It’s that time of the year again – The classes are wrapping up, and you have handed in your last set of assignments. Now you are ready to study intensively for just a few more weeks to finish up the Fall Semester. For upper year students, the busy December may have become somewhat of a routine, while for the first year students, the experience may be a little overwhelming. Regardless of your concerns or anxieties (academic, social, or psychological), the Student Development Centre(SDC) provides a wide variety of services to assist you in coping with university life.

SDC has always been committed to promoting their services to the Western community through the use of their website, flyers, ads in the Gazette and reminders endorsed by professors at the beginning of classes. This year, SDC decided to take their promotional campaign to the next level by displaying two larger-than-life billboards in the UCC. The ads were designed by our former VIP volunteer, Jessie Luo. Both designs were highly supported by the SDC Director, Dr. Gail Hutchinson, staff and the Student Partnership Members.

(continued in page 3)
The VIP Orientation, which took place on September 16th, 2004, marked the official commencement of volunteering for the fall term! Ms. Sandra Pehilj (VIP Program Coordinator), and Dr. Gail Hutchinson (SDC Director) welcomed the volunteers to the program’s third decade. They both expressed their appreciation for the valuable roles that VIPs will play in the upcoming year.

A group of enthusiastic speakers gave the volunteers an overview of the services provided by SDC. Speakers were from the Career Services, the Services for Students with Disabilities, the Psychological Services, the Learning Skills Services, the Effective Writing Program and the International Student Services. In addition to explaining the VIP’s role within their respective programs, the speakers also encouraged the VIPs to venture outside of their specific volunteering area and explore the many services offered by SDC. From these speakers, the VIPs were able to gain a respect for the broad range of roles and responsibilities that they fill.
Following the Orientation, the VIPs attended the first VIP Social Event at the Wave! Once seated at the restaurant, the VIPs engaged in a friendly team competition against the other tables to solve tricky brainteaser questions. After the icebreaker competition, the VIPs enjoyed the tasty finger foods and hoped that they will win one of the door prizes. With majority of the VIPs attending this event, the volunteers had a chance to chat and share with one another about school, volunteering and other interests. Everyone enjoyed the friendly, relaxed atmosphere and left having met a few new people to say hello to around campus and SDC!

Fresh New Look at SDC (Continued from Page 1...)

The first ad, located right beside SDC (2nd floor UCC) depicts a variety of fish swimming through the ocean. When asked to provide feedback on the poster, a few students told us the following:

“It’s pretty colourful – very eye-catching.” – Emily Wang,

“I think the poster is very stimulating.” – Vincent Tse.

While viewing the poster, I was trying to figure out how the fish theme was related to SDC. And I thought that one of the interpretations I can make is that as students, we are much like a school of fish, swimming in the boundless waters that we call life. More often than not, we are able to keep up with the rest, but sometimes, we are in need of guidance to steer us in the right direction.

The second ad, located in the basement of the UCC, is a depiction of a giant hand with the palm faced upward.

“It’s very powerful. The colours are very bold. Almost like the hand is reaching out at us.” – Kelvin Shek, VIP Volunteer.

This ad, like the first, is very captivating. One can obtain a sense of empowerment from the image, as to suggest that your future is in your hands. Another impression of the poster, as suggested earlier, is that it’s an offering; an extension to lend a hand when you need it. Regardless of how the images are construed, the message is clear – SDC is available to help you succeed!
VIP Volleyball is a REALITY!

BY: RYAN MCLEOD

After much hard work and planning, it’s finally official – the VIPs and the Peer Guides have their first intramural sport team. The VIP Assistant Coordinators and Kanna Shintani (VIP Program Assistant Coordinator) worked very hard in recruiting members for the team, and we’re all very excited that it has become a reality. Our team plays on Wednesday nights between 6-9pm in the UCC Gym. Unfortunately, the spectators are not allowed in the gym, but feel free to come out and cheer us on from the window looking onto the court! The players for this semester’s VIP/Peer Guide Volleyball Team are: Megan Chuchmach, Bing Han, Zi Xuan Huang, Kelvin Shek, Yun Fan Zhuang, Michael Wiseman, Annie Ngo, Allie Hobbs and me. When asked about her impression of the team, Annie Ngo commented, “Everyone on the team is great, and I think that we have an amazing time together”.

