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Mission

Civic Matters uses a wide-angle lens to view civic engagement at Bryn Mawr College and creates a public space for members of our campus community to tell the stories of their civic involvement and to reflect on the learning, challenges, and ideas that emerge from it. It is our hope that this publication sparks conversation and becomes a catalyst for a more dynamic integration of civic engagement within the life of this academic institution.

Introduction

This fourth edition of *Civic Matters*, a journal about civic engagement by members of the Bryn Mawr College community, again brings together pieces by instructors, staff, students, and community partners as they think about the experience of crossing campus boundaries and engaging with the community beyond our borders. In this issue, Emily Balch Seminar and writing instructor Matt Ruben—also a community leader and activist in the Northern Liberties section of Philadelphia—writes about how his participation in local civic life has transformed his pedagogy. The Office of Intercultural Affairs' Vanessa Christman reflects on another aspect of civic engagement: the arts and their importance to community.

The *Civic Matters*' interview also turns its attention to the arts as a vital center of civic life. One of *Civic Matters*' editors, Julie Zaebst, spoke with Amy Grebe, artistic director of ACPPA Community Art Center, and Adrienne Webb, a psychology major, about the impact of the partnership between ACPPA and the College on participating Norristown families and Bryn Mawr students. Readers also can see a visual representation of collaboration between the College and the community in the arts, with Teresa Silva's and Asia Hoe's photo essay depicting the Art Club gallery opening.

Laura McHugh's essay, adapted from her 2009 Bryn Mawr convocation speech, takes a more global perspective: It describes the interdependence of her studies at the Graduate School of Social Work and Social Research and her work with The Grail, a South African women's organization dedicated to educating women from developing countries who are committed to social change in their homelands. Finally, Emily Balch seminar instructor Kaley Carpenter reflects on her involvement with the Oakmont Farmers Market and on the challenges and rewards of bringing local, sustainable food alternatives to the Havertown community.

We, the editors of *Civic Matters*, continue to be fascinated and enlightened by the range of involvement in community life undertaken by our friends and colleagues across the College. We hope our readers will be, too.

Editorial Team

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Readers can now access *Civic Matters* online at:
<http://www.brynmawr.edu/ceo/civcmatters/>.

On the Pleasures and Dangers of Professing Politics

by Matt Ruben

I'm not an academic who periodically "engages" in the civic realm. To the contrary, public action has shaped my intellectual development from the beginning. Student government and the 1980s South Africa divestment movement occupied as much of my first college year as classes did. Amnesty International, anti-war activism, and the alternative student newspaper dominated the ensuing years, while I pursued a major that melded English with philosophy, popular culture, and political history.

In grad school at the University of Pennsylvania, seminar papers and field exams competed, often unsuccessfully, with pro-choice clinic defense, the AIDS Coalition to Unleash Power (ACT UP), welfare rights work, protesting university outsourcing, and co-hosting a local political talk show. And my emerging doctoral thesis focused on the cultural manifestations of contemporary American political changes. Engagement in the public sphere continued to bully my academic imagination, spurring me to add an urban studies certification to my English doctorate, so I could continue my immersion in Philadelphia's political geography.

I fancied myself a political intellectual, my scholarly writing influenced and given street cred by my activism. That seemed more or less the end of it. Indeed, when I began teaching writing at Bryn Mawr College in September 2000, I focused on urban issues, but the classroom seemed worlds away from the Philadelphia streets where I'd dodged tear gas and billy clubs as a media rep for the Republican National Convention protestors just a few weeks earlier.

As time has gone on, though, I've found my pedagogy becoming thoroughly informed, even transformed, by my civic life. My course shifted to the topic of poverty, specifically how middle-class Americans understand (or don't understand) poverty and see (or don't see) the poor. This shift was motivated less by the broad intellectual rewards—of which there certainly are many—of the topic than by the decidedly local juxtaposition of Bryn Mawr's Main Line home with the blighted communities of North Philadelphia just a few miles away; and by the even-closer proximity of

my fast-changing home of Northern Liberties to some of the most impoverished neighborhoods on the East Coast.

These thoughts of geographical and class consciousness are never far from my mind, and they affect both what and how I teach. The professor-student relationship and the imparting of specialized academic knowledge no longer form the all-encompassing pedagogical framework they once did. I used to survey the faces in my classroom and see students, and then individuals. Now I see “people in the world,” in the deceptively simple vernacular of a good friend of mine. I see them as citizens who exist, wittingly or not, in relation to other people and places they’ve lived in, encountered, and never even heard of. I push them to read and analyze texts not only to come to intellectual realizations (though those are crucially important), but also to better understand the world in general and their place in it. In this regard it helps that I teach an Emily Balch Seminar, a course not focused primarily on imparting specific disciplinary knowledge. It’s also tremendously useful for helping my students think about writing as a fundamentally communicative (as opposed to expressive) process, because they come to see their reader not only as an audience for a performance or rhetorical exercise, but also as a person situated amidst the places, policies, and passions of our world.

