

PSGA and sister campuses team up

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— Photo by Jennifer R. Vertullo/Daily News
Penn State Shenango student Rico Cruz of Hermitage makes bracelets with Auberle students Michael C. and Kendra H.

“We’re all building friendships and helping someone other than ourselves,” Stephanie Sluk said as she mounted the stairwell at Adagio Health’s Healthy Start House in Duquesne.

Sluk, a freshman from Belle Vernon majoring in political science at Penn State Greater Allegheny, was among some 80 Penn State students doing public service Monday for Martin Luther King Jr. Day.

“God blesses people so that they can bless others,” said Rachel Fredericks of Caldwell, N.J., a sophomore at McKeesport’s PSGA majoring in business finance, as she helped Auberle students with arts and crafts.

Students from Penn State campuses in Beaver, DuBois, Fayette, Greater Allegheny, New Kensington and Shenango took part in the second annual MLK Day service effort.

“He stood for all people, not just African Americans, not just against discrimination,” Fredericks said. “He wanted everyone to be equal.”

“My passion is helping people,” Penn State DuBois Liberal Arts and Sciences junior Alina Bumbarger of Grassflat, Clearfield County, said at Auberle. “I’m just interested in helping others in any way possible.”

“Our students want to make a difference,” PSGA staffer Erin O’Malley of North Huntingdon Township said. “Some are part of student government, others are doing this out of the kindness of their hearts.”

“I just wanted to help out,” said Andre Aina, a sophomore broadcast communications major from Washington, D.C., who will move on next year from Greater Allegheny to University Park.

“I think I want to work with kids after I get my master’s degree,” said Katherine Russum, a sophomore majoring in psychology at PSGA. “I would like to go into social work.” Russum came from Maine to Penn State. She said she enrolled at Greater Allegheny because it was less expensive and smaller than the main campus in University Park. Fredericks was among 24 students working with Auberle residents on a variety of projects, including a sports program at the recreation building there and a King Day performance that capped their visit.

“We’re thrilled with the relationship we have with Penn State and its students,” Auberle Coordinator of Volunteer Services Cheryl Kubitz said. “Our kids enjoy the interaction with the volunteers.”

The majority of the Penn Staters went to Earthen Vessels Outreach in Pittsburgh’s Bloomfield section, while 10 students went to the Healthy Start House in Duquesne, a transitional facility for homeless women with children up to 10 years of age.

“They are doing some of the deep cleaning that doesn’t get done regularly, such as wiping down walls,” Healthy Start House Manager Nicole Anderson said. Her facility presently is home to six families.

While last year’s Penn State MLK Day project focused on the Beaver County area, Healthy Start House is no stranger to the university.

“Penn State contacted us,” Anderson said. “We did a service project with them last year.”

King also will be remembered tonight at PSGA, where the public is invited to attend a program of song and the spoken word at 7 in the Ostermayer Room of the Student Community Center.

Staff Writer Jennifer R. Vertullo contributed to this story.