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Student Profiles: Greg Sileo, Loyola College Maryland

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Student Profile

A Light in the Dark for the Homeless

By Kerry Anderson

Greg Sileo, a senior at Loyola College in Maryland, will graduate in May having accumulated a series of firsts over the past four years. A quiet but doggedly determined advocate for the homeless, Sileo has taken a leadership role in initiating projects to fulfill his goal of fostering a more just society, and, in cultivating the potential of his many gifts, he discovered his life's passion.

Growing up in Ridgewood, New Jersey, Sileo involved himself in service projects throughout high school, and, when he arrived at Loyola, the psychology major immediately became an active volunteer in Loyola's Center for Values and Service. He soon showed unusual initiative in bringing aid to Baltimore's homeless.

Noting that the College's dining service disposed of food with damaged packaging, he single-handedly collected the surplus, packed it into his car, and delivered it each week to Beans and Bread, a shelter for the homeless in Baltimore. This individual project ultimately led Sileo to found Loyola's chapter of Campus Kitchens, a non-profit organization that provides meals to low income children and adults.

Sileo took his passion for service a step further during his sophomore year, befriending homeless men and women on the streets of east Baltimore whom he met working at the Beans and Bread shelter. His friendships motivated him to photograph them and to create an exhibit titled, *More Than a Statistic: The Human Side of Homelessness*, which reflected everyday life in the winter for homeless Baltimore residents.

"I'm trying to get people to take a second look, because a lot of times, people just can't put themselves in the position of what it would be like to be in that

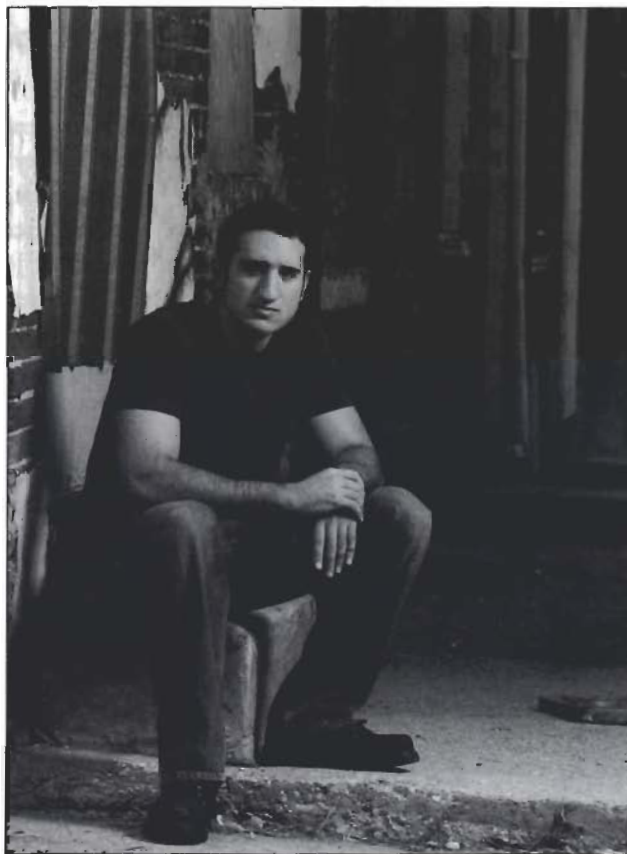


photo: Bruce Weller

Greg Sileo

Loyola College Maryland

situation," Greg says of the exhibit. "What I'm doing is about the individual person, their story, their face, and using the individual stories and faces to say something in general about hunger and homelessness."

The exhibit earned a gallery showing in Baltimore and notices in the local media; it remains on display at the Center for Values and Service at Loyola, and also is circulated to institutions surrounding Loyola.

As a junior last year, Sileo was part of the Loyola student organizing committee that successfully lobbied to host the 2004 National Student Campaign Against Hunger and Homelessness—the first time

a school the size of Loyola had been awarded the annual conference. Over 400 students from around the country came to Loyola for two days of workshops, seminars and service projects.

Sileo also has served as a member of the Loyola College Green and Grey Society, a prestigious group of men and women who promote the Jesuit ideals and work as liaison to the College's President, Rev. Brian F. Linnane, S.J. Sileo is also a student representative on the committee on engaged scholarship, which seeks to strengthen service-learning in the curriculum. For his efforts, last year he earned the Loyola College Student Choice Award, awarded by fellow students to a peer who fosters the goals and objectives of the College and also challenges peers to live the Loyola motto, "Strong Truths Well Lived."

Upon graduation, he intends to enter a graduate program for public and urban policy and planning, and to work for an organization dedicated to developing and advocating for national hunger and homelessness legislation.

"I now realize that I have been given the gifts to make a difference to people who are suffering in this country," he says. "I can see clearly the injustices that exist and I possess the energy, passion, and resources to do something about them. I believe that housing, food and health care are basic human rights and that it is disgraceful that, in the richest country in the world, we are unable to provide them to everyone. I have been fighting and I will continue to spend my life fighting for those who are oppressed by poverty." ■

Kerry Anderson is a senior at Loyola College in Maryland.