

Hydra



Civic Engagement At and Beyond Southwestern

SU Students Walk for Peace, Youth Promise Act in Austin

By Paige Menking

“Break the Silence! Stop Youth Violence!”

It's not the typical cheer you hear in downtown Austin on UT Game Day. But last Saturday amidst thousands of burnt orange football fans, over 100 student and adult peace activists marched from the Texas Capitol to the Austin City Hall in support of peace in general but specifically pushing for the passage of the Youth Promise Act H.R. 1604 in the U.S. House of Representatives.

“It was a definite success,” Martin Fergus, SU Senior and leader in the

National Student Peace Alliance, said. “I think everyone took away a taste of civic engagement and community empowerment first hand.”

The march, now in its third year, was timed to coincide with the UN's International Peace Day, September 21. The last two marches were organized by the Peace Alliance but this year they had too much else on their calendar.

“We thought the walk still needed to happen,” Shireen Tabrizi, SPA co-president said. “And we're so happy it was such a success!”

Since it's inaugural year, the walk has grown exponentially, with 25

marchers the first year, around 60 last year and nearly 115 this year.

Alongside a police escort, the marchers walked from the Texas State Capitol to the Austin City Hall where they heard speeches by various activists

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Members of SEAK pose along with other environmentalists from the around the South at SPROG, the Sierra Student Coalition's summer activist training program.

SEAKers Attend Activist Boot, err, *Summer Camp*

By Alexis Kropf

Sprog?

I heard this strange word in high school through an environmentally-minded sister.

I heard it again during SEAK meetings at Southwestern.

But now this funny word has come to change my outlook on civic engagement and activism forever.

Sprog, The Sierra Student Coalition's Summer **PROG**ram, is a series of camps held across the country for high school and college environmentalists.

Seven SU SEAKERS attended Texas SPROG, including Julia Von Alexander, Allen Smith, Kate Castles, Katie Gibson, Harrison Glaser and Kylie LeBlanc.

It was held in McKinney Falls Park south of Austin and seemed like any other summer camp complete with bare bunks, a rustic eating hall, camp fire socialization, and scheduled hikes and communion with nature. However, this camp diverged from its typical summer-camp cousins in a number of important ways.

The program consists of various trainings about grassroots organizing, interspersed with fun and informative activities. The trainings covered diverse outreach strategies with a special focus on running an effective organization and campaigns.

Following interactive lectures led by

environmental leaders and former "Sprogers" from around the South, current attendees work collaboratively to practice meeting with various officials, tabling on campuses, organizing volunteers, and hosting events consistent with the major goals of an organization.

In between these intense sessions, students exchanged ideas and experiences concerning their own campuses.

This intense week of learning about leadership skills and cogent campaigns culminated in a simulation. Groups representing the various interests of a small town's population, from coal workers to college students to electricians, ran campaigns to reach their goals.

In addition to skills trainings, a series of speakers from different organizations taught Sprogers about the variety of ways to get involved during and beyond college. Representatives of Summer of Solutions, an intensive volunteer program for college students, gave Sprogers another potential avenue for engagement during the summer through community organizing projects focused in lower income communities.

Public Citizen, a political advocacy group promoting social equality and environment justice, also presented, informing students about the proliferation of coal-fired power plants across Texas.

getting involved on campus

EBONY

This semester EBONY is continuing their "A Time to Heal" project, which is in partnership with Baylor Medical and the LINKS, Inc. The project aims to raise money to bring educational resources regarding HIV/AIDS to the residents of Maseru, Lesotho and to send two students to Lesotho to work in the Maseru clinic this coming summer. EBONY will be hosting a variety of fundraisers for this project including Cupid Shuffle next semester.

Colleges Against Cancer

CAC's plans for this year involve repeating past events like Relay for Life, Paint the Campus Pink and selling "I Heart Boobs" shirts. They also hope to start up new events like the Fruit Fiesta, an educational event where they gave out free food, distributed information on the showcased fruits and talked about how eating a balanced healthy diet can help prevent and fight cancer. They also plan to recognize the Great American Smokeout in November for Lung Cancer Awareness.

Despite the funny name, Southwestern Sprogers emerged from this camp enlightened and energized, confident in our ability to create change while being effective, thoughtful, and conciliatory activists.

Health Care, Societal Norms In Need of Fundamental Reforms

by Dr. Dan Hilliard

Dr. Dan Hilliard is a professor emeritus at Southwestern who taught medical sociology for 30 years. He wrote this article in response to a letter to the editor printed in the Williamson County Sun about the "injustice of forcing 100% of Americans to pay for the health care of 20% of Americans." This letter was printed in the September 3 Issue of the Sun and is reprinted here with minor edits.

