

## College gets Service-Learning Grant

By ERIKA CAPEK The Brunswick News

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As an institution of higher learning, College of Coastal Georgia has a mission that covers more than just educating students. It also engages them as citizens.

That's where service-learning comes in, a form of hands-on and engaged learning that addresses community needs, such as poverty, youth education or environmental restoration.

"The long-term goal (over the next five years) is to have every student who enrolls in a degree program in the college to take at least one service-learning course," said Clayton Hurd, director of service-learning for the college. "Ideally, if they're in a four-year baccalaureate program, they'd be taking two or more - a lower level course and an upper level course."

The college has developed a Quality Enhancement Plan as part of its ongoing planning and evaluation process for its 2011 reaffirmation of accreditation by the Southern Association of Colleges and Schools. The plan focuses on how the college aims to improve student learning and accomplish its institutional mission. The theme is "Learning through Engagement: Service-Learning."

Start-up funding for the Center for Service Learning is being provided by the St. Marys United Methodist Church Foundation, which awarded a \$75,000 grant to the college for the second consecutive year.

"The grant was absolutely essential for preparation and capacity building (for the service-learning program)," Hurd said.

Hurd is trying to enhance the capacity of faculty to teach service-learning courses.

"One thing that happened this year is 14 faculty at the college went through a six-week cohort training session to revise either a current course they're teaching or develop a new course for service learning," he said. "We expect in the next year, we'll have 14 new service-learning courses."

Service-learning is academically integrated into the class, Hurd said.

"It's not like (students) are taking a course and a service," he added. "Just like a professor wants to pick a good book for a course, they want to choose the right service for the course. A lot of the role (of the director) is to help those faculty get the information they need to be successful in teaching these courses."

This year there were four pilot service-learning courses: Business, sociology, marine biology and English. Sociology students, for example, explored social programs by serving at sites such as the Boys and Girls Club, the Teen Center, Safe Harbor and the Second Harvest Food Bank. Next year, the college will work in association with United Way to create a volunteer database for all

tax-exempt organizations in the area. The public online resource will feature information about the group, as well as its needs for potential service-learning projects.

College of Coastal Georgia is not the only recipient of funds from the St. Marys United Methodist Church Foundation, which approved grants for \$585,000 to more than a dozen charitable organizations in Glynn and surrounding counties. Other grants include:

- \* \$35,000 to the Gathering Place in Brunswick to support the college ministry Converge at College of Coastal Georgia.
- \* \$30,000 to Glynn Community Crisis Center to support Hope House.
- \* \$37,600 to Grace House of Brunswick to provide operational support for a home for women recovering from alcohol and drug addictions.
- \* \$75,000 to Magnolia Manor to support the resident charitable assistance program called the League of the Good Samaritan.
- \* \$30,000 to the STAR Foundation in Brunswick to provide operational support for the STAR Program, which assists individuals in achieving self-sufficiency and economic stability through computer literacy and job readiness training.