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# IPNS faculty spearheads community outreach initiatives

August 13, 2015



This summer the Institute for Public and Nonprofit Studies (IPNS) joined forces with a local nonprofit to serve teens, aged 12-18 years, who are in the foster care system and are considered at-risk youth from Bulloch and surrounding counties. Dr. Robbie Robichau, Assistant Professor of Public Administration in the Institute, and her husband Jason moved to Statesboro from Phoenix, AZ, in 2013 where they had spent the last 7 years volunteering with a nonprofit in Phoenix that serves the foster care population. Upon seeing a similar need to reach teens here in Statesboro, they spent the last year working with Fostering Bulloch, community and university members, and businesses planning to host two separate programs: The Southern Princess Program for girls and The All-Star Program for boys.

On May 31st, the Southern Princess Program was hosted and supported by the community, the IPNS, and around 100 volunteers. Over 30 teens attended the event, arriving in jeans and t-shirts and leaving that night in prom dresses. Over lunch the girls were encouraged to know their self-worth and inner beauty. Then, they were able to pick out donated prom dresses and shoes, get their hair styled at Split Ends and their make-up done at Merle Norman. Afterwards the girls were driven in limousines to the NeSmith Lane Ballroom, where over 20 men dressed in all black and pink ties, escorted them down a red carpet and served them dinner, after which the girls were treated to a night of dancing and fellowship.

On June 6th, the All-Star Program was hosted at the Georgia Southern Football Facilities with approximately 30 boys in attendance. The teens played flag football with current Georgia Southern football players as well as partook in an Amazing Race event and ropes course activities at the Grube Recreation Activity Center. In addition, the teens got to hear from Georgia Southern alum and motivational speaker Adrian Peterson, Head Football Coach Willie Fritz, and Baltimore Ravens and Statesboro native DeAngelo Tyson. The night concluded with a fancy steak dinner at the Bishop Center. It took over 100 volunteers to accomplish the day of fun. Programs like these encourage local teens that people care about them and their futures; moreover, hosting the events on campus shows teens what college life is like and that it is a viable option for them. In the upcoming year, Fostering Bulloch will be hosting separate 3-day camps for 12-15 year olds girls and boys, and these programs will be the first day of the camps.

Beyond co-directing these events, Dr. Robichau's Master of Public Administration students have completed 25 different graduate-level community service projects with organizational recommendations from the Office of Student Leadership and Engagement. They have worked with a variety of local public and nonprofit agencies ranging from the Averitt Center for the Arts to Habitat for Humanity to Keeping Bulloch Beautiful and the Hearts and Hands Clinic. Projects have varied from writing grants, planning program evaluations, developing strategic management plans, and conducting financial cost-benefit analysis. Dr. Robichau believes that implementing IPNS's mission of giving outstanding academic and practical instruction to public servants who will in turn strengthen and better their communities is why she became a professor and public-servant. Projects like these give students opportunities to apply what they are learning about theory in the classroom to the "real-world" experiences students crave to have while in graduate studies. Moreover, these students have completed projects that demonstrate to potential employers the tangible skills they have gained as a student in the IPNS.

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