

COMMUNITY LIFE

20 WP Seniors Volunteer at UCM in SHOUT Program

United Community Ministries recently hosted 20 graduating seniors from West Potomac High School during the final two weeks of their high school career who volunteered through a program called SHOUT (Students Helping Others United Together).

Each SHOUT volunteer committed to spending 40 hours with UCM, according to UCM volunteer coordinator Emily Griffin.

"This was our largest group ever of SHOUT volunteers," said Griffin. "The students selected in advance which UCM service area interested them the most. We had students helping with the food pantry, our Early Learning Center interacting with pre-K students, and with marketing and promotion, among other departments."

At the end of the two-week period, the students gave presentations to UCM staff about what they had learned and what the experience meant to them.

Del. Paul Krizek (D-44th) joined UCM for the presentations and to congratulate the students for their service and their high school achievements.

UCM development and communications officer Diane Hill said that feedback from the students



Courtesy photo

Pictured are some of the SHOUT volunteers. From left are graduating seniors (by name and including post graduation plans, if available): Afua Owusuaa (Northern Virginia Community College), Comfort Asamoah (Virginia State University), Amana Bhulyan (Salem College), Evelyn Sorto, Sana Iqbal, Revathi Mohan (University of Virginia), Jency Manzano. Front row: Summer Awad (Northern Virginia Community College), with Ms. Jessica Landon, WP Librarian and SHOUT coordinator. SHOUT volunteers not pictured were: Sandra Achai, Akuah Boaheng (Virginia Commonwealth University), Lydia Boateng, Joycelin Chanas (Virginia State University), Jacinda Djossou (Virginia Tech), Maguerite Djossou (Virginia Tech), Natali Gonzalez (Virginia Commonwealth University), Victoria Jones, Jocelyn Mendoza, Mezmure Tesfaye, and Sarah Yankson (Virginia Commonwealth University).

indicated that their time spent volunteering was also a learning experience.

Hill said it was meaningful on a personal level to one student who commented, "My mom comes here to get food sometimes for our family. I am very grateful to UCM for helping us."

Hill said it was also meaningful on a professional level as well.

"All of us want careers interacting with people," said one SHOUT volunteer. "And volunteering at the food pantry was good experience for this."

Another stated, "I volunteered at UCM because it creates connections in the community, and you can meet a lot of great, interesting people here. UCM helps others when they really need it. The best part is helping others and answering their questions."

UCM has many opportunities for groups and individuals of all ages to volunteer helping neighbors in need. For a list of current needs and to register for a volunteer orientation session, go to www.ucmagency.org and click "support us." for questions or ideas for volunteer projects contact Griffin at emily.griffin@ucmagency.org or 571-255-8973.