As Temple freshmen have for the past four years, members of the class of 2014 began their college careers with service — and a chance to get to know their new community first-hand.

FreshServe, part of Temple’s Welcome Week, is the university’s annual day of service. It brings Temple volunteers into Philadelphia neighborhoods to clean, paint and plant alongside neighbors and community leaders.

“FreshServe is important because it connects students with the ideas of community service and civic engagement from their first week at Temple,” said Chris Carey, associate director of Student Activities. “Our hope is that students not only meet new people in their groups, but also feel connected to the city of Philadelphia and their new neighbors.”

More than 600 volunteers — freshmen accompanied by RAs, upperclassmen, faculty and staff — gathered on Polett Walk on August 26, ready to get to work. Armed with brooms, paintbrushes and other tools, they set out for 27 different sites on and around Temple’s Main Campus in North Philadelphia.

“It was a great event,” said student volunteer Skylar Rudolph. “We helped clean up a small bit of Philly — but every little bit helps.”

Service locations included area schools and recreation centers, where volunteers painted, sorted books and swept floors to help prepare classrooms and facilities for the school year. Some groups worked directly with local children, reading them stories, while others went to local churches and non-profits to help with general upkeep. Others stayed on campus to shovel, rake and weed Temple’s Community Garden.

“We’ve had a couple really interesting opportunities this year that really ran the gamut of service,” said Gina D’Annunzio, director of Student Activities.

For the third year in a row, a FreshServe group visited Urban Tree Connection (UTC), an organization that cleans up vacant lots to make them usable for recreation, education and gardening. Students were put to work picking up trash, weeding pathways and spreading compost and woodchips.

“I would definitely deem the day a success,” said Sue Witte, volunteer coordinator for UTC. Not only did a lot of work get done, but it was done with enthusiasm and I think everybody enjoyed it.”

By all accounts, the FreshServe experience instills a sense of service that keeps Temple students coming back.

“If they did this three times per semester, I’d be there,” said Rudolph. “I’d definitely do it again. I’d do it more.”

As part of FreshServe 2010, several Temple freshmen cleaned up along a fence line at Penrose Community Center.
Prom dress drive has local seniors looking fabulous

For many young women preparing to graduate high school, there are few evenings more important than prom night. But for some, the cost of looking fabulous — buying a dress, flowers, hairstyling and accessories — can be too steep.

To help those who might not be able to afford prom night essentials, Temple’s student-run radio station, led by Temple communications student Melanie Martin, held a prom dress drive that helped 21 young women find the perfect gown.

Held in the Student Center Underground in February, the drive brought local high school seniors, Temple students and professional stylists together to help prepare the girls for their special night. Attendees chose from among 53 donated dresses and benefited from advice on makeup and accessories.

Martin, a recent Temple Communications graduate, organized the drive to give the young women a special night to remember.

Temple student works to lower Berks teen pregnancy rates

Temple Public Health student Kelly Lopez is working to reduce rates of teenage pregnancy in Berks County, a region with one of the highest rates in the state.

It’s a statistic that touches home for Lopez — two of her brothers and two of her friends became parents while still in high school. Lopez says it was a story of triumph over adversity — despite becoming teenage parents both of her friends graduated from Temple and are pursuing master’s degrees. But their experience inspired her to begin a program to help Latina teens in her hometown Reading, Pa. meet their life goals and make healthier choices regarding their sexuality.

“I wanted to do something meaningful for my final project,” said Lopez. “I met with the Reading Department of Health, and they gave a rundown of some of the top health issues. Teen pregnancy was a big one, and it intrigued me — it’s something that’s very close to me because of my family.”

The five-week program, called “Chicas in Charge,” uses goal-setting as a foundation and teaches Latina teens about making healthy choices regarding their sexuality. Girls learn how those goals can be affected by poor decision making, which can lead to pregnancy or sexually transmitted diseases. Lopez’s plan matched up with a similar program that the Co-County Wellness Services (CCWS) in Reading had started but never got off the ground. With her help, Chicas was re-instituted in the Glenside neighborhood of Reading.

“My two youngest nieces live in the Glenside projects,” said Lopez. “I grew up there too, and one of my worst fears is for them to repeat the cycle. There is a high poverty rate there and low educational attainment, which are two of the biggest risk factors for problems such as teen pregnancy and sexually transmitted infection. That was a huge motivation for me to pilot the program there.”

