"Liberation through Education": The 2009 Building Bridges Conference

The 14th annual Building Bridges Conference will take place on Saturday, March 14, 2009, at Gustavus Adolphus College. This year the conference, titled “Liberation through Education,” will focus on educational inequality in the U.S. and abroad and the important influence an education has on an individual’s future. After learning about educational inequality, the committee wondered, “What can we do to help someone get an education?” The committee began to answer this question by receiving generous book donations from communities in the Midwest to benefit students in Uganda, collecting more than 25,000 books. This question will be explored in even more depth in this year’s conference in a variety of ways. A keynote presentation will be delivered by Erin Gruwell, the real-life hero portrayed in the 2007 film Freedom Writers, and Maria Reyes, one of Ms. Gruwell’s first students and an original Freedom Writer. Workshop presentations include Marcia Nelson, a teacher in Coon Rapids, Minn., who was one of the first to go through a teaching program designed by Ms. Gruwell, and the organizations Teach for America, Invisible Children, Admission Possible, and Operation Bootstrap Africa.

Ways to get involved

On conference day, a Scholastic Book Fair will provide participants with the opportunity to purchase books for themselves or local students. Additionally, the Gustavus chapter of the Student Educators Association will be selling calendars to benefit the non-profit organization Invisible Children. The Starfish Project, founded by Gustavus professor Lois Peterson, will be selling school kits with all proceeds going towards the shipment of books to the Skeenkamp Primary School in Namibia. In addition, there will be an interactive literacy event for children and parents in the local community to explore different ways in which reading and learning can be enjoyable.

Conference Schedule

10 a.m. | Opening | Christ Chapel
“I Am . . . We Are” Social Justice Theatre Troupe performance and keynote address

12:30 p.m. | Lunch (on your own)

2–5 p.m. | Workshop Sessions | C. Charles Jackson Campus Center

5 p.m. | Interactive Literacy | Lund Forum

Note: See “goings on” for events leading up to the conference.
community service center

Spring Break Trip
by Molly Beernink and Emily Hoel, Co-Presidents of Habitat for Humanity

The Habitat for Humanity spring break work trips have become a tradition here at Gustavus. In the past few years, large groups of Gusties have traveled to locations in the Southern states to help with the building needs of hurricane-devastated areas. This year will be no exception, as three groups of 25 to 36 students will leave Gustavus on March 21 to volunteer for their week of break. One group will be headed to Corpus Christi, Texas, another to Beaumont, Texas, and the third to Pensacola, Florida. Each group of students will be assigned to a work team for daily building tasks. Students will be working with the local Habitat Chapters through the Habitat’s Collegiate Challenge program. Through this program, college groups around the nation travel to towns in need of volunteers during their respective spring breaks. The groups not only volunteer on build sites but also have the opportunity to meet local volunteers, homeowners, and other friendly, appreciative citizens. The program allows the students to experience the sights and sounds of the area during the evenings and weekends of their stay. In previous years, Gusties have had fun while playing on the beach and kayaking in Florida, going on swamp tours and to the French Quarter in Louisiana, and enjoying local music and cuisine in Alabama.

In order to prepare for this year’s adventures, the students involved will be raising money on- and off-campus to assist in keeping the trip affordable for a college student’s budget. In the past, teams have done creative fundraisers such as bake sales around campus, church dinners in St. Peter, back massages for a small fee in the library, and matching trip T-shirts.

The Habitat volunteers around campus are beginning to anticipate their exciting spring break plans. Stephanie Conroy, a senior student going to Corpus Christi this spring, says she is looking forward to the trip because “it is a chance to help out others who are in need, and it will be great to share this experience with a group of fun and wonderful people who are wanting to be on the trip for the same reasons.”

department focus

Womyn’s Awareness Center

The purpose of Womyn’s Awareness Center is to promote women’s rights and equality within the Gustavus and St. Peter communities. This group of students is dedicated to increasing community awareness of women’s needs, contributions, and potential for growth and service. They maintain the physical space of the Womyn’s Awareness Center as a Safe Zone for students and a place of learning and strive to remain an open community that fosters discussions among a diverse group of people. The center’s underlying assumption is that the advancement of women will benefit all of society.

You may have seen or attended some of their many planned events, such as The Vagina Monologues, “Take Back the Night,” Indulgence Parties, Heterodoxy, “Speak Out against Sexual Violence,” WAC Week, consciousness-raising groups, and other various speakers.
Hello, my name is Ray Wilson and I am a senior finance major here at Gustavus. My experience at Gustavus has been one that I will always be proud of being a part of. It seems like it was only yesterday when I was walking to my first class as a freshman. People say that time goes by fast when you are having fun and working hard, and this theory has been proven true through my experiences here at Gustavus over the last four years.

