



**United Neighborhood Centers**  
of Northeastern Pennsylvania  
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### **UNC's Elm Street Program and South Side Community Justice Initiative "Pay It Forward"**

*Nation-wide student service tour visits Scranton to help clean-up South Side neighborhood*

**Scranton, PA** – Each spring Students Today Leaders Forever organizes a community service road trip called the Pay It Forward Tour, visiting multiple cities throughout the US to engage students in service projects and activities. And this year, South Side Scranton was its latest stop.

On Tuesday, March 16, more than forty University of Minnesota students got out their paint brushes for the South Side Paint Out. During the event, groups of students worked together to eliminate graffiti on more than 15 local business and private residences, in one of the first major clean-up efforts of the South Side Revitalization.

The paint out was organized by leaders of the South Side Community Justice Initiative and United Neighborhood Centers' Elm Street program after being contacted by Students Today Leaders Forever. Together, these community groups recognized the Pay It Forward Tour and its message as a perfect fit for the revitalization efforts in South Side.

"This project marks the beginning of the determination of the local groups in South Side to make a beautiful vision come to life," said Ann Marie Harrison, a South Side Community Justice Initiative member and key organizer of the Paint Out.

The South Side Community Justice Initiative is a resident-led organization that meets once a month to address problems of blight, crime and vacant lots in South Side. Group members also serve as committee members of the Elm Street Program, a state designation recently granted to the South Side community and organized by United Neighborhood Centers, to strengthen Pennsylvania's older historic neighborhoods.

The Paint Out was also sponsored by Penn Security Bank, the South Side location of Sherwin-Williams who provided supplies and painting advice to the project, as well as Hickory Street Presbyterian Church which hosted the group during their stay in Scranton.

“By working together, we can know we can make a difference in this neighborhood for years to come. Hopefully this Paint Out will begin sending a message to the community that graffiti and blight will no longer be tolerated and collaborations such as this will make sure of it,” concluded Harrison.

**About United Neighborhood Centers of NEPA**

*United Neighborhood Centers of Northeastern Pennsylvania is a private, not-for-profit, grass-roots United Way agency that offers direct and general advocacy services for youth, singles, families and senior citizens in combination with programs that foster independence and self-sufficiency. The agency’s mission is to work together with neighbors to provide services and create opportunities which empower individuals and build strong interdependent communities.*

**About Students Today Leaders Forever**

*Students Today Leaders Forever (STLF) is a Minneapolis-based non-profit that engages young people in servant leadership. With a mission to reveal leadership through service, relationships and action, STLF aims to energize generations of student leaders by providing meaningful experiences. Since 2003, STLF has been believing in young people and the ways they can change the world. Cited by Time as the Number Two Way to Serve America, STLF’s Pay It Forward Tours have reached hundreds of cities, engaged hundreds of young people and performed thousands of hours of service. For more information or to become involved, visit [www.stlf.net](http://www.stlf.net).*

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