Twenty years of success is certainly a reason to celebrate! When the VIP program began in 1983 with 24 volunteers, we had no idea how far we would come and how central a part of our service the VIPs would prove to be. It is a fantasy of mine that we could somehow gather the thousands of students who worked so hard in the VIP program over the past 20 years and personally thank them for so generously giving their time and energies to the Western community. Not only would it be great to have everyone join in the 20th year celebration but it would be most interesting to hear from former VIPs about the ways in which involvement in the program affected their lives.

I am grateful that I do have the opportunity to personally thank all of the current VIPs and to join with you in joyously celebrating this important milestone. From all accounts, the current group of VIPs are doing a remarkable job. On behalf of the Western community, thank you for your generosity and hard work. Without you, SDC would fall far short of its goal of providing important and effective services to UWO students. My hope is that at the end of this academic year all of you will be as pleased with your experience in the program as we are in having you be part of SDC.

Dr. Gail Hutchinson
Director Student Development Centre
Twelve Years and Counting

It’s been an exciting year so far for SDC’s Volunteers In Progress. In addition to reaching its 20th anniversary, VIP is celebrating other milestones like placing 110 volunteers in 114 positions so far for the 2003-2004 academic year, and having a record turn-out for our first VIP social of the year.

Although much of this newsletter highlights past achievements, I would like to congratulate our current VIPs on the great job they’ve done so far. From talking to you and your supervisors, it sounds like there are a number of interesting projects on the go and that everyone is working hard to make a difference here at Western.

I’ve also had the opportunity to chat with VIP alumni and supervisors while planning for the VIP anniversary. It’s amazing how a few hours of volunteering a week can have such a lasting effect on VIPs and the Western community, even years later.

From my own perspective, it’s been gratifying to see students gaining experience and confidence from volunteering and the rest of the university benefiting from their talents, dedication, and hard work. Thank-you VIPs!

Rachel Crowe
Interim Program Coordinator
SDC’s Volunteers In Progress

VIPS make the difference
Always With great persistence
In the fall
Standing tall
To rise above the pressure
Always holds a smile of pleasure
Everyday they’re gonna test ya
But keep working hard to achieve
Make sure that you believe
That your help for VIP
does not go unnoticed
Without all of you, VIP would be Hopeless

VIP TRIVIA 1983

- There were 24 VIPs — The Founding Members!
- The Student Development Centre was known as “Counselling and Career Development”. It was located mainly where the Health Resource Centre is today in the UCC basement.
- The Student Development Centre had 6 areas — Career Counselling, Study Skills, Personal Counselling, Foreign Student Advising, Student Placement Services, and the Resource Centre.

Brought to you by: Your VIP Assistant Coordinators (Greg, Christina, Mandy)
In honour of the program’s 20th anniversary, I would like to thank all volunteers for their determination and incredible contribution to the program over the past two decades. The program has grown 446% since its inception in 1983.

Special “Thank-You” goes to our alumni VIPs who occasionally inform us about their great successes and life accomplishments as they applied the skills gained in the program to their professions. There is, indeed, nothing more rewarding than learning that your involvement with the program had helped you shape your career goals. Your individual success reflects the program’s success, and becomes inspirational for the potential volunteers.

Throughout the years, we provide our Western students with a challenging world of volunteering opportunities where they can gain career related skills and a sense of personal accomplishment in a professional setting. We will continue to do so in the years to come as SDC’s commitment to the VIP program is strong.

Congratulations VIPs!!!

from an old friend...

Congratulations to all VIPs, past and present, for your spirit of involvement. I had the privilege of seeing the VIP Program come to life and watching the program grow through the years. How appropriate it was that the pilot years logo was Plant a seed and watch it grow! Indeed, it has been rewarding and a pleasure to have participated in the program’s growth and to have worked with staff and the hundreds of dedicated student volunteers. I am honoured to be able to witness and celebrate with you VIPs 20th birthday! Happy Birthday, VIP!

