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OVCS Newsletter May 2014

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COMMUNITY LEARNING

CONNECTICUT COLLEGE

OVCS NEWSLETTER

May 2014



Your work improves the quality of life in our community and enhances the liberal arts education. Thank you for your engagement and may you continue to make a difference.

May your exam period go smoothly and best wishes for a wonderful summer break!

ELT Dinner Celebration

By Alysia Mattson '15



On April 24th, 2014 participants of the Jennings/ OVCS ELT Program had the opportunity to convene for a celebration dinner. Community partners, Team Leaders, and Student Mentors came together to discuss their experiences, receive certificates of appreciation, and enjoy a slideshow of memories from the year.

National Center on Time and Learning Senior Director of School and District Rob Travaghini, as well as Jennings school principal Laurelle Texidor, expressed genuine appreciation for the hard work, dedication, and enthusiasm of the Connecticut College students who contribute to

impacting the lives of children in positive ways. They congratulated the college students for learning within the public school setting.

Jennings School and Connecticut College OVCS built on their partnership to create the new Expanded Learning Time program which had nine week sessions each semester during the 2013-2014 academic year.

We enjoyed this teaching and learning experience and are eager to once again be a part of the ELT Program in Fall 2014!

Easter Egg Hunt at Ocean Beach

By Gabriella Silva '16

Although waking up at 7:30am may seem terrifying to most college students, the five Connecticut College volunteers who knew how fulfilling it would be to watch hundreds of children rushing to fill up their baskets, didn't hesitate to sign up for the annual Easter Egg Hunt hosted by the New London Neighborhood Association.

We arrived to Ocean Beach early in the morning and were told that there were 5000 eggs and 3 huge boxes of candy that needed to be hid. We immediately got to work and, soon enough, the designated area had been transformed

into a colorful garden of Easter eggs!

The children and their parents arrived promptly at 10am, excited and ready to get their hands on as much chocolate and candy as they possibly could. Although the hunt itself lasted a short while because there were so many kids, at the end, the children had the chance to take a picture with the Easter Bunny! It was wonderful to partner with New Londoners and spend time with such delightful children at the beautiful Ocean Beach. I encourage people to sign up for this event next year!



My Time with OVCS and the New London Community

By Cassandra Valarezo '14

Throughout my four years at Connecticut College, I wanted to become an active member in the New London community and what I found was that, OVCS was there to help me with that. I spent many semesters volunteering at the Connecticut College Children's Program. While there I worked in a toddler classroom where the concepts and theories I was learning in class were being reflected in the children I interacted with. My junior year, because of a class I took that studied adolescents, I decided to change the age group of students in New London that I worked with. When I contacted OVCS about this, they assisted me in deciding to be a Spanish tutor at New London High

School. While there, I also found that my class material lined up with the experience, thoughts, and cognitions of the students I tutored. I made valuable relationships with the students and faculty at New London High School and at the end of my time there, I knew that those relationships would last. Finally, my senior year I decided I wanted to work at an organization that had more to do with what I hope will be my future field. Again, through OVCS I have been working at Safe Futures, an organization dealing with domestic violence and sexual assault in Southeastern Connecticut. While working at Safe Futures, I have learned countless skills in counseling,

social work, intervention, etc. and have found the confidence in myself to know that I am capable of this kind of work. I value my experiences at Safe Futures, the people I've met, and the clients I've gotten a chance to interact with and the experience as a whole. I'm also thankful to OVCS for supporting my ventures throughout my four years at Connecticut College. From working with toddlers to adults, OVCS has always had a placement that would satisfy my interest, broaden my skill set, and deepen my experience at Connecticut College and ultimately, with New London.

Spring Cleaning at the Senior Center

By Jennifer Cunningham '13 AmeriCorps VISTA & Kyle Ford '13 AmeriCorps VISTA

On Saturday, April 27th 2014, a team of Connecticut College OVCS students and staff helped New London's Senior Center with their spring cleaning. Prapti Kaffle '16, Mahajabin Chowdhury '16, Professor William Wuyke, Kyle Ford '13 and Jennifer Cunningham '13, helped with painting, cleaning and reorganizing the senior center. Residents and staff at the Senior Center were pleased that we joined their efforts. In five short hours we transformed the recreation room. We didn't have much experience painting rooms before, but we were glad to be there and left with improved skills and warm relationships.



The Walk to End Homelessness

By Susanna Matthews '16

The 7th Annual Walk to End Homelessness to benefit the New London Hospitality Center (NLHHC) took place on Sunday April 27th amidst grey skies and tangible excitement. The event was planned and staffed by members of the sophomore class from the Holleran Center for Community Action and Public Policy, all of whom had worked on various community projects throughout the New London area. With the help of Tanya Yachaina, the volunteer coordinator at NLHHC, the PICA students planning the walk spent the semester planning and learning about advertising and fundraising for a community event. After months of planning and meetings, it was exciting to have the

day finally arrive. The day began at 11am with a group meeting and initial set-up. It was immediately discovered that we did not have all of the necessary supplies and some group members set out to track down balloons, tents, and to print the signs that would guide the walkers. Others were tasked with setting up the registration area and the sound system. Once set up was complete, we eagerly awaited the arrival of the walkers. We were all determined to have the event go off without any problems, but of course unexpected things occurred. As we were running around looking for group members and trying to solve various issues, sometimes it was difficult to see the event for what it was, a chance for all

different members of the community to come together to educate ourselves and raise awareness about an issue that is important to the New London area and many other communities across the country. A total of 218 walkers, many of whom were either current or former guests of the NLHHC, came out to listen to Connecticut College acapella groups perform, partake in a raffle, and listen to President Bergeron and New London Mayor Finizio speak. This showing of support from the New London and the Connecticut College community really spoke to the area's commitment to ending this pervasive issue. The walk event raised approximately \$15,000 for the Homeless Hospitality Center.



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