Conversely, as my activist energies have channeled themselves into the formerly unthinkable square role of president of my neighborhood association, I’ve come to see the pedagogical imperative in leadership and representation. I resisted this realization for a long time, because I’ve always detected a strange mixture of ivory tower arrogance and intellectual self-hatred in the notion that we must sit back and observe, waiting for a “teachable moment” when we can make an “intervention.” There’s an assumption buried in there that we possess superior knowledge, which can be imparted only when circumstances put us and “regular folks” in a position to comprehend each other. In my experience, such a view constitutes a fundamental misunderstanding of politics. Almost every moment is a teachable moment, but by the same token, the idealized teachable moment never really arrives. There is no Platonic pedagogy of sublime communication to an utterly attentive audience (a point that applies to

the classroom too, as my excellent but chattering, iPhone-addled students would no doubt affirm).

Charged with running neighborhood meetings, fielding citizen complaints, raising money, dealing with elected officials, negotiating with zoning attorneys, representing the community to the press, and responding to the occasional subpoena, I am constantly confronted with diverse, unpredictable audiences to and for whom I must speak and to whom I must be accountable. Assuming nothing, explaining everything, putting oneself in others’ shoes, inferring their interests and motivations—these have become everyday survival skills, immensely helpful in both the classroom and the meeting hall.

Despite the increasingly intimate connection I’ve felt between activism and pedagogy, and despite—or because of—how politically charged my subject matter is, there is one link I studiously avoid: I don’t bring my own political viewpoints into the classroom. Now, I’m no fool: Like everyone else my worldview surely oozes from my pores, inflecting what I say. And yet, as my faculty observers in grad school always remarked, and as questions from my pupils tend to bear out, students usually have a tough time figuring out what my politics are. I don’t keep secrets: They get a general sense that I live somewhere left of center; they grasp how deeply I think racism is ingrained in American culture; and, when at some point a student inevitably begins a comment with, “I don’t want to sound like a feminist, but...,” they find out I’m a feminist.

But when it comes to more specific political themes and current events, I am no fan of “putting my cards on the table.” I can think of no better way to undermine the pedagogical enterprise than to present my views as “The Truth,” with the concomitant delusion that I’m simply one member of the classroom community whose pronouncements hold no special weight. Pull that trick in community politics and you’ll alienate most of your constituents, while lulling the rest into passivity and complacency. Similarly, there’s no better way to make young minds resist my pedagogical aims than by pushing my views on them. Nor is there any better way to tamp down the critical faculties I’m encouraging them to develop, than by using my authority to “bring them along” politically.

Perhaps most importantly, and in keeping with the parity of politics and professing with which I started this essay, dictating to my students would cheapen the enterprise of politics itself. If I believe passionately that my view of the world is on intimate terms with critical inquiry and careful analysis—or, more bluntly, if I believe the facts show I’m right—then I should have the courage of my convictions and let my students think for themselves.

Matt Ruben teaches in the Emily Balch Seminar Program and English Department at Bryn Mawr College and in the Writing Program at Haverford College. He ran unsuccessfully for City Council in Philadelphia in 2007 and received a Best of Philly 2009 award for “Best Politician, City” from *Philadelphia Magazine*.

Learning to Serve

by Vanessa Christman

It’s not even daylight yet. I have scrambled to catch a 7:20 a.m. train and find that I forgot to put on my earrings. They are jammed in my coat pocket, along with the four quarters I am now trying to untangle from them. I remove my glove and have success with the coins, but now I have one more thing in my hands. Juggling bag, binder, glove, and coins, I successfully pay the fee to park at the Rosemont train station and race under the rail tunnel, frantically climbing the stairs to the platform.

Why have I left my warm bed so early? Why am I here again on a Tuesday morning, about to board a train into Philadelphia, instead of simply driving the 1.8 miles to my office? The answer has something to do with the arts, their importance in our lives, and some good Pennsylvania Dutch practicality.

After a recent Thanksgiving dinner, my mom, my uncle, and I were washing and drying dishes following the generous meal my sister-in-law had provided. We asked another member of the extended family to give us a hand. “I don’t wash dishes,” she said. My mother turned to her and gently pronounced, “Somebody has to.”

I realized in that moment that this matter-of-fact, Pennsylvania Dutch practicality was the primer by which I had been taught so many things, including civic engagement. Ours was not the world of charity balls and patrons. We simply knew that, if there was work to be done, we should lend a hand. Somebody had to.

My mother and father taught my brother and me the importance of helping others through their example. My mom also demonstrated by example the value of ongoing commitment to local organizations. When I was in high school, she helped run rummage sales and other ventures to benefit the local women’s club. She was very hands on, sorting clothes, affixing prices, and counting the proceeds. She understood that she had something important to offer: time, two hands, and a strong work ethic.

