

Students Contributing to

## COMMUNITY IMPACT

By Evan Dixon



### **Jennifer Thomas Gets Kids Thinking about College as Attainable Goal**

The challenges faced by youngsters from difficult financial and social backgrounds are numerous and discouraging. Those who try to help these youngsters sometimes face their own difficulties and discouragement, according to Jennifer Thomas.

Thomas is a first-semester graduate student at Barry, pursuing a Master of Science in Entrepreneurial Management. About two years ago as an undergraduate, she began her civic engagement work with the Center for Community Service Initiatives (CCSI) as a clerical assistant.

Thomas later assisted with a service project of the Little Haiti Optimist Club, mentoring children at the middle-school level and below.

“It can be challenging when you’re speaking to the kids because some of them come from an environment where their parents didn’t go to college,” she says. “It’s a generational cycle of not achieving.”

Thomas says even though the children are young, she still believes it’s necessary to have them thinking about college as an attainable

goal.

She wants to discourage the notion that college is an option reserved for the rich. “When I’m able to at least get these kids thinking about it, that’s rewarding enough for me,” she says.



*Thomas assisted with a service project of the Little Haiti Optimist Club. She currently serves at Camillus House, a nonprofit agency that serves homeless people.*

For more than five months, Thomas has been a community relations intern at Camillus House, a Miami-based organization dedicated to helping homeless people. Her main responsibilities include monitoring volunteers and providing support so they can effectively perform their duties.

Interns and volunteers like Thomas do their part so Camillus House can feed the hungry – serving 700 hot meals a day – and offer various services to the homeless.

It was at Camillus that Thomas experienced one of her most unforgettable moments as a student volunteer. As she recounted, last Christmas she had an interaction with a Camillus client who took time to say, “Thank you for volunteering your time.”

Those six words, she says, made her service as a volunteer truly worthwhile.

## **Community Engagement News**

*Newsletter of the  
Center for Community  
Service Initiatives*

**Barry University**

**February 5, 2018**