



OFFICE OF COMMUNITY OUTREACH
UNIVERSITY OF CONNECTICUT
Community UConnConnections

Community Outreach Welcomes 2006-2007 Academic Year

The 2005-06 Academic Year was a very exciting time for the Office of Community Outreach. It is clear that students are interested in engaging in meaningful community service and service-learning experiences while they are at UConn. Last year we saw a tremendous growth in every aspect of our programs and services over the previous year. Some of the highlights were:

- Over 1100 students participated – a 47% increase
- UConn students reported investing over 20,000 hours into managing, implementing, and reflecting on community service programs – a 68% increase
- CO organized 6 alternative break and immersion weekends programs – a 100% increase in the number of experiences
- Expanded formal student leadership positions by 30% from the previous year
- Collaborated with over 76 not-for-profit and government organizations in 36 different geographic communities – a 21% and 33% increase, respectively
- Drivers and vans drove over 53,000 miles in order to bring UConn students to and from sites – a 46% increase
- Community Service Days doubled the amount of student participants

During the 2005-06 year, CO also focused its efforts on responding to the devastation caused by Hurricanes Katrina and Rita. CO staff acted as a central point of

contact for charitable giving and activity coordination, and our students were instrumental in organizing and sustaining a \$75,000 fundraising drive that included contributions from student organizations, departments, and individuals from across campus. We also were not afraid to get our hands dirty in responding to the needs. During winter and spring break, CO sent almost 100 students and staff to the Gulf Coast to help with clean-up efforts in Mississippi and Louisiana. They returned with one simple message from the residents of the Gulf Coast – **Do not forget about us.** (We never will.)

This year is already shaping up to be a tremendous year. We will continue to honor our commitments to our traditional partners and neighbors in the Gulf coast, but we are also planning new and exciting projects and programs in the area of hunger and homelessness, youth development and alternative breaks. We are constantly collaborating with University and community partners to promote and sustain service initiatives that meet the self-identified needs of our community and enrich students' learning experiences. Our newsletter – *UConn*Connections - will bring you relevant news of CO endeavors throughout the year and identify ways for you to be involved! Stay tuned.

On behalf of my colleagues in CO, I wish you an outstanding 2006-07 academic year.

Sincerely,
Matt Farley
Coordinator for Community Outreach

Towers Dining Hall provides Surplus Food to local Community

By Kate Dixon
CLAS '08

Numerous attempts have been made by UConn students to establish a program that recovers left-over food from the campus dining halls and transports it to local soup kitchens. This

semester is the first semester this type of program has truly been a success. Ashley Widtfeldt, BUS and CLAS '08, is both the program director and the founder of the Save our Surplus (SOS) Food Recovery program. In the first semester of operation, the SOS Food

program is working together with Towers Dining Hall to provide food to Covenant Soup Kitchen in Willimantic. Widtfeldt spoke recently with Kate Dixon from Community Outreach in regards to her success in developing the SOS Food program.

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Call For Action, a weekly email bulletin, provides information on new service opportunities and related events occurring in the greater Storrs community. To subscribe, please visit our website at www.volunteer.uconn.edu

What is the SOS Food Program?

Left over food that would be thrown away by Dining Services, due to too small of quantities to be served again or would be thrown out otherwise, is brought to the Covenant Soup Kitchen in Willimantic. So far there is only one dining hall participating with the program, Towers Dining Hall, as they have the flash freezers necessary to keep the food fresh. Once the food is delivered to Covenant Soup Kitchen, volunteers stay to assist with prep work, serving, and clean up with the lunch time meal.

The program has been attempted a number of times in the past at UConn. How did you finally get the program started?

First I talked to the head of Dining Services, Dennis Pierce, who referred me to the head of Community Outreach, Matt Farley. Due to all their support, I was inspired to push to make the program a success. Jamie Sorge, a former UConn student who had attempted to organize the program before, was also helpful in the development and success of the program.

How does this program pertain to UConn students on campus?

The SOS Food Program works to raise awareness of UConn students to the issues of the surrounding community. Many people are not aware of the amount of hunger and homelessness prevalent in our society.

What was your inspiration for starting this program?

I was tired of seeing food wasted and hearing students complain about the amount of food that was wasted. I was one of the complaining students and decided that something needed to be done to change the situation. At the end of last school year I began talking to Dennis Pierce, Matt Farley, and Tracey Roy, the head of Towers Dining Hall, to coordinate the program.

What are your responsibilities in being a Program Coordinator for the SOS Food Program?

My main responsibilities are facilitating contact between the dining hall, Covenant Soup Kitchen and volunteers. I ensure that we have a sufficient number of volunteers when necessary.

What has been your favorite part of being a Project Coordinator for the SOS Food Program?

When the first delivery occurred, I realized that the program was successfully running. I was excited that the program was off the ground and had truly succeeded.

How will your role in the SOS Food Program help you with future endeavors?

