UNHs First Year Students Connect with Their New Community

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UNH's First-Year Students Connect with Their New Community

Public Service Plays an Important Role in Their Adjustment to College Life

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EDITORS: First-year students will be available to discuss their public service experiences at UNH, at the Mill Pond Cleanup Project from 9 to 11 a.m., Saturday, Sept. 20.

DURHAM, N.H. -- Juliet Tarantino of Albany, N.Y., has been a member of the Durham and University of New Hampshire communities for less than a month, but she is already making a difference in the community.

Tarantino was among 34 first-year students who came to campus a week early as part of the PrOVES Pre-Orientation Volunteer Experience in Service. Each fall, dozens of first-year students begin their college career at UNH a week before their classmates, as part of the service education program called PrOVES.

However, Tarantino's work in Durham did not end with the start of school. Like many of her PrOVES teammates, she is continuing her community service work and will be among a group of students who will assist with the Mill Pond Cleanup Saturday, Sept. 20, 2003.

Students will help clean up Mill Pond from 9 to 11 a.m. Mill Pond is located off Route 108 toward Newmarket. Mill Pond Road is on the right across the street from the Three Chimneys Inn. The cleanup is part of a larger, communitywide event, the 7th Annual Oyster River Cleanup, organized by UNH’s Office of Sustainability.

“I just wanted to keep doing community service. I met a lot of great people in it. I think a lot of people are coming back because they really enjoyed the work and being together,” Tarantino says.

Now in its second year, PrOVES 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. This year, the students bonded and wanted to stay together as a group to continue their public service.

“They all felt that first week made a difference in their adjustment to campus and feeling comfortable in the community. They became such a cohesive group in their week of community service.”
service that we thought the Mill Pond Project would be a nice segue to continue volunteering in the community as a group,” PrOVES Coordinator Elisa Hankenson says. “So much press is given to a few students who behave in ways that we all don’t appreciate. These students are stepping up and saying, ‘We are now citizens of Durham and we take pride on our town.’”

In addition to the Mill Pond Project, several students also have continued to work on projects they started during their first week experience. Those projects include landscaping with period plant materials at the historic John Paul Jones House in Portsmouth, organizing a Senior Olympics for the adult day care program at the Homemakers of Strafford County, trail maintenance at the Sandy Point Discovery Center in Stratham, assisting the Durham Main Street project in painting murals depicting the history of Durham, and logging names from gravestones in the Durham cemetery into a database that will be available online to residents of Durham.

“It was a really great opportunity to come to campus early and see the different cities around here and get acquainted with the area,” Tarantino said. “I was really satisfied with the experience, and I enjoyed the work. We did some hard work.”