“Kelly is really the reason why this project got off the ground,” said Marlene Cabrera, a clinical assistant at CCWS. “In the program’s first incarnation, it was difficult to devote the time and resources to recruit and market sessions. But Kelly has done most of the legwork — marketing, recruitment, lesson plans — we wouldn’t have this project without her.”

“I was so grateful for this opportunity,” said Lopez. “The project was hard, but incredibly rewarding. It allowed me to do something in my community for people just like me.”
Coleman named to new Temple community relations post

Senior vice president for government, community and public affairs Kenneth Lawrence, Jr. has announced the appointment of Beverly Coleman as assistant vice president for community relations and economic development.

In the newly created position, Coleman will develop and implement programs that strengthen Temple’s relationships at the neighborhood and city level, and enhance the university’s role as a contributor to the civic and economic success of the community.

“As one of the region’s largest employers and developers of the Commonwealth’s economic capital, Temple remains dedicated to building upon our relationships in the community, and contributing to the revitalization of North Philadelphia,” said Lawrence. “Beverly Coleman brings a wealth of knowledge and experience which will ensure a mutually beneficial future for our neighbors and Temple University. I am greatly pleased to welcome her to Temple, and look forward to working with her to support our neighbors.”

Coleman has spent more than two decades working to reinvigorate neighborhoods throughout the Philadelphia area. She formerly served as director of Urban Ventures Group, a Philadelphia-based consulting firm that provides support to organizations involved in neighborhood revitalization. Before working with Urban Ventures Group, Coleman was executive director of NeighborhoodsNow, an organization that works to bring together private, philanthropic and public agencies to increase the quality of life in neglected urban communities, and worked for the Pew Charitable Trusts and a number of community economic development organizations.

“I’m enormously excited to have the opportunity to continue Temple’s long tradition of working with and in the community, building relationships with our neighbors,” said Coleman, who also serves on the boards of SEPTA, Art Reach and the Samuel Fels Foundation.

Coleman attended the University of Pennsylvania, where she earned both a Master of Arts degree in Government Administration and a Bachelor of Arts degree in Urban Studies. She currently resides in Center City Philadelphia.

Alliance promotes North Philadelphia Arts

North Philadelphia is brimming with the arts. From the Cerulean Arts Gallery to the Wagner Free Institute of Science and the Arts Garage, small artistic enclaves positioned around North Philadelphia offer everything from handcrafted ceramics to jazz performances. They have everything well known established Center City venues have — except for high volumes of foot traffic.

That’s where Shayna McConville comes in. Last year, the interim director of exhibits at the Tyler School of Art decided to create an organization to help increase the visibility of the arts in North Philadelphia. Armed with first-hand knowledge of the talent and creativity that resides in the areas surrounding Temple, she founded the North Philadelphia Arts and Cultural Alliance. Already the group has made great strides in fostering creative collaborations between artistic organizations and raising the overall visibility of North Philadelphia arts.

“We want to highlight what has always existed here,” McConville said. “There are pockets of amazing and beautiful arts and creative venues here that people drive by daily and never take a second look. It’s one of the most artistic neighborhoods in Philadelphia.”

“We’re off the beaten gallery path,” said Tina Rocha, owner of new Alliance affiliate the Cerulean Arts Gallery. “The biggest challenge has been getting people to come north, but the area has potential. It’s changed a lot in the four years that we’ve been here.”

“The art gallery at Tyler is facing the same issues with marketing,” said McConville. “Coming together and helping to promote other similar organizations seemed like the best way to approach the challenge.”
Clothing drive helps grads dress for success

Several Philadelphia-area high school graduates have taken their first steps toward career success with help from Temple faculty and staff.

The students were among the first beneficiaries of the university’s professional clothing drive, hosted this spring by the offices of Human Resources and Community Relations to help job seekers and others in the community dress for success.

Beginning in May, Temple faculty and staff dropped off lightly used men’s and women’s professional clothing at bins located around campus. More than 40 suits, 110 dresses, 25 jackets, 120 ties and an assortment of shirts and pants were collected.

