St. John’s Public Relations Students Give Back to Disadvantaged Mothers

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Professor Jane Paley’s Spring 2009 Public Relations Campaign course is distinct from all others; not only did it have the first all-female roster but they designed and executed a single, semester-long campaign with specific and measurable goals just as in the “real world.”

The Public Relations students selected Momma’s House, a facility for young, unwed mothers who are continuing the education or vocational training interrupted by their pregnancy, as part of their Academic Service-Learning project. They contemplated such questions as: Who among the neediest will benefit from our efforts? How can we encourage and empower them? How are we going to make enough money to cater a luncheon for the moms and purchase gifts for them? The solution: Bake sales!

More Than Just A Bake Sale

Upperclassman Angela Virviscas observed first-hand the impact their hard-work and donations made to the residents at Momma’s House.

“I was especially moved after one of the house mothers, noting the donations of detergent, said, ‘Thank God. We really needed this,’” she states. “From bake sales to fliers, campus clothing drives, phone calls and promotions we came together and contributed something special in order to reach our goals.”

The CPS students raised funds to organize a Mother’s Day luncheon, purchased personalized gift baskets which included: a complete set of towels, crib and adult sheets; Tory Burch cosmetic kits; Metro and gift cards; and toiletries for the 11 women residing at Momma’s House.

“The lunch gave us closure in the best sense of the word. The women were grateful to us, but we didn’t realize
how grateful we were to them for such a wonderful learning experience,” commented senior, Judi Paradine. “This was our chance to tell them.”

Jacqui Pinaud summed up the AS-L experience best: “There’s an indescribable feeling of warmth and pride that accompanies charity work for a worthy cause.”

The upperclassmen in the PR Campaign Seminar had great generosity of spirit. By going the extra mile they deepened their compassion for the underserved and witnessed the impact community service can have on the economically disadvantaged in society.

“My goal is to encourage students academically and prepare them professionally,” says the Mass Communications Professor. “It’s not interpreting the work of others but experiencing it first-hand. Service is what makes St. John’s so special and the students are expected to do service and continue helping others throughout their lives.”

VISA

Academic Service-Learning enhances the educational experience of St. John’s students and is a major component of the University’s 2009-2013 Strategic Plan. It’s also a part of the Vincentian Institute for Social Action (VISA), which was launched by the University to more visibly embed St. John’s Catholic and Vincentian mission into the educational experience of its students. VISA provides an organizational focus for a variety of new and ongoing programs through which faculty and students can work together to explore the causes of and develop solutions for poverty and social injustice throughout the world.