

# COMMUNITY UCONNECTIONS

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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.

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## Attention beginners: Stop stressing and start enjoying your time as a CO leader!

IT ONLY GETS BETTER  
WITH TIME!

By Jackie Luginbuhl

Your journey with Community Outreach may start at August training, going pedal to the metal, but that is just the onramp! You have the whole interstate ahead of you. As a second year Community Outreach student leader I can say, my ride was much smoother this time around.

Last year at my first August training, I felt overwhelmed, exhausted, stressed and anxious. I was one of what felt like only a few beginners and it was intimi-



dating. Everyone knew everyone. Everyone had their own groups, their own experiences to share about, and all this knowledge about running their programs. I had a yellow

envelope with a few surveys from last year and a big binder. Some of you may find these feeling all too familiar.

see RETURNING PG 2

## A FRESH LOOK AT AUGUST TRAINING

By James Ngo

Being a new student leader for Community Outreach, I wasn't sure what to expect coming into the first day of August Training. Was everyone going to be as excited and passionate as I was? Would I learn important information to help me run a successful program? What could we possibly do for a whole week? These were some of the many questions I had that were gratefully answered during the wonderful journey of August Training.

On the first day we first arrived, I told myself that I would be the most excited person there. I wanted to be the person who "radiated positivity." Isn't that the reason why we choose to be student leaders for CO? We decide to become student leaders because we're excited and passionate about what we do. We want to express our feelings when we're all together. I can say that I was fortunate enough to interact with

many of the student leaders inside CO and outside of my Community of Practice. Their knowledge, passion, and enthusiasm for their programs was amazing. These leaders reminded me there is a larger world out there and that we're not just doing community service. August training allowed me to meet people who motivate me to not just do my best, but really grow and learn about the social issues that we face.

I feel that I am truly fortunate to have been able to be a part of August Training. I couldn't say thank you enough to Matt, Gina, Miguel, all the Graduate Assistants, the executive board and everyone else who helped put it all together. The amount of material that the staff organized and presented each day seemed overwhelming at first. However, I can say it really helped me to understand that a successful program is built not just on beliefs and pas-

see FRESH PERSPECTIVE PG 3

## THE JOURNEY BEGINS HERE

Community Outreach adopted the "Journey" theme this year in recognition that our work is not just about the outcomes of service - the people impacted, systems challenged, the policies changed - but also the process of serving others. The process of challenging ourselves and others to transform the communities around us is when true social change happens. That process is certainly a journey.

Each journey must begin somewhere and ours begins after another strong performance last year. During the 2008-09 Academic Year, CO again reached some record numbers. Last year, CO had over 2,000 participants in its programs, and again our weekly service programs (Semester Long Programs) led the way with 1,000 participants. This total represents a 31% growth over the previous year. This larger corps of volunteers and federal work-study students also contributed a record 58,000+ hours in organizing and implementing service projects, trips, and programs in 44 communities in Connecticut and beyond. None of our projects could really occur if it were not for our community partners. This past year, CO actively worked with 123 organizations, a 29% increase over the previous academic year. Although these statistics do not fully capture the impact that CO has on and off-campus, it does provide a glimpse into the time and effort that our students put into serving our local, state, and national communities.

It would be easy for us to sit back and celebrate these accomplishments - record number of students involved, hours committed, partners served, etc. - but again, our work is not just about the milestones or short term outcomes. But rather, our work is so much about the journey to make change a reality. Our journey this year consists of a number of different initiatives which we hope will bolster our work including:

- A renewed effort to adequately prepare for effective service and partnership through enhanced training and orientation initiatives.
- An expansion of CO's support for the University Learning Communities initiative including an expanded Community Service Learning Community that includes upper-class students and new related academic course clusters.
- A deeper commitment to enhancing the engagement of our participants through numerous membership building activities.
- An extended deliberative dialogue initiative that allows participants to examine issues that have significant impact on our local, national, and global communities.
- A maturation of our various resource recovery programs (Food Recovery, Give & Go, and Students Stopping Hunger) so that we can better utilize the vast resources which exist on campus to meet our both sustainability and humanitarian interests.

