

w.d. goodwill social work initiatives on aging

Neighbors Helping Neighbors Expands Services In Partnership with Rowland Hall-St. Mark's High School & Sorenson Multicultural Center

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The Neighbors Helping Neighbors (NHN) program, part of the W.D. Goodwill Social Work Initiatives on Aging, is pleased to announce two major developments.

First, as of September, 2003, NHN has expanded its catchment area to include seniors who live between 1300 East and Redwood Road, 900 South and 2700 South. We have partnered with the Sorenson Multicultural Center where we have a "satellite" office site.

Secondly, NHN is collaborating with Rowland-Hall St. Mark's High School to implement a new service component called Teen Connect. Teen Connect is an intergenerational project that matches youth from Rowland-Hall St. Mark's with elderly participants from NHN in a mutually beneficial relationship.

Youth will have the opportunity to provide community service by calling community-dwelling seniors on a weekly basis and providing socialization over the phone as well as safety checks. Through participation in the program, the youth will gain knowledge, experience, and skills that will help them throughout their lives. The youth volunteers will find that their stereotypes of the elderly will be challenged. New opinions will be formed and an increased sensitivity for the elderly will develop.

Additionally, youth will learn first hand about the issues and problems facing the elderly. Youth will also find that their communication skills will improve as they converse with people out of their normal peer group. The best part of their learning and increasing of skills is that it is done through service to others.

The elderly participants in Teen Connect will find that there is more for them in the program than just a chance to help teens. The elderly may experience a decrease in loneliness, anxiety, and depression as they converse with the youth. They may feel a little more connected to the "outside" world. They may also find that stereotypes they hold about teens are challenged. They will get a chance to pass on wisdom, learned through personal life experience, to today's teens. Teen Connect offers seniors the chance to still contribute to their community by building relationships with local youth.

NHN is proud to partner with the Sorenson Multicultural Center and with Rowland-Hall St. Mark's High School. We look forward to seeing relationships form that will help bridge the gap between the young and the elderly. These partnerships are not only good for NHN, but also for the College of Social Work!