



# PRESS RELEASE

## **Making a Difference Key to Course Students at LSCC opt for different areas of community service**

**By Roxanne Brown  
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CLERMONT - Lake-Sumter Community College teacher Alex Perez decided he'd try to make a difference in the community through the students in his college composition class - aka English 101.

"I told my students it was not just a research paper I wanted from them, but a lifelong commitment," said Perez. "That's what I was hoping they could find from this anyway. Something that would have a lifelong impact on them; something much bigger than a classroom project."

Beyond those instructions, Perez let them choose their own topics and what type of community service they would choose for their hands-on research.

Perez dubbed them the "Making it Count" projects

"Getting 17- to 18-year-old kids involved in community service projects is no easy feat," said Perez.

On Wednesday, his 17 students described their topics and what steps they took to either bring awareness about it to the community or make a personal difference by getting involved themselves.

Josh Jackson, 18, of Clermont, chose childhood obesity.

He not only got involved, helping coach a Little League baseball team, but was able to explain to the players about exercising and proper eating habits.

Jackson said he became interested in the "not-so-great" players, those who didn't get to play much or who were teased by others. Now, he said, he's looking into forming his own team - just for those kids who touched his heart.

"I thought it was just gonna be a research paper, but it turned into this," he said. "Plus, I've always loved sports and so this gave me an excuse to get back out there, but with the kids."

Patricia Leonard, 19, decided to raise awareness of cervical cancer. She got out into the community and talked to several medical offices about how she could spread the word.

The Clermont resident said she sought permission to speak at middle schools and high

schools, but was unable to arrange that. Instead, started talking to her little sister's friends, her co-workers and just anyone who would listen. The main thing now, she said, is spreading the word on how serious the disease really is and hoping people will get tested for it.

Other student got involved with such projects as suicide awareness, serving seniors - which took a student into nursing homes developing surveys to improve activities - and even supporting the troops, which led a student to form a group to send letters, e-mails and care packages to soldiers stationed overseas.

"I think it (the project) was a good idea because you're actually reaching people, getting out there and actually making a difference," said Marisa Mariapen, 18, from Minneola. "At first it did start off as just an assignment for me, but now I really want to do it and will continue to."

Melanie Wagner, LSCC English and Communications department chair, said Perez' project was an excellent way to apply the college's core values, which not only include academic skills, critical thinking, leadership, teamwork and academic honesty, but social responsibility.

"I thought, yeach, I can easily fit all those values into an English course, but social responsibility? How can I do that?" said Perez. "Now I just don't want them (students) to stop."