



Congresswoman Recognizes UNH Reading And Mentoring Programs

Contact: [Lori Wright](#)
603-862-0574
UNH Media Relations

April 6, 2007

EDITORS AND REPORTERS: If you are planning to attend the event with Congresswoman Carol Shea-Porter, please RSVP to Lori Wright at lori.wright@unh.edu or 603-862-0574.

DURHAM, N.H. -- Congresswoman Carol Shea-Porter will recognize the achievements of two service-learning programs in the University of New Hampshire Education Department – Project Mentor and Seacoast Reads.

The university community is celebrating the 10-year anniversaries of both programs Tuesday, April 10, 2007. The event begins at 7 p.m. in Richards Auditorium, Murkland Hall. Shea-Porter will give the keynote address, and a reception will follow. The event is free and open to the public.

"I thank the college students involved in Seacoast Reads and Project Mentor for the gifts they give to children and to our communities. By helping these children, these students enrich the children's lives and the communities that these children will live and work in. The college students who give so freely of themselves are great role models for the children, and inspire all of us to reach out and help others," Shea-Porter said.

Project Mentor

Started by Barbara Krysiak, professor of education, Project Mentor helps educationally and economically disadvantaged middle school students to graduate from high school, consider college and build self-esteem. It pairs sixth-graders with college students and was adopted by the University System of New Hampshire in 2006, which expanded the program statewide to all of the university system institutions.

Statistics show that in New Hampshire, one out of every five ninth-graders does not graduate from high school. One high school student drops out every nine seconds, and high school dropouts are 72 percent more likely to be unemployed compared with high school graduates. Many middle school students make the decision to drop out of school before they have even entered high school.

"Children at this age need as many adult supports as they can get. The students who work through Project Mentor become role models for these kids, take an interest in them, and create a connection that often continues beyond the mentoring experience," Krysiak said.

Seacoast Reads

Seacoast Reads was initiated in response to President Bill Clinton's initiative America Reads. The program recruits, trains, places, and supervises UNH students to work with local school children in several capacities: tutors in literacy for primary grade children, organizational support for middle-school students, and educational coaches in after-school programs. Schools participating in Seacoast Reads include those in Barrington, Lee, Nottingham, Madbury, Greenland, Epping, Dover, Somersworth and Rochester.

According to Grant Cioffi, associate professor of education who supervises the program, UNH focuses its efforts on improving the reading and writing abilities of at-risk elementary school children, fostering children's educational aspirations through interactions with university students, and providing service learning opportunities to UNH undergraduates. Over an academic year the university places 75 to 100 university students in 11 to 15 schools in seven to nine districts.

Feedback from students involved in Seacoast Reads indicates UNH is succeeding in its efforts. A recent survey of about two-thirds of students involved in the program indicated almost all of them responded positively to the program and nearly all could name their favorite book.

"As the teams of middle-schoolers and UNH students make progress on reading and writing, the relationship between these 8-year-olds and the young adults is what is most exciting. The children value their time with these grown-ups who are really interested in them, and the UNH students gain a new perspective on what's happening in the communities around Durham," Cioffi said. "Our tutors feel a real sense of responsibility toward the children they tutor. They show up when they have lots of work or job responsibilities or just aren't feeling well because they know what they do with the kids is important."

"Over the years, I have come to admire our students for this commitment and responsibility to children. And it is why I am so pleased that the congresswoman is going to help us recognize the accomplishments of our students," he said.

More information:

Project Mentor: Barbara Krysiak, 603-862-1127, bkrysiak@cisunix.unh.edu.
www.projectmentornh.org

Seacoast Reads: Grant Cioffi, 603-862-3727, glc@cisunix.unh.edu
www.unh.edu/education/seacoast/srmaingood.html.