



▶ UPCOMING SCHWEITZER  
EVENTS - BACK COVER

## Schweitzer Fellows

### “Girl/Friends” Provides Safe Space, Empowers Youth Leaders

My Schweitzer Fellowship Project was born out of my previous experience working with A Long Walk Home, an organization committed to ending gender-based violence. Through its Girl/Friends Summer Institute, adolescent girls from North Lawndale College Prep learn tools to become youth leaders in their community to end sexual violence. With the help of Scheherazade Tillet, founder of A Long Walk Home, I developed a Girl/Friends After School program to provide the girls with continued support throughout the school year.



Girls are at high risk for sexual abuse. National statistics show that 1 in 3 girls will be sexually abused before

the age of 18 (Rape Victim Advocates). Girl/Friends After School is a youth-led program for teen girls who are committed to ending gender violence, such as sexual assault, dating violence, and street harassment, in their school and neighborhood. Our program held weekly meetings during which the girls participated in group check-ins, self-care, and made art for social change. We worked together to raise awareness about ending gender violence and developed a plan of action for change in their school. We also had the opportunity to go on cultural fieldtrips aimed at connecting the girls with larger movements of social change.

When the school year came to a close, we reflected upon our time together. We wrote about what being part of Girl/Friends meant to us, and then we shared our writing aloud. Tiffany, a graduating senior, wrote how she valued “to be a part of something bigger than me... to be a part of a change that is sweeping across the world... to be a part of the bull horn that brings volume to sexual violence... to be a part of a sisterhood.” *Continued on page 6*

### Fellow Mentors Homeless LGBT Youth: Focus on Education and Career Opportunities



Jordan Becerril

In Chicago, a relatively safe haven for LGBT (lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender) youth is found in Lakeview, a north side neighborhood colloquially known as Boystown. It is here that Jordan Becerril, a second year medical student at Rush Medical College, is currently conducting his Schweitzer Fellowship. Jordan’s project aims to address education disparities among low-income or homeless LGBT youth at the Center on Halsted, an agency for the LGBT community that links and provides community resources and enriches life experiences for youth and adults.

Homeless youth are disproportionately LGBT (20% of homeless youth are LGBT, while the general youth population is 10% LGBT). Most of the youth Jordan has served are originally from the south and west sides of Chicago, and have been kicked out by their families because of their identity. LGBT homeless youth face challenges, including being twice as likely to experience sexual abuse before the age of 12 and having a significantly higher risk for suicide than heterosexual homeless youth.

*Cont. on page 4*

## Call to Service Brings Fellow for Life to the Top of the World

As I make my way along a narrow, thin, path that follows a long ridge up to Phangsang Pass at 14,000 feet, my heart and respiration rate are rapid and my leg muscles burn. To my left a series of steep cliffs end in a ravine 2,000 feet below. Ahead of me is a line of 50 porters, each carrying an oversized *doka* packed with 100 pounds of medical and trekking supplies. Our camp is still five hours away and beyond that are two hard days of hiking before we reach our first medical camp in the village of Tipling. At moments like these I start to wonder why I am here again. However, this feeling quickly vanishes when I think about the care and attention our medical team of 10 providers will give to over 600 rural Nepalese in the coming weeks. As well, I think about individual patients that I have seen on each trek over the last nine years and how measures, such as preventive medicine, education, and income generation have vastly improved the quality of life for them and their fellow villagers.



*“At first glance one might not appreciate the similarities between a medical trek to a remote Nepal village near the top of the world and my Schweitzer project on the West Side of Chicago.”*



I first came to this remote northern region near the Tibet border in 2002, as a 2nd year Family Medicine Resident in Chicago. I was struck with the severity of the living conditions and the limited health care available to these rural Nepalese. One in 10 women died in childbirth, 1 in 5 children would not live to their fifth birthday, and whole villages would suffer from diarrheal and respiratory illnesses easily treated with common antibiotics and preventive measures.

Through the work of Himalayan HealthCare (HHC), a non-profit, non-denominational NGO working in rural Nepal for the last 19 years, dramatic improvements have taken place in healthcare statistics.

Today, in some remote villages only 1 in 30 children will die before their fifth birthday, and the country's infant and maternal mortality rates have dramatically improved. The villagers, especially the children, look healthier and are healthier.

HHC's mission is to help Nepalese help themselves. Its three-pronged approach (healthcare, education, and income generation) has proved to be effective. To date, HHC has sponsored over 80 medical treks into the Dhading region (northern Nepal, bordering Tibet) and the Ilam region (eastern Nepal, bordering India), bringing important primary health care services to tens of thousands of rural Nepalese. These treks have allowed international medical providers to teach—and learn from—the local Nepalese healthcare providers. HHC operates the Dr. Megh Bahadur Parajuli Community Hospital, offering 24hr service and employing Nepalese medical doctors and 40 staff to care for some 300,000 in the Ilam region.