My mother was also involved as a volunteer for the town's community theater, again offering her hands-on energy. When my brother and I were very little, this kind of civic engagement proved to be a challenge. Once while she was painting stage sets in an outbuilding on the grounds of our town's airport, my brother and I wandered off. We had a grand adventure, which ended when a grounds worker for the airport returned us to our mother, informing her that children shouldn't be wandering around on the runways. When we were a little older, Mom volunteered in the cloakroom for the community theater's performances, and my brother and I served as volunteers as well, taking coats and ushering patrons to their seats. We saw practically every musical theater piece in the canon, as well as visiting artists like Andre Watts, Van Cliburn, and Marcel Marceau.

And so I came to love the arts not as a patron in the orchestra, but as a volunteer standing at the back of the house or sitting on the steps high up in the balcony. My mother's civic engagement presented the opportunity to learn about the performing arts and gave birth to a lifelong passion.

Although my career has been in the field of education, I have pursued my love of the arts as well. In the spring of 2004, after more than a decade of teaching, I went to work with the First Person Festival in Philadelphia. That summer, I helped share the stories of such national figures as the Weather Underground's Mark Rudd and such local luminaries as chef Georges Perrier. When I accepted a position at Bryn Mawr College that fall, I was delighted to learn that my new relationship with First Person Arts did not have to end. I was offered—and enthusiastically accepted—a position on its board of directors.

Thus began my steep learning curve with civic engagement. I had never before examined the difference between simply "pitching in" and offering strategic leadership. I had volunteered for things my whole life, but now I would have the chance to make a larger impact through board service.

My education and personality prepared me to encourage people to tell their personal narratives and to celebrate the impact of shared stories. They did not prepare me to create a board handbook, research donors, or review the organization's budget. But these were things that needed to be

done, and someone, as my mother would say, had to do them. For six years I helped the organization grow and assured its solvency. In addition to the annual festival, First Person was soon presenting monthly story slams and frequent salons, as well as community writing projects and memoir classes. Over the years, my leadership enabled First Person Arts to share the stories of countless people, both well known and little known, from *Gourmet* editor Ruth Reichl to mural artist Michelle Ortiz.

Much of the time I served on First Person's board, funding was hard to come by. Though the staff had some gifted proposal writers, city, state, and federal money was scarce. Corporate donors had to be convinced of the value of our programming. In the most recent economic downturn, even private foundations were pulling out.

Why did First Person's programming matter, when people were without homes and jobs? I remembered an interview with Isaac Hayes, in which he was asked about his efforts in post-Katrina New Orleans and in other American cities. He spoke of the ludicrous notion of cutting the arts when times are bad. "The arts," he said, "are the last thing that should go. The arts reflect a culture, a society." Peggy Amsterdam, the late director of the Greater Philadelphia Cultural Alliance, wisely noted that, in very hard times, it is the arts that sustain us—that get us through. I knew that this was true, and I was driven to promote the mission of First Person Arts whenever and however I could.

The sun is beginning to emerge over the suburbs, and the tracks of the R5 are a mix of rose and gold. The air is still winter white, palpably frigid. The train approaches, all noise and sulfur. We shift our briefcases and handbags, the cold making us impatient to line up for the open door. Toting my board binder and bag in one hand, I grab the railing with the other and hoist myself up the steps. It's my last day of riding the R5 into Suburban Station for an 8 a.m. board meeting. After six years of contributing my time and talent to First Person Arts, I am wrapping up my board service. But I won't have too much time on my hands. I am already in my second year of service to the alumni board of my alma mater. My children's schools still have a critical need of volunteers. And, probably, there will

be other organizations asking for my time and leadership. When these opportunities present themselves, I will probably say yes. Somebody has to.

Vanessa Christman is assistant director of Intercultural Affairs. She feels fortunate to mentor student leaders at Bryn Mawr College and continues to learn about leadership in her work with them. Vanessa looks forward to attending First Person Arts events as a plain old audience member.

“8,001 Ways to Partner Together”:

Community Arts at Bryn Mawr and in Norristown

by Amy M. Grebe and Adrienne Webb

Bryn Mawr College and ACPPA Community Art Center have been collaborating over the past year to bring a number of exciting arts opportunities to the College and to the Norristown community. ACPPA is dedicated to improving quality of life by providing diverse learning opportunities that use art as a tool to strengthen individual power and nurture creative self-expression. Connections with the Civic Engagement Office and the Art Club at Bryn Mawr have enhanced ACPPA's family-oriented programming, while introducing unique teaching and learning contexts to Bryn Mawr students.

Recently, a member of the *Civic Matters* editorial team, Julie Zaebst, had an opportunity to talk with artistic director Amy Grebe and student Adrienne Webb about their own work as artists and the “8,001 ways to partner together” that they have come up with over the past year. Below is an excerpt from this interview.

Julie: I wanted to start by asking you to tell me a little bit about yourselves and the community arts work that you do and how you first became involved in that work.

