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Office of University
Communications

December 16, 2015

Athletic Training Club Members Visit Upstate South Carolina Shelter

BOILING SPRINGS, N.C.—In the rush of preparing for final exams and anticipating the coming holiday break from college classes, students in Gardner-Webb University's Athletic Training Club spent a day focused on brightening the Christmas season for the men and women at a local homeless shelter.

The students recently visited Miracle Hill Ministries in Gaffney, S.C., to decorate for Christmas, and to prepare and enjoy lunch with the homeless. The ministry operates several shelters for children and adults, while also providing resources for families in need across the upstate region of South Carolina. The GWU group also provided the shelter with 10 bags of clothing collected through donations on the University campus.

“Stepping outside of Gardner-Webb and athletic training into the community teaches students that there is a need for their helping hand, kindness and stewardship,” offered Dr. Heather Hudson, dean of the School of Preventive and Rehabilitative Health Sciences and athletic training program director and assistant professor. “Students learn that hardships are all around us, but just a little bit of kindness can mean so much to people.”

While decorating and eating, club members spent time in conversation with the homeless, offering a chance to learn about each other, shared Karsen Moody, a GWU senior from Belmont, N.C. “Some of the residents were formerly involved with drugs and alcohol,” added Taylor Thompson, a senior from Mooresville, N.C. “One resident shared with us that Christmas is the hardest time of the year because it reminds her how she used to spend the holiday with her children. She encouraged us to continue our college educations and stay on the right path. This service project opened my eyes to how blessed I am to have a home, family and college education.”

Interactions with the homeless made a special impression on each GWU student, including Tripp Hastings, a junior from Boiling Springs. “I had a conversation with one of the guys at the shelter that truly made me realize how fortunate I am to be able to attend school and live my daily life without having to worry about the next meal I eat,” he explained. “You

could tell when we were leaving that it meant something special to them for us to come to the shelter. Our visit really shows the connection GWU has with the community around us.”

Gardner-Webb’s many opportunities for service, like the visit to Miracle Hill, help enhance the college experience for numerous students who choose GWU for their undergraduate education, Moody assessed. “Community outreach like our athletic training project is something I really enjoy doing,” she explained. “The people we serve are so appreciative of the time we spend with them. I am thankful that our University is so service-oriented. It is something that drew me to Gardner-Webb.”

Since beginning in 1937 as a soup kitchen and small rescue mission in downtown Greenville, S.C., Miracle Hill Ministries has expanded in upstate South Carolina to meet the changing and diverse needs of homeless, hungry and destitute people.

Located in Boiling Springs, N.C., Gardner-Webb University offers a comprehensive academic experience that introduces undergraduate and graduate students to the diverse world of ideas and to the people who think them, challenging students spiritually and intellectually and equipping them not only for professional success but for lives marked by empathy, compassion and a commitment to service on the broadest scale, Pro Deo et Humanitate (For God and Humanity).