HHC's education program underwrites teacher salaries and student tuitions in 19 schools in the Dhading region, as well as empowerment programs, bringing hope to many women and children. Children, once destined to be farmers, are now finishing schooling through the tenth grade and applying for college courses.

Income generation programs in the rural villages and Kathmandu, have allowed more than 1,000 families to earn fair wages. Nepalese artisans create beautiful crafts and gifts from recyclables, which help beautify the countryside, and bring vital income to their

village and families.

Going forward, HHC's priority is to implement new and innovative ways to engage these communities, such as building permanent toilets, constructing fuel-efficient, smoke-reducing cooking stoves, and distributing Ready to Use Therapeutic Food to the chronically undernourished.



I am heartened by seeing more women whose number of living children now outnumbers their deceased children.



During my most recent trek, I saw a hopeful trend in the mother-child encounters we have. The mother who arrives at our camp with her emaciated infant lying listless in a basket, swaddled in a dirty towel or scarf, is uncommon now. More often we encounter a plump and healthy infant with a mother who has had the opportunity to properly care for both her child and herself. This is a direct result of our multi-pronged approach to helping these villages become self-sustaining. Our rudimentary yet effective village clinics staffed by our healthcare workers and midwives who have trained in Kathmandu offer simple but effective preventive medicine services. Our educational component, especially the emphasis that we place on women empowerment classes that offer instruction in hygiene, family planning, and birth spacing, have enabled these women to increase the time between pregnancies, thus decreasing their number of pregnancies. This has had a measureable effect on decreasing the maternal and infant mortality rates. I am heartened by seeing more women whose number of living children now outnumbers their deceased children.

At first glance one might not appreciate the similarities between a medical trek to a remote



Robert is welcomed at the Tipling, Nepal medical camp. The silk scarf along with braided marigold flowers and tikka on the forehead is a traditional welcome.

remote Nepal village near the top of the world and my Schweitzer project on the West Side of Chicago. However, similarities do exist. Both called on me to acquire knowledge and use specific skills to overcome challenging obstacles and boundaries.

The obstacles and boundaries encountered when volunteering in Nepal are both physical and mental; physically climbing over a high pass and then diagnosing an unfamiliar medical condition with minimum resources. The obstacles and boundaries encountered during my project at the Cook County Juvenile Detention Center were subtler and mainly mental; trying to bridge the void of distrust that often exists between the incarcerated and the volunteer. The lesson of being flexible in one's approach and having a willingness to call on your team stood me well with my Schweitzer work in 1996 and is now the base line for my work in Nepal. These skills are what generations of Schweitzer Fellows acquire on their assignments and use to good advantage in their implementation of successful and meaningful projects. I have had the good fortune of observing this growth and learning as a result of being an advisor to Schweitzer Fellows and reviewing their reports over the years.

HHC welcomes volunteers from all professions and skill sets. Volunteering will be life changing not only for the Nepalese villagers, but also, I have learned, for one's self. For further information please visit:

[www.himalayan-healthcare.org](http://www.himalayan-healthcare.org).

- Robert McKersie, MD, President of HHC  
Chicago Schweitzer Fellow (1996-97)

