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## **CELEBRATING WESTCHESTER COMMUNITY COLLEGE'S KATHRYN W. DAVIS GLOBAL COMMUNITY SCHOLARS**

*By Jill Casner-Lotto and Malgorzata Kucwaj*

Whether it's enhancing the lives of immigrant families, tackling food insecurity, promoting college success, or helping communities in countless other ways, the Kathryn W. Davis Global Community Scholars at Westchester Community College (WCC) are making a difference. Kathryn W. Davis (1928-2013) was a noted American philanthropist who was a long-time supporter of education, the arts, biomedical research, conservation and the environment, representative government and global peace issues.

Since 2007 the Kathryn W. Davis Global Community Scholarship Program at WCC has brought together over 150 outstanding foreign- and U.S.-born students from diverse backgrounds and cultures for education, international understanding, exchange of ideas, and community service. Students' participation in the program is made possible by



the scholarships, but the initiative offers much more than a traditional scholarship program. The Davis Global Community Scholars, coming from the U.S. and over a dozen different countries, work together in small teams to engage in community service projects and in the process build new friendships, develop leadership and team skills, and learn about each other's cultures. The program, co-directed by WCC Professors Dr. Lori Maida and Kent Trickel, recently received a \$2 million grant from the estate of the late Kathryn W. Davis to continue its work over the next 15 years. At the spring 2015 WCC ceremony honoring the 2014-2015 Davis

Global Community Scholars, the student teams shared their presentations about their community service work. The accomplishments of three of those teams are highlighted below:

## Learning is Fun

Despite their diverse backgrounds, Chiaki Hagiwara (USA with Japanese background), Malgorzata Kucwaj (Poland), David Rowland (Nigeria), and Maria Rubin (Ecuador), shared a similar passion to provide service to immigrants. They came together as a team, which they called “Learning is Fun,” to work with Neighbors Link in Mount Kisco, NY, a multi-faceted community center providing educational, legal, and social



services to Northern Westchester immigrant families from predominantly Hispanic backgrounds. The team created a variety of programs to help Neighbors Link clients integrate into the community, improve English language skills, and engage in activities that can be beneficial to their daily lives. Workshops for the adults included nutrition sessions to promote easy-to-make and budget-friendly meals and share useful online resources such as ChooseMyPlate.gov to help families maintain healthy diets and lifestyles and comidakraft.com that includes many healthy recipes. The team provided all clients with S.N.A.P applications to help them obtain free groceries. Other sessions included ESL medical role-playing activities to help people get familiar with medical vocabulary and simulate situations in a doctor’s office, computer classes to familiarize people with E-mail and Skype accounts, and a Zumba fitness class.

The Learning is Fun team drew from each student’s specific background in developing interactive workshops and activities that exposed adults and children to new cultures. Children’s Family Night included conversations about the various cultures, food, and everyday life in Japan, Ecuador, Nigeria and Poland, coupled with several arts and crafts activities, such as an origami workshop, creating colorful African masks, and making paper dolls decorated with the colors of different Ecuadorian festivals. The students also found a link between Poland and Nigeria by talking about various species of birds, such as the white stork, that migrate in the fall to northern and central Africa and come back to Poland in the spring. Neighbors Link hopes to continue several of these activities at its community center.

## Helping H.A.N.D.s (Hunger and Needs Distribution Service)

Members of the Helping H.A.N.D.s team included Kyria Aho (Republic of Benin), Frank Malizia (USA), Michelle Allen (USA), Loraine Almeida (Brazil); and Wellington Mackey (The Bahamas), who is also a Jack Kent Cooke Scholarship winner. The team learned that food insecurity is not the same as complete hunger or deprivation, but refers to the uncertainty to assure nutritional meals for one's family. While food insecurity is a problem all over the world, it also affects 49 million Americans, including 16 million children.



The Helping H.A.N.D.s team members decided to address the problem by helping to improve the services of local emergency food distribution networks, focusing initially on the food emergency program at Temple Beth-el, a Hebrew congregation in the South Bronx. The team assisted the congregation by creating a database for client and inventory record keeping, building a reliable donor base, recruiting a board of directors, and creating an operational budget with annual projections. In the first week of operation, the food pantry served over 96 families, and it continues to serve many families in the local area. The Helping H.A.N.D.s team efforts helped the Temple Beth-el food pantry program meet the requirements and submit an application to become certified by the New York City's Food Exchange Program. The team plans to continue its work by assisting other area food banks, coordinating their efforts, linking program administrators, engaging business and community leaders, and creating a more integrated network of community emergency food programs.

## Scholars' Outreach for College Success

The Scholars' Outreach team, which included Georgette Gordon (Jamaica), David Sparks (USA), Patchadapa Pattarapanasakul (Thailand), and Rayane Silva (Brazil), also worked with Neighbors Link and several other community and campus groups. The team ran workshops for incoming and first-year students to make them more aware of college success services and opportunities, such as tutoring services, study groups, networking and internships, financial aid and scholarships. While these services exist on campus and in the community, few students realize that help—at no cost—is available, explained Georgette Gordon. "These are all services we wish we had known more about." The team presented at high schools, on the WCC campus, and at community organizations.

The Scholars' Outreach team especially emphasized the importance of preparing for the college placement exam and produced a video, interviewing students on their experiences with the exam, providing tips on how to study for the exam, and noting the availability of services to help. At Neighbors Link the team helped immigrant families better understand the opportunities offered through the college and corrected certain misconceptions. For example, many students and families were not familiar with the kinds of opportunities that could be gained from an internship program. Latino U College Access, a community organization that works to increase college enrollment among first-generation Latino youth, has incorporated the team's workshops into its regular curriculum offerings. The WCC Ambassadors' group, which runs tours for prospective students, has also integrated the Scholars' Outreach message into its tour guide training.



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## WCC Kathryn W. Davis Global Community Scholars Website

Other Davis Global Community Scholars organized projects to provide services to veterans and offer workshops to raise awareness of and stop sexual harassment on campus. To watch the video presentations by all the 2014-2015 Global Community Scholars and learn more about the Kathryn W. Davis Global Community Scholarship Program at Westchester Community College, visit their website at

<http://www.wccglobalscholars.net/archives/2014-2015-cohort/>.

Applications deadline information and online scholarship application are available at

<http://www.sunywcc.edu/student-services/scholarships/>.

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