



## City Year to Mentor at-risk Elementary School Students at Lowest-performing Schools

By BETH LAMONTAGNE HALL  
Monday, June 7, 2010

MANCHESTER – Students in the city's lowest performing elementary schools will be getting a little extra help next fall from the folks in the red jackets.

Manchester officials recently announced that City Year NH will move from Hillside Middle School into five elementary schools categorized as the lowest performing. The program is also moving its state headquarters to Manchester and has plans to grow even further into two city middle schools and one high school. The goal is to target those kids who are at greatest risk of dropping out and get them back on track toward graduation.

Superintendent Thomas Brennan recently announced the expansion at City Year's National Leadership Summit in Los Angeles, Calif.

"City Year is one of the most vibrant and consistent programs that's out there," said Brennan in an interview after the conference. "I would say a year from now when we talk about this we will see improved attendance, we'll be

talking about improved behavior, and student academic achievement will be much better than it is today."

Brennan gave credit for the expansion to Mayor Ted Gatsas, who has been raising money to keep the City Year program in Manchester schools beyond the 2010-2011 school year.

"I thought it made more sense to get them involved in the elementary schools, to mentor them and get them before they got to the edge of the cliff," Gatsas said.

The volunteers will focus their efforts on the third and fourth grades next year, and in the following two years the mayor hopes to put volunteers in the middle and high schools. Gatsas said he's already raised \$200,000 in private donations to help pay for the future expansion.

Starting in September, Manchester's Bakersville, Beech Street, Parker Varney, Gossler Park, and Wilson elementary schools will each get about eight

City Year volunteers to not only tutor students at risk of dropping out, but to run school-wide activities, such as community service projects.

City Year has been in the state for 10 years tutoring and mentoring students and providing after-school, weekend and vacation programming to keep kids engaged in their communities, excited about school and on track to graduate.

City Year Co-Director Alexandra Allen said the volunteers will each work with 10-15 students who are considered "off track" for graduation from high school. Identifying off-track students in third grade may seem early, but Co-Director Pawn Nitichan cited a John Hopkins University study that shows there are indicators which point to whether a student will graduate or not and those indicators start emerging as early as third grade.

"If not addressed by the 10<sup>th</sup> grade, their chances of dropping out are 50 percent higher," said Nitichan.