

## Pay It Forward

Dan Kettering is nervous. The walk from the National Student Partnership office in downtown Pittsburgh to Miryam's Women's Shelter only takes a few minutes, but worry can tug at your sleeve like an insistent child, and, for Kettering, it always does for what he is about to do.

As a volunteer coleader of the local NSP, Kettering— who is a [University of Pittsburgh](#) senior pre-law student— has represented NSP at shelters before. Still, he always wonders: How do you strike the balance between convincing and misleading"

He reaches the shelter and heads to the dining area, where women sit chatting at round tables. Their lunches have been cleared. He greets them and then launches into his spiel about NSP, a student organization that aims to help Americans in need find employment and become self-sufficient.

*Down the street are offices manned by student volunteers, who can help you with, well, whatever you need help with. We can help you find a job or an apartment. We can teach you interviewing skills, resume-building. How to find medical insurance. Childcare. That's what we do. Teach a man to fish.*

It sounds great, and that is what worries Kettering; he isn't promising a future, just a road map. He knows that when NSP succeeds, it's those in need who do most of the work. The students just help navigate the process—the research, the red tape, the Internet.

And they learn, along with the people they help. Kettering, through his volunteering, knows how to help those in need, like the women at Miryam's. It has been so rewarding for him that he plans to work on pro-bono cases once he is practicing law. He believes in a web of interdependence, that the fate of one person affects us all. "Everyone is connected," he says.

And so here he is at Miryam's, concerned about presenting NSP fairly, wondering if any of these women will show up at the office, if his visit will make any difference. He has no way of knowing, of course, when one woman approaches him after his talk, that she'll have a new life four months from now—a home, a job, college classes. "I've got big plans," she says to him. He doesn't know if he can help her meet them. But he believes in that web, and maybe he's right. After all, it's through her success that he'll be able to look back and realize his own.

**—Heather McEntarfer**