Service & Thanks

“The best way to find yourself is to lose yourself in the service of others.”

— Mahatma Gandhi
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“...8, 9, 10, ready or not here I come!” I shout from across the lawn.

I peek around the tree, but no one is there. I creep around the side of the building, but no one is there. I sneak around the slide, but no one is there. I tap my foot against the grass, thinking about where she is hiding. Making my way slowly and carefully across the yard, I notice a yellow shirt poking out from behind the tricycle.

“Found you!” I yell as I reach behind the tricycle and tag the little girl. She giggles and runs across the yard, smiling from ear to ear.

Several weeks ago, I volunteered for an activity called “Playing with Kids,” in which I spent a few hours at Hope Haven playing with children. I played, colored, and gave “piggy-back” rides to many children from the ages of two to eleven. Like many other service events, it was a very humbling experience.

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The month of November, or the month for giving thanks, is upon us. We must give thanks to the world in which we live and the people that surround us.

People volunteer to help others or serve those in need in order to give thanks to their community. Volunteering benefits the volunteer and the organization being helped. Living in a homey community like Northern Illinois University gives reason for many students to give back to their community. However, many instances occur when people are unaware of the ways in which they can give back to their community.

For those stuck in this situation, the problem can be easily solved. From collecting canned food, to donating blood, to spending time with animals at the local animal shelter, opportunities to volunteer and show apprec-
National Service Week

By Britta Rodenbeck

National Service Week for service fraternity Alpha Phi Omega is quickly approaching! The first week of November, expect to see volunteers from the organization walking around campus, encouraging "Respect for Self," this year's theme. There will be two service events this year performed by Eta chapter including a Free Hug Day and a Recycling Campus Cleanup. On Monday, November 4, 2013, members of APO will be handing out free hugs to students on campus in addition to handing out pamphlets, giving students tips on respect for self. Then on Thursday, November 7, 2013, members will be cleaning up campus, separating the recycling from the garbage. We look forward to seeing you around campus and helping everyone to foster respect for self.
Winter is coming. Along with winter, the cold days and nights are starting to creep upon us. Although winter is not here yet, we have begun to feel its nearby presence as the cold weather is starting to affect our surroundings. Working outside in these conditions can cause health issues to arise, especially in the case of our senior citizens. Thankfully, NIU students, staff, and faculty have found a way to help this very important (and caring) population. Rake Across DeKalb sends volunteers from the NIU community into the DeKalb community to assist area residents with lawn clean-up in preparation for winter. Rake Across DeKalb has become one of the biggest service events NIU puts together every year, allowing all student organizations to be part of it. One organization that participated in this initiative was the Adela de la Torre Honor Society (ATHS). ATHS had two groups of five students each, who volunteered for this cause. The first group of students was consisted of Jazmine Cerritos, Griselda Rodriguez, Diana Lopez, Lorena Rosiles, and Christian Villalobos (as seen in the photo below). This group of students provided assistance to an elderly woman by cleaning her garden and raking leaves. They had a very rewarding experience helping this elderly lady, and have since remained in contact with her.

The second group of ATHS students was composed of Benito Martinez, Isabel Contreras, Michelle Rodriguez, Luis Lopez, and Elaine Rodriguez (as seen in the following picture). This group of students helped out the community by going door to door and offering DeKalb residents assistance with lawn clean-up. This group was able help two residents, both of which were very grateful for the team’s efforts.
The second installment of the University Honors Maibach Lecture Series was held on October 3rd. NIU alumnus Michael Maibach, the former vice president of government affairs at Intel Corporation, endowed this annual program in 2012. The keynote speaker for this lecture was Chris Caine, a long time friend of Maibach’s. Caine was the former IBM executive and is now president of the Center for Global Enterprise and president and founder of Mercator XXI. Caine’s lecture and series of roundtable discussions was titled “America as a Commercial Republic.” Throughout the day, Caine focused his comments on the future of American consumerism and economic development, reminding students to pay particular attention to the roles and ethics required of both the individual and corporations. Maibach won last year’s outstanding Alumni Award, and has showed continual support to the University Honors Program and NIU via the Maibach Scholar’s and the Lecture Series. Maibach attended the event in an ongoing show of support for University Honors and NIU. Caine spoke throughout the day about the need for strong leaders, and that is one of the many goals the University Honors Program hopes to achieve for its Honors students. Caine said, “An integral question to ask yourself when moving forward is: ‘Who are you?’ Having a sense of your own set of values and a true north for the direction you
On Thursday October 17, a group of honors students visited Hope Haven to celebrate the birthday of a very special little boy. Every month, members of the Northern Illinois University Honors Program aim to bring cheer to the lives of DeKalb County area youth (ages 1-18), that are designated as “in need,” through the donation of birthday boxes. We decorate, serve cake, and bring gifts for the children celebrating birthdays that month. Our goal is to show our support in the community and more importantly, to give the kids an exciting, memorable birthday. Although this was my first birthday box experience, I can definitely say that it will not be my last! An incredible energy and tangible sense of joy filled the entire room. Playing with the children was a blast and gave students the opportunity to momentarily escape from the stress of midterms. The entire event was very rewarding and everyone involved had an amazing time.
I was just finishing a terrible lab report write up when I remembered that I had to do something else for the following day. I had to do something so magnificent that nobody would even believe I was really going to do it. No, I am not talking about jumping off the Eifel Tower and into a lake of potato cake. No, I am talking about jumping into a thing called an Eifel Towel. The Eifel Towel is known for its peakiness and for its ability to withstand multiple pogo jumps. Needless to say, many people would be excited for this.