Women’s donations were provided to Dress for Success, an international not-for-profit organization that offers services for disadvantaged women. Men’s apparel was taken to the National Comprehensive Center for Fathers (NCCF), a Philadelphia-based organization that helps more than 2,000 men dress professionally each year through its “Work ‘n’ Style” program. As area schools approached the end of the academic year, NCCF outfitted young men with suits for their graduation ceremonies.

NCCF Executive Director Kofi Asante said that it’s important that the students’ dress reflects the significance of this important milestone in their young lives.

“When they come here and they put a suit on … it changes their attitudes about themselves,” he said. “It gives them a sense of confidence. They can say, ‘I can do this.’”

Temple helps neighbors get work-ready

Last May, Temple’s Mitten Hall was bustling with activity as more than 3,000 job seekers from the community met face-to-face with potential employers.

The fifth annual Neighbors Job Fair brought representatives of more than 50 business, agencies and organizations — ranging from Aramark to SugarHouse Casino, Rite Aid and PECO — to connect with local job seekers.

Sponsored by Temple’s Division of Community Outreach and Hiring, the job fair is one part of Temple’s larger effort to provide community members with the resources they need to reach their employment goals. The university’s Community Hiring Initiative offers a continuing program of outreach and training programs for those seeking to enter the workforce.

“The futures of Temple and North Philadelphia are intertwined,” said William Hart, director of Community Outreach and Hiring. “Through this program, we are taking the lead in bringing professional development and job-seeking resources to the community."

The university offers help managing online applications, resume writing, interviewing skills and job search techniques. Training includes a series of workshops offering job skill development and personal improvement lessons designed to enhance a candidate’s chances of employment at Temple and elsewhere.

The program has also helped the university bolster the number of staff and administrators from the area surrounding its campuses. Currently, one in 10 Temple employees comes from the neighborhoods surrounding Main Campus and the Health Sciences Center.

“Temple wants to be an active member of the community,” said Kenneth Lawrence Jr., senior vice president for Government, Community and Public Affairs. “Through our community hiring and workforce training programs, we are helping our neighbors find gainful employment — not just at Temple, but throughout the greater region.”

Study suggests strategies for lowering dropout rates

A new study by researchers at Temple’s College of Education has identified key ingredients to helping young people graduate high school.

Professors Erin Horvat and James Earl Davis analyzed the success of YouthBuild, a national program that helps dropouts obtain their GEDs and continue on to jobs or higher education. Begun in 1992 and operating at more than 273 sites in 45 states, the program combines classroom work with training in home construction — with positive results: 50 percent of students complete the program, 76 percent get jobs or further their education and 52 percent receive their GED or diploma.

Studying data from 57 YouthBuild graduates, the researchers identified three factors to the program’s success: it gives students the opportunity to develop self-esteem, offers the opportunity to accomplish something of value and develops students’ capacity to contribute to the welfare of others. Horvat and Davis believe these lessons can be applied nationally.

“By intentionally altering the disposition of students, the program provides graduates with diverse vocational opportunities,” said Horvat.
Community college partnerships provide great start toward Temple degree

A growing number of students in Greater Philadelphia are taking advantage of Temple’s partnerships with nearby community colleges to access a high-quality, affordable education and a Temple degree. With Temple’s reputation on the rise and Americans becoming more value-conscious, that growth is showing no signs of slowing down.

Temple began to sign articulation agreements — formal partnerships that make it easier for students to prepare for college, complete their community college degrees, navigate the transfer experience and succeed at Temple — with community colleges in 1998. Since then, thousands of students have taken advantage of these agreements and transferred to Temple. In the 2009-10 academic year, 1,540 Temple students were transfers from two-year partner institutions — that’s more than half of Temple’s total transfer population. The number of Temple students who transferred from community college partners has increased by more than 35 percent since 2003.

“Our articulation agreements with community colleges reflect our commitment to offering multiple points of access for motivated students of all backgrounds,” said Interim Senior Vice President and Provost Richard M. Englert, the university’s top academic officer. “These are students who want to come to Temple; our partnerships give them that opportunity — and when they get here, they succeed.”

Armed with a few semesters of preparation, Temple’s community college transfers are among the university’s strongest and most successful students; they have a six-year graduation rate of more than 80 percent, which is higher than Temple’s overall average.

