STUDENTS

SERVICE-LEARNING IN MARKETING AT SOUTHEASTERN

In her marketing and public relations classes, instructor Holly Syrdal promotes practical application of the skills her students learn. Most recently, Syrdal oversaw 16 groups of students working with three different non-profit organizations, including a child care development center, an animal shelter, and Special Olympics as part of the Southeastern Service-Learning Initiative. Each group worked with their community partners to provide public relations materials and services, such as press releases, newsletters, public service announcements, assistance with fundraisers, and Web page development.

The non-profit partners presented the students with serious challenges and opportunities. "The students were much more engaged in the classroom because they knew they were actually going to use what they learned in a real-world situation for a real organization," Syrdal said.

Student Ana Belsome-Brenes agreed: "I liked that I was able to use what I learned in class and apply it to this project. The fact that this was a real client and not a fictitious one made the experience better."

Eight students worked with the St. Tammany Humane Society on different aspects of a fundraiser called Woofstock. The society, Louisiana's largest not-for-profit, no-kill animal welfare organization, has been serving the region since 1953. In reflecting on her experiences, marketing junior Baylie Babin said, "Working with the St. Tammany Humane Society provided me with the opportunity to incorporate what we studied into an actual project with a real organization. I now have real-world experience I can use on a resume' and take into the workforce with me."

"Service-learning is beneficial for students in several ways," Syrdal said. "Most importantly, they gain a bit of real-world experience. Time and again, I've heard employers say experience is one of the top things they look for when recruiting recent graduates. I think service-learning is the next best thing to doing an internship."

PHOTO: One group in Holly Syrdal's marketing and public relations class focused on developing promotional materials for the St. Tammany Humane Society.