Meet Angela Nelson, Red Cross youth leader

During June of 2009, I had the unique experience of being selected to participate in the American Red Cross/National Association of Intercollegiate Athletics Youth Leadership Program. The experience was an opportunity of a lifetime, and what I learned was very valuable.

This program takes the core values of the NAIA's Champions of Character program -- integrity, respect, responsibility, sportsmanship and servant leadership -- and combines them with the Red Cross' objectives to inspire a new generation of volunteers and leaders.

My involvement in the program began with a two-week training session at Red Cross National Headquarters in Washington, D.C., last summer. During this time, we obtained leadership training by professionals at the Red Cross and NAIA.

I really enjoyed hearing about their successes and the passion they have for the Red Cross. Their knowledge and experience in their fields of work really motivated me to learn everything I could about blood services.

One session I really enjoyed was the diversity and cultural competence workshop. During this session, we became aware of the different cultures in everyday life and how to react to the dimensions of diversity.

This session also assisted us in creating an action plan with specific steps to address ways to capitalize on the internal and external diversity of our specific blood regions. My lesson in diversity not only has been useful in coordinating blood drives, but has also been beneficial in everyday life.

Angel Nelson

Another thing I enjoyed about the program was the ability to meet so many people. There are nearly 300 NAIA schools across the country; I was one of 14 student-athletes selected to participate in this year's program. In addition to attending training together, we were able to bond outside of the office setting and experience the sites of Washington, D.C. Although the program was only two short weeks, I was able to gain lifelong friends.

In addition to establishing relationships with my peers, we also were given the chance to connect with senior leaders in the organization at a reception held in our honor. At this reception, we...continued on page 5
were able to network with a group of senior leaders and ask anything we wanted to know about their field of interest or advice about entering the workforce. It was very gratifying to interact with a group of people with so much experience in the workforce. This showed me that if you enjoy the job you are doing, you will never feel like you are actually working.

Once training was completed, we were given the opportunity to develop strategic plans for our on-campus blood drives. Each of the plans included ideas that would increase donors at our schools. Some of these ideas included a number of promotional techniques, such as incentives, competitions and themes. It was amazing to see how each participant could take the same concept and create a unique strategy that best suited his or her school.

Upon leaving the program, each student-athlete is required to coordinate on campus blood drives and actively participate on the region’s board of directors. The blood drives that I organized were held on November 3, 2009, and February 18, 2010. With my strategic plan, I was able to nearly triple the amount of units collected at two drives the previous year. This increase in numbers was very gratifying to me, because by relating promotions to college students, I was able to help make a difference in the community.

Being given the opportunity to participate in the American Red Cross/NAIA Youth Leadership program was truly an unforgettable journey. The knowledge I obtained from the program helped to take a simple service of donating blood and create a trend in youth donors. I hope to take my experience with the program and continue to make an impact in my community.

Editor’s Note: Angela is a Junior at Point Park University, majoring in Advertising and Public Relations, with a minor in Business Management. She is a member of the Point Park volleyball team.

Donor Resources: Thank you, Angela!

Dana Zikesh, Donor Resources Field Representative: It was a true pleasure to have the opportunity to work with Angela Nelson. She is a dynamic individual with strong work ethics. She planned and organized the past two blood drives on the Point Park campus which resulted in over 100 pints of blood collected. I am fortunate to have the opportunity to work with her again next year. She is a great example of all the characteristics that I look for in a sponsor. I appreciate her positive approach that she takes in organizing the blood drives. She is goal-oriented and you can see the results from the success of her blood drives.

Greg Havas, Assistant Director, Donor Resources: After meeting with Angela the first time, it was very apparent why she had been chosen as a Red Cross/NAIA Student Athlete. She not only made the parking arrangements for me, but was there to greet me at the parking lot on Wood Street when I arrived!

Angela initiated many successful recruitment efforts at Point Park and took a “hands on” approach in sponsoring two blood drives that accounted for collections of 102 units, more than tripling the amounts collected the previous school year! She used her advertising and public relations expertise to help attract many new donors in a very competitive setting.

Her maturity, commitment and competitive spirit will certainly lead to her success in life and the Red Cross is very fortunate to have had the opportunity to provide her with this learning opportunity.