

Bonner Profiles

By Valencia Gant, Bonner Senior Intern
Anita Graeser, Bonner Publications Committee Convenor and
Marcie Roberts, Bonner Scholars Coordinator

Purpose

- Increases campus and community awareness about the Bonner Scholars Program by publishing articles on Bonners' service work in the College and local community newspaper.
- Provides Bonners who are interested in journalism with a way to incorporate their vocational focus with their service by conducting interviews and writing articles about their fellow Bonners.

Background

In fall of 2000, a first-year Earlham Bonner Scholar worked with the Bonner coordinator to combine his love of teaching and journalism with his commitment to service to develop the publication of Bonner profiles.

How It Works

The Earlham Word, the college newspaper, publishes a Bonner profile every two weeks. The Bonner who writes the article spends two to three hours interviewing the profiled Bonner, shadowing the Bonner at their site, and producing the article for the campus and/or community newspapers. The Bonners interviewed are usually sophomores or seniors. A photograph, taken by a staff member of the *Earlham Word*, accompanies the article.

The leader of the Bonner publications committee is responsible for training writers, selecting Bonners to be profiled, and working with the newspapers. The Bonner coordinator adds support as needed, sometimes serving as a liaison with other involved faculty and staff, such as the *Earlham Word* advisor or the vice president of community relations.

The Palladium Item, Richmond, Indiana's local newspaper, began picking up these stories in October 2002 in an effort to strengthen the relationship between Earlham and the Richmond community, to increase understanding of Earlham students' contributions to the area, and to highlight local not-for-profit agencies. Students modify the articles they write for the *Earlham Word* to accommodate the requirements of the *Palladium Item*.

What Makes The Project Unique

The Bonner profiles de-mystify the Bonner program and the work Bonners do by sharing stories of partnerships, impact, and change. The profiles also allow Earlham to highlight its commitment to service-learning and community-building. They give community members a greater understanding of the positive impact Earlham students have on their area, helping to close the town/gown gap.

Timeline

Profiles are produced biweekly throughout the academic year. The profile is due at *The Word* on Tuesday and at the *Palladium Item* on Thursday. The extra days between the two deadlines allow for the profile to be edited and revised to meet the specific criteria for the *Palladium Item*.

Resources And Funding

Earlham Word

- The campus newspaper provides computer access, editing, layout equipment, and photographers.

Palladium Item

- The local Richmond, Indiana newspaper publishes the Bonner profiles.

The Bonner Publications Committee

- The head of the committee directs the project, working one-on-one with students writing the profiles to ensure that their work meets the criteria of a professional paper. The committee currently includes two people.

Overcoming Challenges

The committee faces the challenge of a lack of student interest. Although community members love reading the Bonner profiles, few students are interested in actually writing them. It has also been difficult to find Bonners interested in leading the publications committee.

In addition, it can be challenging for the writer to meet the requirements of the *Palladium Item*. For example, the paper requires that articles be no more than 600 words and have at least three quotes from community members. *The Word* does not have the same requirements.

Evidence of Success

Many community members, whether or not they are familiar with the College, have commented on the articles and the Bonner program. Many Bonners have demonstrated an interest in being profiled so that their specific service sites could be better publicized in the community. Most of the Bonner scholars who have been profiled report that their article was distributed and even put on display at their service site.