### *Fellow Mentors Homeless LGBT Youth* (Cont. from Page 1)

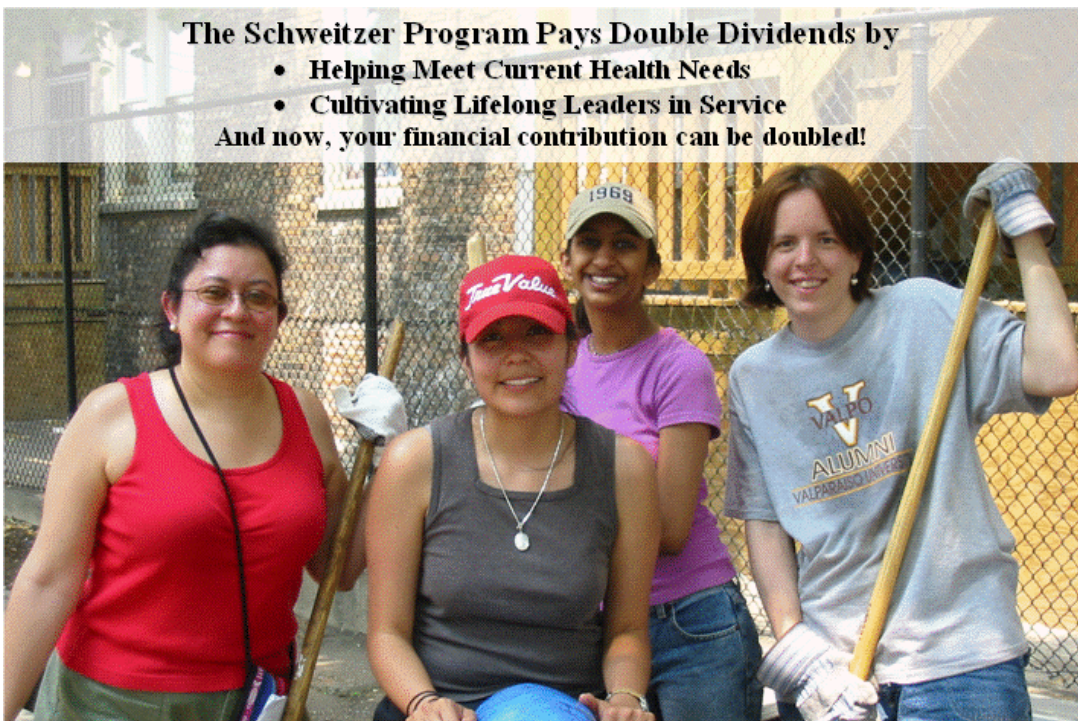
In a needs assessment Jordan administered to 11 youth ages 17-24 years old at the Center, over 50% reported they had not completed high school or earned their GED. Without a GED or high school diploma, the youth are more likely to stay caught in the cycle of homelessness as they are unable to be competitive in the job market. Jordan’s Schweitzer Fellowship project aims to empower the youth, so that they might actualize dreams of an education leading towards a career. While Jordan’s area of expertise is in the health-care field, he works with youth who have a wide range of aspirations from being a flight attendant to a doctor. “They have been a joy to work with,” Jordan said. “I have admired their willingness to let me walk with them in their successes and struggles.” As of this writing, Jordan has begun mentoring a youth interested in the medical field by offering a tour of Rush University as well as provided assistance with college and scholarship applications. He has also helped other youth with writing their resumes, job searching and preparing for interviews. He’s also worked extensively with a male-identified youth who had been encountering bureaucratic obstacles accessing his transcripts in order to apply to college.

While Jordan’s goals for the project have remained the same throughout, the vision has evolved. He began with the intention of creating a class geared towards goal setting and pursuing higher education. The project quickly changed as he realized the problems of the population did not align with his original perceptions. His focus shifted to offering a GED prep program, which then changed into taking a more personalized approach with youth.

*“I have been fortunate to witness small but powerful successes.”*

Jordan hopes that the youth are able to make the goals they have set for themselves a reality, are inspired to take charge in their life, and are motivated to be persistent until they have managed to traverse the boulders preventing them from getting to where they want to be. “The Schweitzer experience has been immensely rewarding,” said Jordan. “I have been fortunate to witness small but powerful successes with some of the youth. I hope to continue volunteering at the Center well after my project is complete.”

*– Jordan Becerril, 2011-2012 Schweitzer Fellow and Rush Medical College student*



#### **The Schweitzer Program Pays Double Dividends by**

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- **Cultivating Lifelong Leaders in Service**

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*Donations to Health & Medicine Policy Research Group for the Chicago Area Schweitzer Fellows Program are tax deductible to the fullest extent provided by law.*

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Donate Online!

*An anonymous funder has renewed the Schweitzer Program’s challenge grant!  
New donations and increased donations can be **doubled** through 2012!*

## Chicago Fellows for Life Program Marks 6<sup>th</sup> Successful Year

This was another busy year for Fellows for Life, the sixth year that the Chicago Schweitzer Program has provided ongoing leadership development, volunteering and networking opportunities for Schweitzer alumni. Our popular “Leadership by Example” lecture series, first launched in 2007, and open to the public, continued to inspire audiences with our guest speakers’ passion for and insights about public service. The speakers included Dr. Richard David, a neonatologist whose research focuses on health disparities impacting expectant African American women and their babies, Kathy Kelly, a peace activist and founder of Voices for Creative Nonviolence, and Dr. Linda Rae Murray, Chief Medical Officer for the Cook County Department of Public Health and President of the American Public Health Association.



