New Community Learning Center to Change the Way EMU Serves the Harrisonburg Area

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As part of the new First Year Seminar, curriculum, more than 100 first-year students will go forth into Harrisonburg next week to serve with organizations ranging from the Virginia Mennonite Central Committee, MCC, Relief Sale to the Black’s Run Greenway.

Deanna Durham has anything to say about it, these students will be experiencing service as they never have before. Durham is the new coordinator of EMU’s Community Learning Center, replacing the hole left by former coordinator Rick Casteneda. The CLC, funded by the Lilly Grant, will help connect EMU to service opportunities beyond campus.

The Community Learning Center (CLC) is meant to set up a “feedback loop” between volunteers on campus and the organizations to which CLC directs them. Volunteers will process and write about their experiences; student agencies will keep CLC up-to-date regarding their programming plans and work with EMU volunteers, as well as meeting specific standards for orienting and working with the volunteers.

What’s Up in the ’Burg?

What’s up in Harrisonburg? This question is one which runs through the mind of many EMU college students as they either sit at their desks on a lonely weekend night or ponder the significance of the existence of EMU in the community. Senior Ben Wilkins and junior Sara Versluis each said one time that “EMU seems like a bubble in Harrisonburg. We are in Harrisonburg, but we have to do that which is really going on.”

This addition to The Weather Vane hopes to change this statement and offer students and the EMU community more opportunities and awareness in Harrisonburg. No longer does The Weather Vane wish to be passively waiting for involvement, but actively aggressive in student activities.

Highlights in this section will include community events, such as the upcoming Music Festival, Hot Dog Roast, and Virginia Mennonite Relief Sale. There will also be a weekly feature highlighting a service-orientation organization. Not only will local organizations be covered, but also those affiliated with the other university in town, James Madison University. In addition, events for each week will be listed in a calendar.

In order to reach this goal, The Weather Vane will be working intensively with service organizations, including EMU’s own Community Learning Program (see Community Learning Center, above). This program, funded by the Lilly Grant, has built an impressive base in the past year.

With her extensive experience with local service community, the addition of Deanna Durham allows for new and exciting service placements in town.

In addition, The Weather Vane hopes to raise awareness about local happenings and events at JMU, such as plays, concerts, and community projects.

The hope of The Weather Vane is that students will find themselves newly challenged by the call to go out into the Harrisonburg community, and build bridges. Let students at JMU get to know EMU students, let organizations meet face to face, but most importantly, let individual people talk to one another.