Adrienne: I started doing community arts work in high school with the Andy Warhol Museum and then later with the Children's Museum in Pittsburgh. Now at Bryn Mawr, I'm doing much more interactive stuff with the Art Club. I get to help plan events, I get to help set up shows for artists at the College, and I get to buy supplies. And I'm doing exciting work recruiting volunteers and helping to plan workshops with Amy Grebe for the Community Art Center in Norristown.

Amy: It was my interaction with the Norristown community that led me to focus on community-based arts and education. Until then, I studied dance for many thousands of years, and then I interned with Pittsburgh Ballet Theatre to learn everything about costume design I possibly could. I pursued costume design for a while and then started illustrating children's

books. After my daughter was born, I returned to the Philadelphia area and began working more intensely as a visual artist. I have always been drawn to education and working with children and youth, and Norristown affords me the opportunity to use my passion for the arts to help revitalize a community.

Julie: Can you tell me a little bit about ACPPA?

Amy: When we started, it was an artists' cooperative meant to really support emerging artists in whatever they were trying to do. And we had lofty goals of providing subsidized day care and group health insurance and eventually opening artists' lofts that would be live/work spaces with a day care on the bottom floor. We had these really crazy ideas, only to find out that just about everybody already provides that and they were doing a much better job of that than we did. We did move into Norristown and find that the need for community-based arts for children in a continuous manner was huge. So we thought, you know, what else are we going to do with ourselves? Let's start teaching classes ... in the basement of my house.

Julie: I didn't realize that!

Amy: Yes, the Community Art Center all started in the basement of my home with eight kids, and last summer we served 900 throughout Montgomery County. I think it's a really good indicator of how much the arts are needed and in fact appreciated by other educators that in one summer just one group alone served that many.

Julie: That's really exciting. I wanted to ask how the two of you connected with each other and what really prompted you to begin a collaboration between the College and ACPPA.

Amy: Well, ACPPA's partnership started with Bryn Mawr last year when we were just looking for volunteers to help out with one of our student exhibitions. So we contacted the Civic Engagement Office and Ruth [Strickland] brought some volunteers up, and it was just a good fit right from the start. We've just been growing and growing and growing, and last spring, Adrienne came on board. Ruth brought her up to meet me, and Adrienne and I have just come up with 8,001 ways to partner together.

Julie: In what ways have you collaborated so far? You mentioned that you've had volunteers come out to assist with different events and that sort of thing, but maybe you can tell me a little bit more about what that collaboration has looked like.

Adrienne: In September, I brought some volunteers to this great open house event where we basically just helped families tour the center and check it out and sign up for classes. Recently, we helped out at the student works exhibition and performance, and it was great because I got to take a completely new set of volunteers to the event. Most recently, and most excitingly, we have been bringing workshops to ACPPA. The first workshop we brought was taught by Ariel Kay, who is an artist from Austin, Texas, and a Bryn Mawr student. In her gap year, Ariel worked with a nonprofit in Texas and assisted with a political art workshop, getting kids to create their own logo and not be branded by the industry. So Ariel brought that workshop and it was really successful. We made T-shirts and it was really fun! And then the last thing is that Amy has been teaching art classes for Art Club at Bryn Mawr. She taught a sewing recycled clothing class, which was really great because we got to bring her skills to Bryn Mawr and expose lots of students to sewing who had never touched the machines in their lives.

Julie: I actually wanted to take your class, and it turned out I had evening conflicts two of the five weeks, but I really need to think about it for next semester because I have no sewing skills whatsoever! Anyway, Adrienne,

Photo essay on following pages by Teresa Silva, photography, and Asia Hoe, layout.

Art Club Executive Board (upper left photo) from left to right: Angana Roy, Ariel Kay, Adrienne Webb, Teresa Silva, Anna Lehr Mueser, Louisa Foroughi, Angela Wang

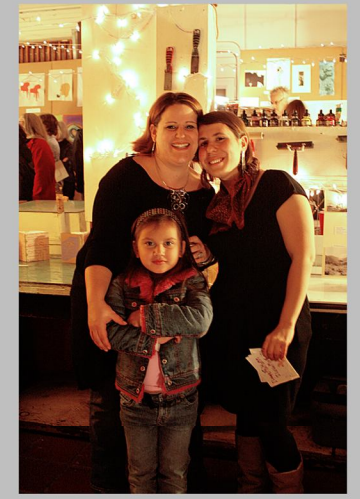
Musical performance by Allegra Fletcher, singer, and Sara Neidorf, drummer

Interviewees (middle right photo) from left to right: Amy Grebe with daughter Mady, and Adrienne Webb

Art Gallery Opening, November 2009

Photography: Teresa Silva

Layout: Asia Hoe



you've been talking about the ways that ACPPA and Bryn Mawr have collaborated so far. Is there anything you want to add to that, Amy?

Amy: I just want to elaborate a little bit on the series that the Art Club is doing with us in Norristown. It's been a really great experience, really mutually beneficial, because it's a little bit more relaxed than our usual classes. Rather than just being for the kids, we're doing them for the parents as well, and it allows us to build even more community into what we're doing at the center. Some of the parents have never done art or aren't interested in art, but if you get them involved with their kids, it just builds a deeper meaning for them. We really enjoy having the opportunity to give the Bryn Mawr students the chance to try out classes. Just a one-time thing, let me find a teaching style and find out if I even like to do this sort of thing.