Yet, after some time many people grew to disdain the Eifel Towel. I was so engrossed with it that I started to neglect all of my friends and family. So, I decided to give back to the community. Not in one of those Mother Theresa ways. No. First, I had McDonald's and then I decided to give my half-eaten hamburger to a pug named Ming Ling. The pug and I skipped down Michigan Avenue while singing I'll Make a Man Out of You.

And get this. The pug actually turned into a man! Yes! Like in the fairy tale with the princess and the frog where the frog turns into a prince, the pug turned into a man. It turns out all you need to do for this to happen is sing I'll Make a Man Out of You. Damn. I began wondering if this would work on tests or homework. So on my next Spanish test, I sang out loud, "I'll make an A out of you!" I ended up getting kicked out of the class and failing the test. It did not work. I began wondering why the pug turned into a man in the first place, so I began a kickstarter account to try to raise money for the study of the song "I'll Make a Man Out of You" on pugs.

Nutella. That was the key. Heavenly Nutella. When Ming Ling and I were frolicking down the street, he slipped in a pile of Nutella and transformed into a man. It's like a magical mushroom, except not at all. However, I failed to mention this to all the major world news stations, and instead took the cash and fame for myself. In the mean time, I allowed Ming Ling to practice pogo sticking. He attempted an Eifel Towel, but ate a piece of moldy bread instead. This quickly turned him back into a pug and then I decided to run a 1.5 mile pogo-thon because I felt like it. Who says you can't wear a shirt with a banana cat when you're pogoing?

The President says so, that's who. Mr. President of the pogo pug society of America made it very clear that he will only allow pogoers to wear shirts with pugs on them. No cats. No bananas. Just pugs. But as I was being prosecuted by Mr. President, I found a clause in the contract we all signed to on the first day. It said that if the shirt was as random as it could possibly be, it would be ok to wear once a year. Now all I needed was proof that I had not worn this shirt any other time in the previous year. I proved this by showing pictures of myself wearing nothing but clothes for every day of the previous year. I showed that these were the only clothes that I had worn by invoking principles of integration onto the data. I had given the end points, which were the pictures of all of the clothes that I had worn. The continuity of the data showed that to change from one pair of clothes to the other, I had to have switched between the clothes. This in fact proves nothing, but the Prez was dumb enough to believe it, so I got away with it.

In every community there are outliers and pugnacious deviants. But, I still pug you and I barely even know you. Remember to not text and drive because I need my pogo buddies alive.

Truck yeah. Over and out.
Hey! Members of the honors program, do you know the honors offices like the back of your hand? Would you be able to navigate them, blind folded? Would you trust a fellow honors student to guide you, to tell you which direction to walk, what chair to sit in… what desk to crawl under? Yes, in one of the most recent “floor wars” activities, the Honors Student Association (HSA) hosted a blindfolded obstacle race.

Exciting, huh!? HSA president, Chris Lloyd, holds credit to planning the “obstacle course”. Next time you look around the Honor’s program offices, imagine turning a corner with your eyes covered. For those of you that are members of HSA as well as those that aren’t, keep your eyes out
The month of November brings with it many things. The cool crisp weather, tempting fall aromas, crunching leaves, and most importantly, the inevitable need to feel thankful for everything around us are all strongly associated with the “month of thanks.”

Granted, I am thankful for all of the corny and customary gifts life gives us, but I am also grateful for my motivation to serve others. Volunteering has shaped my life in more ways than I can fathom, and I have no doubt that it has legitimately shaped me into the person I am today. Just this year, I volunteered my time to venture into the city for the annual Chicago Marathon.

Once I arrived, I witnessed the unimaginable. Over 50,000 people gathered into the same place with the common purpose to finish a race, conquer a goal, or to motivate others. Coming from a rural area with a graduating class of less than 200 people, this scene was miraculous.

Although so many people came out to the event, one participant of the race truly stuck out to me. A Venezuelan man, Maikel Melamed, endured the 26.2-mile trek through Chicago to complete the marathon while simultaneously fighting to win his battle with muscular dystrophy. After pushing through the streets for nearly 17 hours, Melamed reached the finish line and proved to himself and the world that our dreams are never impossible.

Even at our worst, the world offers so much to be grateful for, and Melamed is a perfect example of this. Our outlook on life is the only true contender for our happiness. By giving back to others, your own blessings become more apparent. As John Bunyan once said, “You have not lived today until you have done something for someone who can never repay you.”