

# Student Center

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College of Arts and Sciences senior Dana Twyman established a program that helps local teenagers find jobs with SU Food Services.

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**—Dana Twyman '01**

## Preparing to Reform Urban Education

**G**rowing up in southwest Philadelphia, Dana Twyman '01 knew her schools lacked resources. But it wasn't until she began attending SU that she discovered just how much she had missed. “Coming to college, I didn't feel prepared,” she says. “I didn't have the writing or analytical skills I felt I needed.”

Twyman, a policy studies major in the College of Arts and Sciences with a minor in education studies, was disheartened because her high school was a charter school for college preparation. “We were supposed to be the best writers,” she says. “The teachers were great, but we had limited resources. During my junior and senior years many of the schools were in danger of being closed down because there wasn't enough money to keep them open. We didn't have a lot of things we needed.”

Maxwell School of Citizenship and Public Affairs professor William Coplin, director of the public affairs program in the College of Arts and Sciences, says Twyman didn't take her work seriously when she first arrived on the Hill. “She's very intelligent,” he says. “But her high school was not very strong, and she didn't have many challenges there. She didn't know how much work would be needed here.”

With Coplin's guidance and with mentoring by Michelle Walker, director of community service programs in the public affairs program, Twyman became a serious, goal-oriented student. “I plan on going into urban education reform once I graduate,” she says. “There's always some reform effort going on in different school districts. I think it's going to take people who understand urban communities, and who are committed to educating the cities' youth, to make positive changes. That's my motivation. Education is essential to being successful. I want to see more people from the inner cities have an opportunity to get a quality education.”

Twyman plans to spend time teaching before pursuing a master's degree in public administration. “If I want to be an effective policy maker for the educational system, I have to understand the issues,” she says. “I need to know what's going on in the classroom.”

To that end, she spent last spring teaching at the SU-affiliated High School for Leadership and Public Service in New York City (see “Partners in Learning,” page 38). She and other student teachers taught public policy to 12th-graders. “We also worked with ninth-graders who were reading and writing below grade level,” she says. “We had a series of courses designed to help improve their skills.” After graduation, she plans to join Teach For America, a nationwide program that places new teachers in under-resourced inner-city and rural schools.

Her ideas for reform include redefining the meaning of a good education. “Not everybody is going to score high on the SATs and get into good colleges,” Twyman says. “Not everybody wants that. We need to teach students skills they can actually use. With technology



advancing and the world changing, education is staying the same. As the world changes, education needs to change."

Twyman took action in the local community by creating a program through Coplin's community problem-solving class. "We looked at how to better prepare kids for jobs, regardless of whether they went to college," Coplin says. "She came up with a brilliant idea: Why couldn't we go down to the housing projects, find teenagers who either had dropped out or were still in high school, and get them jobs with Food Services on campus?" Twyman recruited teenagers from nearby Wilson Park, had a Food Services manager speak to the group, then helped them with the application process. "The program didn't take much effort to start. It was a matter of finding the right people to contact," Twyman says. "It gets students in the area involved with the University, and helps SU stay involved with the community."

Coplin says Twyman's problem-solving abilities and concern for the community will serve her well, no matter where her career path leads. "She's overcome a mediocre high school education," he says. "She has great potential, and she now realizes this. I could see her running Housing and Urban Development one day."

