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## Track & Field Team Holds Throwing Clinic for Bridgeport Students

Valerie Wherley, *Sacred Heart University*

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Women's track & field team co-captain Lindsay Aponte, left, works with Blackham School students during a recent throwing clinic in the Pitt Center. Fellow team member Kolbi Smith, right, looks on.

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Members of Bridgeport's Blackham Middle School's track & field team were at Sacred Heart University last week for a throwing clinic led by SHU's track & field team. The brainstorm of [Valerie Wherley](#), professor of [exercise science](#), and organized by [Lindsay Aponte](#), a senior exercise science student and track & field co-captain, the hour-long clinic taught the middle school visitors exercises that will help them improve their throwing skills.

Aponte, who hails from West Islip on Long Island, said she enjoyed sharing her love of both exercise science and track & field with the kids. "We ran a fundraiser at Halloween called the Trick or Treat Trot to raise money for their program. Today's clinic is another way that we can show our support for them," she said.

During the hour-long clinic, the students practiced a variety of training exercises—some with kid-friendly names such as "Squash the Bug" or "Elbow the Dwarf, Punch the Giant." For most of the students, it was their first time on a college campus.

This is not the first time that Wherley has organized training sessions between SHU students and the Blackham Middle School track & field team. "Sacred Heart has been very helpful to us. Last year, two seniors came to our school every week to work with the kids, and our students loved them," said Chris Kinsley, who coaches the Blackham team. "We wanted to find an extra-curricular program that would keep the students healthy and busy after school and also be a feeder to build up the high school programs. Sacred Heart has helped us accomplish that."

He said that last year, 11 Blackham students qualified for the state competition, and he is hoping to build on that number this year. One of those students, Dante Clark, won the silver medal in the shot put, throwing the eight-pound disc 46' 7". Clark is now a freshman at Fairchild

Wheeler/Central High School where he qualified for the Indoor County Championships in his first high school meet at Wilton. He threw the 12-pound shot put 35' 8".

Led by SHU's throwing coach, Steve Santoli, a total of 21 SHU athletes participated in the clinic. Santoli not only offered hands-on instruction, but provided the Bridgeport athletes with a take-home handout.

"Part of Sacred Heart's mission is to give back to the local community. With programs like these, we not only help the middle schools students with their training, but we expose them to a college campus and hopefully get them thinking about the possibility of college for themselves," Wherley said.