Adrienne: I have to second that for sure. It's definitely been really good. And it's also great because I think we've been trying to do lots of non-traditional exposure. Like, graffiti is not something people normally have access to.

Amy: Yeah, and it's really funny because it's sort of appropriate for Norristown, for the families we serve. For instance, graffiti was perfect with Isaiah, the oldest boy who was there. He just wants to spray paint. And on Tuesday nights when he comes to class, I actually drive him home. And he'll say, "Ms. Amy, can we go down this alley? I want to check out the graffiti on the garages." And in that way, it was really great to use what he thinks he wants to be doing and put it into a safe, okay environment. He's expressing himself the way he wants to, but it's not on someone's garage. I think that non-traditional arts definitely have more pull with our families, and it makes art more accessible.

Julie: And I know you're doing things outside of the visual arts as well. Is that correct? I heard something about yoga.

Adrienne: Yeah, it's very student-driven. When Amy, Ruth, and I designed it, we definitely didn't want it to be restricted to visual arts because there are lots of [interested] students at Bryn Mawr.

Julie: I think you've already spoken to what has worked well in the partnership between Bryn Mawr and ACPPA, but I'm also curious to hear about what some of the challenges have been.

Amy: Transportation.

Adrienne: Also, getting everything organized in time and knowing now that I have to plan everything out a little more in advance than I originally thought.

Amy: Yeah, I give Adrienne a hard time because as much as we run the Community Art Center with a lot of flexibility and a lot of forgiveness, it's also a business. It's great to dream and to plan all these things that you think are going to be fun, but then let's make it a reality. How is the class going to be run? Who's teaching it? When are you teaching it?

Julie: I'm wondering what impact the community arts work that you've been doing has had on the community? And maybe you can speak to that both in terms of the individuals who've been involved and what you've seen in those individuals, as well as more broadly.

Amy: I think that the partnership that we have, if we speak just to that, is mutually beneficial. Adrienne and I work really hard to make sure that we're offering the students as much as they're offering us. That trickles down to the families that we teach: The more opportunities we have for the children to be involved in the arts and to engage their parents, the stronger our program is. Our mission is improving quality of life. If you come to a yoga class with your mom every week and you have even just that one hour of connection with her, it makes a big difference. So it almost seems like the art is a byproduct. It's those interpersonal connections that are made and the relationships that are built by exploring something together that are the critical components to community wellness.

Adrienne: For students, I see the advantage being everything from learning to use the R100 trolley to getting a better sense of self and learning to teach a class to just being able to spend time with people who aren't college students. We cannot restrict ourselves to this one college community. There are lots of different ways to get involved with ACPPA and lots of

different ways to just leave your comfort zone, which is one of the most important parts of volunteering: learning to move beyond what you're comfortable with as a person.

Julie: What have you personally been learning, and how does this work fit in with other aspects of your life?

Amy: I have tons of experience working with children, but college students are a new segment of the world for me. So it's a really nice challenge for me – where do I stop coddling and where do I simply be the business-woman who expects the students to work to our level of reputation? I wonder, how do I make this a true teaching experience? And on the flip-side, actually coming down [to Bryn Mawr] and working with some of the students has been an absolute treat for me. In Norristown, a lot of the class is very student-led. Coming down here, there was a lot more of me as an artist that was able to come into the picture. So I'm really sad that my class ended this week, because for five weeks it's been my time, and as a single mom running a nonprofit organization, I don't engage in my own artistic explorations often. I've really enjoyed working with students who are very engaged in the arts and already have those built-in things that we're trying to teach our children: risk-taking, independent thought, and creativity.

Adrienne: I didn't know that you liked it that way. That's really cool. Like your personal art time. For me, I think it's hard to connect everything in my life.

Julie: That's partially why I asked the question, because I know about all the different layers of what you do here. You're a psychology major, you have this interest in art, and you're involved in Norristown, but with the Volunteer Income Tax Assistance (VITA) program, which is so structured.

Adrienne: I'm definitely using all the planning and skills that I've been gaining through ACPPA with VITA. And it's also very important for me to remember my base as an artist. I got into RISD [Rhode Island School of Design] and got into MICA [Maryland Institute College of Art], but I chose to go to Bryn Mawr, which was a very big stretch for

me because I had a really excellent arts education, but I did not have a very good academic education. So working with ACPPA allows me to continue that side of me that has been growing since I was a first-grader in the Pittsburgh public school system. It allows that Adrienne artist to still exist along with this other Bryn Mawr side of me that is interested in public benefits and really likes VITA. Art also has been a really good skill for me to build off of, because I feel as an artist, and as a teenager doing art, you learn to create work for yourself.

