

Celebration of Community Engagement

Highlighted over a dozen projects led by professors and students

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Charles Stoddard, a banker, philanthropist and founder of Grand Angels, spoke on the topic of service at the Celebration of Community Engagement. (Photo by Julia Viniczay, University Communication student photographer)

By: Gillian Panigot, media communications manager & FOCUS editor

Andrews University continues to expand efforts to be a blessing to those beyond its campus. The first annual Celebration of Community Engagement took place on Thursday, Oct. 24, 2019, in Buller Hall. The event began with a poster session, then moved into Newbold Auditorium for formal presentations.

Christon Arthur, provost, welcomed those present, saying, “Community engagement takes ‘random acts of kindness’ one step further.... Meaningful community engagement is sustained. We’re talking about planned, intentional, sustained engagement.”

President Andrea Luxton noted that on a university campus it is very easy to act like we are an island. “We are not an island,” she said. “We want to be connected and part of what is beyond us. We have our tagline ‘World Changers Made Here.’ because we want to make a difference in the world beyond and in the local community beyond.”

A video message from Ted Wilson, president of the General Conference of Seventh-day Adventists, then affirmed the work of Andrews. “I’ve been impressed with the work done by the University,” said Wilson, “especially your work to positively impact the lives of those in the community around Andrews University.”

The program continued with musical selections and video presentations that highlighted more than a dozen University departments and clubs involved in community engagement projects led by professors and students. Projects ranged from music lessons for prisoners to working with students and staff in Benton Harbor to hosting a 5k run to support mental health. The videos also featured groups who traveled internationally to work in locations such as Thailand, Ethiopia, Cambodia, Madagascar, Cuba and Burkina Faso.

Mordecai Ongo, research integrity and compliance officer in the Office of Research & Creative Scholarship, introduced the plenary speaker, Charles Stoddard. Stoddard, a banker, philanthropist and founder of Grand Angels, spoke on the topic of service. He noted that he interviewed three of his friends about their service experiences, as well. He commented, “They said they get much more out of it than they contribute to it.”

He encouraged the attendees to do three things: write down how they plan to provide service this week, check out the website justserve.org, and invite a friend or family member to serve someone else in place of a gift to the attendee.

Alayne Thorpe, dean of the College of Education & International Services and the School of Graduate Studies, announced a community engagement scholarship of \$1,000 that was awarded to student Georgina Zambrano

“The Celebration of Community Engagement created a forum for all to listen and affirm the work of deepening relationships which are strengthened through service,” shares Maya Wilson, Master of Social Work student intern.

“There are many departments and individuals involved in this important work,” says Carlisle Sutton, director, Community Engagement Integration & Service. “We don’t often get to celebrate their efforts and our partners that make the work possible and sustainable. From the presentations, it was apparent that our students are using their skills and knowledge to positively impact our local community, nation and the world through these projects. However, our students and University are also being changed in the process. I see the empathy levels growing among participants, and I believe that is an essential part of the learning that should be experienced on a Christian campus.”

The Celebration of Community Engagement is sponsored by the Office of the Provost, the James White Library and the Office of Research & Creative Scholarship.