The first game against the OC Boom was a little struggle for the team. We lost the first set, 3 to 25, after an overhand serving streak by Khonrad of the opposing team. However, the team made a come back during the second set and only lost by a score of 17 to 25. Even though the VIP/Peer Guide Team lost its first game, we held out very well, considering we only had 5 players on court (A team can have up to 6 players on the court at any given time, provided it is comprised of 3 men and 3 women.)

Our second game was against Seabather’s Eruption. The VIP/Peer Guide Team showed considerable improvement. We finished the first set with the score 17 to 25. In the second set, the VIP/Peer Guide team played very competitively, but in the end, the Seabathers grabbed the lead to win the set 22-25. Annie Ngo commented that: “Although we are on a bit of a losing streak, we are a winning team at heart”.

Indeed, we are a winning team at heart, as a sense of camaraderie and friendships bloomed out of this team. Though the VIP/Peer Guide Team will wrap up their season with a series of playoffs at the end of November, the fond memory of the experiences being on the team shall forever occupy a place in their hearts.
Volunteering with Community Agencies

By Kanna Shintani

SDC is blessed each year with a group of highly talented, unique, and enthusiastic volunteers helping us in delivering a number of valuable programs to the student population. Without your assistance, we would not be able to provide the level of service we offer to the students.

Just as SDC depends on our dedicated volunteers, most community agencies in London depend on enthusiastic volunteers to support their programming. I have had an opportunity to speak with Ms. Jennifer Smith, the Volunteer Coordinator, from LUSO Community Services. Here are some notes from the interview…

Can you tell us a little bit about the organization?

LUSO Community Services is located at 608 Hamilton Road (at Trafalgar and Egerton). London Urban Services Organization (LUSO) provides a variety of programs and services to members of the London community, including: Employment outreach, Community Development, Newcomer Settlement, Multicultural outreach, youth and literacy programs, and more.

What sort of volunteer opportunities are available with your organization?

We have a variety of volunteer opportunities throughout our agency. The programs that tend to utilize volunteers the most are our literacy and youth programs. Examples of volunteer opportunities within these programs include tutoring children in grades one through nine, facilitating our LUSO Family Math program, co-facilitating with youth participants in Fun’n’Food, Positive Café and Hip Hop Dance. We also have opportunities for volunteers providing office support, such as answering telephones, directing clients, etc.

How can one go about applying to be a volunteer?

The first step in becoming a volunteer with LUSO Community Services is to complete our VOLUNTEER INFORMATION FORM. This form can be downloaded from our website at www.lusocentre.org. Please be sure to print it off before completing it. Once you have completed the form, please return it to Jennifer at LUSO. At that point, volunteers will be contacted to complete the volunteer orientation process.

What are some of the benefits of being a volunteer at LUSO?

Volunteers at LUSO are provided with exposure to a variety of different experiences and opportunities within each placement. Each volunteer is provided with ongoing guidance from their program coordinator, [and upon successful completion of the volunteer placement,] they can be provided with a reference letter. Volunteering with LUSO can be a very rewarding experience.
Final Comments...

Working with volunteers is a wonderful experience. People who take time out of their own busy lives to give to the lives of others are to be commended. I have seen some wonderful relationships develop, especially with tutors and students, and I have also seen volunteers move from acquaintances, to colleagues, to friends. I love my job!

Ms. Jennifer Smith, the volunteer coordinator at LUSO recruits volunteers year around. For more information, contact LUSO at 452-1466 or contact Jen at jennifer@lusocentre.org. Their website is www.lusocentre.org.

VIP COMMUNITY DAYS

For three Thursdays in November and December, a group of VIP Volunteers visited the Youth Action Centre (YAC) in downtown London to cook meals for homeless/at-risk youths as part of the VIP Community Involvement Initiative.

The VIPs cooked meals which included chocolate cakes. The Ingredients donated by the VIP Program.

Through our visits to the YAC, we were able to free up staff time (as usually the meals are prepared by staff) so that they would have more time in assisting those in need. We were also able to prevent many youths from going to sleep hungry.

Thank you to all the VIPs who have volunteered their time to come and assist in this meaningful initiative.

The VIPs who volunteered at the events were: Diliana Chopova, Kaitlin Dupuis, Perry Toor, Shannon McAlorum, Ryan McLeod, Xiangning Fan, Jessica Lyn, Sari Hersenfield, Jodine Rosenberg, Cynthia Chu, Allie Hobbs.