Peace Activist Kathy Kelly



Over the summer, we entered an exciting new partnership with The Night Ministry, through which several Fellows for Life will be mentoring formerly homeless young adults who are living in the agency’s transitional housing program. “The Night Ministry youth epitomize perseverance in every sense of the word,” said Ben Preyss, a 2008-09 Fellow and UIC medical student who is volunteering as a mentor. “They remind you just how special life can be despite its obstacles.” Fellows for Life also continued to mentor under-represented student nurses at Rush University. The Rush – FFL mentoring program, soon to enter its fourth year, has been an important resource for the students, all of whom were recipients of a scholarship from the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation.



Above: FFL Ben Preyss with youth at the Night Ministry Below: FFL Nursing Mentors and Mentees at Rush

Throughout the year, different trainings and social events were held to enable Fellows for Life to meet, share ideas and strengthen their skills and enthusiasm for service. We offered a wellness retreat to help Fellows for Life focus on their own well-being and prevent “compassion burnout.” We also arranged a Strategic Planning 101 workshop to help Fellows who are planning to start their own non-profits. Informal and unstructured quarterly dinners provided important opportunities for Fellows for Life to connect with each other.

“Each and every time that I show up at a Fellows for Life event, I am reminded of why it is so important for me,” Monika Black (2008-09) said recently. “It is the people, the energy and the work. The events are one of the few spaces from which I actually walk away feeling connected, rejuvenated and inspired to do more.”

Finally, Fellows for Life are increasingly involved with financially supporting the Schweitzer Program. This fall, FFL organized an “Oktoberfest” themed fundraiser that raised \$1,500 and brought together Schweitzer alumni, Advisory Council members, mentors and other supporters. We thank Dr. Lola Coke, a Fellow for Life (2002-03) and now an Advisory Council member and faculty mentor, for planning and hosting the Oktoberfest event at her home.



Fellows for Life “Oktoberfest” fundraiser

**Girl/Friends Summer Institute Works to End Gender-Based Violence** (Cont. from Page 1)



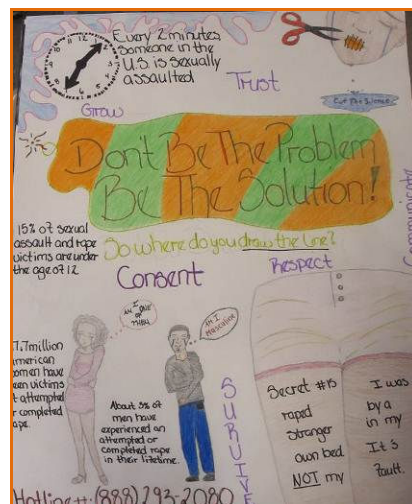
Shirts Made in Girl/Friends After-School

Brittani and Larrinita, both sophomores, described the affirming sisterhood they found in Girl/Friends. Brittani described Girl/Friends as “being a part of a family...you can tell them anything and trust that they will stick by you at all times...For me Girl/Friends is my home.” Larrinita wrote, “Being a part of Girl/Friends was very challenging at first. I had to deal with self-esteem, wondering will I connect with other girls, and trust. But as it turned out,

everyone really just needs a supporter and others they feel comfortable around. Girl/Friends has not only been a success, but also a gift to me.”

Through the Schweitzer Fellowship I have learned that dedication, determination, and creativity can help me cross barriers and conquer challenges. By extending the Summer Institute into Girl/Friends After School Program, I provided a safe place for these girls to come throughout the year. Watching the girl/friends grow into youth leaders against gender-based violence filled me up with energy and inspired me. I have seen their ability to brainstorm positive solutions and to bring their ideas to life.

My time spent with these amazing girls has shown me the power of youth-led social justice movements, and has fueled my passion and my life-long commitment to working for change.



-By Brittlyn Riley, 2010-2011 Schweitzer Fellow and School of the Art Institute Master of Art Therapy student

Brittlyn is now an art therapist at Timberline Knolls Residential Treatment Center and she continues to volunteer with A Long Walk Home.

**New Chicago AHEC Director Seeks Involvement of Fellows for Life**

The Schweitzer Program warmly welcomes Atara Young, the Director of a new Chicago Area Health Education Center (AHEC) that was started at Health & Medicine. AHEC is a national workforce development program seeking to recruit, train and retain a health professions workforce committed to underserved populations. AHEC has a special focus on promoting health careers to minorities and underserved populations.

Our Fellows for Life Program, which aims to help Schweitzer graduates continue their development as leaders in service and their involvement with underserved communities, fits very well with AHEC’s objectives. Thus, Atara has begun overseeing much of the Fellows for Life Program, and especially the FFL mentoring initiatives.

