

A.C. Community Day Clean Up and Party in the Park Grows in Second Year

Media release with photos

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Atlantic City, N.J. — What better day to have a community clean up than Earth Day? And what better place to do it than on the beach?

That's what Stockton University alumna Cindy Verderber figured when she signed up to volunteer for the second annual Community Day Clean Up on April 22.

"As an alum, I wanted to take advantage of helping out, and, of course, I chose the beach," said the 1997 graduate who lives in Little Egg Harbor Township and is an art teacher at Atlantic Community Charter School in Galloway Township. "I am a beach person. The beach is my favorite place in the world, and we are all here just picking up anything we can find that doesn't belong."

Verderber was one of approximately 700 people — many of whom were Stockton students, staff and faculty — who took advantage of a beautiful spring day to participate in the cleanup at nine different sites on the beach and throughout all six of the city's wards.

The cleanup was followed by the Party in the Park at O'Donnell Park near Stockton's Atlantic City campus. The party featured over 56 different vendors and community organizations along with a DJ, a live jazz band, food trucks, outdoor games, face painting and an artist and crafters village.

"A beautiful day brings people out!" said Brian K. Jackson, the COO of the Atlantic City campus. "We're all here with the same mission, and it's to celebrate the city, clean up our streets and beaches and keep Atlantic City beautiful."

Senior Gianna Myers, of Piscataway, enjoyed all the different small businesses set up in the park.

"The event has been very lively. I've been learning a lot about the local businesses in the community, and it's been really inspiring to learn how much they've grown over the years," said the Business and Marketing major. "I think it's a responsibility for Stockton students, especially of the Atlantic City campus, to give back to the community and to build and grow along with Stockton."

One of the small businesses set up in the park was Beyond Bubbles, a handcrafted natural soap company that sells body-care products. Last year's Community Day was the first event owner Ayisha Lee tried to sell her products.

"Atlantic City is my community. The way the community embraced me and supported my business gave me the confidence to go on and come back again," said Lee, who's also the

assistant director of Alumni Relations at Stockton. “Take care of the community that takes care of you! I will continue to support Atlantic City the way they have supported me.”

The Atlantic City Free Public Library used the Party in the Park to debut the inaugural location of its Little Library Project. The project will bring books closer to local neighborhoods by installing little libraries in public parks like O’Donnell Park.

“The idea is that this will be the first one, and we’re going to reach out to other neighborhood associations and see if we can get them all around the city,” said Robert P. Rynkiewicz, the library’s director. “We knew the community party would have a big crowd, and it would be a great way to get the word out there.

“Libraries are changing. We don’t just have traditional services anymore. I think we’re a lot more embedded into the community, and we want to be.”

Improving the community was the overall theme of the day and nowhere was this more evident than in the group of seventh and eighth graders from Atlantic City’s Sovereign Avenue School. About 30 students woke up early on a Saturday morning to clean up around Pete Pallitto Field and the grass walkway along Sunset Avenue near the bay.

“They all came bright and early this morning ready to work, and everyone has had smiles on their faces,” said Linda Mattner, a fourth-grade teacher at Sovereign who’s also the National Junior Honor Society advisor. “And they are having a good time doing it.

“The kids really take pride because it’s their neighborhood and they see the results after they clean up.”

PHOTOS (credit: Mark Melhorn/Stockton University)

Communityday1: Members of the Stockton University field hockey team collect trash in the Lower Chelsea section of Atlantic City.

Communityday2: Chess and Connect Four are just two of the games students could play in O’Donnell Park in Atlantic City as part of the Party in the Park.

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Stockton University

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