

Worcester Housing Authority Apartment Complex Gets Spruced Up Thanks to Assumption College Volunteers

By Tyla Wade ‘15

Assumption College students love Worcester— so much so that more than 200 of them returned to the city before the start of fall semester to help out at a Worcester Housing Authority (WHA) apartment complex on Lakeside Street that provides affordable housing for low-income residents. Wearing gray T-shirts emblazoned with “Assumption Loves Worcester,” Assumption students worked alongside WHA staff to clean hallways, sweep walkways, and rake leaves.

Assumption's various student leader groups had participated in separate pre-semester projects, this was the first year that they all gathered together for a single event, according to Conway Campbell, Assumption's dean of campus life. Their early arrival was part of their preparation for the fall semester, as they participated in training programs as well as the community service project at WHA. The idea to work with WHA was introduced by Assumption's Office of Residential Life staff.

"Assumption College has had a long standing relationship with the Worcester community," said Campbell, "and by helping the Worcester Housing Authority—and the people who live at the Lakeside Street complex—we want to instill in our students the Five Principles of Student Engagement that the College lives by: 'Community; Contemplation; Longing for God; Vocation; and Mission to Serve.'"

These principles were introduced to Assumption's first-year students at the start of the fall 2014 semester. Over 600 first-year students, orientation leaders, and Assumption College President Francesco Cesareo, Ph.D., gathered on campus to prepare approximately 40,000 boxes of food for the non-profit organization Feeding Children Everywhere to be delivered to children in need all over the world.

"Projects like the ones for Worcester Housing Authority and Feeding Children Everywhere embody how we, as a campus community, help our city community," said Campbell. "The principles of service have long been a part of Assumption College's tradition and will be for years to come."

WHA Executive Director Raymond Mariano said: "Worcester Housing Authority offers sincere thanks to the hard-working Assumption College students who helped us cleanup Lakeside Apartments. Their community spirit and compassion are greatly appreciated."

ASSUMPTION'S SERVICE GROUPS

Service to its home city is an integral part of many students time at Assumption. Students in many of the College's service-related groups—the Reach Out Center (ROC), AC Allies, Peers Advocating Wellness for Students (PAWS), Campus Ministry and Community Service Learning courses—routinely participate in volunteer projects, such as the one for WHA, that benefit

Worcester residents. The T-shirt Campbell designed attempts to capture that spirit with a message that unifies also those that participated.

“Assumption really does love Worcester,” he explained. “Through the College’s Reach Out Center, the Office of Campus Ministry, and all of our student volunteers we work hard to be a part of the community and help out whenever we can.”



Reach Out Center

The ROC provides students with opportunities throughout the academic year to volunteer in the Greater Worcester in a variety of ways, including mentoring children with the Big Brother/ Big Sisters of Central Massachusetts organization, visiting local veterans with the MA Veteran INC., and refurbishing abandoned houses with the Worcester Housing Authority.

For senior Meghan Dougherty, an ROC student leader and English and education double major from Braintree, Mass., service often means a great deal to the volunteers as well as the people they help.

“I’m really glad we all participated in the ‘Assumption Loves Worcester’ project,” she said. “We are all members of the Worcester community, so giving back to the city and the Greater Worcester region feels great.”

SEND / Campus Ministry

Assumption’s Office of Campus Ministry organizes eight-day SEND Service Immersion trips assigned to projects not only in Worcester, but also in many states along the east coast and in South America. SEND trips encourage the Assumption community to put their “Faith in Action” through works of charity, allowing students to form bonds with one another and strengthen their faith while helping others.

Student Government Association

The 35 members of Assumption’s Student Government Association (SGA) also took part in the “Assumption Loves Worcester” project. The SGA is comprised of students representing all four academic years and who advocate for the entire student body and are committed to engaging and working with the Worcester community.

The SGA recently established the “Service Sundays” program, which consists of each of the SGA’s five “executive groups” choosing one Sunday a semester to volunteer for a city organization and/or perform random acts of kindness in Greater Worcester.

“The ‘Assumption Loves Worcester’ program unified all the student leaders under one cause and showed the Worcester community that Assumption students care about the city and want to help the people who live, work and study here,” said Kathryn Cullerot ’15, a senior accounting

major from Hampton, N.H., who is an SGA senator.

Community Service Learning

Assumption's focus on service also extends to the academic sphere with its Community Service Learning (CSL) program, which combines classroom instruction and discussion with giving back to Greater Worcester. A variety of service opportunities allows students to volunteer with Worcester-based Habitat for Humanity, African Community Education, Worcester Public Schools, and the Salvation Army.

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