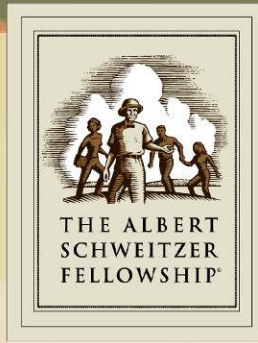
As AHEC Director, Atara is designing and implementing a Speaker’s Bureau through which current Fellows and Fellows for Life may volunteer to share their knowledge,



Atara Young and Schweitzer Fellow for Life Suraj Madoori at the “Oktoberfest” fundraiser

insights, and enthusiasm about health related careers with underrepresented youth.

Fellows for Life interested in becoming involved in these and other activities should contact Atara Young at [ayoung@hmprg.org](mailto:ayoung@hmprg.org) or 312 372-4292 ext. 26



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## **Share your Gifts. Receive a Wealth of Experience.**

- ❖ Design and implement an innovative 200 hour service project to address an underserved Chicago community's needs with guidance of mentors
- ❖ Receive a \$2,000 stipend
- ❖ Join an interdisciplinary group of like-minded Schweitzer Fellows dedicated to making a difference in the lives of people they serve
- ❖ Develop leadership skills
- ❖ Plan public health symposia and service days

“The Fellowship served as a reminder throughout the year of why I decided to attend nursing school and what I hope to do with my degree. It has strengthened my commitment to working with underserved communities, and given me confidence that I can start projects and work successfully with new communities.

- Sarah Cordes, Schweitzer Fellow & DePaul University nursing student

“Participating in the Schweitzer Fellowship allowed me to put my ideals into practice... The hours of direct service I provided to homeless youth allowed me to reconnect with my passion of direct social advocacy and align my professional training with my personal goals in important and tangible ways.”

- Mara Terras, Schweitzer Fellow and University of Illinois medical student

**An information session will be held  
Tuesday, Jan. 10, 2012 6:00pm - 7:00pm  
at Health & Medicine Policy Research Group  
29 E. Madison Street, Suite 602, Chicago, IL 60602  
Reservations recommended: email [rwang@hmprg.org](mailto:rwang@hmprg.org)**

Applications for 2012-13 Schweitzer Fellowships will be accepted until Feb. 1, 2012  
Additional information available at [www.schweitzerfellowship.org](http://www.schweitzerfellowship.org)

**Chicago Area Schweitzer Fellows Program**

Health & Medicine Policy  
Research Group  
29 E. Madison, Suite 602  
Chicago, IL 60602  
(312) 372-4292

Ray Wang  
Program Director

Janna Stansell, MPH  
Program Associate

Margie Schaps, MPH  
Executive Director, HMPRG

Quentin D. Young, MD  
Chairman, HMPRG

Arthur F. Kohrman, MD  
Schweitzer Fellowship  
Advisor  
Advisory Council Chair &  
National Schweitzer Board

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**Chicago Area Schweitzer Fellowship Events**

**Jan. 10, 2012, 6:00pm – Workshop for students interested in applying to the 2012-13 Schweitzer Fellows Program**

HMPRG, 29 E. Madison St., Suite 602, Chicago, IL  
Reservations recommended: email [rwang@hmprg.org](mailto:rwang@hmprg.org)

**Jan. 25, 5:30pm – Schweitzer Fellows Symposium**

*“Aging with Pride: A Discussion on Health Issues Facing LGBT Older Adults.”* Speakers: Dr. Magda Houlberg and Cecilia Hardacker. Rush University, 600 S. Paulina, Room 976  
Free, but reservations recommended. To RSVP, email [rsvp@hmprg.org](mailto:rsvp@hmprg.org)

**Feb. 1, 5:00pm – Application Deadline for the 2012-13 Schweitzer Fellowship.** For information or to apply email [rwang@hmprg.org](mailto:rwang@hmprg.org)

**Feb. 29 – Schweitzer Fellows Symposium on Adolescent Health** Details TBA For information email [rwang@hmprg.org](mailto:rwang@hmprg.org)

**Apr. 18 – Schweitzer Annual Event**  
Details TBA

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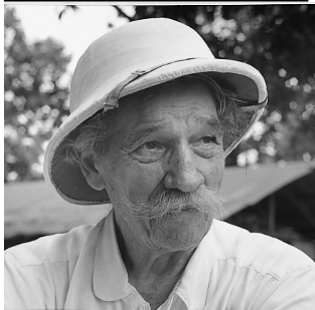
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and the many individuals and  
families who support the  
Schweitzer Program.



“The only ones among you who will be really happy are those who will have sought and found how to serve”

- Albert Schweitzer