

FAMILY SERVICE BUREAU

Interns Sharpen Their Skills At Family Service Bureau



La'Shanda Johnson of Orange, a Seton Hall graduate student and intern at NCC's Family Service Bureau in Newark, conducts a client intake.

When 24-year-old Denisha King of Montclair first came to work at NCC's Family Service Bureau as an intern, she was not quite sure what to expect.

"I thought I was going to drown. School doesn't totally prepare you for everything you will face in the field," said King, who at the time of this interview was completing her master's in social work at Rutgers University in Newark.

About 20 New Jersey college students have spent the past year or more working as interns at FSB, where they have gained real world experience in counseling clients with all kinds of problems. For all their dedication and hard work,

the staff of FSB recently held a special luncheon for the interns to say 'thank you.'

"Until you come here, you don't appreciate how hard the work is, how complex it is and all of you are just amazing to

be able to catch on," said Ellen Gertner, a social worker and clinician at FSB who serves as supervisor of interns.

The FSB interns do everything from client intake and counseling, to facilitating support groups. Most of the students are studying for their master's in social work or marriage and family therapy.

As part of her internship, Tamarra King, who attends Monmouth University in West Long Branch, helped facilitate a Nurturing Parents support group at Harmony House, New Community's transitional living facility, situated right next door to FSB.

"She has a feel for people and a good sense of people's character," said Mary Jenkins, the FSB therapist who supervised King during her internship and who runs the Kinship Program.

As for King, one of the lessons she learned is that one should proceed cautiously when making a diagnosis.

"You have to be cognizant as clinicians when putting a label on someone because it stays with them," she said.

La'Shanda Johnson, 25, of Orange, who was studying for her master's degree in marriage and family therapy at Seton Hall University, said she deeply values the diverse group of people the internship has allowed her to interact with

"We see a wide range of problems," she said, noting they range from domestic violence to alcohol and drug abuse.

Two other Seton Hall students, Eugene Holowacz, 25, of South Orange and James Woodley, 46, of Teaneck, said the FSB staff has been wonderful in lending their expertise.

"I feel very supported here," said Holowacz.

For those interns who were graduating and moving on, Arti Kakkar, executive director of FSB, encouraged them to "keep in touch."

"It's been really good," she said. "We really have developed a good relationship."