

# EMBRACING SERVICE

By Chehalis Eno, senior English major

Service is part of life at Southern. Through opportunities to serve on campus, in the community, and overseas, students experience the fulfillment that serving others brings. These experiences stay with them even after graduation, as they make decisions about how they want to live their lives. Letting God lead, both students and alumni have found the joy in embracing service.

Southern embraces wholistic Adventist education, and many students take advantage of all the school has to offer beyond earning a degree. Through service opportunities big and small, Southern students craft a lifelong love for serving, using their God-given talents to change lives. Students showcase how empowering it can be to create a lifestyle rooted in Christ's mission, balancing work, school, community, and service with distinctive joy.

## STUDENTS SERVE

Each year, several students receive financial assistance through the Rita Vital Endowed Scholarship for Faith and Service Learning, which enables each to continue prioritizing an others-centered lifestyle. The three 2025-2026 recipients, Jordaine Broyer, Charlynneth Dizon, and Logan Johnson, are living testimonies of how serving not only benefits the receiver but also can shape the giver's own life.



Pictured from left: Ken Shaw, '80, president; Charlynneth Dizon, recipient; Logan Johnson, recipient; Greg Vital, '14, family representative; Jordaine Broyer, recipient; Cheryl (Martin) Craven, '99 and '21, Christian Service director; and Robert Young, senior vice president for Academic Administration.

## JOY IN SERVING

Jordaine Broyer, senior English major, feels service has always been an undertone in her life. "I was raised in a military family," she says. "Looking out for fellow families was the culture."

When Broyer was 12, her grandmother was diagnosed with Alzheimer's and moved in with the family. Over the next four years, Broyer spent hours each day caring for the cherished matriarch. "Sometimes I was upset, because I couldn't do things I wanted," she admits. "But my attitude eventually shifted to recognize the joy in serving. How many have an opportunity to provide that much care for someone they love?"

After enrolling at Southern, Broyer got involved in mission trips through Maranatha Volunteers International, a nonprofit organization that partners with the Seventh-day Adventist Church. For three summers, Broyer visited the same school, Kajiado Adventist School and Rescue in Kenya, Africa, which offers refuge for girls escaping childhood marriage, mutilation, and abuse. She aided in student supervision as well as construction of the school that was inaugurated last July.

"My first summer, I met two shy little girls who immediately latched onto me," she reminisces. "Watching them become more confident over time has been incredible." Both plan to become lawyers, just like Broyer, who notes, "It's deeply moving to connect with the ambitions of young women on the opposite side of the globe who have been through more than I can imagine."

Broyer describes the "ultimate blessing that Jesus allows us to be His hands and feet," and she's constantly struck by the happiness she sees and experiences through service. "Here at school, it's easy to get stuck in the 'life is hard' mindset," she reflects. "But then I go abroad and see mothers who were married with kids by age 14, who dance in church and have such joy and gratitude for life, even with so little to be joyful about."



Jordaine Broyer visits Kajiado Adventist School and Rescue in Kenya.



## SAY "YES" TO GOD

Charlynneth Dizon, senior psychology major, moved to the United States from the Philippines at age 15. "Getting involved in church reminded me of home, so I started serving to stave off homesickness," she says. The practice became a staple of her high school experience.

As graduation approached, Dizon felt strong impressions from God to attend Southern. "I wrestled with the Lord but also knew He answers prayers, so I trusted Him," she says. Through a series of extraordinary events, she found herself enrolled at Southern.

In college, Dizon continued the same pattern of service. First, she became a Soul-winning And Leadership Training (SALT) mentor, which led to volunteer roles on the General Youth Conference Southeast's media team and committee board. Back at Southern, her friends studying theology asked her to be part of the Student Ministerial Association, and other peers nominated her as the Asian Club spiritual vice president. Eventually, she became spiritual vice president for the Student Association, and she currently serves as its social vice president.

Balancing her many responsibilities has been easier than one might expect. "My passion in ministry really drives me," Dizon explains. "As long as you say 'yes' to God, He can do miraculous things."

Each role has impacted her growth and maturity because, as she illustrates, "Without the smaller ingredients, I can't make the cake."

Service for Dizon has become synonymous with her belief system. "My life is encircled with ministry, which helps me keep my eyes focused on the main goal in life: to follow in the footsteps of Christ," she adds. "It does require faith, but when I step out of my comfort zone, I'm able to accomplish seemingly impossible tasks."



Charlynneth Dizon says her passion for ministry drives her service.

## DISCOVER PURPOSE

Logan Johnson, junior biology biomedical major, spent much of his life serving for the wrong reasons. “It all felt like a task to be completed,” he says.

Once he came to Southern, Johnson realized something needed to change. “My freshman year, I found myself devoid of purpose,” he explains. Through a series of miracles, Johnson went to Kendu Adventist Hospital in Kenya as a student missionary during the 2022-2023 school year.

