Dare to DREAM
Tufts students mentor young people at the Somerville Housing Authority

The DREAM Program unites communities of local families and college students as a way of empowering youth living in affordable housing developments to recognize their opportunities, make informed decisions, and achieve their dreams. In partnership with the Somerville Housing Authority, the Tufts DREAM chapter was established in 2011.

If you visit the Campus Center any Friday afternoon during the academic year, you will find about two dozen Tufts student volunteers heading out to Clarendon Hill for their weekly mentor visit. The Tufts mentors arrange a wide range of activities for the children, including scavenger hunts, campus field trips, professional sporting events, and small group and one-on-one activities.

There are currently 18 children, ranging from 5 to 14 years old, from the Somerville Housing Authority community participating in the Tufts chapter’s program.

Tufts volunteers make a commitment to the DREAM program for their entire college career, in order to provide the participating children with a stable environment in which they can learn to thrive and grow.

STRONG WOMEN
STRONG GIRLS (SWSG)

SWSG is a mentoring program for girls in grades 3–5 with the goal of helping them to develop skills for lifelong success. College women are trained as mentors and engage groups of girls during after-school hours.

Students from the Tufts Chapter of SWSG meet weekly with nearly 50 young girls at four locations in Somerville: the Healey Boys and Girls Club, Prospect Hill Academy, the Somerville YMCA, and the Elizabeth Peabody House.

Tufts mentors discuss how strong women throughout history can serve as inspiration in the girls’ own personal development. The Tufts chapter also organizes a field trip for local girls to visit the campus each fall.

SCRATCH JR. PROJECT

The kindergarten classes at the Healey School are participating in the Scratch Jr. Research Project led by Child Development Professor Marina Bers of Tufts and Professor Mitch Resnick of MIT. Scratch Jr. is a three-year research project to develop and study innovative technology to support Science, Technology, Engineering, and Mathematics (STEM) learning in early childhood education.

Since programming tools like Java and C++ are difficult to learn, Scratch Jr. seeks to create a new, accessible programming language that will allow children to do personal, creative work of their own. Using this graphic programming language, children can create animations, stories, and games. The project aims to promote “programming literacy” and “computational thinking” at an early age, in an increasingly technology-based world.

Scratch Jr. uses open-ended and project-based activities to teach fundamental knowledge and complex problem-solving skills, as well as discipline-specific knowledge. Each student is able to use a computer to solve problems and is encouraged to discuss and test possible solutions. Scratch Jr. is funded by the National Science Foundation.

DID YOU KNOW?

Tufts student organizations raise money for Somerville programs through various fund-raising efforts. In addition, students in the Experimenting in Philanthropy course, offered by the Experimental College, have awarded a total of $70,000 to a number of community organizations since 2007. In 2012, the Somerville Homeless Coalition was awarded $8,500 for the installation of a walk-in refrigerator at the Project SOUP food pantry, increasing the amount of fresh produce they can distribute.