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Office of University Communications

October 6, 2011

National Student Day

October 6 is the first annual National Student Day, designed to celebrate and promote social responsibility by students across North America. The Day is sponsored by the National Association of College Stores (NACS), and to celebrate, the Gardner-Webb Campus Store and the Office of Community Engagement have instituted a “National Student Day Service Award” to recognize students for their outstanding community engagement in and around the Gardner-Webb community.

This year, the Office of Community Engagement selected seven students for outstanding servant leadership as the inaugural recipients of the “National Student Day Service Awards.”

“Lots of our students participate in service projects once or twice throughout the year, and we are proud of each of them. It is especially impressive and gratifying to watch those students who make service a regular part of their lifestyle at Gardner-Webb,” said Stephanie Richey, GWU community engagement coordinator. “By participating consistently in and even taking leadership of service projects, those students make a profound impact by building real relationships with those they are serving. This year’s recipients each display that type of faithful leadership.”

Profiles of this year’s winners are included below. For more about National Student Day, visit nationalstudentday.com.

Hallie Hefner, Freshman

Hallie is a math tutor for a local fourth-grade student, as well as a member of the “Do Something Now” service club and the Student Nurses Association. She has also participated in a variety of projects, including a recent trip to an assisted living facility. “It’s so rewarding when tutoring kids,” Hallie says, “to see that little light bulb come on when they finally begin to understand. That just feels so good.”

Erwin Johnson, Jr., Junior

“EJ” has shown what Richey calls “great initiative,” volunteering with the Centennial Sprint 5K, the Pound the Pavement 5K, and the Cleveland County Potato Project. He also hopes to get more involved with the Student Alumni Association. “It’s sometimes overwhelming to go outside your comfort box and meet people where they are, but I love how much service means to the people we’re serving. Even when what you’re doing feels so small, it can mean the world to them,” EJ says.

Kevin Kassakatis, Senior

Kevin is the coordinator of FOCUS (Fellowship of Christians United in Service), a student ministry organization which equips teams of students to lead worship weekends and retreats for youth groups in the region. He also volunteers consistently at two local children's homes, and was recently given the N.C. Compact's Community Impact Student Award. "Jesus suffered outside the gates," Kevin says. "He didn't just hang out with the insiders in his community. He went and spent time with the people who were not quite so fortunate. That's my whole motivation. As a Christian, I have to be outside the gates and helping people who need me."

James Mauney, Freshman

James is a member of FOCUS, and has participated in several university service projects including the "Back-to-School" renovations project at a local organization called HarvestWorks. "I think the friends you make on the service projects themselves are one of the greatest aspects of service," James says. "The friends I met on the first service project of the year have become some of my closest friends in college, and I've met people I wouldn't otherwise have had the chance to meet."

Kelly Montgomery, Senior

Kelly is a member of the "Do Something Now" club, through which she has participated in the Cleveland County Potato Project and coordinated a trip to a local assisted living home. She has also been on two mission trips with Gardner-Webb's Office of Christian Life and Service, and is preparing for a third—a relief trip over Fall Break to Birmingham, Ala. "Service gives me an opportunity to express my faith, because it lets me express love through action," Kelly says.

Brittany Mote, Senior

Brittany helped launch the first-ever community garden on Gardner-Webb's campus, and has also been a faithful member of WildLife (a middle-school ministry affiliated with YoungLife), through which she builds relationships with middle school students and shares the love of Christ with them. "I've had such a passion to help people, and that's the greatest aspect of service. It makes our lives better, gives us self-fulfillment, but most importantly, it really does help other people," says Brittany.

Haley Sieber, Sophomore

Haley tutors a local fourth-grader each week, and is an active member of the "Do Something Now" club. She recently led a trip to a local nursing home, a project Richey says demonstrated Haley's "great leadership and organizational skills." "I feel like God has given me a heart to serve children and for elderly people," Haley says. "That's what I love to do, and as a Christian, I feel like it's my responsibility to help people as Jesus did."

Located in Boiling Springs, N.C., Gardner-Webb University was founded in 1905 and is home to over 4,300 students from 37 states and 21 foreign countries. Gardner-Webb seeks a higher ground in higher education – one that embraces faith and intellectual freedom, balances conviction and compassion, and inspires in students a love of learning, service, and leadership.