

Give & Get

STORY BY SARA GRIER

PHOTOS BY NANCY O'CONNOR

To keep a lamp burning," Mother Teresa said, "we have to keep putting oil in it." If that's so, MU is an oil field where students fuel up for a lifetime of community service. That's what's happening at more than 100 locations where students try out their learning in the world. Physical-therapy students teach gymnastics to children with disabilities, education majors tutor at-risk teen-agers—and the experiences are never one-way. "Students have as much to learn as they have to give," says Anne-Marie Foley, AB '82, MA '86, PhD '92, director of the Office of Student Learning and the Honors College Community Involvement Program. Both programs turn students into volunteers. The big idea is to extend classroom learning beyond campus. For instance, environmental-science students learn in class about the delicate balance of nature. Then through their community service projects, they observe pollution's effects. The world is their classroom.

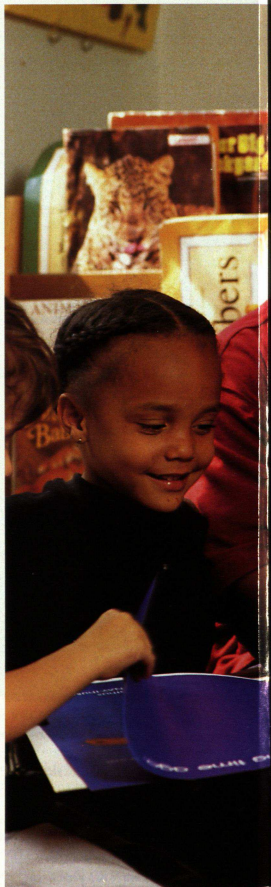
tammy brunk ↓



PHOTO BY GARY M. PEAKINS

"I can
make a
difference,"

With a single stroke, Tammy Brunk's paintbrush brightens the children's tiny faces at the Abused Women Shelter in San Antonio, Texas. For the past four years, Brunk, AB '96, has spent spring break helping others. This year, she and 11 MU students entertained children and conducted stress-management workshops. The trip is one of nine offered this year by Alternative Spring Break, a student-run organization that works with the University Y. "The trip had lasting impacts for me and everyone else," Brunk says. "I know now that I can make a difference."





norvell thomas

← a walking, talking
jungle gym

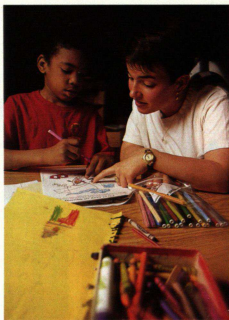
Within minutes of his arrival at Head Start, Norvell Thomas becomes a walking, talking jungle gym for 3- to 5-year-olds. "You would think that I'd get tired, but I never do," he says.

In fact, Thomas, a sophomore prejournalism major from Columbia, has been one of the only male role models for the children over the past year, says Vanessa McTye, a teacher at Head Start. The male influence is especially important at the day-care center run mostly by women. "The kids just love Norvell. When he comes in the room, they drop whatever they are doing and run to him."

And he loves the enthusiasm. "These kids are so great," Thomas says. "They rejuvenate my spirit."

gwen marberry →

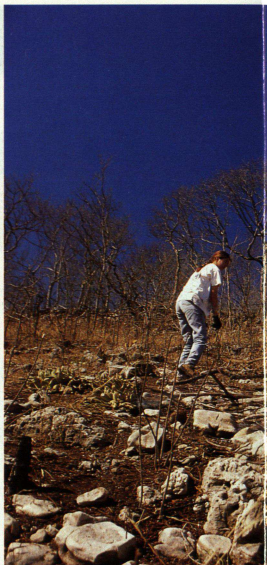
“I get back
five times as
much through
what I learn.”



Gwen Marberry's community service work teaches her more than any textbook. "As much as I give to these kids, I get back five times as much through what I learn. That makes what I study relevant," she says.

In her sociology and psychology classes, Marberry learns about behavioral disorders, children's many modes of learning, and the effects of socioeconomic class. By tutoring kindergartners through sixth-graders at J.W. "Blind" Boone Community Center in Columbia, she sees these abstract ideas play out in the lives of real children.

And despite the many difficulties they face, the children encourage Marberry. "These kids," she says, "have taught me how to be strong in the face of difficulty."





“Any time you
help someone,
that helps us all”

← mindy cooke

Saving the world is a burning issue for Mindy Cooke, a freshman from St. Louis. “I’ve always been interested in environmental causes,” says Cooke, a member of Wakonse Residence, a living-learning experience for students who want to improve their community and world. “This group lets me do something about my concerns.” Cooke’s service experiences prompted her to change majors from pre-veterinary medicine to fisheries and wildlife.

In March, a group from Wakonse cleaned up the Ha Ha Tonka State Park near Camdenton, Mo. But they don’t reserve their good deeds for nature. Wakonse students also feed the hungry and comfort the sick. “Any time you help someone,” Cooke says, “that helps us all.”



← jill bremer

“I can see that I am
helping her.”

Even though the class is over and the grade has long since been awarded, Jill Bremer continues to visit Irene Taylor. Bremer met 89-year-old Taylor almost two years ago through the Honors College program.

“I just couldn’t imagine dropping my relationship with Irene,” says Bremer, a senior recreational therapy major from Champaign, Ill. “I love to listen to her stories and be around her because she is always upbeat and positive.”

Helping Taylor keep that positive outlook is one of Bremer’s goals. Taylor’s mobility is limited by severe arthritis, and her family lives far away, so the weekly trips to the grocery store and flower shop with Bremer help combat the loneliness. “I can see that I am helping her and making a difference,” says Bremer. “That’s what is important.”