

Service-Learning Projects Showcased at College Symposium

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College of Coastal Georgia students present their service learning projects during a symposium at the CCGA conference center Monday.

Bobby Haven/The Brunswick News

The Center for Service-Learning at College of Coastal Georgia hosted the sixth annual Service-Learning Symposium on Monday to celebrate the projects completed by students over the past academic year.

The symposium included an award ceremony, a poster showcase and a community partner exposition. Nearly 230 students participated this year and presented 60 posters.

“It’s a professional experience for the students,” said Cody Cocchi, associate director of service-learning at CCGA. “... It’s also an academic experience for the students, because reflection is a huge part of what service-learning is. This is an extra time where they can reflect about the work that they did, about the importance, both to themselves and to the community.”

Over the past several years, CCGA has significantly expanded its service-learning requirements and opportunities for students. Service-learning combines academic course content with relevant

community service projects through which students partner with community organizations and businesses to apply their skills outside the classroom.

“Students gain a better understanding of their course content, develop skills in community leadership and advance their appreciation of social responsibility,” said Kay Hampton, interim provost and vice president for academic affairs at CCGA, during the awards ceremony.

Students in every department of the college complete a variety of service-learning projects throughout the year. This year, the nursing students hosted a health fair on a First Friday to provide information about sun and water safety. Education students partnered with local schools to work in classrooms and tutor younger students after school. Culinary students held a cook-off contest to raise money for America’s Second Harvest of Coastal Georgia.

“They have real true-to-life experiences, and then they write papers or do presentations and reflect on what they’ve learned by being out in the real world,” Hampton said. “And sometimes they find out it’s not exactly the same as it was when they studied it in the classroom.”



Bethany O’Connor, a nursing student at CCGA, took part in a project for her gerontology and healthy aging class in which the students visited St. Mark’s Towers, a retirement home in Brunswick, and helped them socialize through art therapy.

“We got them to paint on canvases that we provided, and it was called the ‘Tree of Life’ because they have many branches and leaves and many years,” she said. “... They had a great time. They socialized, and they each had their own interpretation of the trees.”

Since the college began to promote service-learning, Hampton said more than 85 courses have been offered. “That’s just shy of 3,000 students that have had at least one service-learning experience,” she said. Hampton said the service-learning projects at the college lead to positive partnerships and mutually beneficial interactions between the students and the community.

“To be able to work directly in the community with individuals, with nonprofit agencies, businesses, is really enhancing the students’ learning as well as providing experiences that build their leadership skills, create collaborative relationships that provide outstanding education for tomorrow’s leaders and citizens,” she said. “That’s how we see our students. We are service-learning believers.”