

Web site created by UF student helps students find volunteer opportunities

Gainesville, Fla. – The University of Florida’s Center for Leadership and Service has announced a partnership with SweatMonkey, a Web-based resource created by a UF sophomore to engage students in community service.

Callahan Fore, an architecture major, started SweatMonkey as a “one-stop” shop, where students can learn about service opportunities and organizations can find volunteers. It has developed into a Web site with the potential to enable students from around the country to find ways to volunteer.

“Most high schools try to help in that they require a certain number of service hours for seniors to graduate, but this only complicates the problem at hand: Students are willing, and even required, to volunteer and work, but no one can tell them where to start,” Fore said. “This is where SweatMonkey.org steps in. We are the gateway for students, as young as 13, to begin finding the opportunities that will help them stay in school, learn good work ethics and traditional values from the generations ahead of us — and a passion for philanthropy, which ultimately helps improve their community and all of our lives.”

To bring this vision to fruition, Fore used skills he developed as a 2007 participant in UF’s Young Entrepreneurs for Leadership & Change Summer Program for High School Students, led by Kristin Joos of UF’s Innovative Social Impact Initiative in the Center for Entrepreneurship & Innovation. Over the past two years, SweatMonkey has been enhanced with new features, including the addition of groups where students can share the experiences as volunteers.

With the assistance of Joos, the Center for Leadership and Service began using the SweatMonkey system this summer, training nonprofits on how to use it. This fall, 17 UF classes will use SweatMonkey to track their Service Learning assignments. Many sections of the seminar course First Year Florida also are participating. Joos believes that this resource could be useful in helping UF’s student body achieve UF President Bernie Machen’s mandate of One Million Minutes of Service as well as increasing service in communities across the U.S.

“This is the sort of thing I would dream about when I originally conceived the summer program,” Joos said. “Callahan has become a social entrepreneur — he is using the skills and strategies of business to create an innovative and sustainable solution to a social, economic, or environmental problem. He embodies the Gandhi quote we emphasized: ‘Be the change you wish to see in the world.’ I have always believed that youth, when empowered, can be the leaders of today, not just tomorrow.”

Fore originally introduced the site in 2006, when he was only 16, after being frustrated in his quest to find and evaluate volunteer opportunities to satisfy the requirements for graduation and a Bright Futures Scholarship. The system can also track students’ volunteer hours and allow teachers and service organizations to verify them, overall making it easier for students to earn credit for graduation and membership requirements for groups such as sororities, fraternities and other service organizations.

The center is observing President Obama’s “United We Serve Week” through Tuesday to formally launch the SweatMonkey partnership and introduce UF’s student body to this service.

The week ends with the Center for Leadership and Service's Volunteer Organization Fair from 8 a.m. to 4 p.m. Tuesday in the Reitz Student Union Colonnade.

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