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Making a Career of Service

College experiences inspire **Mary Beth Neckles, '07**, to pursue a career in social justice.



Since her first days at Loyola, Mary Beth Neckles has been deeply involved with the College's vast array of service opportunities. Now, with graduation fast approaching, Neckles has decided to continue her commitment to service by launching a career focused on social justice. Later this summer, she'll begin a year of service through the Jesuit Volunteer Corps, which matches volunteers with agencies across the globe that serve those marginalized by society.

Neckles will be sent to Chrysalis, a nonprofit employment agency located in downtown Los Angeles, CA. There, she'll work as an employment specialist, helping people with criminal records, homelessness, AIDS, mental illness and disabilities to build resumes, develop interview skills, search for and maintain jobs. While Neckles is nervous about beginning a new job across the country, she says, "I wouldn't want to do it if there weren't going to

be challenges."

After her year of service in JVC, Neckles, a sociology major, plans to pursue a career in social work or counseling. "Loyola has definitely prepared me for life – as a whole," says Neckles. "It has helped me figure out what my passions are and how I can be the best person I can be while pursuing those things."

Neckles' involvement with service at Loyola began her freshman year when she volunteered for CARES, a local food pantry and emergency assistance center and partner agency of Loyola's Center for Community Service and Justice. She continued to volunteer there throughout her college career, eventually becoming an intern during her final semester.

As a freshman, Neckles also participated in Spring Break Outreach, a program that sends students to sites all along the east coast to serve areas of need. She ended up participating in the program each year thereafter, in sites such as Fries in Southwest Virginia and a housing program for people who are living with disabilities in Washington, D.C.'s Adams Morgan neighborhood. She served as site co-leader in Fries her junior year. "Each year was a different experience," she said. "We were forced to talk about issues that aren't always discussed on campus."

Neckles has also participated in Care-A-Van, a moving meal program; Fast and Sleep Out, which generates awareness about homelessness; Frederick Ozanam House, a housing program for men who were formerly homeless; Beans and Bread, an outreach center; CADET, a peer education program on alcohol and drug use; and JUSTICE club's Women Organizing Activism, which creates dialogue about women's gender roles.

During her senior year, Neckles took on a leadership role as Service Coordinator for UNITE (Urban Needs Introduced Through Experience), an urban immersion program; SOS (Summer Orientation to Service), a community service experience for freshmen; and Meet and Eat, a program where students and faculty share a meal with guests from local agencies.

Neckles was honored for her tremendous commitment to service throughout college at this year's Student Choice Awards, where she was presented with the ALIVE award, given to students who pursue Action, Loyalty, Integrity, Values and Excellence. At Commencement, she will be honored with the John P. O'Connor Award, given to a graduating senior who has demonstrated outstanding participation in service to the Baltimore community and has connected it with the Loyola College community.

This summer, Neckles plans to participate in Encounter El Salvador, a 10-day immersion experience in which

students live with a host family and experience the culture. "I didn't study abroad, and I thought that was one thing I was missing from my education," she says. "I wanted more of a worldview and better understanding of the world economy. I felt this would be a great educational experience and teach me how to be a global citizen."

Now, as she prepares to complete her college career, Neckles is grateful for the opportunities service has afforded her to witness social challenges and their impact on society firsthand. "I never would have been able to gain as much out of my classes if I hadn't had these service experiences at Loyola," she says.

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