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Stimulus Dollars Boost Service-Learning Work with Community Groups

Posted By [Sherry Squires](#) On November 25, 2009 @ 11:15 am In [Campus News](#), [Featured](#), [Top Story](#) | [No Comments](#)



Boise State community work-study students and employees at the MK Nature Center participate in a team-building activity.

Many Treasure Valley organizations are stretched by increased need for their services in an ailing economy, and federal stimulus funds are helping Boise State University students fill the gap.

Boise State's Service-Learning Program placed 24 students in work-study positions in the community this academic year, including 10 new positions funded by a \$40,000 stimulus grant. Work-study is a form of financial aid that provides part-time employment for college students. While most students find jobs on campus, these community work-study students have been placed with the Discovery Center of Idaho, the Agency for New Americans, the Idaho Foodbank, Boys and Girls Club, Salvation Army, The Learning Lab, AARP and the Women and Children's Alliance, among others.

The students are doing high-level work that is beneficial in their professional development.

"Students overwhelmingly report that because of their community work-study jobs they have become more aware of community issues, are gaining skills related to their majors and professional goals, and are making a positive impact on the community," said Jillana Finnegan, Service-Learning student support coordinator.

A student working with the AARP has been trained on the Medicare prescription benefit and is helping local clients find plans that meet their needs and researching long-term care facility prices. A student with the Salvation Army will help serve a growing number of requests for basic needs and holiday assistance.

"We have seen the demand for our services more than double for food, clothes and utility assistance," said Amber Young, Salvation Army social services director. "We are unable to fund new positions to help meet this demand. Our work-study student is helping to fill this need."

The MK Nature Center has had strong ties with the Service-Learning program for several years.

"The Boise State community work-study program has become an essential component of our operations," said center superintendent David Cannamela. "We depend on this affordable, valuable and interesting resource to run our business. Our work-study students contribute to almost all of our operations."

Students also come away with new perspectives after working in the community.

"My community work-study job has made a great impact in my life because I have realized the great need for resources out in the community," said Elizabeth Calderon, who is working with Catholic Charities of Idaho.

In addition to the community work-study positions, stimulus money also funded a full-time Volunteers in Service to America (VISTA) position with the Service-Learning program to focus on effectively building the capacity of service-learning to meet community needs. Devin Borland is assisting students, faculty and community organizations by helping to coordinate and strengthen community partnerships, marketing service-learning via social media outlets and refining the service learning assessment process.

Boise State's Service-Learning program is the largest in the state and is used as a model for other programs. Since 2000, more than 12,000 students have contributed 285,000 hours to the community. The program has coordinated community work-study for the past five years. For more information, visit <http://servicelearning.boisestate.edu> ^[1].

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