

Stockton's Fall Day of Service Draws Over 500 Volunteers to Work with Global, Local Communities

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Galloway, N.J. - Over 500 students, faculty and staff today worked with community partners to combat hunger globally and locally, provide food and crafts for hospitalized children and retirees, provide emergency cords for members of the U.S. military, and to educate students on suicide prevention, drug addiction, administering CPR and registering to vote.

"Service is a principal part of our mission," said Susan Davenport, executive vice president and chief of staff, in welcoming volunteers to Stockton University's 13th Annual Fall Day of Service on the main Galloway campus. She said the "takeaway" from this event is expressed by a quote attributed to Winston Churchill: "We make a living by what we get, but we make a life by what we give."

Stop Hunger Now, which provides meals for the under-privileged in 47 countries in Africa, South America, Asia and parts of Europe, set up assembly lines of students to package rice, soy, dried vegetables and packets of 23 essential vitamins.

"Stockton has the opportunity to save 12,000 lives in this hour," Latoya Gillyard, program logistics coordinator with Stop Hunger Now, told the first group of students. Throughout the day, four large groups worked to package a total of 48,000 meals.

"It's a great way to give back and to be useful," said Nephthaly Jean-Charles, a senior Biology major from Hamilton Township in Mercer County, N.J., who has been participating in Day of Service every year.

Askhia Khawaja, a student fellow with the Stockton Center for Community Engagement (SCCE) from Ventnor, explained the center's local efforts to combat poverty and hunger, which is climbing in Atlantic County since the closing of four casinos left thousands unemployed.

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"In 2016, we have served 900 meals through the Campus Kitchen project," Khawaja said. Food is obtained from the Community Food Bank and food drives on campus, then prepared at Atlantic City High School, where students learn about preparing meals with healthy, inexpensive ingredients. Meals are delivered to the under-privileged in subsidized living, to after-school programs and to the Eastern Service Workers Association for distribution, she said.

Merydawilda Colon, executive director of the SCCE, spoke to students about various ways of getting involved here, including helping students complete their homework in after-school programs at Stanley Holmes Village and Buzby Village in Atlantic City, and a new program at the Police Athletic League in the city.

Among the activities were civics and voter registration efforts, including a citizenship quiz taken by members of the Tau Delta Phi fraternity, which turned out as a group.

"I did well - I only got one wrong," said Philip Terlecki, a sophomore from Lawrenceville, N.J. majoring in Computer Science and Information Systems. It was his first time participating in Day of Service, and he said, "I'm having a good time. It's good doing something for the community."

Members of the Circle K club, a student service organization linked to Kiwanis, decorated pillows with hearts for patients at AtlantiCare Regional Medical Center and made cards for hospitalized children. The group also provided coloring books for Ronald McDonald House, and assembled crafts for St. Jude's Hospital and Caitlin Smiles, a group that distributes them to children in hospitals nationwide.

Circle K also assembled Paracord Bracelets for military service members. The 7.5-foot cords fold into small bracelets worn on the wrist, providing a strong rope suitable for use in hiking, camping and other outdoor activities.

The group prepared crafts for retirees at Spring Village in Galloway and made peanut butter and jelly sandwiches for the Atlantic City Rescue Mission.

Emily Mahler, a Circle K member from Hammonton who is a junior Math and Education double major, said she enjoys the group's visits to sites which include the rescue mission, medical center and retirement living centers. "It's really cool to see the people you're helping," she said as she made ornaments to decorate Spring Village residents' rooms.

"One day a week we go to Spring Village and play blackjack with the residents," she said. "They really get into it. We also tutor in area elementary schools."

Other students made learned hands-on CPR, and how to help fellow students struggling with substance abuse or suicidal thoughts.

Day of Service was a Stockton-first for transfer students Bella Gross, an Education junior from Mount Laurel, N.J., and Michelle Cupo, a Criminal Justice junior from Oxford, N.J. "It's a good way to put ourselves out there to meet new people. I love to volunteer, so this was perfect," said Cupo, who has volunteered in high school, on the softball field and at her community college. They signed up for a drug awareness volunteer activity. "Looking for signs [of drug abuse] is something teachers have to look out for," said Gross.

"I'm very excited to work with students who are willing to give up this first Saturday after classes began to learn not only about service, but to actively work hard to make the world a better place," said Jeff Wakemen, director of Student Development, who helped organize the events along with the Office of Service-Learning and other university partners. # # #