Temple’s original four partners are still the university’s top sources of transfer students: the Community College of Philadelphia, Bucks County Community College, Montgomery County Community College and Delaware County Community College. Temple has also signed articulation agreements with seven other institutions: Burlington County College, Camden County College, Gloucester County College and Mercer County College in New Jersey; and Harrisburg Area Community College, Lehigh Carbon Community College and Northampton Community College in Pennsylvania.

There are three types of transfer agreements. Dual admissions agreements conditionally admit students to Temple at the same time they are admitted to a community college, and provide merit scholarships to Temple for those students. Core-to-core agreements accept (upon evaluation and approval) the combination of a transfer student’s community college general education requirements and associate degree in lieu of most of the requirements of Temple’s general education program. In addition, there are many program-to-program agreements between two-year institutions and Temple’s schools, colleges and departments that provide curricular information for prospective transfer students and their academic advisors so they can see exactly what courses students should take in order to be prepared for the Temple baccalaureate program of their choice.

“The [articulation agreements] really helped me and simplified things for me,” said Dan Ankonina of Philadelphia, an Honors student who enrolled in Temple’s Fox School of Business this fall after attending the Community College of Philadelphia (CCP), Temple’s top source of transfer students. “I didn’t have to guess what kinds of courses I had to take [at CCP], and Temple agreed to accept all of my credits without any problem.”

For more information about the university’s articulation agreements with community colleges, go to www.temple.edu/vpus/transfer.
Improving access to dental care

The Maurice H. Kornberg School of Dentistry is working to make sure its neighbors get the oral care they need.

Last year, the school signed an agreement with the American Dental Association to become the urban site of its Community Dental Health Coordinator pilot program, which trains community members to offer dental care services and counseling on how to navigate the health system. The coordinators promote prevention of oral disease and work under supervision to provide preventive services. They also link patients to health providers by coordinating appointments and helping patients become eligible for charitable dental programs.

The school’s participation in the ADA program is its latest effort to improve access to oral health care for North Philadelphia residents. Already, students and faculty spend well over 13,000 hours a year in the community, giving free screenings at schools and churches and holding and attending neighborhood health fairs.

Dean Amid Ismail says the school is committed to meeting the special and specific needs of the underserved community.

Temple podiatrists help patients get a leg up on diabetes

For diabetics, ignorance is never bliss. If left unchecked, their disease can do untold damage to the body, including the eyes, liver and feet. At Temple’s School of Podiatric Medicine, awareness and education are two of the tools that doctors use to treat the rising rate of diabetes among those at highest risk for developing the disease.

“In Philadelphia, the rates of new diabetic cases are 2 percent higher than the national average,” said Kathya Zinszer, chair of the department of medicine and orthopedics at the Podiatry School. “That reflects a need for us to bring more awareness and education about the disease.”

For years, the doctors at Temple’s podiatry school have reached beyond the clinic’s walls to treat those most in need of care. Annually, students and faculty participate in more than 35 city-wide health fairs and screenings, and deliver close to 1,000 informational brochures throughout the community.

In addition, the Podiatry School started a support group for diabetics in 2008 in its satellite office in North Philadelphia. Meetings provide insights from certified diabetic educators, endocrinologists, nutritionists, podiatrists and physical therapists, as well as the life experiences of fellow diabetics, to enable participants to take control of the disease.

“As physicians and healthcare providers, we’re able to act as a guiding tool and provide a forum where patients can share real-life struggles and triumphs of the everyday reality of living with the disease,” said Zinszer.

Podiatry school faculty are also researching ways to help diabetics maintain the health of their feet. Jinsup Song, director of the school’s Gait Study Center and assistant professor of Podiatric Medicine and Orthopedics, received a four-year grant from the National Institutes of Health to craft a personalized program that will show diabetics the areas on their feet that are at highest risk for developing a wound.

“Existing research shows that in underserved minority communities such as the ones serviced by Temple, health literacy is a major challenge,” said Song. “That tells us that diabetic foot care education needs improvement.”

Song and his team hope that personalized education programs that show where injuries can occur and how to prevent them will help reduce the number of foot complications associated with diabetes.

