

NOVEMBER 2007

A Day of Service for the GW Medical Center

GW Medical Center faculty, staff, and students started this semester with a day of service spanning the whole city. This year's Community Service Day brought together more than 375 members of the GW Medical Center community. The annual daylong event connected volunteers with 18 organizations to serve meals to the homeless, landscape parks and recreational areas, work with children and seniors, and engage disadvantaged and marginalized communities.

Sites included Martha's Table, Hermano Pedro Day Shelter, and the National Zoo in **Ward 1**; Miriam's Kitchen, Bread for the City, St. Mary's Court, Northwestern Settlement House, Hannah House, New Endeavors for Women, and Barbara Chambers Children's Center in **Ward 2**; Friendship Place in **Ward 3**; Capital Area Food Bank in **Ward 5**; Mt. Carmel House and Community for Creative Non-Violence in **Ward 6**; and Marvin Gaye Park in **Ward 7**. Other sites included the National Mall and parks across the city, as well as Habitat for Humanity and D.C. Goodwill just across the Potomac River in Virginia.

"GW's relationship with the city community is critically important," says **John F. Williams**, GW provost and vice president for health affairs. Williams hopes to continue building the outreach functions of the GW Medical Center to strengthen existing partnerships and develop new alliances.

GW Fact

More than 3,000 people attended the fifth annual Foggy Bottom/West End Neighborhood Block Party on Oct. 14, featuring over 110 local restaurants, businesses, and community organizations.

City Official Profile: Ayawna Chase



Ayawna Chase graduated from GW in 2003. Today she is the director of constituent services for Councilmember Harry Thomas Jr. in Ward 5.

Some say great leaders are born, not made. In the case of **Ayawna Chase**, director of constituent services for **Councilmember Harry Thomas Jr.** in **Ward 5**, GW is proud to have been the institution where an influential Washington leader was both born and educated.

Chase's ties to GW are many. She was born at the GW Hospital on St. Patrick's Day in 1977. At the time, Ayawna's mother worked for the University as a telephone operator and is still employed by GW more than 30 years later.

Chase was raised in **Ward 5**, the same community in which her parents, as well as her grandparents, met. When it came time to select a college, Chase chose

GW, following in the footsteps of her sister, a 2000 graduate. As a commuter student, Chase maintained her commitments to friends and family at home, while attending GW and working several jobs on campus. Balancing a variety of roles at GW taught Chase the value of hard work. "GW showed me that my competition was studying four hours a day and speaking three languages," she recalls. Chase graduated in 2003 with a bachelor's degree in psychology.

Today, Chase's work includes community outreach, building business relations, providing resident services, and event planning. The job is a "24/7" commitment. Chase explains that in her position it is critical to stay on top of information and communicate effectively so she carries a Blackberry, a Pocket PC, and a cellular phone at all times.

Looking back on her experience at GW, Chase acknowledges a number of mentors, including **Richard Hancuff**, analyst at the GW Medical Center technical support office; **Deborah Roberson**, senior enterprise resource planning analyst for GW Information Systems and Services; and **Robin Delk**, executive coordinator at the GW School of Public Health and Health Services. "All three of them instilled in me a strong work ethic and forced me to constantly improve," says Chase.

Chase has not ruled out the possibility of attending law school in the future. For now, she finds fulfillment in bringing her leadership skills and strong work ethic to the Wilson Building, her office on Pennsylvania Avenue, NW. Whether making sure school children have books or empowering low-income families to improve their quality of life, Chase is focused on making a difference in **Ward 5** and in Washington.

ISCOPEs: Health Information Partners



GW nurse practitioner student Eileen McCormack explains to Carol Chamberlain, resident of St. Mary's Court, how to access health information.

Health Information Partners (HIPS), a coalition of medical, public health, library and literacy practitioners, works to close the information gap that contributes to health inequities. HIPS hosts workshops to teach people how to utilize the Internet to find, evaluate, and apply online health information to enhance personal and community health. For more than four years, HIPS has taught bi-monthly workshops, visited health centers, hosted health talks and Web demonstrations, organized Connecting for Health Literacy conferences to forge alliances among different organizations and disciplines, and conducted street outreach to provide HIV information in **Ward 8**.

The ISCOPEs HIPS team is a service-learning program that pairs graduate health professional students with D.C. community members. The partnership between GW students and community health workers has been instrumental in this work. Team members have created promotional materials, designed evaluations, translated curriculum, and taught health literacy classes. Their technological savvy, fresh perspectives, and health knowledge contribute to the project's success.

Most valuable are the personal relationships that develop as students and community members teach each other about their lives. As community members gain confidence and become increasingly interested in health, many become advocates for health issues in their own communities.

"Holding health literacy workshops increased my awareness about how much we take our computer and Internet skills for granted," says **Rigved Tadwalkar**, a second-year medical student and ISCOPEs participant. "Yet, just down the street at senior housing complexes like St. Mary's Court, there are people who have difficulty connecting to the Internet, let alone retrieving the reliable information they need.

"I've learned that working with the community is an active process that requires a mutual partnership. In order to serve the community, one must also learn from it," says Tadwalkar.

If you are interested in attending a health literacy workshop, please call (202) 416-0408 or e-mail kpomeran@gwu.edu. The next Connecting for Health Literacy conference is Dec. 3 from 10 a.m. to 1 p.m. To register for this free conference, e-mail maphtc@hotmail.com. Continuing Education Units will be awarded for nurses, social workers, and health educators.

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