

Service Learning

Learn – Serve – Engage

Each year, over 500 Elmhurst University students contribute more than 10,000 hours serving their local, national or global communities. Each semester, students welcome refugee families, mentor first-generation students, provide shelter for abandoned pets, advocate for human rights, promote the protection of our natural world, help to address the challenges posed by COVID-19, and much, much more.

Serving Refugees Provides Elm U Students with Insight into Different Cultures, Experiences, and Themselves

So many of us watch humanitarian crises unfold around the world and feel compelled to help but are unsure about how to help. Elm U students in Dr. [Majka's](#) (Psychology) and Dr. [Mulvaney's](#) (English and Honors Program) classes had an opportunity to partner with Exodus World Service to better understand the plight of displaced people, while also helping those displaced people in tangible and concrete ways. Elm U students served in groups to help turn empty apartments into homes for newly arriving refugee families and expecting mothers. With a list provided by Exodus World Service, students shopped 'til they dropped, purchasing kitchen wares, bedding, baby clothes, and more. When the students received word that their families had arrived in Chicagoland, students welcomed the families in their new homes and to the United States – a transformative experience for all involved. Elm U student [Milena Trojan](#) said, "By helping a refugee family settle in to their new "normal" it provided a lot of insight on the hardships and complexity of the immigration and legal system. It allowed us to experience the culture they belong in by trying their foods, respecting their customs and religion, and listening to a foreign language...listening to the stories of the Syrian refugee family was extremely eye-opening." Through service, Elm U students are able to learn about themselves in the context of the larger global community. To learn more about how you can make a difference in the lives of refugees arriving right here in Chicagoland, contact the Service Learning Program.



When it Comes to the Climate Crisis – Elm U Students are Thinking Globally and Acting Locally



As Co-President of the Elmhurst University environmental justice student organization Green Jays, [Evelinn Sanchez](#) understands that “you must start small to make a difference within your community, leading to a bigger difference around the world.” Serving with Elmhurst Great Western Prairie Volunteer Group is an easy and fun way to do just that. The Elmhurst Great Western Prairie Volunteer Work Group meets each month to preserve one of only a few natural prairie spaces remaining along the length of the Illinois Prairie Path. The prairie is a remnant of the pre-settlement landscape, a unique ecosystem that contains many special plants. This visual contrast to lawns and tree-lined streets of Elmhurst provides a living museum and a constant reminder that Illinois is “The Prairie State.” By removing invasive plant species and replacing them with plant species native to the prairie, the Elmhurst Great Western Prairie Volunteer Work Group is doing their part to combat the climate crisis. As a local service option, Elm U students can easily walk or bike to the volunteer work group meet-up spot. Don’t have a bike? Check out the Elmhurst University Bike Rental Program and rent a bike for spring semester! If you plan to use your bike as green transport to your service site, the Bike Rental Program will discount the rental cost! Contact the Service Learning Program to learn about how you can think globally and act locally by serving with the Elmhurst Great Western Prairie Volunteer Work Group.



Check out the Elmhurst University Bike Rental Program and rent a bike for spring semester!

Service Learning Program Civic Liaisons Brought Service and Civic Engagement to Elm U for the Fall 2022 Midterm Elections

In service to their communities, Elm U students often begin to learn that service and civic engagement are different sides of the same coin – both working to ameliorate societal issues and injustices. During the Fall 2022 Midterm Elections, Elm U Service Learning Civic Engagement Liaisons Ericka Creek and Sian Agard partnered with organizations such as the Elmhurst Chapter of League of Women Voters and the Citizen Advocacy Center to help Elm U students better understand the issues, learn more about the candidates, and most importantly...Register to Vote!



York Literacy Project Volunteers Bring the Next Generation of Bluejays to Campus for a Fun Filled Afternoon

