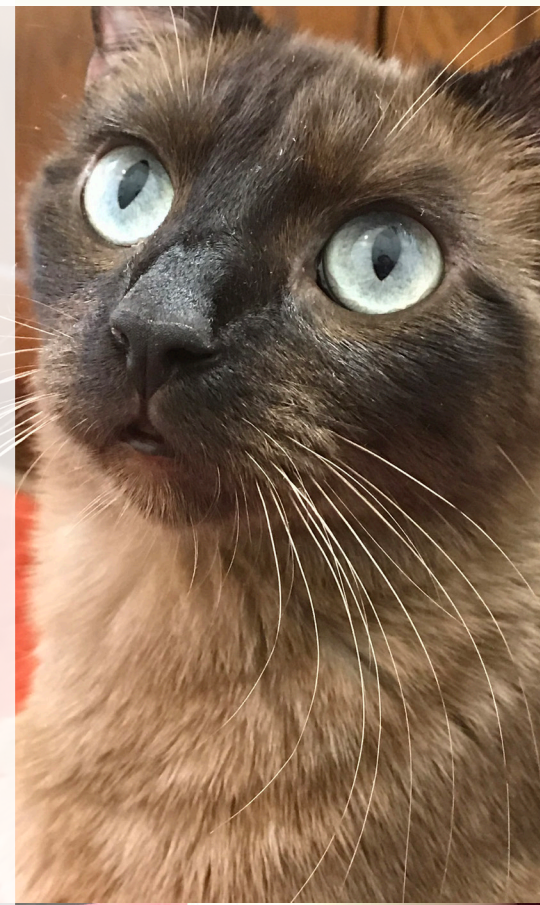
Part of what has helped ground me during this bizarre pandemic year has been working as a foster parent for the Humane Society of Utah. This is something that I've done on a fairly regular basis for a number of years, but it took on even more power and meaning this year. It helped me manage the chaos and upheaval of 2020 to know that I was able to make a difference for creatures who weren't able to help themselves.

Since this past March, I have been able to foster four different litters of kittens, all of whom are now in their forever homes:

- The "Tree Kittens" (March 23-early May): Magnolia (momma), Willow, Oak, Juniper, Ash, and Tamarind
- The "Flower Kittens" (May 13-mid June): Aster, Lilac, and Jasmine
- The "Roman Kittens" (June 28-August 8): Kalliope and Castor
- The "Jane Austen Kittens" (September 22-November 23): Lizzie Bennet, Jane Bennet, Mary Bennett (RIP), and Georgiana Darcy

Over the past 8.5 months, there have been highs (snuggling kittens!!) and lows (losing Mary Bennett just 2 days after she came to me with her sisters) and a lot of sleepless nights (two litters of fussy bottle-babies), but being able to take care of these babies (and one momma) has been a series of amazing experiences.

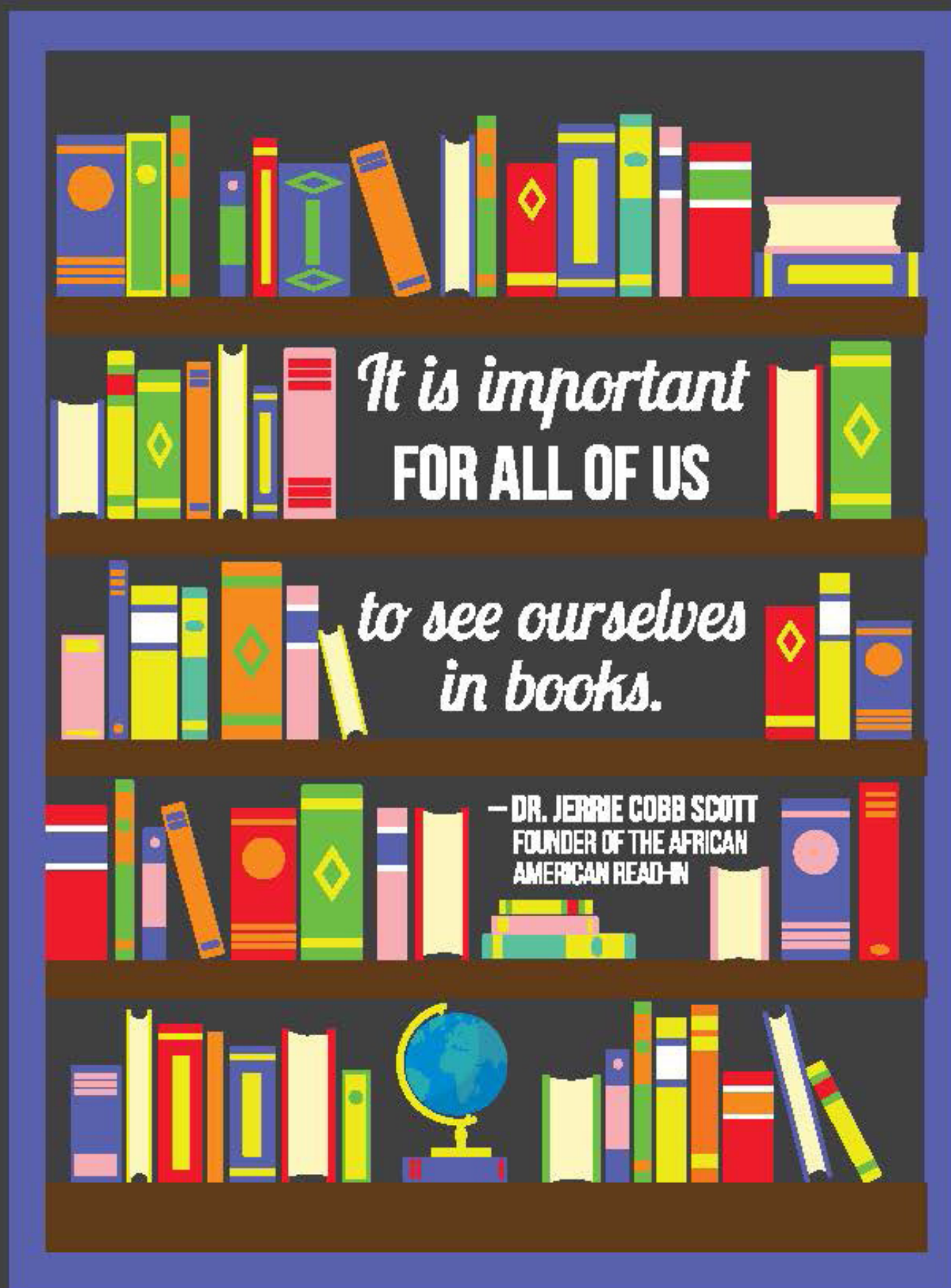
With foster care, the "goal is always goodbye," and so even though I always shed a lot of tears and my heart breaks a little when my fosters go back to the shelter for surgery and adoption, knowing that I helped prepare them to meet their forever families is something I wouldn't trade.



SLCC Student Writing & Reading Center Presents

AFRICAN AMERICAN READ-IN

EST. 1990



2/24/2021

Salt Lake Community College Zoom

<http://bit.ly/slcczoomaari2021>

12:00 pm - 2:00 pm

Register to read at

<http://bit.ly/slccaari>