In "Fixing a 20 Percent Problem." (Williamson County Sun, August 26, 2009), Earl Watson argues a point echoed by many conservatives in the recent health care debates, that since a majority of Americans are pleased with their existing doctors and insurance coverage, we should avoid a major overhaul of the health care financing system in favor of more modest reforms. While I would support many of the reforms they advocate, I want to make a case, on both practical and moral grounds, for more fundamental reform of systemic issues.

As a matter of full disclosure, I should report that I am lucky to have health insurance through my former employer, I am happy with my primary care physician, and I have been pleased with the specialists I have had access to through

my medical plan. So, my concerns about our health care system are not rooted in personal tragedy, though like many Americans who have insurance I still worry about future medical debt. (Medical debt is the leading cause of personal bankruptcy in the United States today.)

My concerns about our health care system instead derive from my years of studying that system as a

sociologist who, in the words of Texas-born C. Wright Mills, attempts to see the connection between "personal troubles" and "public issues."

Ultimately, I want to argue that the problems of our health care system are not just "personal troubles" for the 20% (Mr. Watson's number – I suspect it is considerably higher) who don't get the care they need or are otherwise dissatisfied with the system; instead, they should be viewed as "public issues" that affect us all.

First, however, I would like to address common a couple of current common misconceptions, echoed by Mr. Watson.

“ In recent decades, our ideas about citizenship here in the United States have emphasized individual rights but have largely ignored collective responsibilities ”

First, that of Obama's support for a single-payment health system. Neither during his campaign for the Democratic Party nomination, nor during the general election campaign, nor since he has been in the White House has President Obama ever advocated a single-payer plan. He and his staff have advocated a public option to stand along side existing private health insurance plans. In recent days, he

has said that the public option is not an essential feature of his health care reform package, and he has repeatedly said that no individuals who are happy with their current doctors and insurance company will have to change. As Nobel laureate Paul Krugman has recently pointed out, what President Obama is proposing is much more like Swiss health care than the British National Health Service.

Mr. Watson also states, "While our health care system in America is expensive, it is the best health care system anywhere in the world." Most

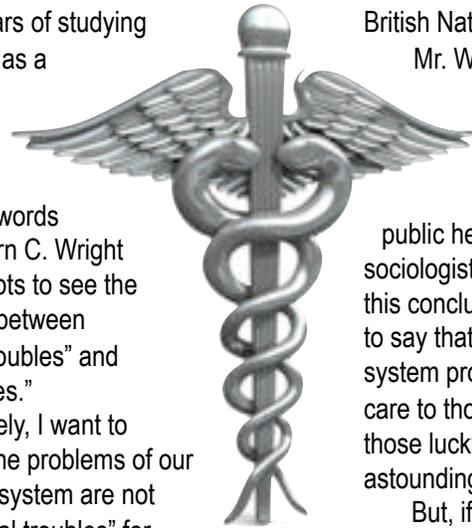
public health experts and medical sociologists would strongly disagree with this conclusion. It would be more accurate to say that the American health care system provides technologically advanced care to those who can afford it, and that those lucky recipients benefit from astounding curative interventions.

But, if we look at the larger picture and compare ourselves with other advanced industrial nations, ours is clearly not the "best" health care system in the world – not even close! As measured by percent of GDP devoted to health, we spend about double what most leading industrial nations spend. So our health care is, indeed, expensive. But we are not getting the best "bang for our buck." If we compare basic measures of the health of populations, such as life expectancy at birth or infant mortality rate, the U.S. ranks very near the bottom of the highly industrial nations. If our system were the best in the world, we should rank at or very near the top.

This leads to the first of my arguments about why health care should be conceptualized as a "public issue" of concern to us all. As a practical matter, our current system is unsustainable. It is an economic drain on businesses that provide group health insurance to employees. It is a source of anxiety and debt to families.

As the "baby boomer" generation of which I am a member becomes Medicare

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Health Care Facts

~ Nearly 46 million Americans, or 18 percent of the population under the age of 65, were without health insurance in 2007

~ 85% of the uninsured are native or naturalized citizens.

~ Over 8 in 10 uninsured people come from working families

~ Controlling for age, race, sex, and income, uninsured cancer patients are 1.6 times more likely than insured patients to die within five years of diagnosis.

Compiled from the National Coalition on Healthcare

SU Welcomes Mary Gonzalez, Making Diversity, Activism a Priority

By Paige Menking

This semester, SU is welcoming Mary Gonzalez, the new assistant dean of student multicultural affairs, a position that has been vacant for some time.

