

WWU Newman Center is home base for student service projects

Campus ministry provides a place for students who are away from home for the first time to stay in touch with their faith and make new friends

BELLINGHAM
BY ARMANDO MACHADO

Corina Jones is a fine arts major at Western Washington University, and she is a peer minister with the Newman Center, the Catholic ministry located just off campus on North Garden Street.

The 22-year-old senior is from Twisp, WA, in Okanogan County, where her home parish is St. Genevieve Church.

Recalling her freshman year during an interview in the large renovated house that has been home to the Newman Catholic Campus Ministry since June 2006, Jones said "It's been pretty incredible coming into this big college. I was overwhelmed, but then I found the Mass and this great little community" at the Newman Center.

Her experience is representative of many who have come in contact with the campus ministry that is in its 44th year at WWU.

Jones and other members of the center are looking forward to participating in various service projects this year. One of those projects will be a spring-break trip to Tijuana, Mexico coordinated through Esperanza International to help build homes for needy families.

About 40 Newman Center members are planning to go. Most will take part in Esperanza, while others will help at

Casa de Migrante, a temporary shelter in Tijuana for migrants and the homeless.

Service programs

Other service projects that Newman Center members take part in include meal programs for the poor and homeless in the Bellingham area, and helping in outreach programs for migrant workers in Whatcom and Skagit counties. Some students have taken summer trips to Calcutta, India to serve with the Missionaries of Charity started by Blessed Mother Teresa; another trip is planned for next summer. In addition, the center offers students various ways to grow in their faith, including a men's group, a women's group, retreats, RCIA and confirmation preparation.

"It helped me to gain friends, good friends," Jones said of the Newman Center, noting the importance of sharing her faith with fellow Catholic students. She said the annual Esperanza trips have helped her "to put things in perspective, and to see what other people in the world are living with."

"Everyday is a pleasurable experience being part of the ministry," said Luke Krumwiede, 22, an archeology major whose home parish is St. John Bosco Church in Lakewood. "Every time that I walk in here, there are always good friends," he added, noting the significance of friends helping friends grow in their faith and the spiritual rewards in taking part in Esperanza and other service projects.

Claire Fuchs, 22, said the Esperanza project is "an awesome experience." She went twice as a high school student, and plans to go again this spring.

"And I love doing the Migrant Food Bank," she said of autumn volunteer work at St. Charles Parish in Burlington. Fuchs, who is studying speech therapy and Spanish, is peer minister for administration at

■ In Bellingham, the phone number for the Newman Center at Western Washington University is (360) 410-0218.

■ In Seattle, the Newman Center at the University of Washington is celebrating its centennial this year. For information on the celebration call (206) 527-5072.

■ Newman centers are named after John Henry Cardinal Newman, a 19th century educator and churchman.



The Newman Center ministry, which includes student opportunities for international service projects, is in its 44th year at Western Washington University. Pictured outside the Newman Center in Bellingham last month are (from left): students Luke Krumwiede and Claire Fuchs, campus minister Rachael Becker and student Corina Jones.

the Newman Center. Her home parish is St. Michael Church in Snohomish.

Peer ministers

Peer ministers like Jones and Fuchs are students who assist the campus minister in various capacities, including music, retreats and social justice programs. Rachael Becker, 28, has been the WWU Newman campus minister since August 2006.

Becker graduated from WWU in 2001 with a major in communications and went on to coordinate youth ministry at Our Lady of Fatima in Seattle before taking her current position at the Newman Center.

"I was involved with the Newman ministry when I was in college here," Becker said. "That was a time of huge formation for me in terms of my faith, and becoming active and involved in my faith — I was a peer minister (for retreats) for a year."

She added that the Newman Center has helped many people, including her, develop long-lasting friendships. Students who participate in Newman Center

programs grow in their faith within a supportive community and she hopes to start an alumni program.

Her hometown is Enumclaw, where she attended Sacred Heart Church, and where her parents have been active volunteers.

About 100 students attend Sunday evening Mass, usually at the Viking Union Multipurpose Room; and up to 20 attend late afternoon Mass on Wednesdays and Thursdays at the Newman Center chapel room. Mass is celebrated by the ministry chaplain, Father Qui-Thac Nguyen, who is also priest administrator at Sacred Heart Parish in Bellingham.

In all, nearly 250 students have registered with the Newman Center since mid-2006.

The ministry used to share a building off campus, the Shalom Center on Highland Drive, with other faith-based student groups before the program moved to the North Garden Street house.



Students pray in the chapel room of the Newman Center at Western Washington University in Bellingham. The center moved to its off-campus home at 714 N. Garden St. in 2006. Archbishop Alex J. Brunett blessed the site last March in a dedication gathering.