—GARY PALLASSINO

## Bringing Art to Inmates

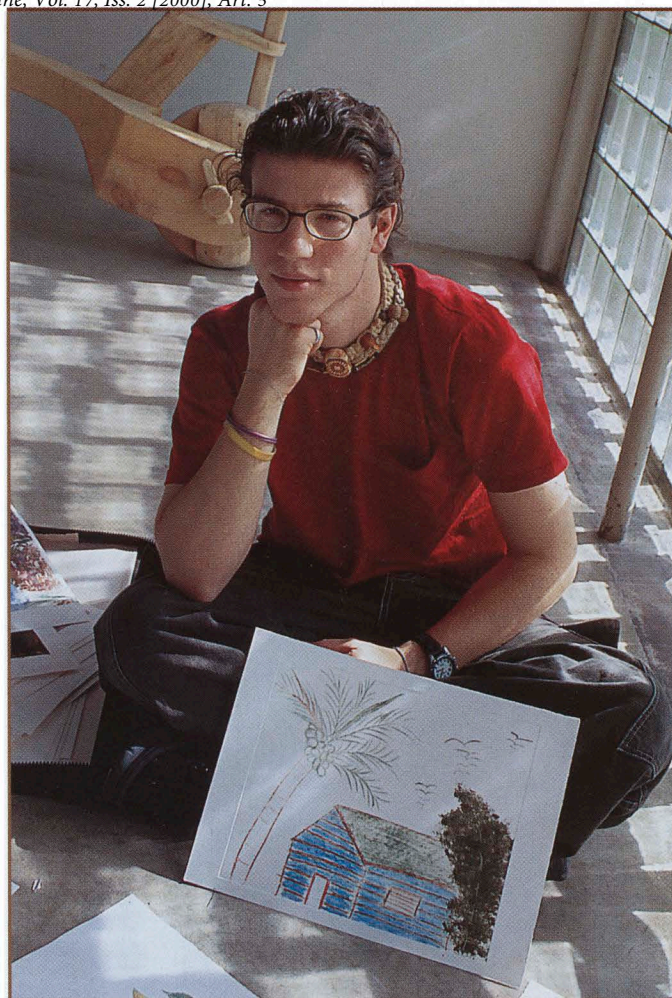
John Pusateri '01 spreads the gospel of art in places where creative expression can free minds from the restrictive routines of daily life. For six straight Saturdays last spring, Pusateri climbed into his car and drove an hour-and-a-half north to the Cape Vincent (New York) Correctional Facility, where he taught a monotype printmaking workshop for a group of inmates. This spring he plans to continue his work with inmates. "I enjoy teaching and am interested in giving people the opportunity to use their creativity," says Pusateri, a printmaking major in the College of Visual and Performing Arts. "I provide them with time to get their minds off being in prison."

Pusateri decided to organize the workshops last year, after accompanying African American studies professor Micere Githae Mugo and fellow student David Floyd '01 to several prisons in northern New York as part of a literature outreach program. "We each read a poem or a piece of literature that would allow the inmates to realize that, although they're physically incarcerated, they don't have to be mentally or creatively confined," he says.

Pusateri also talked about printmaking at the readings, and the inmates' interest inspired him to set up a workshop through the New York State Department of Corrections' volunteer services program. With Mugo's support, he established contacts in the volunteer program and explored the requirements for creating a workshop. "I invite students to join me in community activism, and John took up the challenge," says Mugo, who taught Pusateri in two courses. "He's an excellent student—attentive, self-motivated, industrious. His insights in class discussions were always perceptive."

Before receiving approval for the workshop, Pusateri persevered through numerous phone calls and substantial paperwork. He submitted a resumé, syllabus, and supply list; passed a medical test; and fared well in an interview. "It's a big commitment," says Mary Regan, a regional supervisor of correctional volunteer services. "But John likes what he does and wants to share it. He's very dedicated."

Pusateri turned the volunteer work into an honors thesis project this semester, writing about the experience and organizing the inmates' artwork into a catalog. Initially, however, he just wanted to teach inmates and show them he was willing to give them a chance. He received funding for supplies and travel expenses from the Honors



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John Pusateri, a senior in the College of Visual and Performing Arts, displays artwork created in a printmaking workshop he taught at a state correctional facility.

Program and the Undergraduate Research Program, which presented him with a Ruth Meyer Undergraduate Research Award; and the Community Folk Art Gallery loaned him an etching press. "The driving was pretty tiresome, but well worth it," he says. "I got a lot out of the workshops and feel the inmates did as well. Some of the work they created is really nice."

During the three-hour workshops, Pusateri introduced the eight participating inmates to different methods of printmaking, working with water-soluble crayons and oil paints. Some were skilled, knowledgeable artists; others were just learning to express themselves artistically. They produced an eclectic mix of prints—a rose with a hovering bee, a portrait of revolutionary leader Che Guevara, and a waterfall scene, for example. "I don't think I brought out any talents they had," he says. "But I did open up the time for them to release their talents."

In his own art, Pusateri, who worked last summer at a printmaking studio in his native Pittsburgh, produces abstract works and pieces that examine social issues and injustices. This semester his work was featured in two local exhibitions and a Pittsburgh show. He is also a skilled outdoor enthusiast who led whitewater rafting, mountain climbing, and cycling trips at a Pennsylvania summer camp for several years. In his first three years at SU, he volunteered as a reading tutor. Like the printmaking workshops, Pusateri sees such activities as opportunities to enjoy two of his passions—teaching and working with others. "I like people, and it makes me feel more at home being involved with the community," he says. "I try to be socially conscious and understand what different people's perspectives are." —JAY COX