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OVCS Newsletter April 2010

Andrew Irwin
Connecticut College

Michael Meade
Connecticut College

Rebecca Beachell
Connecticut College

Loretta Vereen
Connecticut College

Mazvitashe Mangisi
Connecticut College

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COMMUNITY LEARNING

CONNECTICUT COLLEGE

THE OVCS NEWSLETTER

April 2010

Being A SISTER...



As a Connecticut College sophomore and an international student, I wanted to find a way to contribute to and explore the New London community. In addition, I felt the need to be the change that I wanted to see in the world, and so I applied for the SISTER (Students

Implementing Support Through Education and Recreation) Mentor program. It has been a very rewarding experience and has enhanced my Conn experience. It is not every day you get to interact with middle school girls and once you get to interact with them as friends and little siblings, you just can't help but realize that you are not growing any younger. The energy that fills the room every time the girls are around is amazingly energizing. I always look forward to my experience as a mentor because I know that every day I learn a new lesson. I give what I have to offer and learn from my mentees. I have learnt that everyone (regardless of age) sometimes has a

bad day, something I took for granted. I thought life could never be that complicated at thirteen but now I know better. I am now constantly being reminded of my own early teenage experience and I find it valuable to have a time of retrospective reflection. Being a mentor has molded my character. I am constantly trying to be exemplary and trying to motivate my mentees, showing them that the little things they do right now can have great positive or negative ramifications. Of course it is not always easy engaging a very young person in such, seemingly serious, "adult" conversations. I always

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Save The Dates

- 4/24** 3rd Annual Walk for Homelessness. Money raised will benefit the NL Homeless Hospitality Center. To register email walkforhomeless@gmail.com
- 5/7** 2010 Student Leadership Recognition Program. In honor of student leaders. Dessert reception and keynote address by Evan Piekara '07. Cro. 1962 Room, 6:30
- 5/8** Youth Environmental Conference. Dennison Pequot Nature Center, 9:30-2:00
- 5/10** OVCS BBQ. Come join OVCS in Cro Pit to celebrate community learning and engagement. 5:00 pm (rain location 1941 room)
- 5/11** Unity House BBQ, Pepsico Room, 4:30-6:00

Students Volunteer to Restore New Orleans Park, Community



Connecticut College, Johns Hopkins, Howard U., and Indiana U. students work together in City Park, New Orleans

Over the first week of spring break, 12 Connecticut College students, including myself, took part in a service trip to New Orleans to revitalize green space at City Park. Students stayed at HandsOn New Orleans, a volunteer house in Mid City, and worked on landscaping projects throughout the 1300-acre park to beautify public open space.

While many of the city's residents have returned nearly five years after Hurricane Katrina, there is still an acute need to create quality public space that is safe and can attract people back to the city. It is amenities such as City Park that will ultimately help restore New Orleans' pre Hurricane Katrina

vibrancy. It was this mantra that drew all of us to the trip and we carried it with us throughout the experience.

Interest in the trip began when a small group of students approached AmeriCorps VISTA Kathryn Muldoon '09 at OVCS to organize another trip to New Orleans after our successful 2008 trip to work with the National Wildlife Federation to restore wildlife habitats on the northern shore of Lake Ponchartrain. Reflecting on our experience, we wanted to partner with an organization that was still connected to preserving the environment while having a greater impact on social justice and community revitalization. Many of us are Environmental Studies majors.

In collaboration with other alternative spring break groups from Johns Hopkins University, Howard University and Indiana University/Perdue University-Indianapolis, our group worked on landscaping projects in anticipation of spring. New Orleanians often stopped to talk to us about what we were working on and were very generous in thanking us for our service. This aspect of the community learning experience, besides simply seeing the benefactors of our service, was

most gratifying.

Most importantly, we all saw that there were still many pockets of devastation after the hurricane; a problem compounded by a continued lack of vital public services. A high need for volunteers to assist still exists. However, restoring public amenities such as City Park can help provide secondary benefits to all residents if distributed equitably. Our hope is to begin a tradition of working in New Orleans on projects that accomplish this goal, while challenging students to think about the larger social justice issues raised through the experience.



Connecticut College students plant cast irons in New Orleans City Park

For More information about City Park: www.neworleanscitypark.com

For More Information about HandsOn New Orleans: www.handson-neworleans.org

Andrew Irwin '10

LINCC Update



A student a capella group performs at the Connecticut College student art exhibit opening at Fiddleheads Food Co-op in New London

New London is now in full bloom with a bounty of great opportunities for students to enjoy. The Fiddleheads Art Exhibit Opening Reception on April 9th was fun - lots of organic goodies and sweet vibrations from Conn's acapella angels, Vox Cameli. The exhibit is still on display until early May so be sure to get down to the coop (13 Broad St.) to check it out and support local business. We have recieved many wonderful submissions for the Experience New London photo contest which will

be displayed in Spirit Gallery (207 Bank St.). The opening reception for this exhibit will take place on April 30th with light refreshments and sweet melodies from local musicians. Mark your calendars for the Spring Food Stroll on May 12th from 5:30 to 8:30 pm. Get your tickets from newlondonmainstreet.org in advance for \$20. Hope to see you in glorious downtown New London!

