***Permeable Borders***

Marlena Hobson

The *Permeable Borders* May term project began as a dream to bring together Mary

Baldwin students, the Salvadoran teachers from Walls of Hope Perquin, Claudia

Bernardi and the community of Basic City, a deeply impoverished and troubled

area in the city of Waynesboro Virginia. Sixteen students, teachers, community

members and several MBC alumnae worked side by side with children from the

local elementary school and an after school program for immigrant families. The

experience of entering an unfamiliar neighborhood and working with children

from diverse and difficult backgrounds was in many ways transformational.

Our students demonstrated a genuine optimism, resilience (we were at the mural

wall an average of 6 hours a day), and compassion for the children and volunteer

community artists. Many declared the course “life changing, eye opening and

bittersweet.”