Ultimately every meaningful journey begins with a choice to begin; to take the first step. Our journey this year is no different. All of us must challenge ourselves to take the next steps in serving our communities, responding to those in needs, and respecting the dignity and humanity of all of our neighbors regardless of distance. I know that if you have received this newsletter then you have already made a conscious decision to get involved and make a difference. Congratulations on such a courageous choice and I look forward to traveling on this journey with you.

Yours in Service,

Matt Farley  
Associate Director for Community Outreach  
Department of Student Activities

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## RETURNING AUGUST TRAINING CONT'D

No fear! I thought I was going to feel exactly the same this year, however, my second August training was a significantly better experience!

I felt the experience was so much better the second time around for many reasons. To start, I knew a lot more about my program this year. I knew my programs strengths and weaknesses. This made it much easier to fill out all of my packets! I also knew better what to expect from myself, my volunteers, my community partner, and the CO staff.

So much information and re-

sources are thrown at you when you first become a student leader that it is overwhelming. Now I feel like I am at a point where I can really utilize other's expertise to make my program better. It is a great feeling!

I also really enjoyed this year because I felt the atmosphere was much different. Everyone was extra friendly and super outgoing. This made me feel much more comfortable and willing to actively participate. I have to say this years August training experience was an all around improvement for me.

My first few months as a CO leader were difficult to get through,

learning the ropes and trying to manage my time proved to be a difficult task for me. I want to take this opportunity to assure all the new leaders that it gets better with time! My best advice is to ask questions! Don't be shy; we are all willing to help. Everyone in CO was chosen to be a leader for a reason! Have confidence in yourself, your peers, and the Community Outreach staff.

My journey with Community Outreach has made me a better person and a better leader. I can't wait to see what your journey does for you!

## NEW STAFF MEMBER: SARAH DUDLEY-MCDERMOTT

By Sarah Parise

When I asked Sarah how she enjoyed August Training she didn't respond with the typical "...well it was a long week!" answer, instead she enthusiastically praised Language and Literacy for winning the CO Olympics. Sarah Dudley-McDermott is one of our new Community Outreach staff members, overseeing Jumpstart as well as the other Language and Literacy programs. Sarah came to UConn after working at The University of Rhode Island for 2 years as a co-site manager for Jumpstart and is excited to really "spread her wings" with the program here. Sarah said she is eager to learn about the other programs at CO as well as generally get settled and unpacked.

### Sarah's Favorites:

*Pizza Topping:* eggplant

*Movie:* National Lampoon's Christmas Vacation

*TV Show:* Ace of Cakes

*Quote:* "Our lives begin to end the day we become silent about things that matter." -Martin Luther King Jr.

*Relax/downtime:* baking, running, unpacking boxes for new house

Sarah said she finds inspiration from her favorite college professor who Sarah describes as a "real social change agent." This professor really got her to think about service learning and pushed her in the direction of serving the community.

From the Strengths Finder exercise we can tell that Sarah's assessment perfectly fit her mission here at UConn. Her top two strengths are developer and maximizer, both similar in that they describe taking something strong and transforming it into something superb. A developer also applauds growth to make programs more successful as Sarah plans to do with her Language



and Literacy programs, and looks forward to "seeing them flourish over the year". Sarah's passion for her program and eagerness to help serve the community make her a great addition to the Community Outreach family.

*"Our lives begin to end the day we become silent about things that matter." -Martin Luther King Jr.*

## FRESH PERSPECTIVE CONT'D

(continued from page 1)

sion. There is an administrative and organizational aspect that cannot be neglected. The workshops in August Training provided us leaders with the tools necessary to help support our service. I think that we as participants of programs take the administrative aspects to running a program for granted. Now as student leaders, we realize that we are the ones who will be facilitating, leading reflections, doing the recruiting, and all the other fun tasks necessary for a successful program.