H.E.L.P.S Conference

By Kanna Shintani

On November 6th and 7th, five peer helping volunteers from SDC and I had a wonderful opportunity in attending the “H.E.L.P.S. Conference” -- a conference dedicated to the exploration and professional development of peer helpers and their programs.

The Conference was hosted by the Peer Helper Program of McMaster University in Hamilton. At the Conference, we were able to explore different ideas on topics such as one-on-one helping, difficult & practical situations, and area coordination.

The 5 peer helpers who attended the conference from SDC were: Namrata Maraj (Peer Guide), Shannon McAlorum (English Conversation Leader), Louis Hui (English Conversation Leader), Katrina Brandt (English Conversation Leader & Career Assistant), and Kate Sudak (Career Assistant).

On behalf of crew who attended the Conference, I would like to take this opportunity to thank the Student Development Centre for sending us to this memorable Conference.
Good-bye Lazy Summer Days….

On a bitter, cold, and lonesome night, one cannot help but think back to a time when there was no need for this sense of anxiety. We reminisce for the warm summer days that were filled with sunshine and care-free fun. Summertime is the time of the year that students look forward to the most and have the most difficulty saying good-bye to. We asked our VIP volunteers to share their most memorable moments of this past summer. Perhaps these anecdotes will remind us of our summer memories and help us think warm, happy thoughts that will help us in getting by the winter months ahead.

How did you spend your summer?

“I’ve spent the summer researching molecular biology and microbiology for Agriculture and Agri-Food Canada here in London. At the same time, I volunteered as an English Conversational Leader at SDC.” – Diana Vulcanescu

“This summer, I worked at a community walk-in medical clinic, as well as for an accounting firm. I went to Florida this summer for a family gathering and went camping in Tobermory.” – Reta French

What was your favourite part of the summer?

“The greatest part of my summer was spending the July 4th weekend (I’m a dual citizen) in NYC. It has always been my Mom’s dream to stay at the Plaza Hotel near Central Park, so my family spent a week there for her birthday. Now it’s my dream to live there!” – Megan Chuchmach

Did you attend any events or concerts?

“Food festivals in Toronto: Taste of Thailand, Taste of the Danforth, and Taste of Chinatown. There were also the Toronto Street Festival (I walked from Queen St. to Eglinton Ave!) and fireworks at the beaches on Canada Day.” – Bing Han

“I went to Edmonton’s Fringe Festival, which is apparently really famous. There are plays, shows and street performers for about two weeks in the city.” – Stephanie Hui
Please share with us something that happened during the summer that you won’t soon forget.

“When we were in Japan, my boyfriend, sister, and I climbed Mt. Fuji. We decided to do it by night so we could watch the sunrise from the summit in the morning. However, we neglected to check the weather before the climb and we got stuck in the tail end of a Typhoon on the mountain in the middle of the night. My sister slipped and fractured her ankle, but in her determination wouldn’t stop climbing. We were freezing cold, drenched, hungry and scared. When we finally got to the top in the morning, the storm had left behind thick fog and we couldn’t see a thing. All that and we never got to see the breathtaking view. Oh well, makes for a good story…” – Sheena Khan

“When I got home from school in April, I learned that my sister who lives in Florida was pregnant, and that I would soon become an aunt. I spent two weeks with her and her husband in Florida in July. I will never forget that feeling and I look forward to welcoming a new member of our family next month.” – Jamie Panet

“My most memorable experience of this summer was taking part in arranging a going away celebration for a very close friend of mine who was leaving for Nice, France to study overseas for nine months… Her brave decision to study independently in a foreign country made me realize how truly important education and experience are in the lives of myself and my close friends.” – Gillian Webster

VIP Upcoming Events

Mark your calendars down for these events!

1) VIP Snow Tubing Event:
   Let’s use the cold winter to our advantage! We will be making a trip to Boler Mountain for a night of snow tubing (just outside of London).
   Date: January 12th, 2005
   Time: Option 1: Meet us at the Boler Mountain’s rental office at 6:30.
   Option 2: If you wish to go as a group by the LTC, then please meet at 5:00pm at the bus stop in front of Natural Sciences Centre.
   Cost: $15/person
   Please RSVP Kanna by December 10th with the payment.

2) Dessert Potluck:
   Pamper your taste buds with unlimited sugar intake! You just have to bring a tasty and sugary dessert to join this potluck.
   Date: January 25 from 5:00-6:30
   Details: TBA