Rose Aquino, VIP Program Coordinator, 1983-1999

Western 20 Years Ago...

Written By: Christina Sanguinetti

Hopefully by now you have all heard that this year marks the VIP Program’s 20th anniversary. The VIP program has come a long way. It started out with 24 individuals in 1983 and presently has over 100 volunteers. Anniversaries are a time to recall the past, enjoy the present and set goals for the future.

To get a feel for the time period in which the VIP program began, I went into the university’s archives in the hope of enlightenment. It is interesting to see how similar the past is to the present. In the March 10, 1983 edition of Western News there was an article entitled “Dish Thief Comes Clean”. Apparently Delaware Hall had received a package from Montreal sent by a former resident. The package contained more than 20 Food Services dishes that had not been in use for 8 years. It seems that taking (borrowing) dishes from residences has become a Western tradition. This custom has been passed through the generations and is still in practice today.

(Continued on Page 4...)
Here are some quick facts about Western in 1983:

- It costs 32 cents to mail a letter.
- The formal fee level for tuition was $1,002.00, compared to $954 in 1982.
- Western had 20,000 full time and part time undergraduate students.
- Seats at the homecoming football game went for an average of $5.25.
- The wind tunnel complex was built.
- Prince Philip, Duke of Edinburgh, received an honorary Doctor of Laws degree in July 1983.

For the most part, student life at Western has not changed that much - tuition being the major discriminator. Students are still cramming for exams and either going out with friends to forget a horrible exam or going out to celebrate a good one. But hey, this is what memories are made of!

INTERVIEW WITH DR. JACK RUSSEL

SDC’s Career Counsellor and Psychotherapist Dr. Jack Russel in conversation with Rachel Crowe

To gain a unique perspective on the VIP program, I spoke with someone who has been involved with VIP since its beginning in 1983. Although he has become less involved in VIP over the years, Dr. Jack Russel has been a VIP supervisor and, more recently, a presenter at the VIP make up training. Here is some of what he had to say about VIP and its student volunteers.

Q: How do you think Western students and SDC have changed since 1983?
“A student need in 1983 is probably not a lot different from a student need right now. There is always going to be stress, there’s always going to be pressure… worries… relationship break-ups… adjustment issues… I think we’ve gotten smarter as to how to help them. I think (SDC’s) programs have gotten better.”

Q: Why do you think VIP has been so successful?
“I believe 100% in students helping students. I think students learn better (this way)”

Q: What do you enjoy about working with student volunteers?
“The students who volunteer and help are, in many cases, wonderful examples of students who are successful. It’s very reassuring to know that in some ways they’ve benefited from the programs we’ve offered… and that their involvement in these programs I think has made a huge difference in their lives.”

Q: What would you like students to take with them from their VIP experience?
“There is a quote by Winston Churchill… ‘You make a living by what you get. You make a life by what you give…’. And that’s what volunteering is all about: giving back to others.”
I started as a VIP working in the reception area. I worked in one form or another in CCD (or Counselling and Career Development, as SDC used to be known), for a few years and all of my activities just seem to have blended into one experience for me—probably because so much time has gone by (about 16 years or so!!!). I felt really welcomed by the CCD staff and enjoyed my work there.

Working in a counselling environment certainly paved the way for work that I have done since that time. I worked for 3 years in Africa setting up vocational training centres for youths, and subsequently spent another 2 years in South America, self-employed in the smoked fish industry, and another year in Belgium, working in executive search, and short contracts with other international agencies.

I am currently working as a rehabilitation consultant for a large national insurance company and have been in this field for the past 10 years. My job involves counselling and a great deal of planning and negotiating. The folks at CCD planted a bit of a seed in me, I guess, and it has certainly grown. I really remember that time very fondly.

