Spring 2013
Honors Community Involvement

Professor Baratian, Matt Arellano, Becca Childs, Catherine Grover, Sarah Phillips, Henrik Singendonk, John Stanton and Kori Watkins
My service site was the Brevard Zoo. For my site I volunteered in the Zoo’s new exhibit the Pioneer Garden as a guide. I talked about the different plants that helped build Florida into what it is today. This experience has taught me much of Florida’s native plants. I was also able to see just how many people that the Brevard Zoo is able to reach. Each Friday that I have volunteered at the Zoo there were many children from Pre-K to 3rd grade that were on field trips. Also on many of the Saturdays the Zoo had events going on, for instance VSA (Very Special Arts for students with disabilities) and MRC (Marine Resources Council). It was very exciting to see each of these events.
In my interview with Cheri Purnell, she said that the way the zoo has been most successful is in their education program, and I am a part of that with the Pioneer Garden. I think that this is important because we need to let the younger generation know about each of the problems with the animals and plants natural habitats. Also Cheri said that the most memorable part of her job is when she comes to work early and hears the wolves howling or the Siamangs calling to each other it makes it wonderful to come to work every day. I think this is important because it gives me a little taste of how the nature was and how we need to preserve the small pockets that are left.
I decided to volunteer at the Florida Wildlife Hospital on US 1 in Melbourne, Fl. Florida Wildlife Hospital takes in animals that would otherwise not survive in the wild, they rehabilitate them, and when they are ready release them back into the environment. Here I was able to work with injured and/or abandoned animals. Whether it was feeding baby squirrels and birds, cleaning the dishes, or washing dirty cages and pelican sheets, I was very busy. I have always been an animal lover, but I really enjoyed helping all the patients. This experience has taught me that Brevard County is determined to help our wildlife not only survive but thrive. Before I worked here, I was unaware of any efforts to help with animal rehabilitation.
One of the biggest obstacles facing the animal shelter is space and funds. They are located on U.S. 1 north of Post Road. From the road one can see a small house and a parking lot. There is another building behind the small house, and this is where all the animals are located. They only have a few rooms to store animals in, a nursery, an ICU, and an area blocked off for the animals that have rabies; when it is busy the hospital is really crowded. To work with the animals with rabies, one must be a volunteer with over 100 hours or 1 year of experience, and have received the rabies shots. When the animals are well enough, they have cages outside to help accustom them to the outdoors. Their biggest cage is a pelican cage that has a small pool and can hold about 20 pelicans. There is a small pelican pond out back, and once a day wild pelicans will come and they will give them free fish. According to CJ, “The hospital serves over 4,000 patients each year and many of those stay for a month or more before being released; the hospital is always crammed with patients but especially so right now. Also, the hospital is run almost completely off donations. They get a small government allowance each year but it does not go far. Almost everything that happens at the hospital is due to donations and volunteers” (Johnson). Right now, it is busy because we are just finishing baby squirrel season and it overlaps with the beginning of baby bird season. For a place that services around 4,000 animals a year, space is needed.
Henrik Singendonk
Keep Brevard Beautiful & BCC Environmental Club
During my volunteer time with Keep Brevard Beautiful (KBB), I have attended several very successful beach cleanups. During the time I have been living at the Space Coast, I have realized that the beach is more than just a part of the landscape. It is a place of cultural heritage a place from which thousands of people have been watching the NASA launches. My volunteer experience has brought me to think several times that the local population does not care at all about the heath at the beach with a few exceptions. I have found the weirdest things at the beach like Styrofoam, medicine, even a pallet. There are always a few which make a difference at the beach cleanups. On of them is Kathleen Shoda. She has been setting up beach cleanups for a while, and she was saying that she was doing beach cleanups “because of my children”. We need to keep the beach clean for our decedents. In addition to that, I have learned that baby turtles in many cases dye form eating little pieces of plastic mistaking them for food, hence now I feel really good with every little peace of plastic I pic up at the beach.
Matt Arellano
Wickham Park
My experience at Wickham Park has been enjoyable, and throughout it all I really do feel like I have helped make a difference. The park grounds require a lot to keep maintained, and the staff is genuinely nice and helpful. I've learned that parks sometimes get overlooked in respect to their importance. Helping maintain the beauty in nature so that others may enjoy it is quite satisfying. Working with the park supervisor and other volunteers has been great.

Something Mr. Whitehead the supervisor said has stuck with me and really describes the attitude of a lot of the faculty at the park, and that's "...be passionate about your work, and to stay true to your convictions."
The Scarecrow

Wrinkled eyes and knotted hair, 
the ringleader of all who are there. 
Sun stained skin from hours long past. 
Twenty long years in the same field, alas 
something keeps pushing her to carry on.

Perhaps wisps of wind, or beautiful 
sights. 
The crows she sees each day in flight. 
Her knotted hands and ravaged bones 
speak stories of the work she's done. 
Twenty years, the same scarecrow.

The end of day marks no end at all 
for the scarecrow works past any call. 
Of any crow, of man, or beast. 
No rest, not for her at least.

