

# SOAR, College Team up for Service-Learning Project

By LAUREN MCDONALD The Brunswick News

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*Figure 1. College of coastal Georgia Health and Exercise Science student Sam Lanier, right, works with SOAR member Ashleigh Purvis making a valentine along with fellow Soar members and CCGA students Wednesday as part of a service-learning project.*

SOAR, a nonprofit that serves local adults with developmental disabilities, aims to provide social opportunities to its members and help them connect with their community.

College of Coastal Georgia, with its emphasis on service-learning, through which students take their skills and passions out into the community in the form of service projects, tries to give back to residents of the Golden Isles.

SOAR and the college have recently teamed up to connect these two missions in a way that benefits both the members of the nonprofit and students at Coastal Georgia.

The theme Wednesday during a SOAR meeting was Valentine's Day, as a group of students from the college helped the members make valentines to give to their friends and family. Then, the group decorated rice crispy treats and had fun in a photo booth.

“It helps the college students. It helps their education,” said Allie Pinson, a SOAR coordinator who runs the nonprofit’s adult health and wellness program. “... And then it helps me. It helps them really build that connection with peers in the community.”

The adult health and wellness program meets three times a week for two hours and provides members with an opportunity to take part in activities like exercise, health education, dancing, crafting and more.

The college class, called “Wellness Methods and Strategies,” is made up of students who intend to pursue careers in health and exercise science.



*Figure 2. College of Coastal Georgia Health and Exercise Science students work with SOAR members making valentines Wednesday as part of a service-learning project.*

“We’re learning the different dimensions of health and wellness and the ways that they can incorporate wellness into activities for their clients in the future,” said Lesley Leonard, assistant professor of health promotion at the college.

The college students observed Pinson lead the program the last two weeks and took an active role in the leadership of the meeting on Wednesday.

“It allows them to take the academic knowledge and the skills that they acquire in the classroom and be able to apply those to a population of clients,” Leonard said. “... It gives them the opportunity to go beyond classroom knowledge in hopefully improving the health and wellness of this population.”

The health sciences degree recently began to be offered at the college as a four-year program.

The class will work with SOAR all semester. The students also applied for and received a mini-grant through the service-learning department at the college and will use the money to buy items for the SOAR program.

“It’s a good opportunity for us to be able to go back and give back to the community,” said Addison Pedraza, a junior at Coastal Georgia. “... Since they’re just down the road, it’s an easy opportunity for us to do it.”