

# Superstars of Service

## Meet America's best campus volunteers

Compiled by Student Leader staff

This year, *Student Leader* was flooded with applications to be on the cover of our community service issue. With so many students out there making a difference, it was difficult to pick just one. From helping children to building volunteer empires, the contributions of these four students couldn't be ignored. They have served their community with excellence, and although we can only pick one cover subject, here are the best of the rest.

### Connecting with the Community

As a graduate student in the biomedical engineering program at **John Hopkins University** in Maryland, Chirag Patel has made it his mission to get JHU students involved in the Baltimore community.

"Since my freshman year, I've noticed a great change in the way Hopkins is perceived by the local community," Patel says. "I'm convinced that this change has been fueled by all of the service efforts put forth by the students on our campus."

Patel says that students tend to get caught up in their studies and ignore the events occurring off campus. "By going out into the community and serving others, we students are showing that we care about more than our homework and exams," he says.

In an effort to change this trend, Patel co-coordinated JHU's Freshman Day of Service—a massive one-day event at the end of freshman orientation to inform new students about the community service opportunities in Baltimore. Because of his efforts, 420 freshman volunteered.

Patel has received numerous awards for his volunteering advocacy, including the Hopkins Martin Luther King, Jr. Community Service Award, and Alpha Phi Omega's John Mack Scholarship. "I don't see volunteering as helping someone who's needy, but rather working together with someone to help them become independently able."

-CS  
Contact Patel at (410) 338-1790 or chirag@jhu.edu.

See expanded profiles of community servants at [www.studentleader.com](http://www.studentleader.com)

### Starting from Scratch

As co-creator of the ManaTEEN Club in Manatee County, Florida, Laura Lockwood says she was never an A+ student, or very popular, and that she used to be extremely shy. So how did this **Manatee Community College** student co-create a club that is nothing less than a volunteer juggernaut with 89 percent of Manatee County's teen population as members and 11,100 members nationwide? "We grew up volunteering, and I always had a passion for it," Laura says. By teaming up with her sister and their friends, they created a club for teenagers that incorporated all the middle and high schools in the county.

Starting with only 22 members, the club's first project was painting a neighbor's house.

Now, eight years later, ManaTEENs work with more than 486 organizations on 57 different projects. Lowe's Home Safety for Seniors is one of their largest projects. In this program, teen volunteers conduct "needs evaluations" in the homes of senior citizens and then install items donated by Lowe's Home Improvement Warehouse such as smoke alarms, fire extinguishers, and flashlights. Other projects include a volunteer babysitting service, consisting of 800 babysitters called "Carousel Kids," and a weekend volunteer program for fathers and their kids, "Weekend Dads."

Lockwood offers her knowledge and experience to anyone who might want to start a club like the ManaTEENs. "We're willing to let anyone copy everything that we have and just erase our name from it and put their name on it."

-RM  
Contact Lockwood at manateens@aol.com.

### Giving Back

Rebecca Palmisano knows how to get the community to care about her fellow college students. As an undergrad at **Frostburg State University** in Maryland, she helped plan events to reach out to the small rural city through her participation in the psychology club. "Psych Night," an informational fair geared toward local high school students, educated the community on issues and careers in the field of psychology.

After graduating, Palmisano joined AmeriCorps as the program coordinator for a K-8 literacy program. "Particularly in the community I was living in, there was an

education gap," she says. "I also thought the program was a great bridge between the university and the community."

After two years with AmeriCorps, Palmisano returned to Frostburg State as the manager and residence hall director for the HallSTARS program. As a hall director, she built community partnerships, recruited, mentored, and managed student volunteers.

Currently, Palmisano is working on a master's degree in student affairs in higher education and works in the Office for Service Learning and Volunteer Programs at **Colorado State University**. In the Office for Service Learning, she manages the ServiceBank, a database of more than 300 agencies that matches faculty, students, and staff with volunteer opportunities.

"I grew up in a kind of community where folks were giving to me, and I wanted to provide that service back to others," she says.

-CE  
Contact Palmisano at rpalmis@lamar.colostate.edu.

### Helping Children

Paul Agnew, vice president of Circle K International, which is the largest student-run collegiate service organization in the world, says his time with the group has allowed him to cultivate the skills necessary for his future career. "It's not only a service organization, but it's also an opportunity to develop your leadership abilities," says Agnew, who has completed 600 hours of service.

Agnew, a grad student at the **University of Georgia**, has been a member of Circle K for five years. Although Circle K performs many service projects for all ages throughout the community, the group's main focus is children 6 through 13. "I want to become a teacher," he says. "Working with children through Circle K has been a benefit to me and my career." Agnew served as Distinguished Governor, District Governor, and now the International Vice President.

Circle K has more than 498 clubs throughout the world. The club also works with Best Buddies, with March of Dimes, and at Penelope House, a home for abused and battered children in Mobile, Alabama. "It was an important role for me," Agnew says. "A lot of those children don't have a positive male influence in their life." -FB  
Contact Agnew at pagnew@uga.edu.



Chirag Patel



Laura Lockwood



Rebecca Palmisano



Paul Agnew



Laura Lockwood leads "Tidy Tombstones," an effort to clean up local cemeteries.

COURTESY: LAURA LOCKWOOD