If I had to describe August Training and my time now with Community Outreach in one word, I'd have to use, "Journey". I know it's cliché to use the same word that was heavily emphasized

during August Training, but I cannot think of any better word. I feel that August Training is just the start of our lifelong journey of service. We start our journey by building new connections with other leaders and acquiring the tools to help us grow and develop our programs. As we continue our journey of service this year, we have the opportunity to learn more about one another and utilize the wonderful resources provided to us by Community Outreach. No matter which paths we take on this journey, we can strive to reach a higher horizon and make what was once only imaginable into something achievable.

## CONGRESSMAN COURTNEY MEETS WITH CHSC

By Josh Faucher

After visiting UConn for a health care reform rally on September 3<sup>rd</sup>, Congressman Joe Courtney headed south of campus into Willimantic to speak first hand with students pursuing health care careers and concerned about disparities they've witnessed in our community. These students were members of the Collegiate Health Service Corps, a health outreach program run by UConn students and co-sponsored by Community Outreach and the Eastern Area Health Education Center (AHEC). The CHSC provides local disadvantaged populations (e.g. farm workers and soup kitchen patrons) with preventive health education and simple screenings, while exposing pre-health students to health disparities and the need for outreach in our own backyard.

The CHSC gained statewide recognition last year, winning a Group Community Service Award from the CT Department of Higher Education. The program came to Joe Courtney's attention during an AHEC advocacy trip to Washington, D.C. last spring. Program Director Josh Faucher, Site Manager Patty Sandoval, and CHSC volunteers Regan Grote and Chris Rago met with the Congressman in Septem-

ber. The group discussed how working with the CHSC has shaped their views about disadvantaged populations and the importance of primary care for people at risk for preventable disease. They also spoke of the difficulty of working with populations so limited by their poverty, and the need for change on a larger level.

Joe Courtney answered questions from students and also offered them some details about HR 3200, the health care reform legislation proposed this past summer in Congress. The bill would increase Medicaid payments to levels equal to those provided by Medicare, with the goal of having more doctors offices accept patients on Medicaid, including many of those served by the CHSC. The bill would also appropriate over \$38 billion to Community Health Centers such as Generations Health Care Center in Willimantic, which serves a large needy population. Additionally, the bill would increase funding for National Health Service Corps scholarships and loan forgiveness, given to health professional students who go into primary care. This would make it easier for CHSC



Joe Courtney (center) with members of the Collegiate Health Service Corps

members and other students to enter a career where they can dedicate themselves to serving where the need is greatest.

CHSC volunteers are hoping to be more politically involved this semester as the health care reform proceeds and is debated. The group may write letters to their representatives and attend question and answer forums to ask questions about reform relevant to them as pre-health students. In any case, gaining the attention of someone like Congressman Courtney is a monumental start.

*"I feel lucky to be part of a community with such a fierce passion for service learning"*

*-Jessica Montana, first-year learning community student*

By Alexandra Kuehnle

As the Community Service Learning Community embarks upon its third year, students are eager to take the wheel on what promises to be a gratifying journey. This year, Director of Community Outreach, Matt Farley, has taken the reins on the service learning aspect of the learning community by developing coursework designed to catalyze initiatives on social issues and generate active global citizenship through service. Besides growing in size, Learning Community freshmen

attend the same English class as well as an First Year Experience class designed to foster transition to the college environment through the lens of community service. Upperclassmen in the Learning Community earn credits for community service hours as well as partake in a three thousand level interdisciplinary course designed to prepare students for active citizenship by exploring the role of civic engagement and its connection to their personal identities, local communities, and global society.



Besides the coursework, Learning Community students have many plans to implement service on a local and even na-

## THE LEARNING

## STUDENT SPOTLIGHT: ANDREW LIGSAY

### What do you do within CO?

AL: This is my second year as the America Reads Preschool Program director. Last year, I participated in a few other programs such as the Windham Hospital Volunteers program, the No Freeze Homelessness Shelter, and the Philadelphia alternative break. I also helped put together a Community Outreach HuskyTHON team, which helped raise money for the Connecticut Children's Medical Center.

### Who have you been working with?

AL: I've been working with the other student leaders in the Language & Literacy CoP.

### How did you get involved with CO/your program?

AL: My sophomore year I went

to the involvement fair because I wanted to become more involved on campus. The previous program director gave me an awesome elevator speech and I was hooked!

