

# Serving gladly

Inspiring the community toward social action

Megan Howard '10



His in Service, along with other students, participate in projects like raking leaves (right) and helping prepare "Lonnie Land" for retreats (above and below).



When I arrived at Carleton, I was thrilled to find a vibrant community of believers on such a liberal campus. It seemed like the CCC (Carleton Christian Community, as it was then called, now FC for Fellowship in Christ) had it all: Bible studies, fellowship, even its own worship band! As I got involved, however, I began to yearn for more outreach opportunities. Although I was raised as a Christian, Jesus became real to me on a high-school mission trip, and I was aware of the profound impact that service can have on one's faith.

My sophomore year, I was thrilled to help Pastor David Olson lead a

small group of Carls on an exciting and thought-provoking trip to Nicaragua. The spring term following our trip was one of excitement and some controversy as the CCC orchestrated Unity Week, a week of 24/7 prayer in a big tent on the chapel lawn (see article by **Josh Yeoh**). For the social action component of the event, I was one of a few students who hosted one hour of prayer daily for social justice. We also did a service project that week at Feed My Starving Children, packing meals to be sent to hungry people around the world.

The event attracted many students from a variety of Christian groups on campus. This was an excellent

opportunity to open up discussion. Sometimes these discussions were positive and sometimes they were tense, touching on personal and emotional differences between people and groups. One thing, however, that was never in dispute was the value of social action. It occurred to me then that service opportunities could nurture corporate as well as personal spiritual growth. There would never be a single worship service, prayer meeting or Bible study that all the Christians on campus could fully agree with, but service was something that everyone could get behind. I realized this trend could be extended to most of campus. Several friends who never made it to the prayer tent accepted my invitation to pack meals. Social action was a rare opportunity for the CCC to find common ground with all Carleton students.

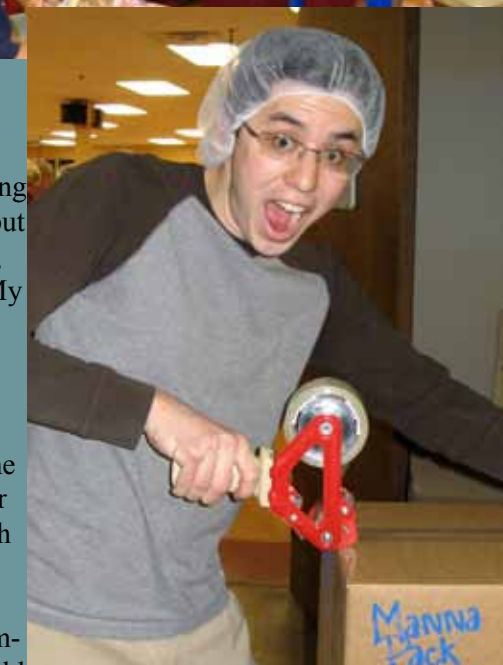
The 2007-2008 school year ended on a high note of open discussion and change in the community. When we returned in the fall, the social action team from Unity week continued to meet, to consider how we could make social action a consistent part of the CCC. It began with three of us: Deb Hvass, Andy Shenk '10 and me, meeting in a classroom in upper Sayles to think about how on earth we could get busy Carleton students to take the time to do more service. (We were later joined by Rachel Kittaka '12, who led the group in 2010-2011.)

There were so many questions that first year. What would our service look like? The practical questions were always important, but the philosophical questions were the ones we discussed

the most. What does it mean to be a Christian service group? What does it mean to serve in Jesus's name? How do we set ourselves apart from any other service group? How do we set up a Christian service group that doesn't rival other service groups on campus but complements them?

There were so many more questions than answers, and as a result we spent most of that year in prayer. We did get involved in a few service projects: We served food at a gathering addressing Northfield's drug issues put on by Main Street Moravian Church, and we returned each term to Feed My Starving Children. The prayer time became the most important thing we did, and one of the few firm answers we did get was to keep praying.

The next fall, we landed on a name for ourselves, His In Service, and our vision was: "seeking to combine faith with deeds so that our actions are an outworking and expression of our faith." Our meeting times were a combination of time spent at the Northfield Prayer Room and at the Northfield Key, a hangout for Northfield's youth. We continued to organize a service trip each term to keep the whole FC involved in service. Since I graduated in 2010, the group has continued, small and dynamic and still devoted to praying over the community, the service projects and social justice issues around the world. ♦



Above: Starting in spring 2008, Christian groups cancel activities one night per term in order to pack food for nations in need at Feed My Starving Children in Eagan, MN.

Megan Howard '10, along with Nick Smith '09, moved to Houston, TX, after graduation. They will be married in June 2011. She is a research assistant in an immunology lab at MD Anderson Cancer Center.

