



Building Hope Together



It won't come as a surprise, to anyone who knows Hope, that in the college's fund-raising Phonathon, the process matters just as much as the outcome.

That's not to say that the outcome, generating annual operational support for Hope, isn't crucial. Along the way, though, it's done with an emphasis on people, relationships and—above all—the students who are the entire reason that the college even exists.

Four nights a week and Saturday mornings across the entire academic year, teams of those students spend time calling alumni, parents and friends of the college who have not yet made a gift to the Hope Fund, which supports Hope on a day-to-day basis. While those conversations always involve a polite request for a donation, the students especially value the opportunity to connect with others in the Hope family—many of whom have been where they are, and are where they're going.

"I enjoy talking to the alumni—hearing stories of how they met their spouses, talking about their major or minor, and talking about what they experienced at Hope and all the similarities that we have," said senior Kristen Garrison of Batavia, Ill., who's worked with the program since her freshman year.

A political science major, Garrison has appreciated the chance to compare notes with alumni who had classes with many of the same professors with whom she is studying now. She has also found those she's called generous in their interest in her.

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— Kristen Garrison '11 of Batavia, Ill., Phonathon caller

"A lot of them are willing to help with my future goals, with contacts or whatever assistance they can give," said Garrison,

who is interested in foreign policy and U.S. international relations.

Students enjoy the Phonathon experience so much that most, like Garrison, come back year after year. When spots do open up (the program can handle up to 31 students), it's generally due to graduation.

Sophomore Joe Soderberg of Glen Ellyn, Ill., is new to calling this year, having snagged one of the six slots available in August. At first, he admits, the idea of calling someone he didn't know—and, in the end, requesting a donation—was a bit intimidating, but it's an affirmation of the good character of the Hope family that he has found that those he is calling make it easy. "You're talking to some pretty nice people," he said.

Interested in public accounting, he's appreciated the reassurances he's received from those with whom he's spoken.

"They say it's a great career," he said. "And I've heard good things as far as the job market is concerned."

The students aren't the only ones who enjoy the conversations. Notes often accompany the donations that come to Hope

as a result of the Phonathon. "I love getting a phone call from a Hope student. It reminds me of all the neat people I met there, who are still friends to this day," one shared recently. "What a lovely young woman who contacted us. She should go far," said another.

Emily Donahue '09 can appreciate the Phonathon from both perspectives. She enjoys receiving calls as an alumna now, just as she enjoyed making those calls herself as a junior and senior.

"It was a fantastic experience," she said. "I think that being able to connect with alumni and graduates of all years was beneficial for me in appreciating my experience and also understanding where people are going."

Donahue notes that she initially signed on because, as a communication major, she saw the program as an opportunity to hone her interpersonal skills. "The experience through the Hope Fund Phonathon gives you the ability to gain that phone etiquette that you can only get through practice," she notes.

It happens that the Phonathon also informed her career direction. She is currently working at the Naper Settlement Museum in

Illinois and pursuing a master's degree in non-profit management.

"Having that experience in college kind of turned me on to the whole concept of development and fund-raising," Donahue said. "It's been one of the puzzle pieces in me finding where I want to be."

In addition to enjoying their time as callers, the students also take the responsibility seriously, recognizing the importance of what they're doing. To enable the college to stay on budget, the Hope Fund is seeking \$3 million this year, to which the Phonathon will contribute \$1.25 million.

The figures aren't arbitrary. Tuition covers about 75 percent of the cost of keeping Hope running each year, with the remainder paid by income from the college's endowment (a story about which also appears in this issue) and the Hope Fund.

The Hope Fund provides unrestricted operational support that benefits every Hope student—and literally helps pay for everything. It contributes financial aid; keeps the laboratories stocked, the computers running, the classrooms heated and the sidewalks shoveled; underwrites health, counseling and career services; assists in bringing world-renowned artists, authors, musicians and lecturers to campus; and more, and more.

"We know our alumni give because they value a liberal arts education, they love Hope College and they love helping students," said Abby Madison '86 Reeg, who is director of the Hope Fund—and who, it happens, was a Phonathon caller herself as a student. "If people want to help students, giving to the Hope Fund is a great way to do it."

Reeg encourages alumni, parents and friends of the college not to be dissuaded if they're not in a position to make a large gift. Every contribution makes a difference in absolute terms, combining with similar donations from others, but also, significantly, makes a difference as a statement. She notes that grant-making agencies and guides like *U.S. News & World Report's America's Best Colleges*

consider alumni giving—the percentage who support the institution, not the dollar amount—in their own evaluations of colleges and universities. The reasoning goes something like this: if those who attended don't think highly enough of their experience to support the school, why should anyone else support or recommend it?

It's never too late to start—or too early. The Phonathon students themselves develop a uniquely informed perspective. They are not only living the Hope experience, but have an opportunity to see what it takes to provide it, and to help.

"It makes me more appreciative of not only the alumni but the school for doing this—for seeking the money on behalf of students," Soderberg said.

"It's nice to feel that I'm contributing to the college and the campus," Garrison said. "I'm contributing to it while I'm still here, through raising funds for the Hope Fund."

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"Whenever my friends ask what my job is, I try to explain exactly what it is I do," she said. "Because the Phonathon goes into everything, including my scholarship, so I'm really grateful." 🐦

Missed our call? Please consider taking the opportunity to make a difference in the lives of Hope students through support of the Hope Fund.

An envelope is included with this feature for the convenience of those interested in making a gift, either before or after the end of the 2010 tax year.



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