

# ECSU students celebrated for giving back



Sophomore Katelyn Root and freshman Ahna Harkness present their poster at the ninth annual Service Expo and Awards ceremony at Eastern Connecticut State University's Fine Arts Instructional Center on Thursday. Brett Donovan | Staff



Students present their projects in the lobby of the Fine Arts Instructional Center. Brett Donovan | Staff

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WILLIMANTIC — The students at Eastern Connecticut State University are passionate about giving back to the community.

That much was clear at the ninth annual Service Expo and Awards ceremony Thursday in the lobby of the Fine Arts Instructional Center, where they were celebrated and honored.

The Center for Community Engagement, an organization that facilitates and promotes substantial relationships between ECSU students and the community, sponsored the event and it was hosted by

CCE student leader Carly Perron.

After the introduction, the founder and chief executive officer of Second Chance Educational Alliance Inc., Erin Corbett, delivered the keynote address to the audience.

Second Chance Educational Alliance provides ex-offenders with the resources and knowledge to become fully engaged citizens within society.

Corbett said she believes there are some brilliant untapped minds within these ex-offenders.

“My goal is for students to see the freedom that education can provide,” Corbett said.

She emphasized the importance

of not depriving ex-offenders of education on human understanding.

Corbett was presented with the Community Partner Award for her dedication and commitment to broadening post-secondary opportunities for populations of all backgrounds.

During the actual expo, students involved in more than 30 projects presented posters around the lobby and showed how they were able to give back to the community in a

meaningful way.

The following awards were issued to the participants during the awards ceremony:

- Going Green Award: Warrior Food Recovery Program, an effort to reduce food waste on campus as well as help the community by donating the food to the Covenant Soup Kitchen.

The participants were Wali Mohammed and Zac Stygar.

- Best New Program: Boy's Circle at Natchaug Elementary School in

Willimantic, whose mission is to improve behavior inside and outside the classroom.

The participants were Dillon Antonopoulos and Joseph Hacia.

- Broadening Horizons Award: Windham High School English as a Second Language mentoring, which seeks to assist students in the ESOL program in various school subjects.

“The program fit the award criteria for promoting economic stabil-

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ity,” said Ellen Lang, who presented the award to participant Italo Bucca.

- Leadership Development Award: Girl’s Circle at Natchaug Elementary School, whose purpose is to provide the fourth- and fifth-grade girls with opportunities to grow into strong women.

The participant was Amanda Peterson.

- Strengthening Communities Award: Windham Recovery Center Jobs 101, a program as part of the Connecticut Community for Addiction Recovery (CCAR).

CCAR allowed the students to get involved in recovery meetings by assisting the individuals with finding jobs and improving their resumes.

The participants were Katelyn Root and Ahna Harkness.

“We didn’t just sit in on the meetings,” said Harkness. “We were able to share our own personal stories with them and get involved.”

- Putting Liberal Arts Into Action Award: Windham High School ESOL Mentoring.

- Kids First Award: Jumpstart, a national nonprofit organization that supports the development of language, literacy and social emotional skills in preschoolers from under-resourced communities.

The participants were Makayla Mowel and Tyler Hubley.

“The program intends to close the gap between affluent areas and low income areas,” Mowel and Hubley said on their exhibit.

- Community Choice Award:



**Kemesha Wilmot, associate director of the Center for Community Engagement, presents the Community Choice Award to Carly Perron, Sarah Tricario and Justin Smith for the Covenant Soup Kitchen project during the ninth annual Service Expo and Awards ceremony at Eastern Connecticut State University’s Fine Arts Instructional Center on Thursday.** Brett Donovan | Staff

ard: Covenant Soup Kitchen, as voted by the audience, which intends to address the physical, mental, emotional, spiritual and cultural needs of the individuals who walk through their doors.

The participants were Carly Perron, Amber Schlemmer, Justin Smith and Sarah Tricario.

- Outstanding Student Leader Awards: Carly Perron and Sarah Tricario, who have both put work into a wide range of community service projects through CCE.

- Service-Learning Award: Denise Matthews, a communications professor who works with students involved in CCE on video production for a range of organizations and projects.

- Student Community Engagement Award: Makavla

Mowel, an ECSU junior who spends hours on efforts to positively impact the Greater Windham community through her involvement as a Jumpstart team leader and member of AmeriCorps.

- Faculty/Staff Community Engagement Award: Nancy Brennan, a member of Eastern’s Foundation for Campus Ministry who has had an extensive commitment to service through organizing events like the Thursday Night Cafe at Eastern and a student-led food cupboard at Knight House called Shawn’s Cupboard.

- Outstanding Community Event Award: Journey House Program of Natchaug Hospital in Mansfield, a specialized residential treatment program for girls ages 12 to

18 who have been referred from the juvenile justice system.

The assistant program director, Christy Calkins, has been instrumental in being a dependable resource and coaching new volunteers yearly.

CCE Director Kimberly Armstrong Silcox thanked the volunteers for their work and the judges who took the time to learn about the projects.

“They weren’t just ‘picking up trash’ projects,” Silcox said of the community work put in by ECSU students. “They were all truly meaningful projects that contributed positively to the community. The students worked hard and as a result, they are fully prepared for the future work environment.”