

Building a Foundation of Leaders

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Evelyn Taylor was one of seven College of Southern Maryland students to participate in a three-day civic leadership training program which included working on a Habitat for Humanity house in Montgomery County.

Raising walls and the spirit of your community is no small task. But seven handy College of Southern Maryland students did just that when they helped build a Habitat for Humanity house in Montgomery County as part of a three-day civic leadership training program held Aug. 1-3 through the Center for Civic Engagement and Service Learning (CSL) at the college.

Summer civic leadership training is a statewide training session that utilizes team building, workshops/seminars and a hands-on service learning project to help students gain an understanding of different leadership styles and how to develop their own.

"It was easily over a hundred degrees outside when we were building the house, and it was hard, hard work," said LaShawna Gibbs, CSM's La Plata campus student association secretary and a wellness center employee. "Everyone worked so hard and there was a lot of team determination to meet our day's goals and to do a good job for someone less fortunate," Gibbs continued.

"The thing that surprised me about the project was, when Habitat for Humanity says they rely on volunteers from the ground up, they mean it," said Nancy Wickham, a student association member and Prince Frederick campus student assistant. "Working on the house was very rewarding and it was a wonderful accomplishment for the team. We were not just placing walls but actually constructing the walls that would be raised," said Wickham excitedly.

"This is my second year participating in the leadership training," said Gibbs. "My favorite project was this spring when we cleaned houses for people with autism and other disabilities. It is amazing to see how something, as simple as washing windows for someone who can't, can transform your outlook and make a huge difference in someone's life," Gibb continued.

"The hands-on activities are a wonderful learning opportunity to apply the skills that you are learning in the seminars and workshops to the volunteer project," said Wickham. "I would love to see them extended in the future because then students would be able to see the day-to-day changes they have made in someone's life."

"One of the things that we learned in the sessions was whether we are analytical or emotional leaders. For me, my leadership is more analytical. I like to do research and get other people's input into a situation before I offer a decision or try to solve a problem," said Gibbs.

"It is important to understand what type of leader you are and to recognize the type of leaders you deal with in business, academic or social settings. In the sessions, I learned to recognize how my own personality leads me to act or react to others and situations. These are things that I can apply to several aspects of my life," said Wickham.

The summer civic leadership training weekend is just one of the service learning opportunities available through the CSL. In addition to providing information on service learning opportunities available in Southern Maryland, the CSL also offers two alternative break trips to Florida and California that give students an opportunity to explore and enhance their leadership skills by working with staff, students

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