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Georgia Southern University Freshmen to Begin College by Giving Back to the Community Students to Take Part in Service Projects before Classes Begin

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Before they check into residence halls, buy books, or even attend their first class, a group of incoming Georgia Southern University freshmen will begin their college careers by giving back to the Statesboro community.

The freshmen will participate in a two-week volunteer project designed to help them learn about their new college and their new home. During BUILD (Building Undergraduate Involvement and Leadership Development), the 80 students who were selected will construct a Habitat for Humanity house, do repair work at the Kiwanis fairgrounds in Bulloch County, and help with a number of home repair projects through the Kingdom Builders organization.

"At Georgia Southern University, we have a culture of service to others," said University Assistant Director of Student Leadership and Civic Engagement Jodi Middleton. "We teach our students that an important part of leadership is taking the time to help those who need it. By giving this group of students the opportunity to serve the community before they even begin classes, we are instilling in them what we hope will be a lifelong love of volunteerism."

Georgia Southern University students logged 26,000 service hours during the 2010-2011 academic year. Chances to serve throughout the academic year include everything from working at nursing homes in Statesboro, to building trails in the Great Smokey Mountains, and helping orphanages in Honduras. And while service to others in Statesboro is the focus of BUILD, the two-week event also helps ease freshmen into the college experience.

"The incoming freshmen chosen for BUILD were selected because they have a lot of leadership potential," explained Middleton. "But the transition to college can be a challenge for anyone. Students who participate in BUILD have the advantage of living on the campus and making a new set of friends before school starts. They interact with professors and administrators. So, by the time class starts they truly feel like a part of the University and the Statesboro community. We've found that students who participate in BUILD have a much easier time with the first months of college and they are more likely to do well in their classes as a result."

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