

LIGHTS, CAMERA, COMMUNITY ACTION

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(From: *Rivier Today*, Spring 2011)

Through a service learning partnership with tv13, students work with nonprofit organizations to spread their messages and reach new audiences.

"The nonprofits get a tangible product at the end. Students get to give back to the community. Tv13 gets a chance to do more value-added work with their station."

— Donny Guillemette, Rivier College Coordinator for Service Learning



As part of her service learning project, Kymm Dennis '14 spent time behind the camera.

Last year, WYCN tv13 Nashua Program Manager Carolyn Choate '06G and Station Manager Gordon Jackson started searching for additional ways the station could contribute to the Rivier community. They connected with Donny Guillemette, the College's Coordinator for Service Learning. After meeting, "We decided tv13 Nashua could be a cool option for service learning credit," says Choate.

Guillemette agreed. All day students are required to complete service learning. "They can add a service learning component to a class they are taking if the instructor offers the option, or take a freestanding one-credit course. Both combine 20 hours of service with some reflective educational

components.” Guillemette says that Choate and Jackson were open to having students involved with the station in various ways.

“It gives the students the opportunity to be exposed to something they never would have been exposed to—scripting, interviewing, videotaping, editing, at the same time helping the local community,” Guillemette says. “That’s significant for someone to get involved with from ground zero.”



Carolyn Choate '06G, Kymm Dennis '14 and Gordon Jackson review interview notes.

In the fall 2010 semester, four students chose tv13 for their service learning experience: communications major Renee Duval '11, psychology major Chris Nugent '11, and nursing majors John Jarvis '11 and Kymm Dennis '14. Duval says while she chose tv13 because she could tie the experience into her major, she says she was also interested because the nonprofit organizations tv13 works with don't have to pay for their media coverage. “They’re getting free PR,” she says. “It’s a nice thing to do not just for the organization, but for the people they’re helping.”

While Jackson teaches students how to use the station’s equipment, Choate teaches interviewing techniques. “The project doesn’t necessarily require that students be on camera,” says Jackson. “They’re using the tools at the station to complete a project with our help.”

Jackson encouraged students to do multimedia projects incorporating audio and video. “How they go about producing the project is up to them,” he says. “They could do paper mache still-frame animation, a skit, an interview...anything.” He also encouraged students to consider where they could put the end product to use. “It doesn’t have to be a TV commercial—it could go on YouTube or elsewhere on the web,” he says.

Duval and Dennis worked together to produce an interview with Bobbie Bagley '97, Chair of the Board of Directors for the New Hampshire Minority Health Coalition. “Through Carolyn’s connections, we found three organizations we felt could be a good fit,” says Dennis. The women decided to work with an organization they hadn’t heard of before.

“Bobbie already had intentions for the final product,” says Duval. “They just had major budget cuts, so she had clear ideas of what she wanted to focus on.” Duval and Dennis filmed a five-minute interview with Bagley, explaining the organization and discussing who the Coalition serves, services offered and fundraising opportunities.

Guillemette directed Jarvis and Nugent to the Salvation Army. “We have a partnership with them—they have a small afterschool program that often gets overshadowed by larger programs,” he says.

Jarvis and Nugent teamed up to create a DVD for parents promoting ways the Salvation Army’s after-school program could benefit low-income families. Jarvis says they asked the program director what he would want the video to portray. “We focused in presenting their after-school program as an alternative for middle school students, a place they can go. We showed the benefits to the community and what children in the program do.”

Both men were surprised at the amount of work involved. “For a five minute video, you probably spend many times that amount of time filming— move in, pan out, go this way, shoot that way,” Nugent says. Once filming was done, they edited the footage down to a video the Salvation Army staff could show during dinners with families or send to parents interested in enrolling their children.

In addition to interviewing, video recording and editing, students developed focus, problem-solving and time management skills. “It’s really independent—you have to guide your own project,” says Dennis.

“It’s a win-win-win situation,” says Choate. “Students have a really unique option for service learning. We win because we love teaching and there will be times the final product can air on tv13—that gives us substantial, meaningful things to air. The other win is that nonprofits and the community in general benefit from this simple, yet powerful endeavor.” Choate says she likes to think that ideally, the partner- ships could serve as a model for other institutions.

Guillemette shares Choate and Jackson’s enthusiasm. “The nonprofits get a tangible product at the end. Students get to give back to the community. Tv13 gets a chance to do more value-added work with their station. It’s been great,” he says. ■