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# Project Provides Education & Change

by Cherie Collins

On a chilly, November morning, a Santa Clara University student serving breakfast to the homeless in St. James Park in downtown San Jose had one of those "outside-the-classroom" experiences that college is supposed to provide.

A psychology major and volunteer for the Eastside Project, the stu-

dent had passed out food to the homeless many times in the past. But this time was different. He met a man who had been on the streets for some time and with whom he shared something in common. The homeless man was an SCU graduate with a masters degree in electrical engineering.

Tearing down streetdweller

stereotypes is just one goal of the Eastside Project, which was started by two Santa Clara University professors in 1985. In addition to its altruistic purposes, the Eastside Project is a valuable educational tool which has enriched Santa Clara University in ways no lecture or textbook could.

Steve Privett and Gerdenio M. Manuel, the two Santa Clara University professors, who are the codirectors and founders of the program, were recently awarded a \$1,000 grant by Sears-Roebuck Foundation for teaching excellence and campus leadership. Privett

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SCU Professors Steve Privett and Gerdenio M. Manuel were awarded a \$1,000 grant for their campus leadership and teaching excellence

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and Manuel are encouraged by the award but view the award as encouragement for everyone who works on the project.

The two were among 700 educators at private universities across the country who received similar

awards. SCU was also recognized with a \$1,500 grant for its role in supporting the program.

Privett, 47, and Manuel, 39, both Jesuit priests, hold doctoral degrees in catechetics (the study of religion) and clinical psychology, respectively.

Their view of the University as community catalyst with wider responsibilities than just study and research, led the priestly duo to start the program in 1985 with fellow Jesuit Dan Guerrman. In keeping with their principles, Privett and Manuel also declined to live in the

plush, on-campus, faculty residence, Nobili Hall. They chose, instead, to live in East San Jose.

An important component of the program is that students learn to put their education to practice. "It is not just a volunteer program but a valuable learning tool," said Privett. This past year, 130 SCU students volunteered through the Project to work in homeless shelters, daycare centers, schools, and centers for the elderly.

"We're not the Boy Scouts," Privett said. "The work they do should filter through their education and be digested in the classroom."

"You don't learn about poverty from statistics," he added. "When you work with them you find out the reason they can't get a good job is because they don't have a phone or proper work clothes."

"You don't learn abnormal psychology through a textbook but by working with the homeless," Manuel added.

In addition to giving sociology and psychology students a headstart in their fields, the program offers exposure to a variety of cultures, which is valuable to students of every discipline.

"Diversity is the richness of the Eastside culture while homogeneity is the poverty of Santa Clara," said Manuel. "But through the Eastside Project we can bring some of that richness on campus and into the students' lives."

Students first learn about the Eastside Project in the classroom. Professors from all areas of study, may require or strongly suggest work in the Project as a requirement of their course. Students can choose from 24 different sites. "They learn they have the power to affect legislation and help the community," Privett said.

A number of graduates who have worked on the Eastside Project have gone on to human service careers. Several have remained in San Jose and become an integral part of the Santa Clara County social service agency network that the Project relies on.

Privett measures the program's success by the little things that have happened over the years. He recalled a woman from one of his classes who spent five to six hours a week with shut-ins. One of the elderly women she visited didn't have the strength to open a jar of peanut butter. The only time the elderly woman could have peanut butter, which she adored, was when the student came to visit. Privett sees this story as a metaphor for the Eastside Project.

"Experiencing the underprivileged, a population and people in pain, is essential to understanding people," Manuel said.