Amy: And I think when you talk about both sides, Adrienne, I've got that same balance. To run a nonprofit, I've got to have that business side. And yet at the same time, I think the reason we can be so survivalist as a community arts center in the crunch of a budget crisis is our ability to think creatively. And that's another thing we're trying to pass down to our kids: There are so many solutions out there, and you just have to kind of work your way through it. And if you can explore in one area, you can probably translate that over to something else.

Julie: So I have one last question for you: What are your hopes and goals for the future of this collaboration? And those might be really immediate goals for the spring semester or big dreams about what you think could happen in the future.

Amy: We're just finding more and more ways to build the relationship, and sometimes I kind of worry: We've come so far in just a year, so I can only imagine what the future is going to hold for us. This past summer I was asked to design the logo for the Civic Engagement Office, and in October, we were excited to have a student employee from Bryn Mawr, Jesika Lopez, join our administrative team. Really all I want is to sustain the relationship and continue to offer students as many opportunities to become involved with our organization as possible.

Adrienne: And it's really important for Bryn Mawr that we sustain outside connections to the community, because there are many students on this campus who have skills that they are not applying – and they should be! They would get so much fulfillment out of it themselves, and they would also learn a lot from volunteering and give a lot back.

Amy M. Grebe has been involved in various disciplines of art for most of her life. She holds a degree in dance from Slippery Rock University, and her work spans many sectors of the arts, from modern dance and costume design to children's book illustration and oil and acrylic painting. As the founder and artistic director of ACPPA Community Art Center, she has been celebrated for her tenacious commitment to providing access to arts education for all and for the exponential growth the organization has enjoyed under her leadership.

Adrienne Webb '11 is a psychology major and sociology minor at Bryn Mawr College. She is a founding member of the Art Club executive board, which seeks to use Arnecliffe Studio as an autonomous art space for students, faculty, and staff. Each semester the Art Club offers free art classes, art supplies, and unlimited studio access to all Bryn Mawr College community members. She is interested in connecting with more Bryn Mawr community members who want to incorporate visual art and community growth into their work.

*Ukubamba Kukufunda (Traveling is Learning):
A South African Experience*

by Laura Tate McHugh

Editors' Note

Below is an excerpt from Laura Tate McHugh's convocation speech, delivered at Bryn Mawr College's fall 2009 convocation ceremony. Laura spoke as a representative of the Graduate School of Social Work and Social Research, where she is in her second year of the Master of Social Service program, pursuing a concentration in policy, practice, and advocacy.

It is impossible for me to reflect on what it means to have the opportunity to pursue a graduate degree in social work at Bryn Mawr College without touching on what I was doing before I came to graduate school last fall. After working several years in program development for a charter school serving out-of-school youth in North Philadelphia, I spent seven months volunteering with an international women's movement called The Grail in Kleinmond, South Africa. The focus of The Grail's efforts worldwide is to harness women's creative energy for spiritual search, social transformation, global solidarity, and ecological sustainability. The Grail in South Africa, in addition to its own local community organizing campaigns, provides intensive training and development education for women, mostly from developing countries, who are committed to organizing for social change in their home communities.

Although I had participated in service-oriented projects over many years, never before had I experienced being part of something as powerful as the movement for social change that thrives in post-apartheid South Africa. Through participation in various trainings and community organizing efforts, across lines of race, class, gender, and ethnicity and in solidarity with women from around the world, I saw clearly for the first time the imperative of interconnectedness in the ongoing struggle for social justice in what is becoming an increasingly intimate global community. As I listened to the stories of the women around me, learned from their

experiences, and at times discovered surprisingly similar realities in the U.S., I began to reflect more seriously on the desperate need for collective, policy-driven responses and strategies to address what I now understand are really global social problems.

As I observed the still relatively new post-apartheid government continue to evolve right in front of my eyes and had the chance to witness some of the most charged and complicated social and public policy debates I could imagine, I came to appreciate more concretely the delicate relationship that exists between government, policymakers, academics, and direct service providers. My experience in South Africa highlighted the complexities and intricacies of the political process in a way that I had not previously appreciated in the U.S. I came away with a sense of hope from working alongside people who are diligently building their new democracies from the ground up. I also came to appreciate that the work for social justice, whether at home or abroad, is about more than just “doing what is right.” Social justice demands that we intelligently and systematically find ways to secure our collective future stability as a global community. Part of that challenge, of course, is that there are often competing views, which are strongly held, about what is “right.”

Problems such as those that South Africa currently faces are not unique to the continent of Africa. The plight of those who are marginalized and focused primarily on survival is becoming a daily reality for even more of the world’s population, including too many of those in our own country. Their reality is part of our own. Rich and poor, wealthy countries and developing countries, and urban and rural communities are all interconnected. And we are all at risk if we cannot reverse the negative effects of inadequate and poorly designed and executed national as well as global, social, political, and economic policies. Globalization is, in some respects, as much of a challenge for middle-class and working-class Americans as it is for the rest of the world. More than ever before, we, an educated generation that is growing into a consciousness of global citizenship, will have greater opportunity and greater responsibility. Whether we are studying in the disciplines of social work, history, health, or biology, we will be challenged to apply more than our knowledge and capabilities in addressing matters

of global injustice and insecurity. We must also develop the will to ask the difficult questions, challenge the status quo, and apply new strategies until we can see results such as more broadly shared health and prosperity.