- Michael Meade '10

Celebrating OVCS Community Site Drivers!



Every day the Connecticut College Office of Volunteers for Community Service provides transportation for up to 70 interns and volunteers working in New London agencies and some agencies in the surrounding area. Connecticut College Office of Volunteers for Community Service is unique and so is our ability to transport our community learners. However, it would not be possible for OVCS to provide the transportation that enables so many students to work without the small fleet of Community Site Drivers whose responsibility it is to safely transport students. Community Site Drivers

work through rain, snow, sleet, and sunshine. Some work on Saturdays and Sundays too. Not only must they stick to a schedule and drive safely, but they must learn their way around New London quickly and well. Although the job can be demanding, Community Site Drivers say that they love being able to meet and spend time with students they wouldn't otherwise have met and enjoy hearing the excitement of the interns and volunteers when they return from their sites. Says senior Seth Williams: "Throughout my relatively illustrious four year career as an OVCS Community Site Driver, I have observed both

my own personal growth and the growth of those around me as the bridge between Connecticut College and the surrounding community has been strengthened by a common goal of providing a superior community learning experience".

Thank you Community Site Drivers for enabling students to be involved in their community and for returning them safely back to campus!

Rebecca Beachell '09
AmeriCorps VISTA*



Playwright Loretta Vereen, as "Bad"

Bad: A play by Loretta Vereen, Class of 2012

Bad is a story about an African American girl unwilling to yield to the rules of society. Obadiah "Bad" Jefferson challenges and acknowledges present social and political structures while struggling to maintain her sanity when left alone to stand for her truth. Bad is a young girl the audience will hate and fall in love with at the same time. This play is great for scholars and intellectuals as it dramatically portrays how life can seem for some members of marginalized groups in America. The play addresses the effects of social and economic inequalities on minority groups. The audience watches the young adolescent transform into a modern day civil rights activist, strong in her views, and strongly opposed to conforming to any of these views. One of her most remarkable views explores the negative impacts current president Barack Obama has had on marginalized communities. Vereen describes this piece as her "taking that one step that no one wants to take" and hopes the production "stirs healthy and useful conversation and discussion for [her] colleagues and regular working people alike!"

-Loretta (Char) Vereen '12



SISTER mentors and mentees participating in ZUMBA

have to find a moderated way of telling my mentees the realities of reaping what you sow. With SISTER I have done yoga for the first

time, done Zumba for the first time, made a dream board for the first time, created a documentary film for the first time and the list goes on. Evidently, I am having a lot of first time, life-enhancing experiences which I will cherish forever. As an international student, engaging with these young girls also gives me a glimpse of what the differences are between Zimbabwean and American culture. For instance, at thirteen you may not find that many kids with cell phones, at sixteen my mother was worried sick that my brother had given me a cell phone, why she was worried still beats me because honestly I wasn't such a bad kid after all. That's just one of the differences in cultures, the list is endless but I take joy in the

chance of experiencing two diverse cultures and different age groups. Nothing is without ups and downs. Sometimes as a mentor you are just not sure what your mentee is going through. It is harder because they are at a stage where they are still learning how to express their thoughts and feelings. Also you always try to imagine in what light they see you, as an adult? As a friend? As a sister? Hopefully the latter, I want to be a SISTER and I want to help instill positive attitude and change in the lives of young women. Hopefully tomorrow they may draw from the lessons they learned from their Connecticut College SISTERS today!

- Mazvitashe Mangisi '12

SUBMIT YOUR WORK!

OVCS is looking for submissions for the annual Community Learning Literary Magazine. We accept all types of written work, photos and art connected to the topic of community work/ learning from students, faculty, staff, alums and community members. This is a wonderful opportunity to publish your work!

To submit work or ask questions, please contact:
kmuldoon@conncoll.edu

Relay for Life

The Connecticut College Relay for Life was held from 6:00 p.m. April 18 through 8:00 a.m. April 19th on Temple Green. Rain did not dampen the spirit and commitment of the hundreds of participants who raised over \$50,000 for cancer research and cancer support services. Thank you to all the dedicated students, staff, faculty and community members!



A special thank you to the Relay for Life co-chairs Tommy Howd '11, Lauren Manning '12, and Jessica LeClair AmeriCorps VISTA '09!

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Tracee Reiser, Associate Dean for Community Learning, Director OVCS
tracee.reiser@conncoll.edu, ext. 2105

Kathryn Muldoon, AmeriCorps*VISTA, Education Outreach and Communications Coordinator

kmuldoon@conncoll.edu, ext 2958

Visit OVCS at <http://www.conncoll.edu/offices/ovcs>; P: (860) 439-2458; F: (860) 439-5408

QUESTIONS OR COMMENTS?

READY TO LEARN ABOUT YOUR COMMUNITY?
CALL OVCS at X2458