

{Be the Change}

Double renewal

Baltimore/Annapolis alumni clean up Inner Harbor BY MARTHA GRAHAM

Baltimore/Annapolis Alumni Chapter members, many decked out in purple sweatshirts to ward off a chilly sea breeze, gathered for an alumni event they called Harbor Clean-up Day.

The Chesapeake Bay is the largest estuary in the United States, but because the Bay is surrounded by 15 million people, its health is an ongoing concern, not only as the critically important habitat for thousands of living organisms but for the quality of water and life of those who live there.

Nearly 20 JMU alumni who live in the Bay area braved chilly March winds to lend a hand to the enormous and important job of cleaning up the Chesapeake Bay. Parents of a current JMU student also participated in the event, which was part of a Wetlands Restoration Project sponsored by the Baltimore-based Living Classrooms Foundation. “We assisted with cleaning the last wetland in the city of Baltimore by picking up trash in and around it,” says Rebekah Porter ('03), Baltimore/Annapolis Alumni Chapter president. The wetland, she added, is vulnerable because it is located near storm drains, and run off from the city ends up in the wetlands.

“Nearly 5,000 JMU alumni live in the Baltimore area,” Porter adds. “Alumni got down and dirty by picking up unwanted trash and debris that was ruining not only the aesthetic of

the Baltimore Harbor but also contributing to the overall pollution of the Chesapeake Bay.”

While the Baltimore/Annapolis Alumni Chapter chose the project to help their community, these service-minded alumni also spent a day renewing friendships. Each year, the chapter hosts numerous social, service, scholarship and community service events, from athletics outings to wine tastings.

In addition to Harbor Clean-up Day, the chapter has participated in service events with the Maryland Food Bank and Habitat for Humanity. They are actively raising funds to establish a scholarship for a deserving JMU student from the area, as well. In June, the chapter members' efforts were recognized at the annual Madison Alumni Conference where the Baltimore/Annapolis Alumni Chapter was named the 2011 Alumni Chapter of the Year.

Baltimore/Annapolis Alumni Chapter members spent a chilly day picking up trash and making the Inner Harbor more beautiful.

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“We care about the community because we are all a part of it,” says Eve Brecker ('09). “The JMU experience is what initially brings us together, but creating positive change in the Baltimore metro area helps us strengthen old bonds with new activities while supporting a place we all live in together.”

Porter adds, “It was great to see recent and past alumni get together and take a few hours out of their Saturday to help give back to the community that they love so much. We find that, more so than almost any other type of event, JMU alums of all different ages and backgrounds come out to serve the community.”

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