

FOCUS SECTION

THIS WEEK'S TOPIC: Student Volunteerism at Elon

Volunteering for emotional wealth

Jeff Sanders
The Pendulum

My parents had always told me I would one day be going to college. When it came to financing their dreams for their son, though, that was an entirely different matter.

When the economy of the early '90s took a nosedive at sea, my father lost his first class reserved seat of 17 years. For four years, whatever land we came upon was merely sandbars. During the crash, my brothers' and my college funds were used as flotation devices from a mounting sea of bills and shelter from storms of uncertainty. In their place to sit on were a series of promises and IOUs, which were not nearly as comfortable. At the time, as materialistic as I was, I had felt like my parents had stole from me.

Drifting into high school, the rescue team had saved us, but we were no where ready to return to shore. I realized that to finance college, I was going to need numerous scholarships.

I got involved with S.A.D.D. in the hopes that of money would recognize my involvement and decide to send me off for "higher learning."

How selfish.

S.A.D.D. suddenly grew in importance to me after some close friends decided to slalom through a forest after a party.

I visited them as a friend and a volunteer, and soon realized there were real people behind my volunteer efforts. From then on, I became involved in whatever I could.

From Key Club, National Honors Society, Environmental Club, Spanish Club, and the Drama Department to helping with foot-

ball and basketball games, I ran the gamut on volunteer activities. You name it, I did it. I even made up a couple of organizations.

It became an addiction – a drug – a part of me I couldn't do without. While my friends were starting smoking, drinking, and sex, my rush came from elsewhere. When I gave a steaming bowl of soup to a dirt-covered stranger with flush cheeks in a homeless shelter, a part of me felt so fulfilled.

When I watched my "younger brother" score a touchdown and rub it in my face, it brought nothing but joy. When I used my otherwise useless Spanish skills to help second-graders learn English as a second language, every hug meant more to me than any amount of money could. I was the richest man in the world.

Applying for scholarships during senior year came quite easily, as did scholarships. In fact, only into my third year here at Elon did I have to start paying out of my own pocket. As a college senior, looking back on the last decade or so, I realize my "higher learning" took place in high school – and in the community.

The most rewarding experiences of my life include the stories I've heard, the smiles I've seen and the hugs I've been given. If you honestly think life is about money, materialism, fame, power or status, I just hope one day you experience the wealth, the recognition and inner strength you get from helping someone.

When your personal jet plunges you to a watery grave, people divvy up your luggage and you're stripped of all fame and status, people will remember you most for the lives you've touched on this one-way, non-stop that we call "life."

Students, President Lambert spend fall break cleaning, sorting and boxing

Tammy Tripp
The Pendulum

Hurricane Floyd may not have wreaked havoc on Elon College, but the massive hurricane wreaked plenty of havoc on many of the towns along the East Coast that Elon students call home.

Freshman Liz Sessums knew that her town, Rocky Mount, N.C., had substantial damage, including trees across the highway and flooding.

So when she saw a sign requesting volunteers to help flood victims, she got involved. Little did she know that EV! was already planning a service trip to Rocky Mount during fall break.

Sessums then became the student site leader and even arranged to have her grandparents cook a meal for the group of 12 during their stay. However, when she arrived, she admitted that it was not what she expected.

"I wish I had prepared myself more for what it would be like," she said. "It was really sad because driving by houses, you could see through them and their [the family's] entire life was on the street. Everything they had ever owned was on the sidewalk."

With the aid of a Presbyterian Church, the group spent part of the break working on a house that had been flooded. The homeowners were elderly members of the church. In conjunction with the church, the group took paneling and flooring out of the home.

They also spent part of their time working in a food distribution warehouse, where two other volunteers joined them.

President Leo Lambert and his wife rolled up their sleeves and spent a day working with EV! sorting and boxing food.

Lambert and his wife traveled to Rocky Mount Monday morn-



Students from Elon Volunteers! spent fall break in Rocky Mount, N.C. helping flood victims of Hurricane Floyd.



ing and spent the day in the distribution warehouse.

"When volunteering, you should think: 'If I were in that situation I would want people to help me.'"

-Liz Sessums, freshman

"It was neat that the president of the college took time out of his schedule to come with students and help others." Sessums said.

"We were all eating lunch and sitting on a cold floor in a dirty building."

But Sessums did not mind. "For me, the best part of the trip was

getting to see the look on the homeowners' face. He was so thankful that there were people willing to come out and help him start his life again."

Later on, Sessums says she is planning on doing more things with EV!.

"I would definitely like to get involved with another trip and go further away from home," she said.

"I'm not going to say it's ethically right to volunteer, but you have to look at it from someone else's perspective."

"When volunteering, you should think if I were in that situation I would want people to help me."

Next Week's Focus Topic:
Sexism: Men, Women and Objectification