



RAY CARSON

Answering to the Ultimate Authority: PBA Workshop leaders Richard Velten, Kim Warner, Hannah Peter, Heather Crimmins, and Andy Weatherill make sure their community service work is pleasing to not only college administrators, but also the true head of their program — God Himself.

All in a Day's Workshop

Palm Beach Atlantic students answer the call

By Risa G. Merl

Some combinations are fundamental to college life. Beer and pizza. Finals and cramming. Work and worship.

Though the last combination might seem a little unusual to the average college student, it's one that's second nature to students at the Christian college of **Palm Beach Atlantic University**.

Work + Worship = Workshop

PBA requires its students to participate in 45 hours of community service during each academic year. While many schools simply require service hours, PBA has gone further by creating Workshop, a comprehensive leadership program that provides students with the projects they need to complete their service requirements. This successful service program—which has logged more than one million hours of community service—enriches students' spiritual lives while serving the surrounding area.

Workshop's job is to make completing the required hours not only easy but also enjoyable. "Our challenge is to make community service not a drudgery or something they have to do but to make it rewarding or beneficial to the students," says Debbie Moody, Workshop director. PBA relies on the Workshop student

leaders to surmount this challenge—they're the ones responsible for making each student's goal of completing 45 service hours a reality. Each year, 20 student volunteers become group leaders for Workshop, choosing which projects they want to do, then organizing the entire project and recruiting the manpower to make it happen. "We're able to provide the students not only with service hours, but we also provide a way for them to meet other students," says Hannah Peter, a senior serving her second year as a group leader.

Motivation from Above

Different things motivate different leadership groups. A common motivation for the student leader, or the student volunteer, is the chance to gain resume bullets while also serving the community. Student leaders in the Workshop program, however, answer to an authority higher than their own ambitions. "We're doing Workshop so we can put our hearts and minds to something higher than ourselves," says Richard Velten, 2004 graduate and alumni group leader.

Heather Crimmins says that the fact that Workshop is a faith-based program is what sets it apart from other service organizations out there. "Any number of schools might have service organizations, but our university has Workshop because

the school firmly believes that God commands us to go out and serve the world, to help people and to meet needs," says Crimmins, junior and two-year Workshop veteran.

Andy Weatherill, 2004 alumnus and group leader, notes that the leadership skills used in Workshop are similar to those that should be used by any other leadership group. "You use the same skills, but you keep in mind that you are, in fact, representing Christ in your attitude and how you treat others," he says. "We should also keep in mind that God holds teachers and leaders to a higher accountability because they influence others." Senior Kimberly Warner explains that who she is as a Christian, not just a group leader, means she better walk the walk. "Because of being a Christian and trying to exemplify Christ in my life, I have felt many times that as a leader I need to be accepting and understanding of other people's differences and ideas, even when they do not necessarily match up with mine," Warner says.

Leading and Learning

Each group leader has to figure out the answer to the big question: how do I successfully lead a group of my own peers?

"You have to get everyone to do everything at the same time, and some of the students aren't too excited," Peter says. "As a leader, it's very important for us to know what we're doing and then guide and direct the students." Peter had to learn how to lead groups of her peers while also getting them interested in the projects they were doing. She overcame this initial difficulty with one word: excitement. "It's just being excited about the project, because excitement leads people. If you

like what you're doing, and you're just excited about whatever it is, people will follow that," she says. "The main thing is knowing what I'm doing and liking it and getting the students to like it with me."

Where Peter leads by excitement, Velten leads by example. All of the Workshop team members are responsible for leading the students, but the alumni group leaders also have to train and lead the new group leaders that join the program each year. "I teach the students by example," Velten says. He describes his approach to leading new team members as being more active than verbal. "You work together so they get an understanding for the position. You don't tell them what to do; they want to see it more than hear it," he says.

Making Workshop Work

Doing the work of Jesus is not without its challenges. But sometimes, the most difficult challenges create the best leaders. The Workshop group leaders' leadership skills have been put to the test during their time with the program, but they've learned to overcome each obstacle and strengthened their leadership skills in the process.

Crimmins overcame her fears of public speaking in order to become the skilled Workshop leader that she is today. "I'm not ordinarily the type of person who likes to be in front of people giving orders, but when you're the one leading the project, you have to step up and say what needs to be done and how it's going to be done," she says. "Learning how to do this has definitely given me more confidence in any kind of leadership position."

Warner had to learn to delegate or else be overwhelmed by the work. "I'm someone who has a hard time telling people what to do. If I can do it, I don't ask for help," she says.

