

At your service - Expo showcases ECSU's role in Windham community

By MICHELLE FIRESTONE Chronicle Staff Writer Copyright (c)2016 Willimantic Chronicle 4/14/2016

WILLIMANTIC — When Eastern Connecticut State University students notice a social problem in the Willimantic area, they don't just sit back. They do something about it.

Eastern students, community members and organizations were recognized for their work in the community during the annual service expo and awards ceremony Wednesday afternoon in the Bellingham Auditorium at Windham Town Hall.

“ Our students don't do this work for the accolades,” said ECSU Center for Community Engagement Director Kimberly Armstrong Silcox.

Eastern students volunteer with several different organizations in the area through CCE Volunteers created displays that included information about their work at each of the organizations.

The following awards were issued: • Community Partner Engagement Award: Stan Hale, manager of the Petey Greene GED Tutoring Program at the state's correctional facilities and Dotti Durst, who recently retired from her job as principal of the school at Brooklyn Correctional Institute.

The award, CCE student leader Jasmine Carvalho explained, is given to a member of the community “who is a hero in his or her own backyard.”

Durst has played a key role in the expansion of the Petey Greene tutoring program. Hale works with higher education institutions and correctional facilities to bring volunteers to tutor inmates studying for their GED certification. Durst was at the event, but Hale could not attend. *Kimberly Armstrong Silcox, ECSU official*





The Center for Community Engagement at Eastern Connecticut State University presented its Service Expo Awards at an event at Windham Town Hall in Willimantic Wednesday afternoon. ABOVE: Volunteers at the Habitat for Humanity exhibit were, from the left, Ayanna McDougald, an ECSU freshman from Windsor, Ellie Frankinburger, an ECSU sophomore from Lebanon, and Julia DeVivo, an ECSU freshman from Mansfield. BELOW: The event took over the refurbished ball room at town hall. More photos on Page 2. Al Malpa photos

- Student Community Engagement Award: Quanece Williams, a Jumpstart corps member at Eastern. Jumpstart is a nonprofit organization that promotes literacy among children. “I just wanted to say that I’m proud of the work I do at Eastern,” said Williams. “To me, community service is really important and I’ve done it since high school.” She is a recent recipient of the Henry Barnard Distinguished Student Award in honor of her academic achievement and record of community service.
- Faculty/ Staff Community Engagement Award: Alyson Iannicelli, who has been the program coordinator for Eastern’s Jumpstart program for nearly two years. Jumpstart is a nationally recognized non-profit organization. “This person serves as a role model and mentor to students,” said CCE student leader Melanie Morales, who presented the award.
- Service Learning Award: Mary Curran, a cultural geographer who has been teaching at Eastern since fall 2002. She incorporates a service learning component into her geography class. Curran has partnered with Grow Windham since 2013. Grow Windham is a collaboration of community partners that promotes access to healthy food in Windham. Grow Windham Director Sally Milius presented the award to Curran. “It is additional work,” she said, referring the service learning component of Curran’s class. “It’s easier not to teach that, but she’s very dedicated to it.”
- Outstanding Community Event Award: The Connecticut Eastern Railroad Museum, located along the Willimantic River in Willimantic. Eastern students have been volunteering at the museum over the past three years. “This award recognizes either a one-time event or a continuous program that has had a lasting impact on the community,” said CCE student leader Enidza Torres, who presented the award.
- Strengthening Community Award: No Freeze Hospitality Center, a shelter in Willimantic.
- “Going Green” Award: The mobile food pantry Each visit to the pantry yields about 100 to 180 people, according to Eastern freshman Ruth Eragene, a Wethersfield resident who volunteers at the pantry. “I was surprised to see that there were so many people in need,” she said. The mobile food pantry, which Eragene said was started in 1982 by someone named Mark Patton, visits Willimantic every month. “ They come every fourth Tuesday of the month,” she said.
- Best New Program: Tri-County Arc, a non-profit organization that provides services to area residents with developmental and intellectual disabilities.
- Kids First: Windham High School ESL (English as a Second Language) Mentoring Program.
- “ Putting Liberal Arts into Action:” Windham Middle School Tutorial Program.
- Broadening Horizons award: Vanderman Place, a nursing home in Willimantic.

A special award was also given to Emily Cameron, who is an Americorps Vista that works at the Center for Community Engagement. That award was presented by Silcox, who said Cameron has worked at the center for four years. "We have grown with her and she has grown with us," she said. "This year, she has really taken on a leadership role. She has developed the Windham Middle School afterschool program into what it is. Emily has also been an incredible role model for our student leaders."



The Center for Community Engagement at Eastern Connecticut State University presented its Service Expo Awards at an event at Windham Town Hall Wednesday afternoon. Melanie Morales, received the 'Kids First Award' for being the student leader of the ESL Program, for English language learners. As leader of that program, she helped Spanish-speaking students make their college and scholarship applications. Presenting the award was Dr. James Watson, a prominent ECSU benefactor, center, and Luis A. Rodriguez, assistant director, Center for Community Engagement at ECSU. Al Malpa