

Hammering for the homeless

Melissa Kansky
Reporter

Study abroad, internships and alternative spring breaks enable Elon students to experience diversity, but sometimes life in Elon's own backyard is overlooked. Professor Anthony Weston's Ethics in Leadership and Decision Making class aims to solve this inconsistency and establish local citizens as well.

In collaboration with Homelessness Awareness Week, which was Nov. 15-21, Weston's class began the Framing Family Futures program, which strives to provide for the homeless of Allied Churches Shelter in Burlington by building beds.

The class encourages students to realize their power in society. Weston teaches ethics not as a means of judgment, but rather as a guide to act as a leader and make a difference.

"As part of the class we are required to create a project for Elon which would create an ethical change," said sophomore leadership minor Aaron Moger. "We wanted to do something that would make a difference instead of just volunteering hours."

Weston said he also wanted the project to better the local community. Elon offers scholarships to Jordanian students and is currently striving to bring Iraqis to the school. The focus on the world prompted Weston to ask, "What about the local people?"

"Too often we assume too much. We think we know what someone else needs and wants," said a pamphlet compiled by the class. "Very few of us are familiar with the surrounding area, a disability that could cripple our impact on helping to promote social change."

To combat misconceptions about the community's needs, Weston's students contacted the Allied Churches Shelter to ensure their actions would meet the organization's needs.

According to senior Lauren Caldwell, leader in collaborative services between Allied Churches and Elon, the biggest needs include paper plates, cups and other common goods necessary for operating a successful shelter. She said she believes the beds are a huge asset to the shelter as well.

"The director (of Allied Churches)

acknowledges that we are providing a place to stay, but not necessarily the most comfortable (environment)," Caldwell said.

The class completed beds for the entire women's and children's section and built enough frames to provide the men's section with sturdy beds.

In addition to improving the homeless shelter, students plan to talk with the residents to better understand their unfortunate situation.

"Service is a complicated thing and part of it is relationships," Weston said.

The project allows each end to both give and receive.

"We want to promote the ideals of comfort, mutual respect among one another and the rising of equal chance," sophomore Ellie Jesse, said.

Caldwell said the project was a success overall.

"It was impressive to see the dedication of the students," she said. "You could tell they were excited about (the project) and you could see the shelter guests getting excited about (the beds) too."

While the students constructed the bed frames, a few shelter guests assisted.

"The goal of the class is to create more project and less judgment," Weston said. "We were just people working together."

But the class is not alone in the plight against homelessness.

"We are trying to get organizations involved on campus to promote sustainability (of the project) so that when the class ends, the progress and idea of service remains," Moger said.

The class' mission statement expresses a hope to maintain support for the homeless so the families will never feel forgotten or neglected. Moger said the class adopted eight families to support and have recruited various club organizations, sororities and fraternities to assume some of the responsibility.

"We really wanted to empower the students to break out of the 'Elon Bubble,'" Jesse said.

Aaron Moger echoed her.

"The project is a step in the right direction toward making the 'Elon Bubble' obsolete and creating a more communal support system between Elon and the surrounding Burlington community," he said.



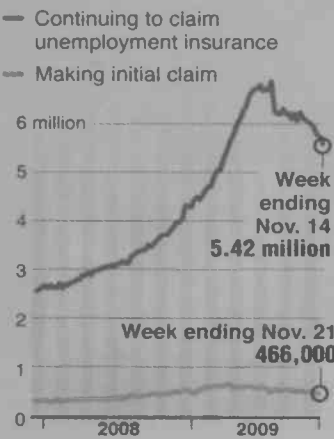
BRIAN ALLENBY | Photographer
(left to right) Sophomore Ethan Rosenbluth, senior Maggie Landy and sophomore Frank Campos build bunk beds for the Allied Churches of Alamance County homeless shelter as part of their Ethics in Leadership and Decision Making class.

EXTENDED BRIEF

State unemployment still problematic, statistics show new signs of hope

Out of work

The number of newly laid-off workers seeking jobless benefits and the total on jobless rolls each fell this week.



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funding would be beneficial to the local economy.

"Any money from the outside would directly affect the community and create more jobs," Tiemann said. "Every job that is saved or created would make another job."

Looking at the national unemployment situation, the latest unemployment claim report shows the advance figure for seasonally adjusted initial claims was 466,000 during the week of Nov. 21. This information, released by the United States Department of Labor, shows a decrease of 35,000 from the previous week's figure of 501,000.

Despite the U.S. government's hopefulness in saying the recession is through, many North Carolinians are still without a job, a trend that may not disappear soon.

In August, Gov. Beverly Perdue and the North Carolina Congress approved a state budget that would cut \$225 million from the North Carolina public school system and would cause many teachers to lose their jobs and cut afterschool programming.

Perdue recently addressed the North Carolina School Board system and said she hoped the state would receive \$400 million from the federal stimulus package of \$3.2 billion designated education innovation grant, which all states are competing for.

The Alamance County Chamber of Commerce could not comment on whether the grant could help Alamance County schools or if more teachers could be hired.

Tom Tiemann, chair of Elon's department of economics, said from a general perspective, any outside

Dismal economy drives up the number of those hungry

HUNGER from PAGE 1

Christian non-profit organization, as well as the Burlington Salvation Army.

Robin Drummond, a caseworker at the Salvation Army, explained her clients range in age "from young adults to middle aged to elderly."

Unfortunately, the Salvation Army, as well as other organizations, simply do not have enough to provide everyone in need with food.

"We can't help anyone on a daily basis," Drummond said. "We don't want to enable them. We have just enough (food) to get them through an emergency crisis situation."

Additionally, Drummond said she has noticed a shift in the types of people that frequently visit. While it was once typically those who had been homeless and unemployed for years, Drummond said this is no longer the case.

"It's the ones who used to have jobs, people that have lost their homes, people that are on minimum wage, people that have gotten wage cuts," she said.

Brenda Ingle Allen, director of Loaves and Fishes, confirmed this observation. She said the recession has forced hour cuts and, consequently, the wages workers are receiving have become inadequate.

"We have seen a large increase in numbers of people coming into Loaves and Fishes since the recession. Our numbers per month have doubled from June through now," Allen said.

She said they now serve about 7,000 people a month and the clients are allowed to return every 30 days for more food.

She also said while the lower class once dominated the clientele, the middle class has started to become

HOW TO HELP:

Contribute by attending a Christmas concert on Dec. 20 on campus, sponsored by Fox 8 News. The cost of admission is boxed or canned food, which will be donated to the Burlington Salvation Army.

more prominent.

"The trend is more people unemployed seeking assistance, also more people being put on short time," Allen said. "Those who normally worked a full-time job are now working part time."

Although organizations such as these are willing to assist, they do prioritize based on the severity of need.

Allen said the amount of food distributed to families is determined by how many people are working in the family, who is disabled or on maternity leave and various other factors, such as children, number of vehicles and amount of bills.

With the holiday season approaching these organizations said they foresee more families and individuals in need.

"We expect after Christmas we will see a high increase in numbers as more places close and force more to our doors," Allen said.

Although the Salvation Army has only an emergency pantry stocked with canned dinners such as Spaghetti-O's, and beans, cereals and rice, Drummond said they can only help if people are willing to donate.

"We're here trying to do the most good with what we have available," Drummond said.