

# national role

## AS A COMMUNITY SERVICE LEADER

*Defiance College was recently named among the top 20 schools nationally for community service and engagement*

**D**efiance College's role as a national and innovative leader in community service and engagement was recently recognized by the federal government, which named Defiance among the top 20 schools in the nation for community service and engagement. This designation was made by naming Defiance College as a Presidential Award Finalist for the 2013 President's Higher Education Community Service Honor Roll.

While hundreds of colleges and universities were listed on the Honor Roll,

only 20 colleges and universities in the nation received the highest recognition as either Award winners or Award Finalists. Defiance was one of only four colleges and universities in the Midwest to receive this level of recognition from the federal government's Corporation for National and Community Service.

"We are absolutely thrilled that Defiance College's innovative leadership in community service has been recognized in such dramatic fashion," said Defiance College President Mark C. Gordon. "This

is a wonderful testament to the efforts of our students, faculty, administrators, and staff – all of whom have made service a pervasive part of the Defiance College experience.

"It is also a reflection of the way that Harold and Helen McMaster's foresight in creating the McMaster School for Advancing Humanity at Defiance College ten years ago has enabled us to establish ourselves as a national leader in this area," added Gordon.

Defiance College is the only college in the country with a separately-legally-incorporated student-run nonprofit as part of



*DC freshmen rally before they head out for their annual Service Day projects.*

the McMaster School, in which every student can create, develop, run and manage their own service projects. Known as Project 701, this nonprofit entity has a separate Board of Directors, on which many DC students sit. During its slightly over two years of operation, Project 701 has already developed (in cooperation with the two area hospitals) a monthly free clinic for area residents in need of primary care; participated in micro-finance lending in Jamaica; coordinated (together with the United Way) the highly successful Backpack Buddy program throughout the county; begun a computer repair service for the community (DCPC Solutions), a graphic design studio (Creating Defiance), and a community tutoring program (Read @ DC); initiated a student mentoring program (Project Mirror); developed an herb-growing project for students with autism (Hench Herbs); and initiated many other projects. Recently approved projects include a student-coordinated beekeeping operation at the Thoreau Wildlife Sanctuary (DC Honeybees), as well as a fair trade project (DC Art Box), and others.

Full-time eligible students at Defiance College are now also guaranteed an international opportunity in either their junior or senior years, and many students use their international travel experiences to engage in service abroad. Over the past decade, DC students have performed service-learning and community-based research projects in Belize, Ghana, Cambodia, Costa Rica, Thailand, Jamaica, Guatemala, and elsewhere, performing more than 200 projects in developing countries. Examples of such projects include training rural health care providers to use microscopes to diagnose malaria and tuberculosis; testing drinking water in numerous countries to determine if it is contaminated; teaching in classrooms in small towns and villages; installing solar panels (in partnership with Advanced Distributed Generation); tracking locations and nesting sites of endangered species; working with victims of domestic violence; testing solar cooking techniques; and much more.

In May, a group of DC students will travel to Tanzania (in partnership with business leader Dwight Smith of Sophisticated Systems Inc. and his Thanks Be to God Foundation) to explore the feasibility of establishing water testing, micro-finance lending, and the distribution of E-readers to impoverished public schools in that African country.

Through its Service Leader Scholarship

program, Defiance College also gives students special opportunities to engage in a wide range of service opportunities both on the college campus and throughout the community. Last year, DC Service Leaders alone performed more than 12,100 hours of community service.

“I am truly delighted to see that Defiance College’s pioneering efforts in so many areas of community service are now receiving national recognition,” said Mary Ann Studer, Dean of the McMaster School. “I also think that more and more people are starting to realize that the kinds of experiences DC students receive through our service-learning projects not only help those being served, they also help our DC students stand out when applying to graduate/professional schools or when seeking employment. While students are engaging in service-learning, they are also developing entrepreneurial, organizational, leadership, and numerous other skills which are particularly sought after by employers and graduate schools.”

Brock Bell, a senior from Antwerp, is the current director of project support for Project 701. “Through my time in service I have been able to meet amazing people and participate in life-changing events,” he said about his service experiences at DC. “Those events and people have allowed me to grow tremendously, both professionally and personally, in ways I would have never

otherwise had the opportunity to.”

Brittany Coats, a native of Montpelier and a 2012 DC graduate, was a founding director of the free local health clinic, one of the Project 701 initiatives. She calls it “one of the richest, most educational, and rewarding experiences of my life.” Coats, now in graduate school, said, “Through the Defiance Cares Free Clinic, I’ve gained so many communication and organizational skills, organizing and leading meetings, and making decisions. I’ve gained much more confidence in myself, my leadership ability, and a passion for service.”

“I particularly want to recognize the tremendous leadership that both Dean Mary Ann Studer and Ashton Judis, director of our service leadership program, have provided over the past several years for our community service efforts,” added President Gordon. “This award is a recognition of their stupendous achievement. But it is also recognition of the many hours that so many faculty, staff, and administrators have devoted to so many service-learning projects – both at home and abroad. Above all, this recognition reflects the tremendous accomplishments of our DC students: from the Board, officers, and staff of Project 701; our Service Leaders; our McMaster Scholars; and every Defiance College student who has participated in service-learning – which is just about everyone on campus.” ♦

