Gordon in Lynn’s, College Bound program considers expansion
By Natalie Ferjulian

When the van of Gordon College tutors pulls into Curwin Circle, there are already a group of giddy kids gathered on the steps of the tutoring center. Their Gordon tutors may have just had a day of classes, jobs and homework but between 2:45 and 4:15 on Monday and Wednesday, their time is dedicated to the College Bound program for the K-2nd graders of Curwin Circle in Lynn, Massachusetts.

Curwin circle provides subsidized housing for 278 low-income families. Gordon students have been tutoring Curwin children both on campus and in Lynn since 2003 when the College Bound program began. “The positive effect of a 1 on 1 role model does incredible things for these kids,” said youth services coordinator Cathy Rowe. “I’ve seen how it’s helped their grades and built their confidence.”

While the younger children are tutored at Curwin two days a week, 3rd-5th graders travel to Fowler campus Monday-Thursday to meet with their tutors. Because of the programs success, Gordon in Lynn is now considering expanding College Bound through junior high.

Sixth grader Emily Rodriguez has attended College Bound for the last four years and wants to continue doing so. “I started College Bound when I was nine,” she said. “Even though it ends in 5th grade I still come to Gordon four days a week because it helps me get better grades in school.” For Rodriguez, the tutors help make homework enjoyable. “When I was younger if my homework was too difficult my tutor would make it into a game so that I would want to do it,” she said.
As the only “start-up” program rather than partnership that Gordon in Lynn is involved in, Director of Gordon in Lynn, Val Buchanan, is always looking for ways to deepen the relationship between Gordon and the College Bound program. “We have a commitment to the children who’ve been involved in College Bound and we want to follow through,” said Buchanan.

Many of the students in College Bound come from first generation families, still trying to navigate their way through the American system. “We want to instill an appreciation and love for education in these kids,” said Rowe. “Most of their parents haven’t been to college so we want them to see that continuing their education after high school is a definite possibility.”

And with plenty of tutors, the program allows students to develop areas where they are having difficulty in the classroom. “When I was younger my tutor always worked with me on my worst subject, science,” said Rodriguez. “She would get a book and ask me questions about matter and mass and solids and liquids and explain what I didn’t understand.”

But the Curwin students aren’t the only ones benefiting from the tutoring relationship. “I really appreciate being able to give to someone else for a few hours per week,” said freshman communication arts major, Natalie Giordano. “The kids have so much joy and energy and they help me remember that there is a world outside of my own studies.”

The relationship between tutors and students isn’t only about homework. The 3rd-5th graders that travel to the Fowler campus also play sports with their mentors and become acclimated with campus.
This helps Rodriguez as she’s planning on going to school in North Carolina to play basketball. “I want to be a teacher and a basketball player,” she said. “I can’t choose one.”

-30-