

sure that the good works go beyond graduation. Stanford School of Law recently announced a program of inexpensive loans for graduates who choose a lower-paying public-service practice; the school will even retire the debt if the young attorney sticks with public service for several years. Many states are also happy to stretch their resources with student labor: later this month Minnesota's legislature will consider a plan to grant tuition credits in exchange for extended hitches in a state community-service program.

Fish heads: Beyond what these programs do for the schools or even for the people they serve, volunteerism opens the eyes of the volunteer. DePauw senior Robyn Ratcliffe recalls her month in Kenya: "I bathed in a river. I had fish heads for lunch. I had diarrhea for weeks." After the Third World, sorority life was a massive culture shock, she says: "You come back to campus, and people are asking each other what color shoes to wear." Says Tulane junior Mark Bourgeois, who works with the



JOHN TROHA—BLACK STAR

Dedicated feet: World Food Day drew 'stamp out hunger' crusaders from across the nation

school's Hunger Action Team, "It trivializes my problems to see what is going on in the world."

Through these epiphanies, the helpers sometimes become the helped. When someone holds the hand of an ailing, lonely pensioner or comforts a battered child, poverty and suffering assume an inescapable, hu-

man face. These are memories that will likely linger—and they increase the odds that, along with status cars and jobs, students may also strive for a social cause in later life.

JOHN SCHWARTZ with TODD BARRETT in Washington, D.C., CHRISTOPHER BROWN in New Orleans, JEFFERY RUBIN in Grand Rapids, and FELICIA KORNBLUH in Cambridge

Spreading the Word

Wayne Meisel—a.k.a. the Johnny Appleseed of volunteerism—lives a life that's an odd mix of high tech and low class. As he travels the country in search of fertile environments for community organizations, the 27-year-old Meisel crashes on student couches and wears one of his two outfits: a sweat suit or a blue business suit. Then there's his Macintosh computer, which he plugs in whenever he has a moment—even during airport layovers—for some quick letters or work on the latest publications from the Campus Outreach Opportunity League (COOL), which Meisel founded in 1985.

A preacher's son with a lopsided grin, Meisel is taking local action nationwide: COOL's presence is now felt on about 150 campuses. When he was studying at

Harvard, Meisel says, he accepted the conventional wisdom that his peers were job-obsessed automatons. But when he decided he wanted to coach a soccer team for Cambridge youngsters and tried to recruit others, he was astounded by the response: 150 students signed up the first night. Meisel says he began to believe that "given the

Touring on a budget: Wayne Meisel
CHARLES LEDFORD



proper leadership and structure and support, students will get involved."

Two years after graduating in 1982, Meisel trekked 1,500 miles on foot to 67 colleges between Maine and Washington, D.C., to spread the word. Eager as a Newfoundland pup, Meisel has a knack for infecting others with his enthusiasm, sowing soup kitchens wherever he goes.

COOL tries to get students to individualize their community action. "We try to get them to think about their strengths, think about what it is that makes their community tick," he says. It was his notion, for instance, to link Harvard "houses," as some of the dorms are called, to several neighborhoods. Although he is aware that the apolitical nature of community service draws fire

from some activist quarters, Meisel insists that the commonality that nonpartisan status affords is crucial to a group's strength.

Big time: These days, Meisel is back crisscrossing the country by air to conduct regional workshops. COOL now has Washington offices, a staff of five and a comprehensive guide to starting community-service programs (page 29). Much of their funding comes from private foundations and federal volunteer programs like ACTION/VISTA. COOL also helps sponsor the National Hunger Clean-Up and a summer internship program in Appalachia.

Despite having hit the big time in terms of visibility, Meisel still eschews expense accounts and hotel beds. "It's gotta be low budget, it's gotta be living on couches," he insists. "You do better work when you're sleeping on couches."

JOHN SCHWARTZ