Peter learned how to hone her organizational skills—a must for any group leader. "My biggest challenge is learning how to organize my day so I get everything done," she says. She's faced the challenge of getting in touch with the agencies and organizations that her group will be working with, since they often return her calls when she's in class, and agencies frequently are closed by the time she gets out. She's had to figure out how to manage her time by making a call in between classes or getting in touch with the organizations in other ways. "I definitely learned self-discipline and time management through Workshop," Peter says.

Velten also nurtured another very important leadership skill. "I learned flexibility," he says. "Sometimes, a curveball gets thrown at you. Having to manage the project after the curveball has been thrown at you is a real challenge."

The skill Weatherill improved on is one many group leaders tend to overlook—reflection. "It's important to look back at the end of the day to see what had occurred and assess what I did or didn't do

correctly. Also, I listen to the participants' feedback. Finally, I make the proper adjustments," he says.

Leading as One

The Workshop group not only strives to work as a team but also tries to instill a sense of unity in the students who participate in the service projects. When students see the cooperation between group leaders, they also become motivated to work together. "When the leaders show unity, and then the students show unity, that's a great thing that happens in Workshop," Velten says.

More than the divine inspires group leaders to do their work—they also inspire one another. Velten says Weatherill inspired him to do some of his best work in the program. "Andy's been an example to me. He's a perfect example of how Workshop should be, in terms of bringing Christ into the whole scenario," he says. "He leads the project meetings and brings out prayer and scripture every day." A major goal of Workshop is to create a bigger and stronger community, and Velten also praises Weatherill for accomplishing this. "He emphasizes that goal through his example and through his leadership," Velten says.

Weatherill is humble about Velten's praises. "I feel I've grown in the last couple of years," he says, "but I have a long way to go still." He believes the makings of a great leader are not something he or anyone else is born with but something people grow into. "Your passion as a leader should encourage and motivate people to help you in your vision," he says. "They [leaders] have the ability to empower people. After all, what's a leader without followers?"

Weatherill believes that leaders also should be able to follow and have a mentor to lead them. "We should choose a mentor who reflects our own belief system. We're influenced highly by whom we look up to and take favor in," he says.

A Changing Perspective

Workshop hasn't just brought awareness to the group leaders. The program generates awareness in the students who participate in the projects, changing their perspectives on community service. Many of the students who first come out to participate aren't thrilled about the idea of mandatory community service and can't understand how it can be true community service if it's a requirement.

If this is the case, how can Workshop survive and keep attracting new leaders every year? "More often than not, after doing a project, people find they enjoy it so much more than they expected," Crimmins says. "It's amazing how Workshop forces you to be aware. Anyone who goes to work on these projects, whether they want to be there or not...it touches everyone's hearts."

"It's always interesting to watch the students change their perspectives," Peter

says. "The freshmen are always the most resistant. But to watch them change! Freshmen aren't freshmen forever, and the next year, the same people come back who didn't want to participate, and their viewpoints are completely changed." After each project, group leaders do a debriefing with their student participants. The group leaders enjoy hearing what the students have to say about what they've learned. "It's usually along the lines of, 'I didn't know somebody was that poor,' or just little things they've picked up," Peter says. "It's amazing just watching their eyes open like that."

Weatherill is impressed by the motivation put forth by Workshop's student participants. "I have learned when you have a group of motivated college students, not much can stop them," he says. "These students never fail to amaze me in their abilities and heart to get something done. And not just to get it done, but to do it to the best of their abilities."

The Greater Good

The program proves that a good tree will bear good fruit. Workshop contributed 102,950 service hours last year alone. On Martin Luther King Day 2004, over 200 students participated in 11 projects, ranging from tutoring children of traveling carnival workers to giving the day off to volunteers at a soup kitchen by cooking for 300 people. But these are all minor accomplishments compared to the loftier goals of leaders involved in the program.

"The paint we put on the houses and the meals we serve; it's all so temporary. My goal is to get the job done, but more than that, it's to leave that impression on the people we help that somebody loves you and cares for you," Peter says. "And it's because I worship God. Because He loves you, I love you."

Velten is also determined in his own quest to glorify God. "For me, it's not just about being content in what I do in service—it's more about what God's doing," he says. "During a project, the day goes by so fast, and we look back on a project and say, 'Wow. God did this.' And it's just amazing because I'm satisfied through Him—by God doing His work through me because I know I couldn't do it on my own."

Crimmins is pleased with the leadership skills she's developed and the great experience she's had with Workshop. "But the only reason we really do it is completely for God. This is all about serving Him," she says. "That's what will carry on with us. My goal is to serve God with my life and with everything I do, and this is just one aspect of that."

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