



Kerry points to 'The most important work'

By Patrick Brodrick/ Staff Writer

Thursday, June 22, 2006

CLINTON - It has housed disadvantaged and troubled youth since the Victorian era, but on Monday the Robert F. Kennedy Action Corps in Lancaster hosted both local and federal politicians, including former presidential-candidate U.S. Sen. John Kerry.

More than 100 people showed up to commemorate the opening of the new residence on the Lancaster Campus. Before the ceremony began, members of the Lancaster Board of Selectmen milled about with State Rep. Jamie Eldridge and Harold Naughton, who just returned home from a tour of duty in Kuwait and Iraq. The center, which houses 52 students, finally opened its new residence hall that has 72 beds and four wings and is the first part of a two-phase, \$14.5 million renovation project. By the time the project is finished there will be a 37,000 square-foot homelike residence and family center, coupled with state-of-the-art computer labs, classrooms, gymnasium and a new library.

Kerry, who headlined the opening ceremony, met with a group of the students before he made his way over to lead the gathered crowd, with the help of several of the Action Corps students, through the pledge of allegiance.

During his speech, Kerry drew attention to the fact that all too often funding for centers like the Robert F. Kennedy Action Corps is being left out of spending bills.

"Budgets for these programs are being slashed," Kerry told the crowd. "I've seen it all over this country, community by community and state by state, families are struggling. Too many children in this country are struggling to get the help they need. Values are taught to young people in three ways; through their parents, through their teachers and organized religion - I know some people don't like to hear that but it's the truth. And in the richest country in the world, too many children are without all three."

Kerry said that is why institutions like the Action Corps are so crucial to the country's youth.

"I want to thank all the people that work at this center and all the institutions just like this one," Kerry said. "Without question this is the most important work being done in America."