This would be impossible without graduate schools like Bryn Mawr’s, which has always been at the forefront in recognizing the importance of this “big picture” in education and which is prepared to challenge us as students and professionals, across all disciplines, to find creative, more comprehensive ways to respond to ever-changing, increasingly complex global issues. Over the last year, Bryn Mawr helped me interpret and ground my South African experience and earlier experiences in ways I could not have accomplished on my own, as well as helped me draw appropriate connections to the social justice efforts I am passionate about here at home. I have relied on my professors and fellow students to channel and provide structure to the new energy I brought with me from my time abroad.

At the Graduate School of Social Work and Social Research, I am surrounded by like-minded students and faculty who believe that our ability to process complex information and think critically in the classroom is only as relevant and as meaningful as our commitment to demonstrate actual progress and to produce real results for the people who need it the most. Most importantly, with its Quaker roots and its focus on educating historically marginalized populations, Bryn Mawr has always recognized the critical need for education with a conscience and is forever challenging us as students to think more thoughtfully and critically about the work we do, why we do it, and what we hope to accomplish with our degrees when we leave.

I believe that all of us who have the distinct privilege to attend an institution like Bryn Mawr have an important legacy to live up to, and I find that Bryn Mawr continues to provoke in me a sense of urgent social responsibility to utilize my own capabilities to seek out new, more innovative solutions to the problems that we face in our country and our world today. I am looking forward to embarking on that journey in collaboration with all members of the Bryn Mawr community.

Laura Tate McHugh will graduate from Bryn Mawr with her M.S.S. in policy, practice, and advocacy in May 2010. She earned a B.A. in sociology and visual arts from Fordham University in 2002 and has been working in the field of urban education in both New York City and Philadelphia for nearly 10 years. A Philly native, she hopes to continue working on public education reform efforts at the policy level in Philadelphia when she graduates.

*Local Women Start a Revolution in ... Grocery Shopping?
The Story of the Oakmont Farmers Market, Education, and
Social Change in Bryn Mawr's Backyard*

by Kaley Carpenter

In 2006, three women who lived in Havertown, a small community just south of Bryn Mawr, came together and unintentionally started a revolution. They included a stay-at-home mother, a small business owner, and an anthropology graduate student finishing her doctorate at nearby University of Pennsylvania (Penn). Having met each other through volunteer work, they soon realized that they shared two passions: improving the quality of their local neighborhood and business district as well as sustainable, healthy eating. After a few phone calls to their local township officials and to farmers active in Philadelphia's food markets, they realized that the deceptively simple question, "Could a farmers market happen in Havertown?" was a battle cry that challenged the way people thought about eating, shopping, and community service. I know this from personal experience: As a current volunteer who became involved with the Oakmont Farmers Market (OFM) in 2007 after I moved to the area from New Jersey, I have seen the travails of grassroots organizing for grass-fed beef and other local food options. On the other hand, after only three years in existence and an unprecedented Best of the Main Line 2009 award for "Fresh Fruits and Veggies" adding to their reputation, the OFM seems to have won the day against skeptics. It has done so in part by transforming itself into an independent nonprofit organization and by articulating a clear mission to educate people of all ages and income levels about sustainable eating and farming practices.

This story of local change began with Janet Chrzan, who now teaches nutritional and medical anthropology at her alma mater of Penn. Chrzan was an avid shopper at the Clark Park Farmers Market, which had begun under the auspices of The Food Trust, a nonprofit founded in 1992 to ensure access to affordable, nutritious food for all Philadelphians. It was there that Chrzan met Lisa Kerschner, owner of North Star Orchards. Kerschner not only grew tasty vegetables and exotic varieties of rare apples

and Asian pears on her Cochranville, Pa., farm, but she also educated the public about her vocation by writing about her farming experiences in such publications as *Newsweek* (see the “My Turn” column at <http://www.newsweek.com/id/132862>). When Kerschner asked Chrzan, “Why isn’t there a farmers market where you live in Havertown?” Chrzan enlisted her help in finding other local producers who would be willing to sell their crops directly to customers in the suburbs off the Main Line.

With support from neighbors, township officials and civic organizations, and Julie Schultz (a busy mother of two) and Lauren Feldman (an entrepreneur trained in Hollywood’s entertainment industry), this tiny team of residents convinced township officials to approve the incorporation of the OFM and to let it run on Wednesday afternoons in the Havertown municipal parking lot at the intersection of Eagle and Darby Roads. They then went door to door telling local businesses about the market, asking them to hang posters in their shop windows that encouraged passers-by to “Buy Fresh, Buy Local” or to display colorful postcards showing the cornucopia of crops grown in Southeastern Pennsylvania. Newly recruited volunteers like myself handed out flyers at local community events like Narberth’s Earth Day and Haverford Township’s Heritage Festival. We also received help with the initial infrastructure of the market from Farm To City, a Philadelphia business dedicated to helping rural food producers connect with urban eaters.

