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THE DIFFERENCE

A Newsletter from the Collaborative for Community Engagement at Colorado College

COMPASSION ACROSS BORDERS:

How you can help Flint, Michigan as it recovers from its water crisis



In Gainesville, Virginia, a young boy in the second grade has been galvanized to help his peers states away in Flint, Michigan. In just 11 days, Isiah has raised \$8,855 (and counting) to buy hand sanitizer for students at elementary schools across Flint so that students afraid of cleaning their hands with the contaminated water will be able to sanitize themselves and avoid further contamination (you can find his gofundme at <https://www.gofundme.com/quna3w9g>). This large deed, done by a young boy, goes to show that everyone is capable of aiding a community in crisis.

Flint has been the focus of the U.S. ever since it was revealed that all of Flint's citizens had been exposed to dangerous toxins like lead that will have detrimental impacts on the community for generations to come. Flint's water crisis arose from the detrimental actions of Michigan Governor Rick Snyder, Emergency Manager Edward Kurts, and other government officials. Driven by the fear of bankruptcy, Governor Rick Snyder authorized Flint's water to be pulled from the Flint River, instead of treated water from Lake Huron. The river water is laden with harmful materials and adding to those dangerous materials are the lead pipes that the water ran through. Together, this created a deadly cocktail of toxins in the water that has especially impacted all of the children that reside in Flint, MI, which totals around 8,000 children. According to an article in Vox titled "The Flint water

crisis, explained”, written by Libby Nelson, “Lead does irreversible damage to children’s developing brains. But the situation became a scandal because the water crisis played out in plain sight for months while the state refused to acknowledge it, even though Flint was run by a state-appointed emergency manager at the time”. Due to the active negligence of government officials, Flint’s most vulnerable citizens (their children) are left to suffer the implications of their actions.

It is also important to note the demographics of Flint. Flint, MI is 57% Black and 42% of that population lives in poverty. These demographics, pointed out by Nelson in Vox and Charles Blow in the New York Times, reveal how the Flint crisis is a “result of generations of policies promoting housing segregation that stranded black residents in poorer neighborhoods.” People in this community are disenfranchised on levels of class, gender, race, and socioeconomic statuses (amongst others). These inequalities compound in ways that impede people in Flint to receive the proper resources they need to recover from this. Understanding the complexities of the Flint crisis can help us understand larger inequalities at play that we should all be cognizant of to make sure something like this doesn’t happen to any community, let alone to a community that has been repeatedly and systematically victimized.

So, what happens next? Flint is in critical need of resources, especially money and sanitation methods. Huffington Post suggest these 5 ways you can support the Flint community in both an immediate and sustainable manner.

1. Donate to the people bringing clean water to Flint families like the United Way of Genesee County’s Flint Water Fund, found at <http://www.unitedwaygenesee.org/civcrm/contribute/transact?reset=1&id=5>
2. Support the researchers keeping the public informed. You can find data and information from Virginia Tech’s Flint Water Study at <http://flintwaterstudy.org/about-page/about-us/>. Donations to this study can be made at <https://www.gofundme.com/flintstudyvt>.
3. Fund the organizations supporting critical public health services. “Funds will support ‘public health, medical and community-based services’ to address the impact of the water crisis on Flint families.” Go to <https://www.cfgf.org/cfgf/GoodWork/FlintArea/WaterCrisis/tabid/855/Default.aspx>.
4. Live in Flint? Bring cash and water directly to those who are helping. Flint Community Schools is one of many places to take cash or water to directly.
5. If you are not comfortable giving money, call on Governor Snyder to help residents. There is a petition on change.org (you can find it at <https://www.change.org/p/rick-snyder-stop-making-flint-residents-pay-for-poisoned-water>).

Other ways we may help is through asking residents of Flint; or organizations based in Flint tackling this crisis what it is that they need. As this develops, the needs of Flint’s residents will change and we must adapt to aid them as they need. Like Isiah from Virginia, we are all impacted by the terrible events in Flint, Michigan and it is within our power, no matter our age or position, to aid the people of Flint. Here at the Collaborative we encourage civic action in our immediate and extended communities to promote social responsibility and awareness. While we may be states away in Colorado Springs, CO, we have a duty to help those in Flint in the name of compassion and service to one another, as that is our civic duty.

STUDENT GROUP SPOTLIGHTS

Get to know our student groups!

The Grits Collective

The Grits Collective, a student group focused on the continued engagement with the Colorado Springs community, began as a proposal for the Colorado College Soup Project. Grits Collective publishes work that ranges from stories to artwork that provides a first hand look at the experiences of homelessness in Colorado Springs. The submissions are made by homeless community members in the hopes of humanizing their experiences and reminding the community that “those who experience homelessness and hunger as mothers, fathers, sons, daughters, friends, and pet-lovers have a story, ambition, and value.” You can find this publication quartely as an excerpt in the Colorado Springs Independent.