"We're really glad to see her here but it's definitely about time," said Siobahn Cooke, president of ALLIES.

The long vacancy provided many opportunities for Mary to develop a framework that is reflective of her social justice background, as it left her with a sort of blank slate.

Gonzalez definitely brings a wide range of experience and passions to help

" I want to have these conversations about identity, about intersections. Because you change the world through individual changes, by changing yourself "

with just that. She's been active in student organizing, legislative policy and university administration. But she feels the training she's found most useful is that of her life.

"I've prepared for this type of work by living it. I'm a queer brown Latina Chicana from the border - I learned social justice for survival," she said. "I've had to learn to

navigate the systems of oppression."

Gonzalez attended UT Austin for her undergrad in Mexican American Studies and History and earned a masters in liberal arts with a concentration in Social Justice from St. Edward's.

While a student, Gonzalez was very active in student organizing, reestablishing the UT chapter of LULAC and serving as the Co-Director of the Latino Leadership Council, as well as working on LGBTQ issues and being involved in Kappa Delta Chi, a Latina Service Sorority.

In addition to student organizing, Gonzalez has been active in governmental policy, working with Texas State Representatives Paul Moreno and Richard Raymond.

Most recently, Gonzalez served as the Program Coordinator in the Multicultural Information Center at UT.

Of all of these mediums of affecting change, Gonzalez prefers working directly with students.

"I wanted to move past politics. It just wasn't touching what I want to touch," she said. "I want to focus on the ripple effect. Higher education can promote change by creating more awareness in students. It starts here, then they graduate and touch

the people they meet for the rest of their lives."

Gonzalez has hit the ground running in her new position. She's already organized and led a retreat with the organizations in the Multicultural Coordinating Council (comprised of: SU Native, Latinos Unidos, A.S.I.A. Club, Ebony and Allies).

"I'm excited about the revitalized MCC," Cooke said. "I think it will serve as a reminder of our interseccionalities. ALLIES isn't just for queers, you know? It's good to share about our work and to hear what other people are doing."

Gonzalez is also planning on developing and giving workshops on diversity and social justice to faculty, staff and student groups in order to create more campus consciousness of these issues.

"I like higher education because they're such formative years. Now is the time that students find themselves. I want to have these conversations about identity, about philosophical issues, about intersections," she said. "Because you change the world through individual changes. You change the world by changing yourself."

Student Learns Unexpected Lessons During Maymester in Jamaica



Photo by Lisa Leninger

By Matt Kamas

Over the summer, I went with seven other Southwestern students to Lucea, Jamaica for a service learning Maymester. Over nineteen days, we lived with host families and had the opportunity to visit and observe in a variety of schools. We also participated in a variety of seminars and cultural events, which gave us important insight to aid participant observation based research.

Like many of the Western imperialists and tourists before me, I went to Jamaica with the intent to take what I wanted and needed. While my intentions seemed more noble than the European colonizers of old, my plans for the trip were entirely based on what I could learn and how this would give me insight in the future.

I had no idea that the most valuable parts of my trip would not be absorbing the

Jamaican culture for analysis.

In addition to our daily visits to the schools scattered across Lucea, we had the opportunity to visit Hanover Parish Infirmary, which was a facility dedicated to the long term care of residents who were unable to care for themselves for whatever reason.

Although not a fundamental part of our May Terms curriculum, our afternoon trips to the infirmary became the highlight of my day. The memorable part was not those things exchanged, candy and snacks, magazines, clothes, addresses, and promises to write, or the satisfaction of helping one's neighbor.

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"Unexpected" --- Continued from p 4

What stood out the most were the connections with people, like Rebecca Mitchell, whose diabetes had caused the loss of her legs; the moments when I was able to bond with my new friends despite the age difference or the overflowing bed pans.

At these times we both knew that each was important to the other and such realizations brought peace and resilience. We all knew that these relationships were as temporary as sunny skies that would soon be engulfed in afternoon rain showers, but for those few hours in the



SU Junior speaks about violence and the GLBT community. Photo by Kate Steinbach

waning of the afternoon they were as real and beautiful as anything I have experienced.

It was not the lessons learned or the needs met, but the instances of closeness that made my abbreviated stay in Lucea special, and it is these moments that continue to give our lives meaning.

"SU Students" --- Continued from p 1
involved in different aspects of peaceful-social justice movements.

Fergus spoke about the specific purpose of the walk -the Youth Promise Act - and about instilling a culture of peace in the US.

