

Director Finds Her Niche

By MICHAEL HALL The Brunswick News

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Phillis George isn't sure what compelled her to apply for the position of director of service learning at College of Coastal Georgia in Brunswick, but after being on the job, she is positive she is in the right place.

"When I met the community partners during my campus visit and saw what an active role they play in the program, it sealed the deal for me," she said.

Her path in life took her around the world before bringing her to the Golden Isles.

Born in Canton, a small, predominantly black community in central Mississippi, George was exposed to the idea of service learning when a group of University of Wisconsin students came to town to help out around the community.

As a young girl at the time, she was moved by the professor who was a freedom rider during the civil rights movement. Freedom riders were civil rights activists who rode buses to the desegregated South in the 1960s.

"I remember them coming in and tutoring us. It really had an impact on me," George said.

Learning about how being an involved citizen can better a community was the driving force behind her decision to attend the University of Wisconsin, where she excelled enough as an undergraduate student to earn the prestigious Chancellor's Scholarship. She left for Oxford University in the United Kingdom after graduation and earned her master's degree in sociology.

She returned to Wisconsin for her doctorate in educational leadership and policy analysis.

George's travels have taught her much more than what she read in school books, she said.

"I learned that people around the world are not so different, and that we really are part of a global community. I think a person's greatest accomplishment is to be able to use their skills for the betterment of the community," George said.

It is an attitude she hopes to spread in her new position. She will guide the college's service learning initiative, which is designed to incorporate community service into the learning experience.

"My first goal is to go out and learn as much as possible about Brunswick, so we can strengthen our relationships and continue working with the community," George said.

Doing so will hopefully open a clear path to college (for youth) like Wisconsin's service learning projects did for her when she was young, she said.

"When (young) students see our kids out in the community, it plants a seed," George said.