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COLUMN: Students understand importance of giving

*By Mark Nook
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The University of Wisconsin-Stevens Point enjoys a special relationship with its community, and one way that relationship is exemplified is in the numerous ways students come through on behalf of their neighbors.

A couple of weeks ago I received a letter from the North Central Wisconsin Chapter of the American Red Cross. A young man walked into the Red Cross office and, without fanfare, handed over a check for \$539. He and his friends in the UWSP Men's Rugby Club held an ice fisheriee this past winter and chose the Red Cross to receive the proceeds from their effort. These young men didn't raise funds for the accolades. They did it out of a desire to give back to their community.

In many cases, a student's desire to give to others is instilled by their families and home communities. For others, it is a desire awakened as part of their education at UWSP. For all of them, this desire is multiplied through the experience of being a Pointer and a member of the Stevens Point area communities.

Several UWSP classes include service-learning projects that tie students' involvement in community service projects to specific learning outcomes for the class. Many of our student clubs and organizations carry out community service projects throughout the year. Even in our study abroad programs, our students engage in community service projects, giving back to communities that support Pointers around the globe.

Often times, like the Rugby Club, our students take the initiative entirely on their own to give back to this local community that helps makes their time at UWSP a transformational experience.

UWSP's Student Volunteer Annual Report shows that our students logged more than 6,000 hours of volunteer service in the Stevens Point area, central Wisconsin and beyond during the 2008-09 year.

Our Student Involvement and Employment Office reports the number of student volunteers has doubled during the past two years for one-time sponsored events. We are particularly pleased that more than 300 of our students gave more than 3,000 hours of volunteer tutoring in area K-12 classrooms.

These are challenging days, and many of our students come from families and communities hit hard by the recession and unemployment. These also are days in which the spirit of giving back becomes even more important.

Our students will be back on campus and in our community in a few weeks. Let's make this a year in which we work together to encourage them as they increase their understanding of what it means to be part of something greater than themselves. As we work with these students in their efforts to support our community, we'll probably realize that we, too, never stop being students with something more to learn about ourselves and the people around us.

If you would like to learn more about the ways your organization or business could be a partner with the university and its students, contact Shannon Williams in UWSP's Student Involvement and Employment Office at 346-2174 or sieo@uwsp.edu.

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