Outside the hospital gates was Nyaburi Integrated Primary School, a learning center and orphanage for disabled children. Johnson first visited to help with vespers and quickly recognized a deep need. The children at the orphanage struggled to get consistent meals, and their beds were soiled by bats that lived in holes riddling the ceilings. “The kids had no showers and crawled into bathroom stalls, because there was no wheelchair accessibility,” he says.

Immediately after visiting, Johnson and fellow student missionary and senior biology major Gabriel Brown decided they needed to step in. “There was no hesitation,” Johnson says. “When you’re the only chance someone has for reasonable living conditions, the responsibility is unavoidable.” The two young men created a short documentary showcasing the children’s testimonies and needs. (Watch the video at [southern.edu/columns](https://southern.edu/columns).)

Returning home, Brown and Johnson showed the video in churches with the goal of raising \$30,000. “More than \$50,000 in donations came in,” Johnson reports. “It was truly a miracle.” Through a contractor willing to do the work for the cost of materials, Nyaburi Integrated Primary School got a full facelift.

“I felt like I was working side-by-side with God throughout the process,” Johnson shares. “Everything lined up perfectly to make the project possible, and I know He had a hand in it.”

Now back on campus, Johnson feels called to become a mission doctor and says, “Service gives me a purpose on this Earth.”

At Southern, every student’s journey is unique, but the common thread of service means learning to find passion as well as joy in helping others.



**Above: Logan Johnson volunteers at Kendu Adventist Hospital and nearby Nyaburi Integrated Primary School in Kenya, where he discovered a sense of purpose.**

**Left: Fellow Southern student missionary Michaela Lohr (center) bonds with students at Nyaburi Integrated Primary School.**

## ALUMNI SERVE

The Christian Service program at Southern encourages students to form habits of helping others through school-wide service days, mission trips, club outreach events, and more. “The goal is to connect students with meaningful opportunities that foster a love of assisting and benefitting those in need, which will continue beyond their time at Southern,” says Cheryl (Martin) Craven, ’99 and ’21, director of Christian Service.

Success stories include Eric Davis, ’13, and Iliana Dialectakis, ’22, two alumni whose experiences at Southern led them to seek careers and churches oriented around service.

“Even before college, my parents instilled the value of service in me,” Davis says. Southern’s intentional opportunities allowed him to continue the cycle. “Literally the day after I graduated from Southern, I went on a mission trip with the Evangelistic Resource Center to the Philippines, where I preached 19 sermons.”

Dialectakis had a similar experience. “Service is a major part of my life,” she shares. “I was part of a LifeGroup at Southern, and through that, I was able to play music at nursing homes.” Dialectakis also served as a student missionary in Hong Kong for six months.

Graduating with a bachelor’s degree in computer systems administration, Davis now works at AdventHealth in Florida as a senior collaboration engineer. He explains, “I wanted to work for a company that shared my values and had a large impact on the community around it.”

Dialectakis graduated with a bachelor’s degree in finance. As a coworker of Davis, she chose AdventHealth because “the mission ‘extending the healing ministry of Christ’ really resonated with me,” she notes.

Both individuals attend the Spring Meadows Seventh-day Adventist Church in Sanford, Florida. Davis has been a part of four mission trips organized by the church since he became a member.

In June 2024, both Davis and Dialectakis participated in the church’s trip to Honduras. They volunteered at an Adventist school on the island of Utila. “The school ran into issues getting accreditation, because they needed updates to the library, bathrooms, and science lab,” Dialectakis explains. “We fundraised to buy and ship nearly 10 tons of material to the school to help with renovations.”

Davis helped set up the school’s newly painted and tiled computer lab, ensuring each computer had the needed software. Dialectakis was a leader-in-training, aiding with trip logistics and helping the two dozen volunteers stay organized and efficient. In addition to construction efforts, volunteers hosted a Vacation Bible School, decorated and organized classrooms, and taught courses in art, music, and sports that were not typically offered.

“I didn’t initially realize the impact I had,” Davis shares. “One of the teachers at the school told me he’d been praying for a computer lab since 2017. It’s times like this that give me



**Alumni Eric Davis, ’13, and Iliana Dialectakis, ’22, participate in a mission trip to Instituto Adventist Utila in Honduras, where they set up a computer lab, helped with construction projects, and hosted a Vacation Bible School program for the children.**

a perspective of the world and help me recognize the many blessings God has given me.”

Dialectakis also felt the impact. “The school is known for being the best on the island,” she says. “Parents send their kids to this school, because they know they will get a good education with strong values, so it functions as a real ministry for the church.”

“In Mark 10:45, Jesus said that the Son of Man did not come to be served but to serve and to give His life as a ransom for men,” Craven shares. “Here at Southern, we’re always glad to see students and alumni align themselves to Jesus’ life of service.” ■