

## **Community Connection**

### **Overview**

For the Community Connection program, our primary goal is to help students feel excited about being actively involved in their community. We will achieve this goal through the use of five major components. Our first component consists of stressing the importance of a residential community filled with students who share common interests; particularly community service. We would like the members of our program to feel a sense of pride in the community they live in, as well as within the program.

Our second goal for the program is to maintain the bond between the University of Vermont and Burlington. Students come to UVM and fall in love with Burlington, but many do not really know the city beyond the limits of Church Street. Students in our program would make an effort to get to know the people of Burlington and how the community functions, and how it could be bettered. With a better understanding of the community it enables us to learn important values and lessons through these community-based service projects.

Thirdly, a goal for our program is to preserve the good image of UVM students. We would like to set a good example and be role models for others in the Burlington community. Many UVM students are actively involved on campus, either politically, socially, environmentally, etc and we would like to spread that activism beyond solely the UVM community and reach the rest of Burlington. By immersing ourselves in off-campus activities, we are not only students, but role models for our community.

Another goal we have for this program is to encourage other UVM students to involve themselves in the community. This way our goals can span the entire university, and not just the members of the program. By involving more students, we would not only have more assistance but we would have a greater influence on the community. This program would act as a liaison between Burlington and UVM, making available community service opportunities known to the students. The members of our program would establish this liaison by beginning every relationship and setting every example.

The final goal for our program is to continue the legacy of the Community Connection program. As members this year, we know how the program runs, and what it needs to be successful. We would like the principal goals of the program to remain the same. We would like to continue the successful activities from the past while also incorporating new activities to expand the success of the program.

### **Learning Objectives**

**Each member of the Community Connection program will be actively engaged in learning about and exploring volunteer opportunities throughout Burlington.**

### **Action Steps**

- As a group we will travel to organizations such as Committee on Temporary Shelter (COTS), the Salvation Army, the Boys and Girls Club, the Chittenden Emergency Food Shelf, Edmunds Elementary and Middle Schools, Converse Home, the Humane Society of Chittenden County, and organizations through the City of Burlington's Community and Economic Development Office such as the Graffiti Removal Team.
- Students, on their own or in small groups, will look into and familiarize themselves with other organizations with volunteer opportunities, and explore their own personal interests that could, for example, relate to their major.
- Through familiarizing themselves with opportunities in Burlington, students will choose something they find particularly interesting and form small groups to visit that organization throughout the year
- After finishing the exploring steps of the program, we will come together as a group for a meeting where students will give presentations on what they have learned and which organization they have chosen to work with. Other volunteer options will be discussed as well as personal interests of the members.

**Each member of Community Connection will actively participate in community service events as a program and in smaller groups.**

#### Action Steps

- We stress mandatory attendance to biweekly meetings to update members on upcoming events, receive input and feedback from each member by discussing recent events. Members will share reactions, feelings about what worked and did not work at certain events, as well as their individual interests. Meetings will ensure active involvement of members and personal commitments to the program.
- In small groups, determined based on interests, students will volunteer at organizations relating to these interests 2-3 times per month.
- All students will be required to actively participate in program run events. Events will include those previously put on by Community Connection such as the COTS Bike-A-Thon and Snowshoe-A-Thon, weekly visits to the Salvation Army's "Friendly Kitchen", Relay For Life. New events will include campus sports tournaments/events, as well as activities focused on environmental preservation.

**Through the events of the Community Connection program, more of the UVM community will be made aware of volunteer opportunities and will be encouraged to participate.**

#### Action Steps

- Our events will be advertised through the Living and Learning e-newsletter, flyers, advertisements in The Vermont Cynic, and UVMbored. Our advisor, Douglas Dickey, will advertise through his math website and through

communications with faculty. Members themselves will also play an active role in the promotion of our events.

- Every organized event will be open to any UVM student who wants to participate.
- Events will be organized with the purpose of involving any UVM students, such as sports tournaments to raise money for an organization (such as COTS or the Food Shelf).

**At the end of their time with the Community Connection program, our members will have attained the following skills:**

- Leadership skills from helping to plan and organize community service projects.
- Communication and interpersonal skills from interacting with peers and members of the Burlington community.
- Organization skills from planning small group activities and helping to plan things with the entire program.
- Students will gain the initiative to involve themselves in their community and to motivate others to do the same.
- Students will learn to act as role models for the UVM and Burlington communities.
- Students will gain more insight on the needs of the Burlington community, and see firsthand the values of community service, while gaining an appreciation for their society.
- The knowledge and capabilities to continue volunteering during their stay at UVM and beyond.

### **Community Service**

We feel that a community benefit dinner held in Living and Learning would help to provide a sense of community within the Living and Learning complex. This dinner could possibly benefit any of the service organizations that we would be working with, such as COTS or the Salvation Army. The dinner would provide an opportunity for Living and Learning residents to become more aware of Community Connection and what it has to offer. Living and Learning residents would have the opportunity to work with us and become involved within our UVM Community and Burlington.

### **Plans for Interactions with other L/L Programs**

An important aspect of our program will be to bring together all kinds of different programs to help serve the Burlington community. Specifically we could potentially work with the Art of Photography program, which could capture images of our program in action. These photos could be used to promote our program as well as theirs. We could also work with Animalia in getting involved with local animal shelters. We could raise money for animals in need as well as supply volunteers for the shelters. We could also work with the Social Justice program by assisting them in events to raise awareness

of global issues such as hunger or poverty. Helping this program would directly relate to our program since a lot of the services that we provide involve helping those who are affected by these global issues. In addition to these programs we would be welcome to work with any other program willing to serve the Burlington community.