When opening day arrived in May 2007, the OFM boasted ten different vendors who sold locally-produced flowers, eggs, cheeses, breads, bison, lip balms, and dog treats in addition to the expected array of fresh fruits and vegetables. Township and state politicians were there to help with the ribbon cutting. Shoppers came from as far away as Phoenixville and Center City with reusable canvas bags. By the end of that first summer, the market had almost 1,000 names on an e-mail list and a 1,500-person petition to township commissioners asking them to bring the market back the following spring. “In many ways, the market is a logical extension of what makes a place like Havertown unique,” reflects Chrzan. “People born and raised here stay here because they know the local business owners as their neighbors. Residents grow up fixing each other’s cars, mowing each

other’s lawns, and preparing their favorite meals. Now they can also know the names of the men and women who grow the food served at mealtime.”

Today in 2010, the impact of the OFM is on display both inside and outside Havertown. Local business owners who saw their foot traffic and sales spike on Wednesdays quickly established an annual “Oakmont Village Fall Festival” to coincide with the market’s seasonal finale the day before Thanksgiving to boost holiday business. Their leadership helped forge not only a partnership with the farmers market but also the beginning of a new economic development task force. Residents at Haverford Township revitalization meetings credited this new activity with increasing home property values during the middle of the real estate crash. And new restaurants like Kaya’s Fusion Cuisine, opening in what had once been the original Carmine’s, soon partnered with the OFM to create seasonal menus with produce, meat, and cheese sourced directly from the farmers themselves. Mike and Jessica Hawthorne, co-owners of Kaya’s and long-time Havertown residents, have since sponsored three “Locavore” Harvest Dinners, while winning their own Best of the Main Line award for their delectable desserts. Suddenly, the once-sleepy and historically working-class town that had long been looked down upon as being “off the Main Line” was attracting foodies from Philadelphia. Nearby municipalities took notice and began their own farmers market efforts. It is perhaps not a coincidence that by the summer of 2009, markets were launched or in the planning stages in Bryn Mawr, Ardmore, and Bala Cynwyd.

Yet the founders of the OFM realized that, despite achieving their initial goals of providing sustainable local food alternatives to the community and helping to revitalize Havertown’s business district, their work had just begun. For starters, their efforts remained misunderstood by many. Some (misinformed) residents complained that the market did not pay rent for its use of the township’s parking lot and was driving other small grocery stores out of business. Such rumors persisted despite the fact that institutions like Young’s Produce (just down Eagle Road from the market’s weekly home) actually saw an increase in customers when shoppers stopped in to finish off their grocery lists by purchasing milk and other products not available at the market itself. Suspicion toward the market

was also born innocently enough out of a lack of knowledge: Many locals had simply never heard of or seen a farmers market and did not understand how it worked. Thus, Chrzan and a fresh cadre of volunteers sought to expand the mission of the OFM to include education – a mission that today distinguishes it from all the other markets in the area.

In order to meet this local educational need, the OFM first became a 501(c)3 entity, complete with a board of trustees who accepted the responsibility of oversight that Farm to City had rendered during the OFM's first two years. Unlike other markets that are still run as part of this Philadelphia business, the OFM is completely volunteer-driven; all monies taken in through farmers' dues and fundraising go right back out to the community. With its new nonprofit status, the OFM has been able to work with other civic institutions like the Haverford Township Free Library, with which it launched a children's outreach this past summer. The Fruit and Veggie Challenge, which was one of the programs conducted at the market, encouraged youth of all ages to try new fresh produce. It was a hit with over a hundred families participating. In the meantime, the market's weekly e-mail newsletter and blog entries invited the public to screenings of the recent film *Food, Inc.* and posted news articles explaining the differences between organic and conventional farms.

As the OFM enters its fourth season after changing the culture and economics of the local community, it seeks to continue its nonprofit and educational mission. It has also added new vendors, including a pie maker and specialty cheese producers. So far it has weathered the downturn in the economy and increasing competition from other markets. If consumers continue to value knowing the names of the people who grow their food and where it came from, the "Buy Fresh, Buy Local" revolution will continue both in Havertown and beyond. Yet even the OFM's short history is a testament to the ability of women from different walks and in various stages of life to work together to galvanize economic and social change in their community.

Kaley Carpenter serves as a lecturer in Bryn Mawr College's Emily Balch Seminar Program and as an adjunct professor in both the History Department and the Center for Liberal Education at Villanova University, when she's not recruiting and training volunteers for the Haverford Township Farmers Market Association. Her interests include world history, American religious history, visual and material culture, agrarianism, and media ecology. For more information about the Oakmont Farmers Market, please visit <http://www.oakmontfarmersmarket.org>.

