

Amid despair and violence, Dimock offers teen-agers hope

Emmanuel Brown won't call them clients. Even though none of them would probably be insulted, Brown just doesn't feel right using the word.

They are customers, he says. They are consumers. He thinks a little more. He'll find it in a minute.

They are participants. "I understand what client means," he says, "but to me it's a stereotype."

The concept is simple when he explains it. A client is someone in need. A participant is someone who shares. Certainly, the participants he serves at the Dimock Community Health Center need his help, but he doesn't want the world thinking they're so needy.

That is what makes this place work. It is a community environment, from the outreach workers like Brown to the teen counselors who give the young ones hope. Everything they give to the community, they are able to get it right back.

Take the "Dimock Street Voices," for instance. These adolescents come to Dimock from all over the city to share positive messages and build self-esteem among others. This may not sound like the work of a health center, but when it comes to medicine, is there anything better?

"We're a very positive group," says Donald Taylor, 19. "A lot of people are afraid to let us in. Not all of us are out in the streets hanging and shooting each other."

No, some of them are doing more constructive things like working every evening,

preparing for college or performing for the first lady if she happens to be in town.

And Hillary Rodham Clinton was. And after months of insults from Newt Gingrich and the like, she could not hide her pleasure at being serenaded.

Clinton was in Boston to help Dimock celebrate the groundbreaking of an addition to the center's expansive campus, and to lend support to the center's ambitious \$4 million fund-raising drive.

Clinton, ever the health care advocate, had more in mind. While she heaped praise on Dimock for its array of community service, the first lady used the opportunity to rant against those who are calling for less government and in the process would pull the safety net from under those who are falling.

"I think it is important, perhaps now more than ever, to demonstrate that we are moving forward to meet the needs of our citizens and community," Clinton told the crowd.

Her remarks captured the sentiment of much of the crowd. This conservative climate that puts people last put a bit of a damper on a beautiful day.

Brown has been at Dimock for nearly five years and is happy with the work the center has accomplished. But threatened cuts in government subsidies threaten to undue much of its progress.

"It's really a much harder time," Brown said. "You really want to help but you have no tools. It's like being out there defenseless."



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Mayor Thomas Menino praised Clinton and her husband for standing up to the bullies in Washington. Even Boston, a world leader in health care breakthroughs, recognizes the need to serve the people.

"I wish the majority party would not prescribe bad medicine for health care," Menino said. "The president has the courage to stand up to these folks. He's not going with the flow."

And neither is his wife. That was demonstrated by her concern for youth. She no doubt knows about the spate of violence that befell Boston in the days before her visit and how heavily it weighed on the minds of those assembled.

In the days before her visit, four teens were wounded in separate incidents in the neighborhoods served by the community center.

On Centre Street Monday, just yards from the tent where Clinton would receive an award, a 16-year-old boy accidentally shot himself.

"It's important to place Dimock in both place and time," Clinton said. "We know that not very far from here young people have a sense of hopelessness and despair that leads them to self-destructive acts."

She spoke of young people in the neighborhoods who have never been to downtown Boston, and urged those who could hear to make individual investments to help instill hope.

"There are no easy answers in the face of complex times," she said. "But the challenge for us is to take those hopes and aspirations and built them into a positive view."