

Service in learning and life

FROM A FAMILY OF entrepreneurs, Stacy Maynard always dreamed of owning her own prop and stagecraft business, specializing in creating custom-crafted theater set pieces for rental. Building the educational foundation that would make her dream possible, Maynard embarked on a journey to earn a business degree at Collin College.

An Air Force veteran who worked as a law enforcement specialist, Maynard was accustomed to alarming situations. However, the Collin College alumna will never forget the anxiety she felt upon realizing she needed to secure an internship in order to fulfill her business degree requirement and walk across the graduation stage at commencement this past May.

Fortunately, a service learning class that partnered with the Plano Chamber of Commerce provided her the skills and experience she needed to not only complete an internship

U. S. Air Force veteran Stacy Maynard used her internship with the Plano Chamber of Commerce to secure full-time employment.

and earn her degree, but also landed her a full-time job at a local city chamber of commerce.

"Being able to apply what we learn in the classroom to real-life experiences opens so many doors," Maynard said. "Service learning truly enhanced my education."

Collin College's award-winning Service Learning program engages students in valuable experiential learning through service

opportunities that benefit the community. This unique hands-on method of education connects a student's personal career and civic interests to learning in the classroom.

Dr. Cindy Briggs, professor of business, and Judi Wohead, professor of communications, both agree that service learning is applicable to all types of courses and can be implemented in a variety of ways.

"I feel like I am contributing to something bigger than myself and my classroom," Wohead said. Wohead is among the 124 faculty members who included service learning in the classroom this past fall and spring. Last year, Collin College students accumulated almost 35,000 service learning hours in projects with 425 community partners.

From classroom to office

Maynard understood the benefits of service learning,

and she rearranged her schedule and drove from Rockwall to McKinney every day to take Dr. Briggs' service learning business courses. The project for Dr. Briggs' students included assisting the Plano Chamber of Commerce with research and tasks related to the accreditation process the organization was undergoing with the United States Chamber of Commerce.

"Dr. Briggs' service learning classes and the collaboration with the Plano Chamber taught me so much. I not only learned a lot about the chamber, but also about businesses in general," said Maynard, who better understands what is needed locally and can apply that knowledge to her current position in her new role as an administrative/communications specialist at the Rockwall Chamber of Commerce.



Jamee Jolly, president and CEO of the Plano Chamber, said the students applied skills they were learning in the classroom to help create everything from a marketing plan to an organizational chart. "Dr. Briggs' students presented their projects and shared their research so that we may incorporate some of their great work into our own projects," said Jolly.

According to Jolly, who wishes to continue serving as a resource for Collin College students, planning for a good service learning experience takes time for the business or organization, but the outcome is well worth the effort.

"The more real-life training the students can receive during their educational experience, the better they will function in the work world

and be more productive employees," said Jolly.

The impact goes both ways

Student Brandon Jackson, who volunteered as a mentor at the Boys and Girls Clubs as part of professor Judi Wohead's speech class, explained that service learning benefits everyone.

"I never realized the kind of impact we can have on these children and, at the same time, the impact they could have on us," Jackson said. "I saw many of my classmates decide to pursue a career in education after being involved in this project."

Jackson applied what he learned in the classroom during the time he spent with the children he interacted with. "I had to learn an entirely new vocabulary in order to work with the kids and understand them," Jackson laughed. "The entire class




Collin student Brandon Jackson volunteered as a mentor with the Boys and Girls Clubs.

was about learning how to communicate and working with these children. It was definitely a challenging communication exercise.

“I learned a lot about the children and how we, and even I, can shape their world,” Jackson said. “Although I saw how the small things we taught them impacted them in big ways, they truly impacted us in even bigger ways.”

Professor Wohead’s students volunteered their time to serve as mentors to the children, help with homework, and play games. Wohead, who has implemented service learning in her speech classes for more than three years, said that on average her students volunteer 125 hours of service.

“Students can choose from several different nonprofits during the semester, but because my soft spot is the disadvantaged youth, I make an effort to visit the Boys and Girls Clubs of McKinney alongside my students,” Wohead explained. “The best part is that these children see my Collin College students and aspire to be like them.”

For more information about service learning at Collin College, visit collin.edu. 

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