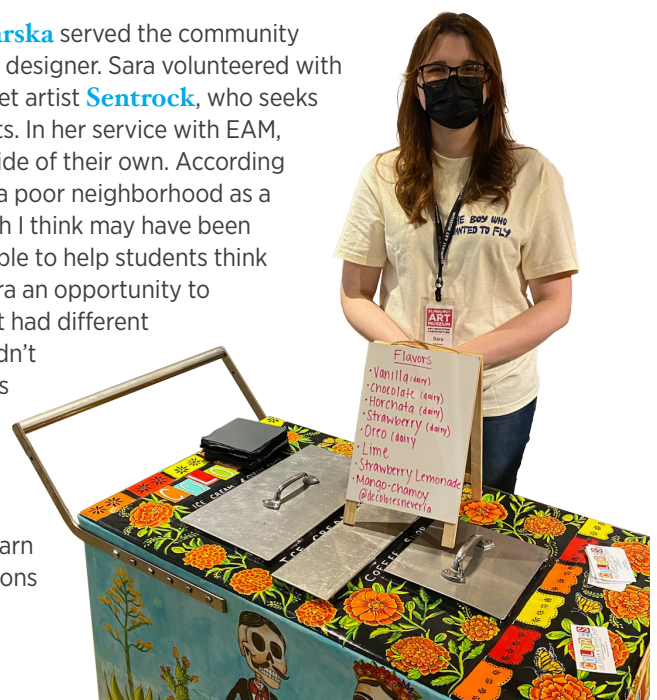
After a term of working hard during weekly tutoring sessions, it was time for Elm U students and their York Literacy Project buddies to have some fun here on campus! Each semester this special Service Learning project pairs Elm U CSD and SPN students as tutors and mentors to middle school students at the York Community Resource Center in Lombard. YCRC buddies visited campus and danced on stage with Professor [Amy Lyn McDonald](#) (Theatre and Dance). They received a behind-the-scenes tour of the Mill Theater with Professor [Janice Pohl](#) (Theatre and Dance). They learned about the speed of sound and light with Professor [Robert Froelich](#) (Physics). And, before it was time for pizza, snacks, and a pep talk from Vice President of Admission [Christine Grenier](#), they worked up a sweat on the track and field with Elm U athletes!

The York Literacy Project accepts new volunteers each semester. Contact the Service Learning Program to learn how you can help local elementary school students reach their academic potential through the York Literacy Project.



Everyone Wins When We Serve

As a volunteer with the Elmhurst Art Museum, Elm U student [Sara Tokarska](#) served the community while considering different options and paths for her future as a graphic designer. Sara volunteered with EAM when they hosted the first solo museum show of Pilsen-based street artist [Sentrock](#), who seeks to uplift and empower youth through his murals and educational projects. In her service with EAM, Sara was able to help visiting student groups consider experiences outside of their own. According to Sara, "The artwork in the museum... told a story about growing up in a poor neighborhood as a young Mexican boy and learning how to create art through graffiti, which I think may have been a contrast to the experiences of the visiting group." Not only was Sara able to help students think expansively about the world in which they live, service also provided Sara an opportunity to think expansively about her future as an artist. "Some of the artists I met had different paths towards success. One was entirely self-made from scratch and hadn't attended an art school or taken any major classes - he just learned on his own and kept working hard to make a name for himself. Another went as far as majoring in his chosen field as well as traveling to various cities in the world to create a professional photography career. As a graphic designer, the options are similar, it is up to me and my own dedication on how far my abilities and career take me." If you'd like to learn more about how you can consider your future academic and career options through service, like Sara, contact the Service Learning Program.



Elmhurst U Students Find Ways, Big and Small, to Serve People Experiencing Housing Insecurity

It's easy to compartmentalize homelessness as a "big city" problem, but Elm U students know that homelessness does not discriminate based on zip code. That is why Elm U students found a variety of different ways to serve individuals experiencing housing insecurity during the Fall 2022 semester. Students created greeting cards and cold weather gear packs with the Service Learning Program on Founders Day; they made sandwiches and brownbag lunches at the Chaplain's residence to be distributed by Elm U students traveling to the city with Dr. **Sexton Radek** (Psychology) to serve with Night Ministry; they partnered with DuPage PADS and Chicago HOPES for Kids as part of Dr. **Coward Bucher's** SOC/CJ Capstone class.

Linda Cabral, a student in Dr. Coward Bucher's Capstone Course, said, "my service learning experience has taught me things that can't be taught in a classroom...and made me realize that even if the role I play is small I am still making a difference." Contact the Service Learning Program to learn how, big and small, you can make a difference in the lives of individuals and families experiencing homelessness.



We Want to Hear from You!

Tell us about how you are serving and learning in your community. Or find out how to get involved with one of the wonderful organizations highlighted in this issue. Our goal is to help you combine your interests and passions with community needs and opportunities. We can also help you fulfill your Integrated Curriculum Experiential Learning graduation requirement through service. Contact us for more information.

To learn more about how Elmhurst University members are serving their communities, learning about themselves and building their futures, visit elmhurst.edu/service-learning

Dr. Mary Walsh
Director, Service Learning
walshm@elmhurst.edu

Michelle Reidy
Coordinator, Service Learning
michelle.reidy@elmhurst.edu