I have been a part of a number of different organizations here at Gustavus: football team, track and field team, and LAN (the business fraternity). These organizations have been instrumental in my growth as a person over the last four years. Being a part of these organizations has taught me about teamwork and how to have faith in myself and the people around me, and has continuously reminded me that hard work does pay off.

When I started coming to the Diversity Center my experience at Gustavus took a dramatic turn. I knew that no matter how bad college life was treating me at the time, I had a place where I could go to relax and talk to someone who was willing to listen to my current situation. From the students to the staff, the Diversity Center is filled with great people who I can now call my friends.

The Diversity Center has also contributed to the success of one of the organizations that I am a part of at Gustavus. Virgil Jones, the director of the Diversity Center, took time out of his busy schedule to become the running backs coach of the Gustavus football team. Being a running back myself, I was able to receive great tips from Virgil about how I could improve as a football player. It was not always about football though. Very often Virgil would ask all the running backs on the team how school was going, and let us know that if there was anything that he could do, he would be more than willing to help. This past football season, I broke the single-game rushing record with 258 yards, and as a team we ended the season with the best record we have had in at last four years. Both of these successes would not have come true without the presence of Mr. Jones, and since he represents the Diversity Center as well, it just gives me another reason to thank the Diversity Center for contributing to the great Gustavus experience that I have had.

“From the students to the staff, the Diversity Center is filled with great people who I now call my friends”

“The question is not whether we can afford to invest in every child; it is whether we can afford not to.”

— Marian Wright Edelman
Diversity Center Calendar

Every Tuesday | Meditation | 7-8 p.m.
The perfect study break and time to wind down

March 13 & 14
Building Bridges Conference

March 15 | 8-10 p.m.
Sacred Space

College Calendar

March 9 | 7 p.m. | Evelyn Young Dining Room
Is Gustavus Smarter than a 5th Grader?

March 10 | 7 p.m. | Governor’s Room, St. Peter Community Center
Showing of 150 Years of Human Rights in Minnesota by the St. Peter Human Rights Commission & Minnesota Department of Human Rights

March 11 | 7 p.m. | Heritage Room
Showing of Freedom Writers

March 12 | 7 p.m. | Heritage Room
Showing of Go!: the Schools for Schools Movie

March 12 | 9:30-10 a.m.
CICE Approval Packet Review Session

March 12 | 6:30-7 p.m. | Leadholm
Amnesty International Meeting

March 13 | 7-9 p.m. | Evelyn Young Dining Room
Gustavus Idol

March 14 | 8-10 p.m. | Björling Recital Hall
The Ying Quartet in Concert

March 20 | 2:30-4:30 a.m. | Jackson Campus Center Board Room
How to Get Into Law School

April 4 | 5-11 p.m.
President’s Ball

World Watch and Cultural Connections are brought to you by Crossroads. Through their shared interest in world cultures, languages, and contemporary global issues, members work to develop a broader understanding of the world in which they live and contribute to the education of the College community as a whole. Think Globally, Act Locally—the Crossroads Program.

World Watch

Guinea-Bissau —
Renegade soldiers shot and killed President Joao Bernardo Vieira in an apparent revenge attack after reports the president had the army chief of staff killed. An interim president has already been selected to run the country until new elections can be arranged.

North Korea —
North and South Korean military officials held talks at the UN Command in South Korea for the first time in seven years. The talks aimed at reducing border tensions but also gave the North Korean military a chance to criticize South Korean military ties with the U.S.

Venezuela —
President Hugo Chavez has sent the military to intervene in at least two rice mills and threatened more interventions after price disputes and claims of rice mills hoarding production and causing food shortages. The move comes after Chavez won the right to run for re-election in a recent referendum. One Minnesota-based company, Cargill, is involved in the price dispute, although no Cargill plant has seen government intervention.

Brussels —
The EU rejected aid cries from poorer performing member states at an emergency meeting last Sunday. The leaders instead called for aid to countries on a “yet to be determined” case-by-case basis. The Hungarian prime minister responded to the rejection by warning of a “new Iron Curtain” dividing Europe.

Cultural Connection

March 9, 10 – Purim (Jewish):
Celebrates the Jewish peoples’ defeat of a plot by Haman of Persia to annihilate them.

March 20 – Naw Ruz:
A Persian national festival to celebrate Iran’s New Year.

March 26 – Khorad Sal (Zoroastrian):
A celebration of the birth of the prophet Zoroaster.