

# Social justice advocates in the making

## Part two of a three-part series

By Rebecca Coven  
and Laura Sampson  
News Editor and  
Contributors Editor

This year, as part of Roger Grande's new social justice program, participants were set up with internships at social justice organizations around Boston. Here are two student experiences.

### Students organize fundraiser for SHARED Inc.

It costs anywhere from \$2,500 to \$3,500 to plant a community garden in Lesotho, a garden which provides food for children and adults with HIV and AIDS. But the high price did not discourage junior Rachel Baras and senior Lizzy Divine.

For about three months, the two girls worked to raise money for a garden in Mokhotlong, Lesotho, an African country where approximately 30 percent of the population is HIV positive.

Their work was in collaboration with SHARED Inc., an organization based out of Brookline Village that works to improve global health for poor countries by providing the proper medicines and vaccines to residents.

With the help of SHARED's president Elizabeth Ziemba, Baras and Divine organized two events which raised about \$1,700, according to Baras. The first event was an evening at Ten Thousand Villages in Coolidge Corner, where the store agreed to donate 15 percent of its net sales to the community gardens.

The second was SHARED's third annual Round Up Day, held at Whole Foods in Braintree on Dec. 1, World AIDS Day. Customers were given the option to round up their purchases to the next whole dollar and the extra money was then donated to the community garden project.

Throughout their internship, the two met with Ziemba for about a half hour every week, but other than that, they took on much of the project themselves. The girls solicited pledges and donations from businesses, advertised their events and got student volunteers from BHS' SAJE to help out on Round Up Day.

"Because Rachel and Lizzy did such a terrific job, it's really given me a lot of confidence about the quality and the caliber of work that the high school students can do for us," Ziemba explained.

Although the internship is now completed, Baras feels that it



PHOTO PROVIDED BY PATRICK ALVARADO  
Alvarado used his knowledge from building his own bike (pictured above) to help out at Bikes not Bombs.

environmental destruction and lack of safe haven for low income children?

During his three-month internship with Bikes not Bombs, senior Patrick Alvarado got to witness just how that was done. Along with promoting bicycles as an alternate mode of transportation, the Jamaica Plain based organization

**Some other organizations that students are interning with:**  
Allston Brighton CDC  
Brookline Community Foundation  
City School  
Facing History  
Grassroots International  
Harvard Injury Center  
Mass Immigrant and Refugee  
Physicians for Human Rights  
Sibusiso  
Jobs with Justice  
Partners in Health  
United for a Fair Economy

taught her time management skills and how to interact with businesses. For her, the internship was nothing short of a worthwhile experience.

"I learned about the process to plan an event, and that's just a really great supplement to what I've done at SAJE," said Baras, who also participates in SAJE's Hunger Committee, which raises awareness about global hunger issues.

"The main focus of the whole [social justice leadership] program is leadership, and it involves... how you can, as an individual, affect the world," said Baras. "I think that what this [internship] showed me was that I, as an individual, and also Lizzy, we were able to just two people help to set up this whole program that would be affecting so many people in Lesotho."

Baras hopes to stay involved with SHARED in the future.

### Promoting peace through bikes

Who would have guessed that bicycles could help solve three of the world's biggest problems: war,

ships used bicycles along with technicians and tools to economic development projects in poorer countries, such as South Africa and Ghana. Additionally, Bikes not Bombs reaches out to low-income youth in Boston by opening their doors to children through various programs.

One such program is the Earn-A-Bike Program, which Alvarado volunteered at one day a week for a couple hours at a time. The program teaches young people about bicycle mechanics and environmental issues while getting them involved in community service. Throughout the course of the program, the youth build their own bicycle, and at the end of the program, they get to keep it.

Each week of the internship, Alvarado worked with the children, assisting them in constructing their bicycles and helping them with their homework.

This internship was the perfect opportunity for Alvarado to link his passion for biking with his social justice goals. No stranger to bicycle mechanics, Alvarado has gone on several bike trips in the past and built his own bicycle only months ago.

Through his work with the organization, Alvarado saw first-hand how organizations become active in social justice issues, which is also what the Social Justice program aims for students to be able to do.

"I learned a lot about how an organization runs itself, the power structure of [the organization] and also how it obtains finance and support," said Alvarado.

Alvarado now looks forward to the rest of the program where he plans to use what he learned in his internship to help him in the seminars.

Although their internships have been completed, these three students still have much to do as they strive to become active social justice advocates, using the knowledge they have gained from their internships along the way. They will be joined by the 22 other students in the program as they continue on their journey by attending leadership field trips and participating in biweekly seminars.

Rebecca Coven and Laura Sampson can be reached at rcoven.sagamore@gmail.com and lsampson.sagamore@gmail.com