

Program Provides Professional Clothing for Job Interviews

By MARY STARR The Brunswick News

November 24, 2014

It's often been said that there is strength in numbers.

That's certainly true for the students at the STAR Foundation, where job readiness and life management training are taught to low-income residents of Brunswick.



One of the many challenges disadvantaged people have when entering the job market is the lack of proper clothing for an interview. But thanks to a service-learning project by students in Kimberly Mannahan's "Introduction to Human Services" class at College of Coastal Georgia and a grant from the Rotary Club of St. Simons Island, the soon-to-be graduates are interview ready.

The service-learning students, including Samantha Cain, Neal Henderson, Hunter Price and Megan Williams, developed a reward system in which STAR students earn vouchers throughout their eight-week class for grades, attendance and community involvement.

The program, dubbed "Attire for Hire," provides students with a new interview outfit to improve their likelihood of obtaining a job after graduation. The "Attire for Hire" vouchers may be traded in for clothing that has been purchased at a discounted rate from area businesses, thanks to the Rotary Club grant.

Leslie Lamkin, a member of the Rotary Club of St. Simons Island, said that Rotary primarily raises funds to help young people succeed. And although some of the STAR Foundation's students are not young, many of them are raising children and grandchildren.

"We took one look at this and knew it was a winner," Lamkin said.

Eureka Styles is one student who is taking advantage of "Attire for Hire."

"We learned a lot in this program," Styles said. "The attire is important. It gives us the confidence we need."

Cain, who led the service-learning project, said that much of college learning is theoretical, but service learning allows students to have a real impact in their community.

Ellen Murphy, executive director of the STAR Foundation, said when students begin the program, about 90 percent of them suffer from a lack of self-confidence. She says it is amazing the turnarounds that can be accomplished within the short eight-week period.

“They have not had a lot of success in an educational setting,” she said.

Murphy said that once graduates become employed, they become less stressed about bills and other challenges.

She hopes the collaboration between the college, the Rotary Club of St. Simons Island and STAR Foundation continues and would like to forge additional relationships with other organizations, businesses and schools.

“It’s important to learn how to dress for success,” Gregory Aloia, president of College of Coastal Georgia, told the graduates. “You want to make a good first impression.”

Aloia said he never hires people based only on their resumés or letters of recommendation.

“I hire people who can tell their story and make a good impression,” he said.