

FREEDOM

STUDENT/COMMUNITY ORGANIZATION

Contents:

CURRENT PROJECTS AND EVENTS
PAST PROJECTS AND EVENTS
FUTURE IDEAS

CURRENT PROJECTS AND EVENTS

- **FREE SPEECH MAGAZINE:** FREEDOM has begun printing a newsletter that challenges the definition of “news,” expanding it to include information about local, national and global issues and projects addressing them and expressionistic pieces like creative writing and artwork. Email shobbs@bgsu.edu for more information.
- **FREE FEST:** FREEDOM's staple event draws students and community members together to experiment with alternative ways of living and discuss ideas about changing the world. It includes a free garage sale, in which all items are available at no cost, and a free community dinner prepared in partnership with Food Not Bombs. FREE FEST participants engage in discussions about social change and participate in a variety of free workshops. An open mic is held in the evening. SATURDAY, OCT 4th BEGINNING AT 1 PM IN THE UCF.
- **TENT CITY:** From 10/31 – 11/2, FREEDOM will participate in Tent City. Individuals concerned with social justice camp in downtown Toledo for a weekend to express solidarity with the homeless. All weekend, free meals and donations are provided to Toledo's homeless. FREEDOM helps serve meals and spends time dialoguing with the homeless, learning about this social justice issue and what we can do about it.
- **FREEDOM IN THE STREETS:** Select Saturdays at 11 PM, FREEDOM gathers in the alleyway across from CBCB's on Wooster Street to hold open talking circles, share performance art, and host an open drum circle. These events promote local art and expression while bringing community members together.
- **COMMUNITY GARDEN PROJECT:** FREEDOM has started a Community Garden in Bowling Green, linking our community with a number of other communities throughout the country that have also begun community gardens to promote local, sustainable living and build community. The Community Garden is located on Wooster outside of Peace Lutheran Church. All community members are invited to help grow a variety of vegetables, herbs, and flowers, weed, and harvest produce. All grown produce is FREE and available to all community members, regardless of their involvement in the garden. By giving away free food grown communally, we hope to inspire alternative methods of obtaining resources and promote community ties.
- **COMMUNITY MAPPING PROJECT:** FREEDOM members go door-to-door in neighborhoods throughout the community, asking individuals what they think of Bowling Green and what

needs improvement in their neighborhoods. The responses will be used to guide FREEDOM's work in the community and create mutually beneficial connections among community members.

- **ACTIVISM WORKSHOPS:** Each semester, in partnership with BGSU's Office of Service-Learning, we sponsor a series of workshops that train individuals to be socially aware and active in their daily lives, as well as in their communities. Experienced community members, organizers, and teachers meet with FREEDOM and interested students and community members to discuss topics related to activism. We discuss ways to be activists in our daily lives, as well as how to organize individuals to work for social change. 9:00 PM IN UNION 208, except where indicated otherwise: 10/16/08 (Union 314); 10/30/08; 11/6/2008 (Union 314); 11/20/08; 12/11/08; 1/15/09; 1/29/09; 2/12/09; 2/26/09; 3/5/09; 3/19/09; 4/2/09; 4/16/09.
- **OPEN MICS:** Every month, FREEDOM hosts an open mic in the Falcon's Nest in the Student Union. FREEDOM's Open Mics are designed to be free speech forums for all interested in exercising their freedom of expression. Open Mics are open to all performance artists – musicians, singers, writers, poets, actors, etc. We hope to create a strong community of vocal artists on campus by providing venues where they can connect and share work. 9:00 PM, FALCON'S NEST, 10/23/08; 11/14/08; 12/4/08; 1/22/09; 2/19/09; 3/26/09; 4/9/09
- **ROLLOVER/AMERICAN EDUCATION SYSTEM MOVEMENT:** We are raising awareness about problems in the American higher education system through petitions, art, and protests. These events encourage people to determine what they want out of their education, question the "business model" of education, and challenge a system that leaves the average American undergraduate in \$27,000 of debt. We want to empower students to take an active role in determining their educational experience. To this end, we are challenging BGSU's decision to end Rollover on student meal plans, encouraging students to fight for their funds and to critically analyze how those funds are used. This is one concrete issue we can address on our own campus to inspire student involvement in universities across the country.
- **POSTCARD ART PROJECT:** We have set up a networking project between children involved in community organizations in the South Bronx and Bowling Green. We create events where children do artwork on postcards about themes such as "What makes you happy?" Those postcards are traded with children from another culture. Our goal is to create intercultural dialogue and make children aware of links between cultures.
- **BIBLE STUDY:** Mondays at 8 PM, FREEDOM members host a Bible study for anyone who is spiritually seeking. All are welcome. The Bible study established an open atmosphere where people can spiritually seek without judgment or expectations. Individuals are invited to come together to share their lives and build community with each other. [Note that FREEDOM is not a religious organization and does not endorse any specific religion.]
- **FOOD NOT BOMBS:** FREEDOM members are involved with Food Not Bombs, a local organization that provides free food to the community to challenge war and wastefulness. Select Saturdays, they meet at 3 PM at the UCF to cook together and serve food at 5 PM.

