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BC Students Build Exercise Stations for OCP

BRIDGEWATER, Va. th The work of 106 Bridgewater College students over two school years has culminated in the construction of seven exercise stations at Our Community Place in Harrisonburg.

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(Media-NewsWire.com) - BRIDGEWATER, Va. – The work of 106 Bridgewater College students over two school years has culminated in the construction of seven exercise stations at Our Community Place in Harrisonburg.

The public dedication of the project is at 4 p.m., Nov. 10, at Our Community Place, which is located at 17 E. Johnson St.

OCP is a center dedicated to providing support and activities to people struggling with poverty, addiction and difficult life circumstances., and to promote personal growth and community well-being.

In the fall of 2010, students in the community and personal health class of Jill W. Lassiter – assistant professor of health and exercise science at Bridgewater – were tasked with spending time at Our Community Place and assessing its needs. According to Lassiter, the goal was to design something that would benefit OCP in terms of equipment or facilities.

“The only guideline was that whatever they designed had to be usable outside, because of the size limitations of the OCP building itself,” Lassiter said. “The second part of the challenge was that they had to raise money to make it all happen. And lastly, whatever they came up with had to be built, not simply bought and installed. There had to be sweat equity – a physical investment – in the project.”

The students designed exercise equipment that could be installed at stations on OCP property. To support construction, they held fundraisers and performed odd jobs. This year, a new slate of students took those ideas, improved upon them, and with the \$2,000 budget set about building the exercise stations.

“OCP coordinated with some local construction professionals to come in and help us build,” Lassiter said. “Plus, people from the community who just happened to be there when we were working would come over and help us. Everything got built in just four days. It was a tremendous experience.”

Four of the seven stations that were installed required construction and included pull-up and push-up bars, parallel bars, a sit-up bench and a balance beam. Three other stations that had no actual equipment were devoted to areas of health such as cardio-vascular exercise, and contained signs directing users to a one-mile walking trail or detailing how to do certain exercises.

“For a lot of my students, this was their first experience working with a population that’s different than what they were accustomed to,” Lassiter said. “My objective going into it was for them to see that – as health pros – they have something the community wants and that they can actually make a difference.”

Philip Fisher Rhodes, executive director of OCP and a 2006 alumnus of Bridgewater, said he enjoyed interacting with the Bridgewater students and seeing them work so hard while interacting with the OCP community.

“We are very appreciative for this group of 106 who committed so much time and energy to get us healthier,” he said.

Bridgewater College is a private, four-year liberal arts college located in the Central Shenandoah Valley of Virginia. Founded in 1880, it was the state's first private, coeducational college. Today, Bridgewater College is home to approximately 1,700 undergraduate students.

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