### Why did you get involved?

AL: I wanted to experience something outside of classroom work, and kind of de-stress. I got involved with this program for the kids to help them grow and develop. Plus, deep down, I still feel like a kid inside so it was a perfect match.

### Where and when will your program take place?

AL: I'm in charge of 5 different preschools all within a 15 minute driving radius from UConn. I have outstanding volunteers that start the week of October 5<sup>th</sup> and they usually volunteer once a week. They have the option to

volunteer more than that if they want.

### What has made your program successful so far?

AL: From all the support I have received the student leaders, coordinators, grad assistants, and of course... Matt Farley. Also, my Community Partners have been outstanding. I was able to establish a great relationship with all of them and continuously receive feedback about how the program and volunteers are doing.



Andrew is a 7th semester double major in Community Outreach and Molecular & Cell Biology

*“Out of clutter  
find simplicity.  
From discord  
find harmony.  
In the middle of  
difficulty lies  
opportunity.”  
– Einstein*

## COMMUNITY JOURNEY

tional level throughout the year by participating in national days of service and constructing local community projects that encompass social issues such as environmental advocacy, literacy awareness, and homelessness. In addition, students will also create a spring alternative break trip, directed by Community Outreach student leader and learning community member, Alexander Senetcky. “I feel lucky to be part of a community with such a fierce passion for service learning. It is comforting to know that despite everything, I can come home at the end of the day to people who have very

quickly become some of my closest friends and who have the same values that I do,” said Jessica Montana, first-year learning community student.

This new face of the Community Service Learning Community is designed to create new student leaders within Community Outreach, on campus, and within global society. Ask any Learning Community student and they will tell you that they are ready to embrace this challenge and trek this journey, both individually and as an active community.





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## UPCOMING SERVICE OPPORTUNITIES

### Welcome an international student into the UConn community

The University of Connecticut American English Language Institute (UCAELI) seeks volunteers to act as conversation partners for our Intensive English Program! UCAELI has students who come from all different countries to study English. As part of their coursework they have conversation classes which volunteers join. This helps students with informal English practice and is a rewarding experience for both students and volunteers. During the session, volunteers are placed in small groups with students. Instructors give topics for discussion or an activity. Instructors remain in the class to facilitate as needed. No advance preparation is needed, volunteers should just be ready to talk and participate! Our Fall session will be on Fridays from 10 - 11 a.m. on the Storrs campus. Dates are Sept. 4 - Dec. 11. Volunteers are not required to commit to a full session. *Come for one day or more!* To register or for more information, please contact [neena.kapoor@uconn.edu](mailto:neena.kapoor@uconn.edu)

### Are you a Fashion Designer in the making?

Announcing the UConn Rev. Martin Luther King Jr. 2010 T-Shirt Design Contest! Open to all UConn students! Submissions should reflect the 2010 theme, "Coalition Building: The Key to Advancing the Dream." The winning submission will be used for the 2010 event, and the winning designer will receive ten of the shirts. The event will occur on Monday January 18, 2010 in the afternoon in the Student Union. E-Mail your electronic submission to Ryan Barone at [Ryan.Barone@UConn.Edu](mailto:Ryan.Barone@UConn.Edu) by Friday October 30, 2009.

NOTE: Submissions need to be completed in Illustrator and done in Vector Art. Submissions must also be in JPG/PDF format. The design may have a maximum of three colors. The MLK Planning committee reserves the right to alter the winning submission as needed.

### Join the Friend to Friend volunteer program

The program is designed to partner a volunteer with a person who has a stable mental illness in hopes of fostering a friendship that will teach/model social skills for the client. It seeks to help persons experiencing the loneliness and isolation of prolonged mental illness by recruiting volunteers to accompany the client in various social settings and recreational activities, such as attending a movie or concert, going shopping or on a picnic, going out for coffee or simply sharing a common interest or hobby. Both the client and the volunteer will receive \$10 each per week to help defray the costs of the activities they chose to do (\$40 each per month total). *Help someone who needs it the most.* Contact Sara Thaxton at (860) 951-3325 x103 for more information.