Being able to start a program and knowing that I have the ability to make it work will give me courage to start something once again in the future. I had never thought of myself as a leader until this time. Through this leadership I have learned how to get people involved and active in the program.

How do you envision the SOS Food Program in a couple years?

I want the program to expand to include every dining hall, café and establishment that sells or serves food on campus. Off campus, I would like local restaurants to also be involved in the program. I would hope that there would be UConn students volunteering at the soup kitchen each day of the week.

What advice would you give to other UConn students who have a desire to start a new program?

You really have to want to do it. It needs to be something that you are genuinely interested in and passionate about. Don't give up, don't get overwhelmed, and don't be afraid to ask for help when you need it.

What type of commitment do volunteers need to make to participate in the program?

To participate at this time, volunteers need to have time from 9am to 1pm on Wednesdays. This allows the volunteers to participate in picking up food from Towers Dining Hall, delivering food to Covenant Soup Kitchen, and assisting with work at the soup kitchen.

How can UConn students become involved with the SOS Food program?

Students can contact me by email at ashjane29@gmail.com



SOS Food Volunteers begin their morning of volunteering by picking up surplus food from Towers Dining Hall



October Community Outreach Honorees

Collecting Change to Bring About Change

By Jennifer Swaysland
CLAS '07

To some, pocket change is rather insignificant. Naturally, the few silver coins and twice as many pennies at the bottom of one's pocket or bag are appreciated on specific occasions; we find ourselves scrounging for change at tolls, in casinos, at snack machines and at parking meters. How often can you say, however, that these coins are satisfying a need greater than an entrance onto the Mass Pike or to fill an empty stomach?

The Jar Campaign is the ultimate solution to UConn students' handfuls of change that go unacknowledged. As a collaboration between Community Outreach, Dining Services and student organizations, the Jar Campaign raises money for various nonprofit organizations. Each month, a student organization sponsors the Jar Campaign. Change is collected from donation boxes at Grab-and-Go locations around campus and is then donated to the charity of a student organization's choice.

The program is unique in not only uniting different campus groups in a service initiative, but also offering student organizations the ability to support a service project of their choice. In having a variety of student groups participate, there is the opportunity for multiple types of charitable organizations to benefit.

The collaboration with Dining Services affords the organizations as well as the charities they've selected exposure in areas of campus frequented by many students. Also, students frequently have change in hand after purchasing food from a Grab-and-Go, so the Jar Campaign is an effortless way for students to give something of themselves to better the lives of others.

Congratulations to Community Outreach Honorees of the Month

October

VOLUNTEERS

Micah Alden-Daitfotn
Big Brothers Big Sisters

Jenny Barnett
Windham Heights

Alea Doolittle
Southeast After School Program

Kimberly Gentile
Natchaug School Tutoring

Amanda Kivell
Campus Big Buddies

Scott McCarthy
Project Academic Advancement

Shawn Mirmina
Big Friends Program

Mike Rambone
Mansfield Middle School Tutoring

Stefanie Rozelle
Nathan Hale Homework Club

Laura Veilleux
Southeast Elementary

Daphne Vlahopoulos
Mansfield After School Program

DRIVERS

Judy Castenada
Mansfield After School Program Driver

Jeremiah Rozarie
Southeast Elementary School Driver



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Upcoming Service Opportunities

Sport in Society: Using Sport and Athletics as Vehicles for Social Change

This program is sponsored by The NEAG School of Education, Department of Kinesiology Laboratory for Sport Management and Sociology. It'll take place **Thursday, October 26 at 7:00 p.m. in Gentry 142/144**. The keynote address and discussion will be given by, Peter Roby, Director of the Center for the Study of Sport in Society at Northeastern University.

Conference of the National Student Campaign Against Hunger and Homelessness

The 19th Conference of the National Student Campaign Against Hunger and Homelessness will be held **October 27-29, 2006** at the University of Southern California (USC) in Los Angeles. Students will be empowered with skills to be active student leaders in the fight against these issues both in the short term as well as long term. Participants of the conference will have the opportunity to network with other student leaders and national campaigns.

For More Information: www.studentsagainsthunger.org

The First Annual Hartford Area Out of the Darkness Community Walk

This walk will follow a scenic 3-mile path through the woods and around the MDC Reservoir on Rte. 4 (Farmington Avenue) in West Hartford. Proceeds from the event will benefit the American Foundation for Suicide Prevention (AFSP), as the walk aims to break the silence surrounding the issue of suicide. The walk will take place on **Saturday, October 28th**.

For More Information: www.outofthedarkness.org

Trick-Or-Canning

This Hillel and Month-of-Kindness sponsored activity is a Trick-Or-Treating alternative where organizations sign up in teams to compete in a competition collecting cans of food in local neighborhoods. Teams will collect as many cans of food on Halloween, **October 31st, at 6:30 pm** for those less fortunate while having fun and dressing up in costumes to have a fun night out!

Contact: Edy Fink at edy@uconnhillel.org or (860) 429-9007 before Wednesday, October 18th.