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Freshmen gain leadership skills BUILDing in the community

JULY 13, 2007

When many college students are enjoying the end of their summer break, a group of students at Georgia Southern University will already be hard at work.

Approximately 80 incoming freshmen will be taking part in the BUILD leadership development workshop. BUILD (Building Undergraduate Involvement and Leadership Development) is part of the Southern Pathways pre-semester leadership programs.

"The Southern Pathways Leadership Program strives to help incoming freshmen with their transition to college life by introducing them to concepts that will enrich their educations both in and out of the classroom," said Kellie Pickett, assistant director of student leadership. "The philosophy behind this (BUILD) project is to help students understand that leadership begins with service. The purpose is to introduce them to the Statesboro community and the University community."

In its second year, BUILD has expanded to two weeks. "We're doing two weeks this year, because the one last year was so successful and there was so much interest that we wanted to expand it," Pickett added. The first week is Sunday, July 22, through Thursday, July 26. The second is Sunday, Aug. 5, through Thursday, Aug. 9.

BUILD students will be constructing a playhouse and working on other projects with the Statesboro Habitat for Humanity affiliate. The playhouse will be auctioned off later in the year as a fundraiser for Habitat.

"We are very excited about doing project BUILD again this year," said Vicki Davis, executive director of Habitat for Humanity of Bulloch County. "Last year the students were fabulous, very enthusiastic, very hard-working and a lot of fun to be around. We're looking forward to doing that again this year. We have so much going on, the volunteers will really help us and we hope it will be a great way to get them involved in volunteering in the community as they get into their school year."

During the day, the students will be building in Statesboro Pointe, the Habitat subdivision. In the evening they will be involved in small group discussions led by current student leaders at the University.

In addition to working with Habitat for Humanity, students will also work with Kingdom Builders, a local non-profit organization. "They work to repair existing structures for people who need assistance," Pickett explained. "They build wheelchair ramps for people who need to get into their

houses and do some restoration work as well. What's great is that the students will meet some of the people in the community that they're helping.

"By the week's end the students will have logged over 1,000 combined service hours and will have a stronger sense of self, their friends and their new community."

Throughout the week of experiential learning, students will gain communication skills, self-awareness, responsibility, stewardship, tolerance for adversity and uncertainty, a sense of selflessness and compassion, and learn the relationship between vision and action.