Additionally (according to the Grits Collective’s website), “contributions are also archived at gritsco.org and in the Colorado College Tutt Library so

that students and faculty at the college have access to primary sources for research on issues of homelessness, poverty, and hunger.”



The Grits Collective states their core mission as follows (taken from their website, gritsco.org):

- (1) provide empowering, creative programming for vulnerable members of our community
- (2) challenge the status quo attitude toward these populations, paving the way for change
- (3) deepen the relationship between Colorado College and the rest of Colorado Springs
- (4) archive our publication to integrate primary sources into sociological research

You can find out more about the Grits Collective, and how you can get involved at:

<https://www.coloradocollege.edu/offices/cce/how-to-get-involved/soup-project/>
and

<http://gritsco.org/>

Public Achievement

Public Achievement (PA) is a national youth initiative that engages young people in community-based civic education. Its goal is to expand the notions of politics, democracy, and citizenship by empowering young people as agents of public change. Colorado College students have the opportunity to mentor and guide K-12 youth through the process of implementing a project that will have an impact on their community. The PA process involves six stages: exploration and discovery of issues in the community, issue development, problem research, designing a project to address the problem, implementing the project, and reflecting on the process and results.

Colorado College's PA currently has a partnership with two different school sites in Colorado Springs – North Middle School in Colorado Springs School District 11 and Sand Creek High School in Falcon School District 49. The North PA site operates as an after-school program and is currently working to develop a student-created newsletter that's distributed quarterly. The Sand Creek PA site works with a Special Education class (includes students with physical and intellectual disabilities as well as students with behavioral disorders) and is working on selecting which issues they would like to focus on. To get involved or to find out more information, you can reach out to Sarah Marshall at sarah.marshall@coloradocollege.edu.



“ Love and compassion are necessities, not luxuries. Without them, humanity cannot survive. ”

Dalai Lama XIV, *The Art of Happiness*

COMMUNITY PARTNER

SPOTLIGHT

Get to know our community partners

Concrete Couch

The mission of Concrete Couch is to work with kids and community groups to create public art, to build community, and to create environments and experiences that humanize our world.

Concrete Couch's 7 core beliefs:

1) Community matters

It's what holds us together. But the places where community happens are disappearing. We want to create new ones. And strengthen the old places.

2) Making things is fun work

Creativity is a fundamental human force that connects us to who we are. When we make things, we're being our best selves.

3) Junk is just raw material waiting for an idea

You'd be amazed what we can do with a pile of stuff that's headed for the landfill.

4) Every community has strengths, assets and resources

We love discovering these resources, and creating a venue for the sharing of skills, knowledge, tools, and ideas. Projects move forward, and our communities grow stronger.

5) Sharing things with others makes people happier

Sharing food, music, tools, materials and knowledge makes us all feel better about ourselves and our world. We're never happier than when we're sharing our gifts.

6) Happy people who feel valued contribute more

We love watching what happens when a person is given a welder, an engaging project, new amigos, and a firm, loving steer. This is sheer magic and it's what gets us out of bed in the morning.

7) Getting dirty is liberating

Most of our best times involved dirt, dust, paint, glue and some kind of unidentified gunk (respirators where appropriate).

Want to see how these core beliefs play out in the real world? Join other students, faculty, staff and alumni, and your CS neighbors to create a fabulous tile and steel-relief mural for Colorado Springs! CC students are invited to come help with the Penrose Library Mural Project, Tuesdays from 6:00-7:30pm at the Morreale Carriage House. This will be especially valuable to people interested in public art, construction and community engagement. Everyone is welcome, but organizers ask you to plan on attending at least 6 of the 10 sessions. RSVPs are encouraged. To RSVP, or if you have questions, please contact Shanna Farmer at Shanna.Farmer@ColoradoCollege.edu.



Photos are taken from the Concrete Couch website which features a gallery of their work in Mosaics, Art Benches (pictured right), Bridges, Gardening and Environmental (pictured bottom right), Parades and Puppets and Art Cars (pictured below), Concrete structures, and Post and Beam Structures



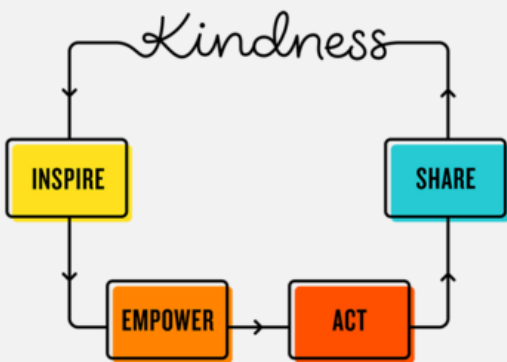
RANDOM ACTS OF KINDNESS

How will you spread kindness this week? Random Acts of Kindness Week is February 14th to 20th!

