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UNH Media Relations

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Media Relations

UNH Residential Life Teams With City Year To Spruce Up Manchester Elementary School

August 20, 2010



DURHAM, N.H. – Meghan Young didn't sign up to be a resident assistant at the University of New Hampshire thinking it would involve picking up trash but the Cornish resident thought doing so was a great idea.

Young was just one of 180 UNH Residential Life staff who, along with City Year staff, assisted in the cleanup of Gossler Park Elementary School in Manchester this week. City Year is a program that has 17-24 year olds volunteering full-time for one year.

The UNH crew helped build and paint bookcases, cubbies and benches for the classrooms, paint a safe-walking path through the parking lot and clean a nearby wooded area of trash and debris.

"We really want our RAs to be enthusiastic about community service," said Ruth Abelmann, associate director of Residential Life. "If the RAs are excited, they will inspire our students."

Young, in her third day as a first-time RA, was already inspired.

"Building a volunteer effort is really great; it give us a good edge," Young, a sophomore, said. "It's a good outlook for UNH to have, wanting the students to be involved; to be productive."

All of the residence halls do some form of community service so RAs and hall directors come in knowing it's part of the deal. Teambuilding projects like helping to clean up the Queen City school serve to drive up enthusiasm.

"It creates a lot of energy and that gets carried back to campus," Katie-Anne Lawrence, a UNH senior in her second year as an RA, said of the joint activity. "I feel like we're all inspired."

Sidian Lan, a sophomore from China who lives in Greece, was struck by the effort to help the elementary school and its students, whom he hoped the UNH group would encourage to pass it on.

"I think this is great that we're trying to give them a better environment. Look what we're doing—we're building them things," Lan said, pointing to his fellow RAs who were wielding hammers and paint brushes. "They'll know we are college students, and maybe that will motivate them to go to college. Maybe they'll help others someday."

And that's the thing about community service work, says UNH hall director Michelle Blanchette: Those who are helped often go on to help others in return.

"We try to drill into our RAs the importance of community service. This kind of teambuilding brings it to light more than anything we can say," Blanchette said. "Most of these kids came not knowing each other and they'll be fast friends by the end. More importantly, they learn they can do anything. And they pass that on to the students in their dorms."

"Even if something goes wrong—if something doesn't turn out exactly as planned, it's still right. Everything




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Resident assistants from the University of New Hampshire work to build a cubby as part of a teambuilding exercise.

is right about this.”

Residential Life works to help students form connections and make the most of their UNH experience. Their four mission areas are social justice, citizenship, healthy living and academic success.

The University of New Hampshire, founded in 1866, is a world-class public research university with the feel of a New England liberal arts college. A land, sea, and space-grant university, UNH is the state's flagship public institution, enrolling more than 12,200 undergraduate and 2,200 graduate students.

Photos can be uploaded at

http://www.unh.edu/news/cj_nr/2010/aug/jr20res.jpg Caption: resident assistants from the University of New Hampshire work to build a cubby as part of a teambuilding exercise.

http://www.unh.edu/news/cj_nr/2010/aug/jr20res_02.jpg Caption: Natalie Kerman and Mike McAlister, both sophomores and RAs in Williamson at UNH, put the finishing touches on a cubby.

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T-hall

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