

UCCE Connect



Connect is the newsletter of the thirteen programs in the University Consortium for Catholic Education (UCCE). Each month, current participants from one of the consortium programs take responsibility for sharing news and stories of service, spirituality, and community at work in their program. For more information on the consortium, please visit www.ucceconnect.com. This month we highlight the PLACE Corps of Loyola Marymount University in Los Angeles.



Heather Boyle (center) surrounded by the six PLACERs who welcomed her home from the Kairos retreat.

PLACE Corps: Partners in Los Angeles Catholic Education

- Loyola Marymount University
 - Archdiocese of Los Angeles
 - 52 current participants
 - Founded in 2001
 - Director: Diana Murphy
 - Email: dmurphy@lmu.edu
- www.lmu.edu/education/PLACE

Spirituality: The Micah Challenge

By Heather Boyle
Bishop Conaty-Our Lady of Loretto High School, Los Angeles, CA

"...what does the Lord require of you but to do justice, and to love kindness, and to walk humbly with your God" - Micah 6:8

The PLACE Corps summer retreat began with the Micah challenge, that we commit ourselves to answering the call that each of us received to being apart of the program in which we chose. This past fall retreat the PLACERs were asked to recommit ourselves to this call of service to our students, our community, ourselves, and God. Each PLACER knows that their mission is to be leaders in their schools, and to be images of Christ for their students while molding this image within their communities. But what does that really mean?

A defining moment for me as a Catholic role model occurred on my school's senior Kairos retreat. Kairos means 'God's time' and for four days in the Julianne Mountains outside San Diego, 50 young women reflected on their relationship with God. The girls were able to reflect on their lives, who they are, recognize the results in God's friendship, identify the obstacles that seem to push God away, and discover the true meaning of God's friendship. Finally, they were challenged with how they would carry these messages and new discoveries with them into their daily lives. This challenge was known as 'the fourth day,' because the ladies had transformed. Kairos was no longer just a vacation away from school; it was their journey to loving kindness, as many mended relationships with peers, and walking humbly with God, they were able to recognize everything they had to be grateful for especially, the support of their families.

As a leader on the retreat I truly was able to discover the call that Micah referred to in the previously quoted passage that is reflected in our program's mission: that as teachers our call is to truly be images of Christ for our students. We must help transform their communities, be passionate about kindness, and show them the results of God's friendship in their daily lives. Thus, being apart of PLACE, or all other UCCE programs, we are all living 'the fourth' by showing God's friendship in our communities and schools.

As the students were welcomed back by their families and friends, there were tears, laughter, and many hugs. I was looking around at the true results of God's friendship and saw the harmony of it all. As I was standing among the students and their families, one teacher came over to me and said, "Heather, there is your family." As I turned around I saw seven other PLACERs who had come to welcome me back from Kairos. It was an amazing surprise and truly resembled what 'living the fourth' means in the program: to be an image of Christ for our schools and communities, not only for our students, but for one another.



A candle lit by a PLACER at our annual winter retreat.

Community: The Annual PLACE Corps Talent Show

By Rita Morgan

Junipero Serra High School, Gardena, CA

The five PLACE Corps communities showcased their many talents at the talent show held at the PLACE Corps annual fall retreat in California's San Bernardino Mountains over the weekend of November 17-19. Each community was responsible for presenting a group act and several brave individuals shared their unique and strange talents with the larger group. The highlight of the evening was the variety show presented by the Maria Regina community. This thirteen-member community showed their versatility by presenting a series of short skits including original raps, new lyrics to popular songs, a spoof on a rushed teacher's morning routine, and a hilarious game show about the recent events happening within the larger PLACE community.

The talent show is the favorite part of the retreat for many PLACERS because it gives each community the chance to come together and create something to share with every one else. Taryn Matsumoto, a first year teacher from the Compton convent commented, "Our house spent three weeks preparing for the talent show; it was a great experience for us because it gave us the chance to see what everyone could do unrelated to teaching." Due to the large size of many PLACE communities, experiences like the talent show have value in helping community members get to know each other better.



The Maria Regina community smiling after a successful talent show performance at the winter retreat.

Professionalism: Pen Pals in PLACE Classrooms

By Amanda Kraivanger

Our Lady of Perpetual Help School, Downey, CA

Learning to write a friendly letter is part of the second grade curriculum at Our Lady of Perpetual Help School. To make the lesson fun, I worked with one of my housemates, Kristen Croley (St. Columbkille School, Los Angeles), to set our students up as pen pals.

The weekly exchange of letters began in January. The second graders from both of our classes were so excited to meet each other. In April, Kristen took her second graders to my school. I had my students prepare for their visitors by making banners and coming up with games and crafts to share. On the big day, all sixty-one second graders finally met. They played a game that allowed the students to share simple clues to determine their pen pals. As it turned out, because the students had written such good letters to one another, the students had little trouble identifying their pen pals. The students ended the day by making two quilts for each school with the pen pals placing their brightly-painted handprints next to one another on the quilt. The day was a big success, and the quilts will serve as a reminder for my students of how easily friends can be made.

Amanda
Kraivanger
guides students
in the discovery
of their pen pals.

