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OVCS Newsletter March 2010

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COMMUNITY LEARNING

CONNECTICUT COLLEGE

THE OVCS NEWSLETTER

March 2010

International Community Learning: London, England



When I came to Connecticut College, I had practically no idea what I wanted to do. Freshmen year, I took mainly general education courses to get a feel for what my options were, including a Human Development course on Children

and Families. This class really sparked my interest in children, and led me to begin work at the USCG Child Development Center during my first two years at Conn. Then, during my sophomore year, I was fortunate enough to enroll in a class with Tristan Borer called Human Rights in World Politics. Professor Borer really inspired me, and I decided to become an International Relations major with a focus on human rights, as well as a PICA scholar.

This past summer, I was determined to find an internship that would enable me to combine my interest in children with my passion for human rights. I secured a position with the British Refugee Council in Lon-

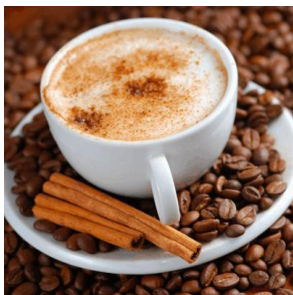
don, working in the Children's Section. The Refugee Council is the largest organization in the UK working with asylum seekers and refugees. The Children's Section works with separated children - young people under the age of 18 who arrive without a legal guardian (about 3,000 arrive in the UK every year). The Children's Section provides a drop-in service for young people, where they can get help to complete their asylum applications, obtain solicitors, register with doctors, enroll in counseling, get support from social services, and access any other support and assistance they might need.

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It's so easy to get downtown!



13 Washinton St. (off State St.)



Muddy Waters: 42 Bank St.



45-47 Bank St.

If you feel like having coffee or want to spend the afternoon in a laid back café atmosphere, you can walk or ride your bike to **Bean & Leaf**, **Muddy Waters Café**, or **Passion Coffee House**. It only takes 37 minutes to walk and 10 minutes to cycle! At Bean and Leaf you can enjoy organic and fair trade coffee and tea, environmentally friendly packaging and a good-ol' people friendly atmosphere. Don't miss the live music and poetry readings. Downtown New London has so much to offer!

The staff in the Children's Section were extremely supportive of me and my goals. My supervisor, Mohamadou, felt that the best way for me to learn was to do a little bit of everything. I was able to shadow advisors while they met with children, attend asylum and immigration hearings, and even attend social outings with the kids. I also became quite familiar with the various policies concerning separated children. I learned that although people often speak of foreign policy and domestic policy as two very separate things, they are actually incredibly connected. One of the prime examples of this is that the majority of asylum seekers in the UK are men from Afghanistan; a direct result of the foreign

policies of the UK and US in the Middle East. Yet, that the UK is accepting these men as refugees is an indicator that their policies are failing, and that they are not contributing to safety and security in the Middle East after all. As a result, UK domestic policy toward asylum seekers is very strict, and many of the children I worked with had to really fight for the right to stay in the UK. This of course goes on to affect the funding that an organization, like the Refugee Council, receives. I witnessed this first-hand, as my first day was someone's last, and throughout the summer I saw one third of the team leave because they had been made redundant. There are so few people looking out for the best interests of these kids, that it was truly heartbreaking to see so many go.

Although my internship was challenging to say the least, I am glad to now know about the realities of human rights law, as well as the theory. My internship was the most valuable and wonderful experience I could have ever hoped to have. It was hard for me to say goodbye to all the children that I met, but at least I know that they are in good hands. Now that I am back at Conn, I will spend this next year writing a thesis on separated children and the different kinds of protection available to them. After that, who knows. What I do know is that community work will remain a huge part of my life for years to come.

-Sarah Howe '10

Alternative Spring Breaks



New Orleans City Park



Habitat for Hum. in Cody, Wyo.

This spring break Connecticut College students will engage in at least four different alternative learning/service spring break projects, spanning the country and the globe, from Alabama to Africa. Students working with Habitat for Humanity will be building houses in both Alabama and Pennsylvania. In New Orleans, a student-organized project will focus on restoring and maintaining the largest public park in the city in hopes of creating safe and appealing green space for everyone. A student working with Asayo's Wish Foundation will help bring much needed medical supplies and work with children at an orphanage in Kaberamaido, Uganda. If opportunities such as these interest you, contact OVCS (x2958) for more information about the trip leaders and to connect with an institutional committee exploring ways to solidify all break programs.

Community Learning is published by the Office of Volunteers for Community Service for Connecticut College faculty, staff and students, and for all members of the Greater New London County Community

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COMMENTS?

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