I was a Learning Skills Assistant with Learning Skills Services for four years. I was interested in volunteering at Learning Skills Services because I felt that was the area where I could best help people. It was always gratifying when students that I had helped would come back to the drop-in centre or stop me on campus to thank me for my help. This past summer, I was in a store downtown, and someone asked me if I used to be at Western helping students. When I replied that I did, this person told me how I had helped them in the drop-in centre, and how beneficial that was. From VIP, I took away a passion for helping others, as I had seen how one person could make a difference in the lives of other people by giving just a few hours each week.

I have just completed a master’s degree in Holocaust history and genocide studies in Massachusetts. In January, 2004, I will begin the process of getting certified to teach English as a Second Language. In the fall, I hope to be at the Ontario Institute for Studies in Education at the University of Toronto. My plan is to do doctoral work in anti-racism, and Holocaust and genocide education. Also, I am serving as a member of the Board of Directors of the Association for the Elimination of Hate here in London, and I am a member of the London Diversity and Race Relations Advisory Committee, which is an advisory committee to London City Council. I am very much involved in the Youth Anti-Hate Program, which is a partnership of these two entities with both the public and Catholic school boards. Through the Association, as well as the Holocaust Literature Research Institute on campus, where I am a Senior Fellow, I am developing a three-day summer institute on the teaching of the Holocaust and genocide for educators in the London area. I also work with some First Nations GED students at Nokee Kwe, and I lead an English conversation circle at the London Cross Cultural Learner Centre for newcomers to Canada.

As a VIP, I learned the value of helping other people and that I can help people. That is to say, my tradition of helping others grew from my time as a VIP. And, that tradition continues today as the governing principle in my life.
I first got involved with the VIP program in the Career Development Centre in 1990. I helped type up job ads, and compiled job stats to find out trends in job placements. I also helped out with the career and summer job fairs, which was very enjoyable and eye-opening. I really enjoyed having the hands on experience and gaining more insight into the job search process. In those days, the internet was not mainstream, so the only ways students read about job opportunities was by the postings on the walls and by the very rudimentary DOS-based computer database system.

Since university graduation, I have taught in 3 different provinces; my job search skills which I first learned while at UWO have been put to good use. During my undergraduate career, I was tired of living at home and was craving to do something different. I had been approved for the 6 week Trois-Pistoles French Immersion experience, and I was looking for a summer job that would enhance my recently improved linguistic skills. I followed up on an ad for a girls' summer camp in the Laurentians in Quebec. Now almost 15 years later, I still spend part of my summer there as I am a French and Social Sciences teacher. I am not sure if I would have found out about that camp if I had not spent so much time at SDC and I don't know if I would have had the confidence to try something new.

In my graduating year, 1993, I became the VIP 10th anniversary coordinator. We produced some VIP newsletters, contacted alumni to find out what they were doing and we organized a reception to coincide with Homecoming that year.

Without a doubt, my VIP experience was a highlight of my UWO experience; being a VIP really let me try a lot of new things and gave me the confidence and organizational skills that have helped me in my career as a teacher. I would strongly advise VIPs to get involved; you are making a positive contribution to the UWO community and gaining invaluable experience.

I was walking in University College one day and saw a poster about the English Conversation Program. I knew instantly that I wanted to participate! I felt facilitating English discussions and activities for international students would be a great opportunity for me to contribute in a meaningful way to our campus community. I also love language learning and teaching, and decided that the VIP program would be a unique opportunity for me to foster both.

The experiences I took away from the VIP program have been many. After every session, especially the first, I felt an incredible bond with my fellow students. This is the greatest experience I took from the program. The students’ attempts to master the English language were solid and sincere. I was motivated by their motivation! In this way, I saw them as my teachers as much as they saw me as theirs. Our sessions were very much based on community and sharing.

My most memorable VIP moments took place outside of the sessions whenever I would run into the students on campus. It was always very pleasant to speak with them and to learn what they were up to. It was also very rewarding to see and hear their language development. These meetings affirmed the community spirit we had created in the classroom.

