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34 New UNH Students Help Others the Week Before Classes Begin

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UNH Media Relations

Aug. 25, 2003

DURHAM, N.H. -- Thirty-four first-year students will begin their college career at the University of New Hampshire a week before their classmates, as part of a service education program called PrOVES Pre-Orientation Volunteer Experience in Service.

Now in its second year, the program is a collaboration of the First-Year Programs Office and UNH's Partnership for Social Action. It was created last year to introduce community service and leadership to first-year students. According to Program Coordinator Elisa Hankenson, lasting friendships and continued volunteer activities resulted from last year's pilot program.

"The group really bonded during that first week, which was important for many of them who were away from home for the first time," she explained. "And, more importantly, they experienced firsthand the rewards of volunteering and helping others."

Participants arrived yesterday, Aug. 24, and will live on campus during the program and spend the week at area non-profit agencies providing public service as diverse as landscaping with period plant materials at the historic John Paul Jones House in Portsmouth to organizing a Senior Olympics for the adult day care program at the Homemakers of Strafford County to doing trail maintenance at the Sandy Point Discovery Center in Stratham.

Students will work on a Durham cemetery project, logging names from gravestones into a database which will be available online to residents of Durham. Another group will assist the Durham Main Street project in painting murals depicting the history of Durham.

Participants will work in teams of five, led by two upperclass team leaders and take part in a day-long leadership and team-building session at UNH's Browne Center.

For the remainder of the week, teams will visit a different site each day to ensure a range of experiences. Evening adventures include a movie and games night, a sightseeing trip to historic Portsmouth and other group activities.

UNH PrOVES 2003 Service Projects

Reporters, for more information about when UNH students are scheduled to be at these non-profits, please call Judy Spiller (judy.spiller@unh.edu), associate provost for academic achievement and support, 862-3488.

John Paul Jones House – Portsmouth Historic Society

Primary projects will be to remove most of a 100 year-old dirt floor in the basement, giving the house more room for drainage and new piping, digging up and replanting flowers and shrubs throughout the garden/yard.

Adult Day Out Program – The Homemakers of Strafford County, Rochester

Linda Howard, the volunteer coordinator, has scheduled multiple events to run all week.

Sandy Point Discovery Center

Trail maintenance, in addition to painting two children's (playground) boats and re-mulching the surrounding play area. The Discovery Center staff are discussing the possibility of students working inside on exhibits and/or helping them to get materials ready for the school year.

Durham Main Street

The Main Street project is scheduled for downtown mural painting and some cleanup as needed. The idea is to paint murals on the walls outside of Hayden Sports and/or the Red Carpet flower shop. Town Manager Todd Selig is hoping for stenciling on all of the town drains, which would read "drains to river" with a picture of a fish next to it.

Durham Cemetery Projects

Two different activities are planned. First, students will be logging names into a database marking where town folks are buried. Second, students are scheduled to take a digital camera out to some of the cemetery sites and photograph or trace gravestones for the same purpose. Durham officials are hoping to soon have a Web site up and running where people can click on gravestone icons, revealing detailed outlines of the deceased including living family, etc.

Seacoast YMCA – Camp Gundalow

This will be the final project of the week. All of the students and staff will be working together winterizing the camp. This includes painting, trail maintenance, dry wall instillation, canoe maintenance and storage, grounds work and really anything else that fits into the six hours.

All of the sites are providing lunch and beverages for the students during the volunteer week.