



State of New Jersey
COMMISSION ON HIGHER EDUCATION

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GEAR UP Students in Camden Serve Their Community at Ronald McDonald House

The T-shirts read “Educated to Serve”—and serving is what students in Camden and four other New Jersey cities did in February as part of their participation in a grant program that helps them prepare for college.

The projects are as varied as the students and their neighborhoods and schools. On February 16, thirteen students from Camden high schools helped “clean up” at the Ronald McDonald House of Southern New Jersey.

Tasks included organizing the many food and supply donations in the pantry, kitchen, and closets; restocking family bathrooms; changing light bulbs throughout the house; washing windows; and cleaning the laundry rooms on each floor.

Sonia Mixter, House Manager of the facility, had planned tasks carefully for the student volunteers. She has a special fondness for their passion. “I grew up in Camden and I still live in Camden. I came through the public schools here, and any time an opportunity presents itself to give back to youth in Camden, I step up. I want to be a teacher someday, and this is one way I can give back to my community what my teachers gave me unconditionally. Being here at the [Ronald McDonald] House, I have that opportunity,” she said.

The students are participants in state- and federally funded grant programs—College Bound and NJ GEAR UP—that begin in grade six to help them prepare to enroll and succeed in college. These programs are hosted by colleges and universities that work collaboratively with local schools and districts to improve students’ college readiness in as many ways as possible. At Rowan University, the program is called C.H.A.M.P.

“Community service helps young people experience the joy of giving to another person, whether it’s time or skills or attention. That provides an education that goes well beyond textbooks and classrooms and will remain with students when they enroll in college,” said Jane Oates, executive director of the Commission on Higher Education, which administers the grant programs.

To see photos of the students at Ronald McDonald House of Southern New Jersey, go to www.nj.gov/highereducation/GEARUPSvcePhotos.

The program director, Winona Wigfall, can be contacted directly about the program and about other volunteer opportunities, at (856) 756-5420.

Other NJ GEAR UP programs performing community service projects include:

Passaic County Community College; Clarence Wright, (973) 684-5201

New Jersey City University; Valerie Boseman, (201) 200-2347

Mercer County Community College; Wayne Murray, (609) 570-3156

New Jersey Institute of Technology, Dr. Jesse G. Jackson, (973) 596-5762

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