Quentin Grief, SU Junior and leader of ALLIES, talked about sexual violence in a moving speech about violence directed at the GLBT community.

SU Junior Paige Menking spoke about environmental justice and racism and the right of all people to have equal access to natural resources, regardless of race, class or location.

And John Woods, graduate student at UT, spoke about Students for Gun Free Schools in Texas and why it is important to cultivate peace at home in order to prevent the exportation of war.

After such a success, SPA has no

intentions of letting the walk fall by the wayside next year.

"Sarah Wiggins (the other co-



National SPA leader and SU Senior Martin Fergus explains the Youth Promise Act. Photo by Kate Steinbach

president of SPA) and I were talking," Tabrizi said, "and we think we can double it again next year if we take more advantage of Austin activist circles"

Fergus agrees, emphasizing the power of actions like this to empower students for the movement.

"I want everyone to know that it is by virtue of our insanity to change the world," Fergus said, "that we have the ability to reach out and strive for the impossible."



Austin and SU students and community members gather for a group picture before they walk to the Austin City Hall in support of The Youth Promise Act, HR 1604. Around 115 people attended, nearly double that of last year's march. Photo by Kate Steinbach

SMaRT -- The (Fun) Science of Mentoring, After School Programs

By Anna Frankel

On the phone she's a quiet, shy girl who responds with one-word answers.

"What do you like about science?" I ask.

"Animals."

"What is your favorite kind of animal?" I prod.

"Puppies."

"What cool science experiments have you done at school?" I beg for an explanation.

"Volcanoes."

I sigh. What have I gotten myself into?

But before I know it three weeks have passed and my shy, third grade "SMaRTie" AJ was boldly pouring agar into Petri dishes, courageously swabbing the cheeks of dogs and confidently telling the group about our project.

Like many new and exciting things in life, it started with a phone call, then an unnerving, but stimulating first meeting. And suddenly I realized that I had discovered the harmony of science and civic engagement, and my Monday

afternoons became an incredible source of highly anticipated adventure.

As it turns out, to an elementary aged student there is nothing innately cooler than a college kid, especially when they come loaded with juice, cookies and lab materials. For this group of young students the Science and Math Achiever Teams (SMaRT) is an outlet for their creative minds, exercise for their inquiring brains and an introduction to the large world of science.

At Southwestern University, college students continue the SMaRT program as a means to combat our deteriorating science education and rejuvenate young students about inquiry based learning.

Not only is there hope for the minds of young students to further develop within science and math, but we also strive to keep our youth safe and excelling in every area of their life.

According to a report investigating the increased violence of youth nationwide, it was found that on average children spend

20 to 25 hours per week after school without any form of parental supervision. This time is known as an "after-school gap" and in many cases is a contributing reason why the youth violence rate has increased.

Research has found that teens who do not participate in after school programs are nearly three times more likely to skip class at school than teens who did.

The unsupervised down time that many families say they cannot get around is leading to poor choices and negative effects on our young people, yet the blame cannot be placed on one single party.

A major deterrent for parents considering programs off campus though is the lack of transportation. Twenty-four percent of elementary schools report that their off campus after-school programs provide transportation home for students, but the majority are left without a way home if the guardian is unable to pick them up.

Taking this into consideration, SMaRT has worked with the City of Georgetown and an on-campus after-school program to

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<p style="writing-mode: vertical-rl; transform: rotate(180deg);"> Organizations in the Spotlight </p>	A.L.L.G.O.	P.O.D.E.R.	G.A.O.
	<p>ALLGO (Austin Latino/Latina Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual and Transgender Organization) sponsors transgender, men's, "womyn's", and civic participation community organizing initiatives.</p> <p>Through cultural arts, health, and advocacy programming, ALLGO envisions a just and equitable society that celebrates and nurtures people of color in queer cultures.</p> <p>For a calendar of upcoming events and to learn more, visit allgo.org</p>	<p>Poder works to redefine environmental issues as social and economic justice issues, and collectively set their own agenda to address these concerns as basic human rights. They seek to empower their communities through education, advocacy and action.</p> <p>They aim to increase the participation of communities of color in corporate and government decision making related to toxic pollution, economic development and their impact on their neighborhoods.</p> <p>For more info, visit poder-texas.org.</p>	<p>Georgetown Animal Outreach supports and enhance the services provided by the Georgetown Animal Shelter and other local organizations dedicated to the welfare of animals.</p> <p>They raise awareness of the shelter through public education, increase volunteer participation and fund raising activities, and campaign for free/low cost spay/neuter clinics.</p> <p>They hope to work toward the day when no healthy animal is killed.</p> <p>For volunteer opportunities, visit georgetownanimaloutreach.org</p>

provide free, supervised transportation to and from the University where SMaRT is held. Though transportation has worked out for the SMaRT program, we recognize that improvements can always be made. Many factors come into play as to why students are unable to find or be in a safe, supervised location during the “after-school gap”.