PAST PROJECTS AND EVENTS

Academic Year 2007-2008:

- **Postcard Art Project:** This project began at the Mercy Center during the South Bronx Engagement Experience [link to South Bronx Engagement Experience, **drop-down 4**]. BGSU students created artwork on index cards with students in the Mercy Center's after-school program, depicting their neighborhoods. This led to dialogue about environmental differences. FREEDOM expanded this project by creating monthly postcard exchanges between students in after-school program at the Mercy Center in the Bronx and at the UCF's after-school program in Bowling Green.
- **Tent City:** In November 2007, FREEDOM participated in Tent City. People concerned with social justice camped in downtown Toledo for a weekend to express solidarity with the homeless. All weekend, free meals and donations were provided to Toledo's homeless. FREEDOM helped serve meals and spent time dialoguing with the homeless, learning about this social justice issue and what we can do about it.
- **Open Mics:** Beginning in November 2007, FREEDOM hosted an Open Mic on-campus about once a month. All events were open to performance art on any topic. In 2007-2008, FREEDOM held the following Open Mics: UNSILENCED, Back in the Swing, FREESPEECH DEFENDED, Open Mind Open Mouth Open Soul, FREEDOM OUTLOUD, and Freedom Finale.
- **Rollover / American Education System Movement:** Originally called the Student Loans Movement, this movement began with awareness-raising events and teach-ins to share information among students about the American student loans system. It evolved into a larger questioning of the "business model" of education that transforms students' university experience into job training. When BGSU cancelled Rollover of students' meal plan dollars, FREEDOM decided to fight the decision with awareness-raising events, petitions, and protests to rally for more student involvement in University decisions.
- **FREEDOM Retreat:** At this event, a community organizer from Minnesota came to Bowling Green to train FREEDOM in consensus building and community planning. We did community-building exercises, brainstormed local and national issues that we wanted to address, and came up with concrete ideas to address them. This event strengthened the FREEDOM community and framed our work throughout the semester.
- **Activism Workshops:** Activism Workshops train individuals to be socially aware and active in their daily lives, as well as in their communities. Experienced community members meet with FREEDOM and interested students and community members to discuss topics related to activism. Beginning in January 2008, Activism Workshops were held about every other week. In January, FREEDOM hosted "The History of Activism." February's Activism Workshops were "The Art of Community Organization" and "What Are the Issues?" After Spring Break in March, FREEDOM held "Activism as a Lifestyle & The Search for Bliss." In April, FREEDOM's Activism Workshop centered on the Rollover Movement.
- **Spring Break Trip to South Texas:** On the Spring Break Trip to South Texas, FREEDOM members engaged in a service-learning experience in collaboration with the Southwest Good Samaritan Ministries (SWGSM). At SWGSM, we learned about political refugees, political and cultural relations between the US and Mexico, and the social and economic conditions of border cities and refugee neighborhoods. Following each workshop, we engaged in

experiential and service-learning opportunities. The capstone experience of this trip was helping build a Casita, or “little house,” for a poor area family. Students constructed the entire house during this week-long trip, putting in many hours of community service and learning a great deal.

- **COMPASS:** In April, COMPASS, a campus organization composed of instructors and administrators who encourage personal and social responsibility on campus, held a showcase of student organizations that had engaged in projects focused on personal and social responsibility. FREEDOM made a PowerPoint presentation about our work in South Texas and Mexico building a home for an impoverished family and facilitated a discussion about personal and social responsibility in our daily lives and on campus.
- **Sponsorship of Navajo Engagement Experience:** FREEDOM raised \$1000 to help sponsor the Navajo Engagement Experience [link to Navajo Engagement Experience, **drop-down 3**]. Given that FREEDOM was partly created by students who had been on the Navajo Engagement Experience, FREEDOM wanted to ensure that other students had the same opportunity to experience Navajo culture, society, and worldview.
- **FREE FEST:** FREEDOM's year end event drew students and community members together to experiment with alternative ways of living and discuss ideas about changing the world. It included a free garage sale, in which all items were available at no cost to anyone who wanted them, and a free community dinner prepared in partnership with Food Not Bombs. FREE FEST participants engaged in discussions about social change, especially focusing on anarchism, mutualism and socialism. The last open mic of the semester was held in the evening.

FUTURE IDEAS

- **Globalization Project:** In response to FREEDOM's Spring Break Trip to South Texas, FREEDOM would like to develop events to engage students and community members in analyzing the effects of globalization on this community, this nation, and in other nations and cultures.
- **Apathy Awareness Day:** This event will unite university student organizations in addressing the nonpartisan issue of apathy. Organizations desire their community to be self-determining. The way to accomplish this engagement is the meet on the same ground and network with others involved in community improvement. This event will provide a forum for such networking.
- **Social Awareness and Activism Film Series:** In partnership with the Office of Service-Learning and other campus organizations and departments, FREEDOM would like to sponsor a film series centered on raising awareness about social justice issues in different cultures and social contexts, focusing on activism about those issues. We would like to host open discussions following the films for community reflection.
- **Environmental Awareness Movement:** FREEDOM would like to develop events and projects designed to empower people to adopt more sustainable lifestyles and work as a community to slow down carbon emissions. Concurrently, we will address high gas prices by promoting alternative modes of transportation, such as bicycles, and combat rising food prices by promoting free food from the community garden.