Student-Organized Service Day to Become Annual Event

By Debra Levy Martinelli
Chilly morning temperatures and blustery winds didn’t dampen the spirits of about 160 Price College students, faculty and staff who cleared, cleaned, raked and painted at nine Norman schools and a local nonprofit organization during the first-ever Price College Service Day this past November. Organized and facilitated by the college’s Delta Sigma Pi chapter, the college-wide event included volunteers from eight other student groups and multiple academic divisions.

Wade Brockway, Delta Sigma Pi vice president of community service, spearheaded the effort, which was an expansion of the business fraternity’s 2009 service day that addressed needs of two Norman elementary schools. When he contacted those schools and others last summer, he quickly realized the enormity of the needs and extended invitations to other student groups to help. “The response surprised me. I saw just how many people in Price College share the value of community service,” he remembers. “I thought we could get the whole college involved within two or three years, but we were able to do it in one semester.”

Brockway appointed 20 other Delta Sigma Pi members to serve as co-captains at each site, with leaders from participating organizations guiding their subgroups. Delta Sigma Pi president Zach Stuart and member Christopher Sweeney, along with Steve Wilson, Delta Sigma Pi advisor and communication mentor in the college’s Business Communication Center and Robert Harper, director of Undergraduate Professional Development, were responsible for ensuring that each site had the necessary volunteers and resources to complete assignments. Brockway teamed with Dean Ken Evans to “float” among the sites. “Christopher didn’t get an official title during the process, but he was absolutely integral to our success,” says Brockway.

Bob Lipe, KPMG Centennial Professor of Accounting and advisor for Beta Alpha Psi accounting fraternity, helped clear out part of an elementary school’s gymnasium used for storage so it could instead be used for activities. “It was just packed full of stuff they wanted to get rid of. With some direction on what to keep and what to toss, we went through it all and made hauls to the dumpster. When we finished, we did some more general clean-up.”

Brockway gives all the credit for the success of the event to the day’s participants. “When it comes down to who made a lasting impact, it was the people pulling gum off tables, moving gravel and cleaning out rooms. They are the ones who really influenced the community,” he says. “This day was about the entire college getting involved. All I did was facilitate by matching the desire to help with the need for help.”

Evans calls the inaugural event “a truly joint endeavor.” “As I toured each of the 10 sites around Norman where the groups were working, it was indeed uplifting to see the teamwork taking place,” he says. “Not only that, but this totally student-run project is serving as a springboard for the future.”

Brockway and Wilson envision a bigger, better and even more inclusive event for 2011. “We are looking at having as many as 300 to 400 students, faculty and staff who can serve up to 20 sites in a day, which is really ambitious,” Wilson says. “We will try to get more students involved who aren’t affiliated with organizations so they also can serve the community in some fashion.”

Lipe is confident they will pull it off. “I see giving back to the community throughout Price College all the time. This was one very visible, organized and good way to give back. Organizations value it, faculty and staff value it, and students value it. It’s grassroots Oklahoma.”