Twenty years of work and stress 
to keep her field looking its best.
Becca Childs
BCC Environmental Club
During my time volunteering with Environmental club I have learned how much of a difference I could make by paying attention to the activities going on around me and utilizing my resources and strengths. I wanted to be able to make an impact and I believe I did just that. I spent my time doing beach and road clean-ups, improving the greenhouse, working on the median beautification project and helping give tours and teaching groups of children and disabled young adults about growing their own food. I also worked with Florida Land and Water to get petitions signed to refund our conservation lands here in Florida, which I enjoyed because I was able to use my retail experience to approach people and make them an ally in protecting what is left of natural Florida. It’s just as the club’s sponsor Mr. Herber said “always go for it, take advantage of opportunities because you never know what doors will open in the future,” and that is what I chose to do this semester. I went a bit beyond the 32 hour requirement that this class requires and really embraced the idea of creating my own change and not just to satisfy the quota, but because to me it’s about more than just that. I guess I will do as Gandhi instructed and keep trying to become the change I wish to see.
The Barrier Island Center located in Melbourne Beach, Florida is a community education center run jointly by Brevard County and The Sea Turtle Conservancy. The center educates visitors about the diverse ecosystems of the barrier the species of sea turtles that use the local beaches for nesting. My time at the BIC was spent assisting in any way I could. Even with the most menial task.

This position has opened my eyes to the difficulty of working with government funds and just how much of gamble it can be. Despite this, the BIC crusades for a noble cause and as Jen Howell, the Naturalist at the BIC put it, “the primary goal of the BIC is to conserve whatever natural habitat we can so that future generations can appreciate the wonder of nature and understand the vital role it plays in our lives.” Jen’s statement rings close to home, especially for those who have witnessed the “progress” first hand.
Sarah Phillips
Turkey Creek Sanctuary

TURKEY CREEK

Soil: Sandy bottom with deep holes and submerged logs

Vegetation: Floating and submerged aquatic plants, wetland shoreline plants

Animals: Manatee, alligator, turtle, gar, snook, mullet, blue crab, water snakes
For my service site I chose to volunteer at Turkey Creek Sanctuary and had an experience I will never forget. There were some days where the majority of what I did was pick up trash throughout the park, but then there were other times that were very different. This usually included helping test the water and pulling up Boston ferns. Mainly I never realized how much work went into simply maintaining the land of a sanctuary with the amount of acres as Turkey Creek. Ranger Johnson works tirelessly with his handful of volunteers trying to eliminate exotic plants while preserving the native; this in itself requires much manual labor. My experience with Turkey Creek has taught me how important it is to volunteer cause for people like Ranger Johnson, this is what keeps our parks and reserves the way they are today.
When interviewing Ranger Oli Johnson at Turkey Creek, whose job is to maintain the sanctuary year round, he stated how important it is to teach the public about wildlife and why it is so important to preserve it. I never realized how vital something so simple could be until I was working alongside Oli. Things like kids throwing rocks at turtles or feeding raccoons were hurting the habitat, but without education and understanding these children would grow up feeling this is an ok thing to do and pass it on to their kids. So by teaching our youth as well as the adults how to respect wildlife we can continue to have preserves such as Turkey Creek for all of us to enjoy, without it this will all be destroyed in years to come.
Walking into the sanctuary we go,
What we will see there is no way to know,
Maybe, if lucky, we will see a manatee or two,
Or perhaps hear a bird singing a “coo”
Walking into the sanctuary we go,
Alligator’s tail skims the water to and fro,
Turtles enjoy the sun on a log,
A mother nursing her baby hog,
Walking into the sanctuary we go,
What we will see there is never a way to know.
Brevard Waste Management Tour
Final Exam Project

Lake Washington Clean Up with Keep Brevard Beautiful
Different kinds of animals were spotted....
As well as different kinds of trash.
March 13, 2013

Brevard Community College
3865 North Wickham Road
Melbourne, Florida 32935

Carl Hiaasen
The Miami Herald
One Herald Plaza
Miami, FL 33132

Dear Mr. Hiaasen:

We are honors students enrolled in a Community Involvement Class at the Melbourne campus of Brevard Community College. Our course is unique in many ways as it is student-centered. As a group, we select the topic that is to be our academic/experiential focus for the semester. (Previous classes have explored such topics as domestic abuse, poverty, and illiteracy in Brevard County.) Class members individually devote a minimum of 32 hours of volunteer service to a not for profit agency that supports the theme of the class. Each class’s final examination is designed to be completely unique, group produced and service oriented.

Our focus this semester is to investigate environmental issues that impact the residents of Florida. In addition to choosing our class topic, we also have the privilege of selecting our own textbook. Your novels immediately came to mind. The clever satire that you implement in your writing is especially appreciated by those of us who are native Floridians. (One of our class members from Germany and he finds your writing hilarious). Each of us has selected one of your novels and will present on what he/she believe is the most heinous ethical, environmental, or political transgression depicted.

To get to the point, we LOVE your books and we would benefit greatly from your personal perspective and insight on environmental and political issues facing Floridians. Please consider visiting us at Brevard Community College. We will make you feel at home and we guarantee some stimulating conversation! If you are interested, please contact Marina Baratian (our professor) at 321-433-3662.

Thank you so much,

Sarah Phillips  Matt McKeel  Catherine Brover

BCC Honors Community Involvement Class – Spring 2013

Marina Baratian