Students bridge the gap between IU and the community

“I never thought about community service when I applied to college” is a sentiment shared among many students as they envision their college careers. When Sarah Cohen arrived at IU Bloomington in 2003, she would never have guessed where her college experience was going to take her — exactly where she least expected.

Growing up in Mississippi, Cohen was involved with a youth group that incorporated community service into their programming, and she also worked at a camp for individuals with disabilities. For Cohen, the draw to these activities was primarily social. So when a friend told her about an Alternative Spring Break course that involved traveling to Louisiana to assist disabled students in the classroom, Cohen couldn’t pass up the opportunity.

Her instructor, Claire J. King, director of community outreach and partnerships in service-learning, noticed Cohen and told her about Advocates for Community Engagement. ACEs are IU undergraduates who serve as liaisons between local not-for-profit organizations and IU constituents, connecting academic coursework to community needs. Cohen applied and was hired to be the ACE for Stonebelt Inc., an agency that helps people with developmental disabilities participate fully in community life. “I didn’t know what I was getting into, but from then on, being an ACE completely changed my college experience.”

Besides placing, orienting, and supervising IU students at Stonebelt for the past two years, Cohen has also worked with faculty and community members to ensure that both academic and community needs are being met. Being an ACE opened up new opportunities for her. Over the 2005–06 winter break, Cohen successfully organized more than 200 students for a trip to Biloxi, Miss., creating the largest student presence in the devastated region to date. She is also working toward a certificate in non-profit management and hopes to lead a youth trip to Israel over the summer. “I think the classroom stuff is great, but the experiences outside of the classroom will be what actually help you in the long run in terms of a career.”

Cohen describes her evolution into a community leader best in her own words: “I was the naïve freshman who had no idea what college was about, but now I feel as though I’m on a pretty clear path and I can see where I’m going. I had always been an individual — but I wasn’t the leader that I am now. All of these experiences have made me step up.”

For more information about the Advocates for Community Engagement, visit www.iub.edu/~copsl/aces.shtml.

Fabulous first impressions

An etiquette dinner was held at 6 p.m. on Tuesday, Feb. 28, in the Federal Room of the Indiana Memorial Union. Students registered for the event from the SAA Web site at www.indiana.edu/~saa.

The dining tutorial included instruction on formal dining skills during the five-course meal. Thanks to several sponsors, the cost for the event was only $10 for SAA members. This is the third consecutive year that the Monroe County Chapter of the IU Alumni Association and the SAA have partnered to assist students in overcoming the fear of formal dining and have helped them learn how to put their best foot forward as they embark on their career search.

For more information on attending future etiquette dinners or becoming a sponsor, contact the Student Alumni Association at (812) 855-9263 or by e-mail at iusaa@indiana.edu.

IU Dance Marathon raises record funds

The 2005 IU Dance Marathon raised $677,415.19 for Riley Hospital for Children. More than 600 students dance to raised funds, and more than 500 IUDM Council members worked year round planning the event and raising funds. This year’s Dance Marathon will be held on Nov. 3–5 at the Wildermuth Center on the Bloomington campus. Call IUDM at (812) 855-6362 for more information or visit the Web site at www.indiana.edu/~iudmc/.