Did you know that this week is Random Acts of Kindness Week? Since 1995, this Denver based organization has been teaching people what it means to be kind and how to share kindness with others in various forms. Calling themselves RAKtivists (Random Acts of Kindness Activists), people of the RAK span the world to deliver sentiments of kindness. This week is meant to encourage people to step up their kindness game to help build healthy relationships, inspire others to pass kindness forward, and effect positive change.

At www.randomactsofkindness.org, you can find resources and curriculum that teach people (inside or outside an academic setting) what it means to be kind and why it is important to do kind acts without expectation of want of recognition and praise for having done those deeds.

RAK employs the Kindness Paradigm (pictured left) to inspire and empower people to act on their kindness and then to share the kindness philosophy. So, in the name of kindness, spread the love today, this week, and everyday! Take this opportunity to challenge yourself to do RAK to deepen your connections and pass the kind sentiments forward.



Announcements and Events

Look here for great opportunities!

CEL Applications and Interviews Coming Soon!

The Community-Engaged Leadership (CEL) Certificate program, supported by an endowment from the Boettcher Foundation, is designed to assist students in developing their interests and capacities in areas related to service, social justice, leadership, and public engagement. Designed to work in conjunction with students' other commitments, the program is a way for students to connect their learning in the classroom and their service in a variety of community settings. This program is designed to transform participants' perceptions of community service, leadership, and the ability to create change on a local, regional, national, or global level. Applications will be sent out soon and interviews will be held during Block 7. Keep an eye on the CCE website for specific details!

Colorado Springs School District-11 Science Fair Judges Needed!

Colorado Springs School District 11 is seeking judges for upcoming elementary school Science Fairs. No experience necessary! Visit <http://www.d11.org/Volunteers/Volunteers/Pages/Science-Fair-Volunteer-Sign-Up.aspx> to sign up.

Sustained Commitment Award/Hour Log

The CCE will offer up to five Sustained Commitment Awards this spring, honoring students who have shown exceptional dedication and commitment to community-based work. The CCE will grant these awards to those students who have committed (and documented) the most time to the community during spring semester, measured simply as number of hours logged. If you are interested in being considered for this award, please click here to find out more information. Go to <https://www.coloradocollege.edu/offices/cce/how-to-get-involved/service-reporting.html> to log hours!

Pikes Peak Regional Science Fair

The CCE is seeking volunteer judges for the Pikes Peak Regional Science Fair (PPRSF) to determine which projects which receive CC-sponsored awards. PPRSF is a science fair held at UCCS annually for 6th through 12th graders. CC sponsors four awards centered on excellence in Rocky Mountain Regional Research, Field-Based Research, Sustainability and Conservation, and Community and Social Justice. Students with an interest or expertise in these subjects are particularly encouraged to volunteer. Judges will need to be able to commit their time from 9:30 to 12:00pm on February 27th. Please email jordan.radke@coloradocollege.edu if interested or if you have questions

Block 6 K-12 Exchange

Game Day Thursday, February 25 at 12:15-1:15pm in Gaylord Hall. For leaders & members of organizations with K-12 community partners. We'll play a variety of games and activities that come in handy for team building, unplanned down-time, or just to have fun. Lunch provided.

Let's Party Like it's 2016: Democratic and Republican Colorado State Party Chairs to visit CC!

Rick Palacio, Democratic State Party Chairman, and Steve House, Republican State Party Chairman, are coming to CC for an event that's going to be full of interesting questions, hot issue topics, and why YOUR participation in the election process, starting with the March caucus, matters! Moderated by CC students Steven Ortega and Ian Pelto. Pizza will be provided!

Where: Tutt Science Lecture Hall

When: Wednesday, February 24th from 6:00-7:30pm

CONTACT US!

How and Where to Reach Us:

EMAIL:

cce@coloradocollege.edu

PHONE:

719.389.6846

WEBSITE:

<https://www.coloradocollege.edu/offices/cce/>

*We are located in ARMSTRONG SUITE 100.
Come by for a snack and meet the staff!*

A Note from the Editor

Readers,

Thank you for supporting the Community for Collaborative Engagement! This issue is concerned with manifestations of empathy, and how one can align their good intentions with good impact.

For questions or concerns, please contact me at salem.tewelde@coloradocollege.edu. If you would like to submit to this newsletter, or have topics, events, or announcements you would like me to share, please email me at salem.tewelde@coloradocollege.edu.

Sincerely,
Salem Tewelde