AU freshmen connect to D.C. seniors via service

BY LAURA L. THORNTON  
Current Correspondent

Anthony Catanzaro could have spent another week of summer vacation at home on Long Island before moving into a dormitory at American University to begin his freshman year of college.

Instead, Catanzaro reported to school a week early to partake in the university’s 21st annual Freshman Service Experience, a four-day event that engages the university’s newest students with their new community. He joined more than 600 other American University freshmen — over half of the incoming class.

“I thought it would be a really great way to meet people ... and learn about the city,” said Catanzaro, who spent last week volunteering at the Washington Home and Community Hospices in Tenleytown.

American University freshmen volunteered at more than 50 sites across D.C. and the Maryland and Virginia suburbs last week, said sophomore Megan Elkin, the team leader for the two-dozen students who volunteered at the Washington Home. Sites included schools, farms and retirement homes.

The students anticipated logging 14,000 hours of community service during the week, said Aaron Grushkin, a freshman from Durango, Colo., who volunteered at Friendship Terrace, a Tenleytown retirement community.

Grushkin and 10 other students spent last week helping residents of Friendship Terrace to de-clutter their apartments and clean out their closets. They also painted patio furniture and vacuumed hallways.

On Thursday after lunch, students and Friendship Terrace residents played bingo together, chatting between rounds and enjoying cakes and lemonade served by the students.

“It’s been a really cool experience,” said Grushkin, who enjoyed listening to residents share their stories about living in Washington.

“I’m not familiar with D.C.,” he said, “and the program seemed like a fun way to do some ... work and see D.C.”

For Frank Short, president of the residents association at Friendship Terrace, the students’ presence “lives up the place very much.”

“Many residents have commented on how much they’ve enjoyed having them here,” Short said, “and we’re happy to have them back.”

At the Washington Home, student volunteers performed a variety of tasks, including cleaning up flood-damaged rooms, delivering phone books to residents’ rooms and providing company for the residents, several of whom are over 100.

Corcoran Gallery community project has amateur artists in pieces

BY TEKE WIGGIN  
Current Correspondent

A little girl wearing pigtails and pink glasses chatters in Spanish with her mother and brother as she sketches on a small white square of paper. Following a rogue pencil stroke, she tilts her head and squints. Turning to her mother, she mutters in a rising pitch of disappointment.

“My mother returns words curtly. Turning to her mother, she mutters in a rising pitch of disappointment. Her mother returns words curtly.

“But I didn’t know that’s here,” the girl says, breaking into English and pointing at a giant atrium. Each student tried his or her hand at a “gridded value drawing” for the

In the Corcoran’s Community Art Project, visitors contributed their renditions of pieces of a collection masterpiece. Above, visitors re-created a detail of John Singer Sargent’s 1883 painting “Margaret Stuyvesant Rutherfurd (Mrs. Henry White).”

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American University freshmen volunteered throughout the region last week to kick off their first year of college. Above, students Megan Elkin and Anthony Catanzaro visit with Washington Home resident Jan Simko. Left, Haley Lynn and Hana Le assist resident Jim Birmingham in making a cast of his hand.
in the Corcoran’s permanent collection of art. Upon completion, participants tape their squares onto a gridded poster set on an easel. Corcoran artist-in-residence Matt Haughn oversaw the project from its late-July start. Patrolling tables covered with stray lead marks, he gave advice to participants, sometimes taking the form of consolation, as it did with his frustrated young artist.

“We’ve had kids show up ... just afraid of drawing and once I sat down with them and explained it’s not the whole area, it’s just that little square ... it’s really inspired some kids and adults to try and pick this up,” he said.

A D.C. public school teacher, Haughn originally introduced the style to his classes at Sousa Middle School in Southeast. He started by putting on the project, along with experienced artists come in.”

“Drawing through the square is a way of focusing on details and getting to know the painting better,” he said. “It’s a better way of understanding the artist.”

He said he is looking forward to finding the picture he had been sketching inside the gallery, a desire the Corcoran aims to inspire with the program. A little ways away, on the steps up to the galleries, another Free Summer Saturdays event unfolded. David Ibata, a Corcoran College of Art + Design alum tasked with performing weekly public chalk drawings, stared pensively at a large blank piece of paper propped on an easel.

Steeling his drawing hand with a maul, he dabbed the paper with chalk to make his first sketch marks.

Usually, Ibata stands at 17th Street and New York Avenue as passersby huddle around him to watch him sketch nearby objects. But this past Saturday, inside the Corcoran, he had less of an audience.

Still, one museum visitor stopped to observe, staring quizically at the sparse sketch marks. That’s awesome, that’s really interesting,” the man said.

“I haven’t started yet,” Ibata said. He craned his neck. “It’s very modern, I guess.”

The final day of the series, Sept. 4, will feature various activities including an opportunity for visitors to sketch a live model and a concert. To learn more about the Saturday events, visit www.WeichertAtClevelandPark.com.