

A Bounty Of Gratitude And Good Food Served At Siue East St. Louis Charter High School Annual Thanksgiving Meal

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EAST ST. LOUIS - Before leaving for their holiday break on Friday, Nov. 17, Southern Illinois University Edwardsville East St. Louis Charter High School (CHS) students sat down to a school tradition – a meal of turkey, dressing, and all the fixings.

“We are grateful for every one of you. You are valued, and we see each of you,” said CHS Director Gina Jeffries, EdD, to the scholars who had assembled in the Multipurpose Room on the Wyvetter H. Younge Higher Education Campus. “I’m extremely grateful to be here at Charter High School. You scholars make me proud every day, and I am also grateful for the Charter High School staff.”

Prior to the meal, Jeffries led off the customary expressions of thankfulness, offered by selected CHS staff and students.

“As a scholar, I’m grateful to wake up and be able to be around teachers who care for me, and who I know will help me out,” said CHS senior Theodric Belt Jr.

“I’m thankful to be able to come here, spread peace and celebrate together as humans,” said CHS STEM instructor Johnathan Tate. “I appreciate every single one of you and the entire CHS staff team.”

“I’m grateful for the opportunities at Charter High School,” said CHS junior Orlando Evans. “I’m thankful for how much you care for us, support us and promote us.”

“I’m grateful for your attention, respect and love, and hope you feel the same,” said CHS social studies instructor Carolyn Stewart.

“I’m glad that the Charter High School is still here providing you all with first quality education,” said Willis Young, CHS board president, former CHS assistant director and originator of the CHS Thanksgiving Day meal.

“Charter High School scholars, you make me proud every day,” said CHS Assistant Director Liza Cummings, PhD. “You continue to show up and work hard. I’m also grateful for our wonderful Charter School staff and for being under the great leadership of Dr. Gina Jeffries.”

After the round-robin of grateful expressions, CHS senior Jada Parker sang Rihanna’s “Diamonds” to an appreciative audience.

“The Charter High School has given me more opportunities and is making it easier for me to get into college, which I really want to go,” Parker said later. “The teachers are supportive and push me in a good way to accomplish my goals and dreams. I’ve wanted to be a doctor since I was three years old.” Parker wants to become a cardiothoracic surgeon.

CHS sophomore Breon Johnson agrees with the importance of favorable teacher support. “They help me be a better version of myself. I’m grateful for basketball and for Mr. (Shawn) Roundtree staying on me,” said the captain of the CHS basketball team.

After greeting and visiting with many CHS students and staff, SIUE Chancellor James T. Minor, PhD, commented, “I am extremely thankful for the dedicated educators who show up for our Charter High School students, and others who arrive to this campus

over the course of any given year. I personally know heroes in this community by their first name, and I am inspired by them.”

Dishing up the scrumptious meal were Provost and Vice Chancellor of Academic Affairs Denise Cobb, PhD; SIUE East St. Louis Center Executive Director Timothy Staples, EdD; SIUE School of Education, Health and Human Behavior Associate Professor in the Department of Teaching and Learning Nate Williams, PhD; CHS Treasurer and SEHBB Business Administrative Associate Anne DeToye; and CHS Board Member Starr Gibson (2014 CHS graduate).

Serving the students were CHS team members: Jeffries, Cummings, Mildred Fort, Marquita Holton (Thanksgiving Day Meal co-coordinator), Ronald Irving, Sajiyah Jalil, Hope Jordan, Edith Lakztian (Thanksgiving Day Meal co-coordinator), Greg Laktzian, Tomisha Montgomery, Bridget Nelson, Colin Neumeyer, Stephanie Newton, Roundtree, Keivan Shariat, Stewart, Tate, Aaron Vance and Edna Woods.

The menu, prepared by D. Rodg World Class Catering, included turkey, dressing, green beans, macaroni and cheese, yams, cranberry sauce, rolls and soft drinks. Desserts Out of the Jar and More consisted of Oreo cookies and cream, banana pudding and cream, strawberry cheesecake and cream, peaches and cream, and red velvet and cream, and were provided by Yashica McKinney.

“We are so grateful for this time of fellowship,” said Holton. “It is a way for our students to come together to have a good Thanksgiving Day meal with individuals who love them.”

[The SIUE Charter High School](#) is a school of choice for families in the East St. Louis School District 189. The mission of the Southern Illinois University Edwardsville East St. Louis Charter High School is to prepare students who are career- and college-ready upon graduation. To achieve this mission, the school and its staff will positively impact the educational and economic lives of East St. Louis, Illinois youth through individualized instruction in core academic subjects, exploration of career interests and aptitudes, assistance in realizing students’ talents, high academic goals, and expectations that graduates will become competitive employees for the 21st century.

The [SIUE School of Education, Health, and Human Behavior](#) prepares students in a wide range of fields including public health, exercise science, nutrition, instructional technology, psychology, speech-language pathology and audiology, educational administration, and teaching. Faculty members engage in leading-edge research, which enhances teaching and enriches the educational experience. The School supports the community through on-campus clinics, outreach to children and families, and a focused commitment to enhancing individual lives across the region.

