



# The Post-Standard

## Lessons in Upstate Field School

### Colgate pairs students with nonprofit groups for summer

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**By Glenn Coin**  
Staff writer

Colgate University students this summer are helping organize a local kids' circus, working with troubled teens and their families, and helping represent victims of domestic violence.

They're all working for the college's Upstate Field School, which pairs willing students with local governments and community agencies in need of expertise and plain old hard work.

Students, many from upper-middle-class backgrounds, gain an insight into community problems and how to solve them. The agencies get an intern to tackle jobs the regular staff doesn't have time for the rest of the year.

The program is part of Colgate's continuing efforts to connect the college and the community, and to give students real-life experiences beyond the classroom, said said Ellen Kraly, who runs the program for Colgate.

"It's a way to share our human capital with the region and its not-for-profits," said Kraly, director of the college's Upstate Institute. "It gives them some people power and resources to allow them to undertake research or special projects that they might not have been able to do."

Agencies pay nothing for the students, who work for eight to 10 weeks. Colgate pays the students a stipend of \$400 a week.

The program started in 2004 and has grown ever since, Kraly said. This is the first summer the college had more requests than it had students to do the work, she said. Twenty-six organizations asked for interns, and Kraly was able to assign 18 students to cover 23 projects.

Students have been working for governments or agencies from Cazenovia to Utica. The students are at their jobs Monday through Thursday. Each Friday, Kraly holds a seminar with the students to discuss broader aspects of not-for-profit work.

The program has attracted the attention of other colleges. This week, Kraly gave a presentation in Hamilton to representatives from Bloomsburg, Bucknell and Wittenberg universities who are interested in the program.

Liz Harkins, a Colgate junior from Westchester, said she's come to understand problems of teens and families that she didn't before.

"I've learned so much about issues facing teens in this community," said Harkins, who is working with the Madison County Council on Alcoholism and Substance Abuse in Canastota. "I've always

known alcohol was a problem, but now I've become more aware of what a pervasive problem it is and how it affects people. It was something I wouldn't really have considered before."

Much of the students' time is spent in research, one of the goals of the program. At the Madison County Department of Social Services, Kate Serrurier is compiling information to help the county's largest department figure out how its programs are working.

Commissioner Mike Fitzgerald said Serrurier is laying the groundwork for more detailed studies that will help the department assess itself. She is studying the needs of the county and the best ways to address them.

"There's a kind of general feeling, but there's never any research behind it," Fitzgerald said. "What the field school allows us to do is find out what the research tells us and what are the best practices."

Last year, a Colgate student studied the problem of homeless teens in Madison County, Fitzgerald said. That study helped put a number on the problem: 88. Plans are now under way by Community Action Partnership to turn a former Wampsville motel into a shelter for homeless teens.

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