

Recreation and Tourism through Community Engagement

WCU & Habitat for Humanity: Researching, Developing, and Implementing the 'Build & Bloom' Festival

Faculty Carroll Brown (cabrown@wcu.edu) and Bill Richmond (brichmond@wcu.edu) collaborated with Rick Westerman, Director of Macon/Jackson County Habitat for Humanity (rickw@dnet.net) to engage Hospitality and Tourism students enrolled in HT241 Festivals & Special Events in planning a spring, 2015 Habitat for Humanity festival. The festival's purpose was to raise awareness of Habitat for Humanity in Jackson County and provide students "hands-on" learning experiences. Student groups recommended festival ideas and presented their findings to Habitat representatives. The best festival components from each project were selected to include in the 2015 event. In spring, 2015: using the best festival components list, faculty Carroll Brown and Mary Morse (mlmorse@wcu.edu) designed a festival project for HT436 Tourism Planning & Development students. Morse worked with students to plan and develop the "Build & Bloom" festival and Brown tied textbook concepts to students' festival work to enhance learning. The event benefited Habitat for Humanity, bringing in over \$1,000.00, and was the kick-off for a new annual Dillsboro event.

About this collaborative project as an example of community engagement, Associate Professor Richmond said, "For me, community engagement provides a way for my students to learn the nuances of the material taught. It validates and guides my scholarship, ensuring that the scholarship is relevant to business and has impact, and it opens opportunities to become more deeply involved member of the community." Similarly, Associate Professor Brown had the following perspective, "My community engagement work has been a win-win-win situation leading to on-going event partnerships and a variety of other projects, both research- and student-based. Engagement gives me the opportunity to integrate service with teaching and offer students hands-on event experience. Community engagement has also provided valuable data for my research in special events and tourism planning and development, again... a win-win-win."

If you would like your community engagement work recognized through the *STAR Engagement Projects* program, please submit your proposals through the [Community-based Activities Faculty Survey](#) administered annually in the spring semester from early April – late May.

