
SERVICE

More Than Just a Symbol at Union College

By Lilya Wagner

A special display is mounted in the lobby of the Union College administration building. Sculpted from metal and marble by a Union graduate, the display pictures the two world hemispheres. In the center are the school's former and current clock towers. Reaching from the newer tower are the golden cords, the ends attached to a variety of locations around the world. During each homecoming, a golden cord is hung for a Union alumnus who is working for the Seventh-day Adventist Church overseas.

Although cords are hung only for those in foreign service, the Golden Cords display has taken on a broader meaning—as a symbol of Union's commitment to its community, its church, and its world. Evidence of this commitment to service is seen everywhere across the campus, and includes many programs that reach out to the community. The foremost example, however, is Union's BRUSH day.

Beautifying Residences Using Student Help (BRUSH) began almost 10 years ago. The project grew out of a desire to demonstrate to the community that Union College could be part of a city rich in resources for the less fortunate. The goal was to paint 100 houses during the 10 years prior to the college's centennial.

One day each year classes are canceled. Students, faculty, and staff spend the day painting houses owned by the elderly, handicapped, or others physically unable to care for their own homes. No rental properties are painted, and only homes 30 or more years old are eligible for the project.

At first, the government sponsored the purchase of paint, but the federally funded program soon discontinued. The college then incorporated the cost into

***The logistics of
preparing for an event
like BRUSH day are
mindboggling.***

its own budget. However, Iowa Paint Company now provides paint at cost to show their appreciation of the project.

The logistics of preparing for such an event are mind-boggling. Rich Carlson, campus chaplain and director of the project for the past eight years, manages

to assemble all the materials, select the homes for painting, and motivate everyone on campus. His personal enthusiasm for community service provides the spark that guarantees success.

Pastor Rich says, "Ten years is a long time to maintain enthusiasm for the same project, and I am continually amazed at the response of students and staff alike." Students are not required to take part. Since classes are canceled, they could enjoy a free day. However, probably two-thirds of the student body and an equal proportion of the faculty and staff participate willingly. They cherish the personal satisfaction of helping those in need.

The BRUSH program has received excellent coverage in the city newspapers both before and after the event. It has also earned a Lincoln Community Service Award.

The project is almost completed. On August 23, 1990, seven homes were painted, leaving only two for centennial celebration time. Then the goal of 100 homes will be reached!

Although the most prominent, BRUSH is just one of many community service efforts at Union College. Here are several other exciting projects:

- SPARK (Special People Are Reaching Kids) is a student-organized story hour on Sabbath afternoon at the Good Neighbor Center (the Adventist welfare organization) in Lincoln. Each week students reach out to children from the less-fortunate families in the area.

- UNION FOR KIDS is the college's version of a big brother/big sister program. Students team up with children from low income or single parent families to provide regular group and individual activities. According to John Larson, a past director, the group seeks "to bring the kids companionship and to

Melody Becker, a 1989 Union College graduate and student volunteer for the Adventist Development and Relief Agency, poses with her new friends in the Philippines.

show them that Christianity can be fun." A list of names is provided by the Good Neighbor Center and P.A.S.S. (Parent Aide Support Service). Students select their little brothers or sisters from these names. Says Suzanne Beranek, a Union student, "I'm not a counselor for my little sister, but a friend."

• **THE GREAT UC GIVEAWAY** last year featured a four-part activity of giving and sharing. Each day during the week prior to the Christmas holidays a box was placed in the lobby of the administration building, and items or cash were collected for specific needs. First came the toy box, then "undercover" (underwear for street people and others), "cover-up" (coats, gloves, and other warm clothing), and finally food boxes for Christmas dinners. All items

***For five years
students of Union
College have caught
the vision of service
and have made a
significant difference
in the work of a
pastor in Brazil.***

were divided between the Good Neighbor Center and the People's City Mission.

• **THE COMMUNITY HEALTH**

NURSING CLASS requires students to donate 45 hours to community service. They may select any of the volunteer activities. According to the instructor, this program was set up to help "students learn to be givers in a society rather than just takers." If this were just a class assignment, the participation would not be remarkable. However, many students go beyond the required hours. They enjoy reaching out to many segments of the community.

• **THE OPEN DOOR FELLOWSHIP** is a church established and operated by Union College students in cooperation with the College View church. Established in the northwest section of the city, where no other Adventist church exists, it provides opportunity for pastoral experience. Money has been raised

Student volunteers prepare a house for painting during Union College's annual BRUSH day.

Brazillans show their appreciation to Union College students for their monthly offering.

for a plot of land for a church; and building will begin soon.

● **BRAZIL OFFERING PROJECT.** A little farther from the Lincoln community, Union College students are also having a significant impact. For the past two summers students have actively participated in dark county evangelism. The Minnesota, Rocky Mountain, and Iowa-Missouri Conferences have aided students in reviving or beginning Adventist work in several areas.

The Brazil Offering project, however, has been as inspiring or perhaps even more so, than the BRUSH project. Some time ago Pastor Rich first became aware of tremendous needs in Brazil, where one pastor had 50 churches in his charge. He proposed to the students that they make this pastor and his work their focus for Sabbath school offerings. The students' acceptance of the challenge produced a 400 percent increase in offerings. Not

once has the monthly goal failed to be reached. On the first Sabbath of the month the students give \$100 or more, and this amount is matched by an interested alumnus. The regular world mission offering is collected on the other Sabbaths of the month.

The pastor being supported by the project regularly keeps in touch with Pastor Rich and the students, by sending letters and pictures. During this year's homecoming, he came from Sao Paulo to personally thank the students for their faithfulness. He now has five Bible workers helping him.

For five years students of Union College have caught the vision of service and have made a significant difference in the work of this Brazilian pastor. Some are so committed that they bring in their offerings beforehand if they plan to leave town on the weekend when the offering is taken! The giving has been so

generous that the overflow has provided funds to distribute *Steps to Christ* in Lincoln homes. In addition, some funds were sent to East Germany to purchase Bibles.

Whether on campus, reaching out to the community, or being involved in overseas efforts, Union College students have caught the meaning of service as symbolized by the Golden Cords displayed prominently in the administration building. The key to their motivation may be a dynamic campus chaplain, or the example of faculty, staff, and peers. Or perhaps they are motivated by the excitement generated by successful programs. However, they may simply be a fine example of today's Adventist youth—caring and involved! □

Lilya Wagner is Vice-President for Institutional Advancement at Union College, Lincoln, Nebraska.