

College Volunteers Boost Nonprofits

By ERIKA CAPEK The Brunswick News

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Capt. Glenn Queener, head of the Salvation Army in Brunswick, says college students who volunteered with the charity have done more than sort clothes or feed people.

They changed lives, he said.

Four College of Coastal Georgia business students - Tiffany Curry, Shea Able, Annsley Pitts and Krista Norvell - volunteered at the Salvation Army as part of a class project.

The students, having experienced working with people in need, said it's something they will continue to do.

"I'm going to continue during the summer and until I leave Brunswick," Curry said.

In January, students enrolled in the required Business and Its Environment course at College of Coastal Georgia became the first to participate in a service learning project called Business Environment Community Service Learning.

Students chose a nonprofit agency and served as a volunteer for the organization for 15 hours during the semester.

They had to acquire an understanding of issues facing the organizations, identify trends and collect information that would be helpful in improving the agency.

"This really was the beta test to make it permanent," said Craig Fleisher, chair and professor of management of the Department of Business and Public Affairs at the college, of the project.

"The idea is to try to get more students to volunteer."

In addition to the Salvation Army, students volunteered at other nonprofits including Ferst Foundation, which promotes childhood literacy, Habitat for Humanity in Camden, Kiwanis Club, and the Humane Society of South Coastal Georgia.

Students presented reports about their experiences throughout this week. In some cases, representatives from the organizations were present to observe and interact with the students.

Queener, along with Cindy Davis, manager of Salvation Army, and Carr Woods, assistant manager of Salvation Army, watched the presentation Wednesday.

Davis said she enjoyed how happy the students were when they volunteered. "They stayed very upbeat the whole time," she said.

As many as 200 business students could volunteer for nonprofit agencies as part of a required second year pre-business course in the fall semester, college officials said.

"The intention is to permanently make it a part of the second-year business class, which is great," Fleisher said.

"We will literally have a couple hundred students volunteering in the community."

Fleisher said the interaction between students and community is a learning experience.

"We've been working so hard to get the students out in the community and to get the community into the college," Fleisher said.