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### GWU Freshmen Service Projects Help People Both Locally and Worldwide

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# GWU Freshmen Service Projects Help People Both Locally and Worldwide

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Office of University Communications

August 21, 2012

BOILING SPRINGS, N.C. – Gloves. Plastic caps. Garbage bags. Food prep. Assembly lines. Clean up. Yard work. Helping others. The aforementioned items may not typically bring to mind elements of one’s first college experiences, but for members of the Gardner-Webb class of 2016, the two are now synonymous. Around 400 students took part in freshmen community service projects on Monday, both on the GWU campus and in other locations within Cleveland County.

The students were separated into smaller groups and given specific tasks. Projects ranged from writing notes of appreciation to key university staff members (cafeteria workers, maintenance crews, and custodians), to assembling food-pantry backpacks for local school children in need, to putting together over 14,000 meal packages for hungry people all over the world. Participants gathered up trash and overgrown brush at the Broad River Greenway, while other students got their hands dirty by harvesting sweet potatoes for the Cleveland County Potato Project and working in the community garden, and more.

Stephanie Capps is the GWU community engagement coordinator, and she believes the community service day helps instill qualities that are extremely important. “At Gardner-Webb, we’re about faith, service, and leadership,” Capps said. “We want to show the freshmen before they even start with classes that we want them committed to service.”

While many of the projects will have an immediate impact at a local level, one service area will have long-lasting effects around the world. Dozens of GWU freshmen helped assemble food packs for the international hunger relief organization Stop Hunger Now (SHN). The SHN assembly process taught students how to combine rice, soy, dehydrated vegetables and a flavoring mix including 21 essential vitamins and minerals into small meal packets. Officials say the food stores easily, has a shelf life of five years and transports quickly for delivery to remote areas for school lunch feeding programs and crisis situations. Brandon Faulkner, the program manager for SHN’s Charlotte, N.C. share house, said the GWU freshmen have made a tremendous difference for over 14,000 people through their efforts on Monday.

“I’ve actually met the kids whose lives these meals are going to save,” Faulkner explained. “So it is very personal to me. The next time these meals are opened, they’re actually going to be in the hands of someone whose life is going to be saved because of it.”

Several incoming students have already established a history of giving back. Isaac Pearson is a graduate of Kings Mountain High School who made community service part of his senior project last year. Through various fundraisers that he planned, organized, and implemented, he raised thousands of dollars for the Make a Wish Foundation. Now a GWU freshman, Pearson said his experiences have shown him that the benefits of community service are long lasting. “It can lead you somewhere you may not have known you were going,” Pearson shared. “Maybe you didn’t think you would be good working in the community, but you’ve done a project and now you realize, ‘Hey, I like this. I want to continue this.’ It truly could affect the rest of your life. You might even get a job for that organization and continue to help people forever.”

Earlier this year, Gardner-Webb University was selected for the 2012 President’s Higher Education Community Service Honor Roll, marking the fifth year in a row the University has received the distinction. The Honor Roll recognizes those institutions that reflect the values of exemplary community service and achieve meaningful outcomes in their communities. Gardner-Webb has become an Honor Roll mainstay because of students’ commitment to a wide variety of service initiatives, and the freshmen service project day helps instill in them a continuing desire to serve others.



Watch Video At: <https://youtu.be/6O6bMKyajII>