I would advise current VIPs to be very creative! The students enjoy and crave a challenge. Organization is also integral: the more organized you are, the more time you have during your sessions to devote to your fellow students and friends. And above all, I would advise VIPs to establish a genuine community in their sessions: if students feel accepted, they will have one less hindrance in their successful grasp of English. Enjoy the experience!
VIP ORIENTATION 2003  Written By: Mandy Lai

Orientation 2003 was a GREAT success! An all-time record of SEVENTY-TWO VIPs attended the event!

It was a great opportunity to meet different volunteers working for different areas in the SDC.

Best of all, free food, games and prizes at the Wave brought a smile to everyone’s face!

Thank-you to all those VIPs who came out. And a special thank-you goes out to all the speakers from the SDC.

Come One, Come All to Theatre in the Fall  Written By: Greg Ross

On Friday October 17th, VIP held its first social of the year. Destination — the Grand Theatre — to see “The Turn of the Screw” on opening night. There was a good turn out and a good time had by all. The show was very different yet very creepy. It was only a two person play with a woman playing the main role of the nanny and a man playing three different characters. Many dark colors and dark costumes filled the stage, which added to the mysterious atmosphere created mainly by the emotions of the actors. At one point, I remember being so held in suspense that when the nanny screamed, I jumped out of my seat!!! The Grand Theatre was a great and out-of-the-ordinary night. I recommend anyone who is interested in seeing any future shows to visit www.grandtheatre.com/index. Seat sales starts at $15 and there is not a bad seat in the entire theatre.

STAY TUNED FOR OUR NEXT SOCIAL...
MOVING FROM STUDENT TO SUPERVISOR

SDC’s Learning Skills Counsellor, Denise Reaume, Reflects on Her Experience with VIP

Q: You were involved with VIP as an English Conversation Leader when you were a graduate student at Western. What has stayed with you from that experience?
A: What stayed with me most is a deep admiration for students who are studying in a language that is not their first language. While traveling in countries where English isn’t widely spoken, I’ve struggled just trying to buy groceries or make a phone call. I couldn’t imagine studying in a language other than English. It takes incredible dedication, perseverance, and patience.

Q: As a supervisor, what have you enjoyed most about working with the VIPs in your area?
A: We have great VIPs in Learning Skills Services. Overall they epitomize all that is best about a university; a love of learning, a sense of responsibility, and an optimism for the future. I enjoy their intelligence (not only about courses but other things like digital cameras and web pages), but I most enjoy their personalities. They’re highly capable, nice people who are enjoyable to be around.

Q: How do you think Western has changed since the 1980s and how do you see this affecting the needs of students and the services that the Student Development Centre offers?
A: Perhaps the biggest changes at Western since the 1980s is the increase in the number of international students and students with disabilities. Fortunately, the Student Development Centre has services to help meet the needs of these student populations. It’s noteworthy that volunteers through the VIP program have been so important in assisting these students through positions such as the English Conversation Class Leaders and Readers for students with disabilities.

Q: What would you like for VIPs to take away from their experiences with SDC?
A: I’d like VIPs to take away from their experiences with SDC an appreciation that they really are special people who have made a difference. Volunteers sometimes don’t realize the significance of their contribution they choose to give of their time and talents — something they don’t have to do, and something that many others never do. Everyone has busy lives, but here is a group of people who makes volunteering a priority — that’s a wonderful thing to do.

English Conversation Leaders’ HALLOWE’EN POTLUCK

VIP TRIVIA 1993 & 2003

- 1993: 52 VIPs were placed in the program.
- 2003: 110 VIPs were placed in 114 positions.
- 2003: SDC’s International Student Services has the highest number of VIPs — 62 in 2003.
- 2003: SDC has 8 areas of service: Career Counselling, Student Placement and the Resource Centre have been combined to form Career Services, and SDC has added First Nations Services, SSD, and Effective Writing.