“Giving our patients the proper education on their condition can help empower them to make better decisions about their foot care,” he said. “Not only does that help cut down on medical costs, it can reduce instances of chronic wounds and amputations and help maintain a good quality of life for our patients.”
School of Medicine bridges gap in care for Latinos

Effective healthcare begins with good communication. But for a growing number of U.S. patients, a language barrier stands in the way of adequate medical treatment. This is especially true for the nation’s Hispanic population. According to the Pew Hispanic Center, many Latinos forego primary care physicians and instead end up visiting an emergency room for care that doesn’t address their long-term needs.

Recognizing this trend, School of Medicine Assistant Dean for Recruitment and Retention Raul DeLa Cadena several years ago developed a two-pronged approach to address the problem. The first involves recruiting more emerging-majority students, mainly of Hispanic background, to Temple’s School of Medicine.

“The medical school became a magnet nationally for minority students because we have a good representation in the class and we have a strong track record for on-time graduation,” said DeLa Cadena, who also serves as academic director for the Center for Minority Health and Health Disparities at the School of Medicine.

To mirror that success in the Hispanic population, DeLa Cadena’s second approach focuses on equipping medical students with a crucial element in the patient/physician relationship: communication. Through DeLa Cadena’s leadership, the School of Medicine launched the “Medical Spanish” elective course in 2003 for first- and second-year students. Spanish-speaking students teach the course to their non-Spanish speaking peers and collaborate on a corresponding manual, Espanol Medico, to guide students on how to perform a clinical history in Spanish.

“It was exactly what I was envisioning — a manual put together by students for students,” said DeLa Cadena. “And it could grow each year by involving the students doing something better for the next group of students.”

Second-year medical student Elys Viera taught the elective last year, and is charged this year with editing the manual. She has already added phonetics and a new cover page and revised every lesson. Originally from Miami, Elys recognizes the importance of educating doctors who can communicate in both English and Spanish.

“I think the benefit of having a larger Latino presence in medical schools is outreach in the community, because Hispanic students like me are aware of the language barrier problem,” said Viera. “So we can use this manual and the elective to teach other students who don’t know the language.”

The course — which had a record number of 60 students this year — continues to grow, as does the Hispanic population in and around the School of Medicine. Total Latino enrollment at TUSM has significantly increased since 2003.

But DeLa Cadena isn’t through. He recently applied for a $3 million federal grant that would benefit the entire North Philadelphia community by funding a program to raise awareness of careers in the health profession at Fairhill Elementary and Edison High, two area schools with at least 70 percent Latino enrollment. The funding would also provide services such as SAT preparation to the potential doctors of tomorrow.

“We need to continue building a relationship with our Hispanic Community,” said DeLa Cadena. “The Hispanic population is growing rapidly, and I believe there will be a day when we are on the nation’s radar for graduating Latinos.”
Temple honored as leader in higher education community service

For the second time, Temple has been ranked by the Corporation for National and Community Service on the President’s Higher Education Community Service Honor Roll.

Each year, the U.S. president recognizes colleges and universities across the nation that strive to support their communities and engage students in service. Temple was chosen this year for its efforts to support the community in the eight zip codes surrounding the Main and Health Science campuses. In total, more than 12,500 members of the Temple community engage in service each year, contributing more than 65,000 hours of their time to help others.

“Service to the community was part of Temple’s founding, and we have strived to keep up this tradition and be a good neighbor,” said Kenneth Lawrence Jr., senior vice president for Government, Community and Public Affairs. “We are so pleased to be recognized for our efforts to enhance the lives of those living in the community.”

In recent years, Temple has expanded its legacy of community engagement, making the university a hub for community engagement in the city of Philadelphia. Temple’s Liacouras Center has served as a city-wide host for service projects connected to the Martin Luther King Jr. Day of Service by welcoming to Main Campus thousands of volunteers who then spread out across the city improving communities.

On a daily basis, Temple’s Office of Community Relations serves as a center of community engagement for students interested in volunteering year-round. Its staff works with leaders in North Philadelphia to identify service opportunities ranging from building playgrounds to working in soup kitchens, and then collaborates with student organizations to find students who wish to get involved.

“So many Temple students are dedicated to service, and our student organizations encourage volunteerism throughout the year,” said Lawrence. “There are always opportunities to get involved.”