Center for Community Engagement at SHSU celebrates five years of valuable service work

By Marissa Nunez mnunez@itemonline.com  Oct 12, 2017

Joyce McCauley, executive director of Sam Houston State University’s Center for Community Engagement, cuts the cake during a special celebration honoring the center’s fifth anniversary and all the work it does to impact both the SHSU and Huntsville-Walker County communities.
During its five years in Huntsville, the Center for Community Engagement has come to embody Sam Houston State University’s motto — “The measure of a life is its service.”

In commemoration of the center’s fifth anniversary, SHSU faculty and staff members came together in the College of Human and Social Sciences building for a special open house celebration Wednesday afternoon.

“This has been such a journey,” said Joyce McCauley, executive director of the center. “I think some of the walls are coming down and there is more comings and goings between the university community and the local community. We need to be looked at as one. We both have resources and incredible people, and the more we work together, the more good we can do. The more we get the students out in the community to learn from the incredible people in the community, and the more they impact our students, is a win-win.”

Lee Miller, director of the center, added, “What we have found is that the students, faculty and staff are eager to work with the community. On the community part, we found that the community is really interested in partnering with people on campus. It has been really rewarding to help facilitate that matchmaking. We’re thrilled to be celebrating our five years.”

The center was officially established in 2012 in an effort to bring the SHSU and Huntsville-Walker County communities together, and to troubleshoot issues facing everyone in Huntsville and Walker County.

One of those issues centered around homelessness in the Huntsville community. Over the last year, center staffers held a number of community meetings and discussions where concerned citizens and representatives from different community organizations, such as The Good Shepherd Mission and Huntsville ISD, came together to take an in-depth look into the issue and possible ways to solve it.

Program coordinator for the center Taylor Morrison, who focused on homelessness while earning her master’s degree at the University of Denver, says the center has allowed her to focus on her passion of giving back to the community and impacting the lives of citizens.

“I grew up in Huntsville and graduated in 2009. I moved back to Huntsville last October and growing up here, community needs was always something I was engaged in,” Morrison said. “I was involved in the county fair and the high school’s FFA program and did a lot of service projects.
“When I left Huntsville, I knew I would come back to give back in some way. I found an opportunity with the center to help support the Huntsville POP (Promoting Our Positives) in an initiative to address homelessness in Huntsville.

“So, I was bringing back my interest and passion for a community here and trying to find a way to help the community in any way I could. That is one of the initiatives that is ongoing for the center, but we have so many other initiatives we are working on. I love that I have the opportunity to be involved and help so many people in the community.”

A key aspect of the center’s work focuses on getting SHSU students involved in the community through its Academic Community Engagement courses, which combines community engagement with academic instruction.

The center began with 12 ACE courses, and has since grown to offer 428 ACE courses through the university’s various colleges. As of this year, approximately 13,681 students have contributed to 217,905 hours for a total economic impact of $5,498,863 through the courses.

Associate professor and assistant chair of the Department of Computer Science Li-Jen Lester says she has seen how the ACE courses have impacted her students. Over the years, Lester’s students worked on refurbishing computers and creating wireless networks, which were then donated to Huntsville ISD.

“The moment I started to teach, I felt that I need to use the projects to get the students engaged,” Lester said. “I started with having them build computers and donating it, and after four years I haven’t stopped. If I teach, I have to incorporate community projects and my students love it. They get to learn about the community through the projects, and they become very humble and learn that they can do so much for the community. I’m so happy that it has grown to offer more than 400 courses.”

Examples of ACE courses include education students tutoring students in local schools, foreign language students transcribing informational pamphlets for non-English speaking residents, photography students documenting community organizations and the work they do and more.

Chuck Drumm, ACE coordinator for the College of Fine Arts and Mass Communication, says the ACE courses help students by allowing them to see the potential impact their own works of art can have on the greater community.
“Our ACE courses allow our art students to look out beyond themselves and see how other people can benefit from something they create,” Drumm said. “For example, students in my class, they work with first-graders. Students in graphic design do design work for nonprofits. All of our classes center around creating things and the ACE courses allow them to take what they created and to use it out in the community.”

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sanalika Oct 12, 2017

our classmate’s sister makes 73 an hour on the laptop. she’s been out of work for eleven months. the previous month her check was 18358 just working on the internet a couple of hours each day.

check http://www.r-a-i-s-e-d-a-i-l-y.com/
### Huntsville Item Events

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