Not only have after-school programs proven to keep youth safe and out of trouble, but it has also been proven that disadvantaged students who regularly attend top-notch after-school programs end up, after two years, academically far

“ A curiosity about birds spawned a comparative study on eggs from different species and a question about the effectiveness of hand soap lead to a comparison of the effects of soap on cultured bacteria From our hands ”

ahead of peers who spend more out-of-school time in unsupervised activities.

The above factors are taken into account when enhancing the SMaRT program yearly and it is our hope to continue to grow and make a difference in the holistic lives of the next generations.

There is a reason it is called Science and Math Achiever TEAMS. Each third, fourth or fifth grade student has one-on-one attention from their college partner, but the 12 pairs often discuss their ideas, projects and information with the group.

Students spend the first afternoon brainstorming and working to develop a project question. Over the next few weeks, the pair continues to transform an idea into a weekly schedule fleshed out with feasible and interesting projects to fill the remaining time.

When all the experiments are done and the data is collected, SMaRT culminates with an Achievement Party on week 10 to celebrate the hard work of all the students involved. This time allows the pairs to present their posters to their peers, families and academic communities.

The SMaRT design allows each participant to be extremely successful; the SMaRTie cultivates a personal interest and college volunteers continue to encourage

the student to think about science in a creative and investigative manner.

Focusing on the students’ personal interest makes this task much easier. For example, a curiosity about birds spawned a comparative study on eggs from various species, and a question about the effectiveness of hand soap lead to a comparison of the effects of soaps on cultured bacteria from our hands.

Often the young students become so enthralled by their topic of choice and the support from their mentor that they come prepared with their own research from the internet or local library. The program is also a unique experience for the college students as they are introduced to education as another avenue for their degree. It serves as a hands-on way to get students to think about their education.

At the end of my first semester of SMaRT AJ and I successfully came up with a question, a hypothesis, designed an experiment, and reached a conclusion. To my amazement I saw our answer to her question (“Are dogs’ mouths cleaner than humans’ mouths?”) come alive in the form of dozens of Petri dishes streaked with swabs from our mouths and the mouths of many pet dogs.

At the Achievement Party, AJ boldly explained the results of our simple experiments to everyone who stopped by our poster – we all had lots of bacteria! So, contrary to her hypothesis and the common myth, and with the backing of other scientists, we found that dogs’ mouths are not necessarily any cleaner than humans’ mouths.

I don’t know any other third graders than can say they have done a comparative bacterial study to disprove a common misconception. But what can I say? AJ was a SMaRTie.

eligible and begins to require more of the expensive care associated with advanced age, we simply will not be able to afford the existing system. One of the major reasons our system is expensive is that our private, for-profit insurance companies have markedly higher administrative costs than the government agencies or non-profit insurance entities used in other countries. For this reason alone we need to think seriously about an alternative to

private insurance.

But there is a second, and (to me) more compelling, reason to think of health care as a public issue – a moral reason. In the United States, we tend to think of health care as a personal consumer choice, not much different from groceries or clothing. But almost all other industrial nations have come to think of basic health care as a right of citizenship.

They have reached this position for two reasons. First, investing in the health of the population makes for a stronger work force and thus a stronger society. Second, they believe that taking collective responsibility for one another’s health is a tangible expression of what it means to be a citizen of a democracy; citizens have individual rights but also responsibilities to the collective welfare.

In recent decades, our ideas about citizenship here in the United States have emphasized individual rights but have largely ignored collective responsibilities.

Early insurance programs, such as the benevolent societies founded by immigrants in the 19th century, emphasized collective responsibility through shared risks. But, today’s private health insurance helps us to ignore our collective responsibility by reducing health care to a commodity – which some can afford and others cannot.

Insurance companies keep their losses down and their profits up by denying coverage to those who need the most medical care. Thus, there is a conflict between for-profit health insurance as it currently operates in the United States and the notion of health care as a right of citizenship.

While it is true that there is no constitutionally protected “right to health care,” it is also true that we are and always have been a nation founded on the principles of “liberty and justice for all.” Individuals burdened by medical debt, or trapped in a poor job because they would lose their health insurance if they left it, or disabled because they did not receive timely medical care are not free.

A system that denies basic medical care to a substantial minority of its population because of cost is not just. As Americans, we can and should do better by one another.