HELPING HANDS

Spring 2013

In This Issue
› Dessert Night
› VIP Interviews
› The 2nd Annual VIP Conference
› Supervisor Interviews
› Recognition Night

From left to right: Hassan Husni (IESC Transition Program Assistant), Vincy Kwong (IESC Newsletter Assistant Editor), Charlotte Dawson (IESC Spousal Events Assistant Facilitator), Keefer Wong (IL Marketing Coordinator)

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Dessert Night

By: Joyce Lai

On Thursday January 24th, VIP kicked off the new winter 2013 term with a Welcome Back Dessert Night. Attendees were able to experience treats baked by some of our very own coordinators and VIPs. Students socialized in the company of many familiar faces as they enjoyed a buffet of cakes, pies, cookies, and fruits. This Dessert Night was a great success for the VIP program and we hope to plan many more in the years to come!

Welcome Back

By: Joanne Lac

This is my go-to cake when I want to make a quick and easy dessert for parties and gatherings! All you need is a few ingredients, a few hours, and a group of people to show off your seemingly impressive baking skills to.

Ingredients:
- 1 box of chocolate cake mix (don’t forget to have eggs and vegetable oil on hand)
- 1 can of cherry pie filling
- 1 tub of whipped cream

Directions:
1. Prepare your cake mixture according to the instructions on the box. Pour mixture into 2 cake pans.
2. Bake. Let cool when done.
3. Once your cakes are completely cool, remove from cake pans with care (I like to scrape along the sides to loosen the cake, and then flip the pan upside down and bang on the bottom until the cake falls out). Place on separate plates.
4. On one cake loaf, spread on a layer of whipped cream. Follow with a layer of cherry pie filling.
5. Place the second cake loaf on top. Cover the entire cake with whipped cream. Spread on a second layer of cherry pie filling in a neat circle on top.
6. Finish by using the leftover whipped cream to decorate around the edge of your cake.
7. ENJOY!
Joe Lin is a 3rd year Computer Science student who is currently a VIP Student Coordinator. I had the chance to speak with Joe to hear his thoughts on the past year with VIP and his future aspirations.

What aspect of your position in VIP interested you the most and enticed you to become a VIP?
A great aspect of my position at VIP is the opportunity to make a meaningful impact to both the community and myself. Volunteering over the past year has been very rewarding to my career from the opportunities given to me. I’ve picked up leadership and communication skills while working with fellow volunteers. I’ve learned valuable technical skills such as digital design while working in the office. But most importantly, volunteering at VIP gave me a sense of achievement for being part of the community. VIP is a stress-relieving, friend-making and career-boosting program that will benefit all students!

What is your favorite quote?
“You never fail until you stop trying” – Albert Einstein

What is the highlight of your summers?
Eat. Sleep. Work. Most summers in my undergrad career has been career building work. Though, I’d like to travel the world when I graduate.

How do you balance school, work, and life?
I balance school, work and life by prioritizing important due dates. I use a calendar on my computer that syncs all events with my phone so I’m aware of projects that needs to be done. Of course, events with friends and family should not be missed! I think relaxation is important to surviving a busy student life.

What are your career aspirations following graduation?
I wish to work in the ever-growing software industry. I see myself coding in front of a computer for the next few years.
What aspect of your position in VIP interested you the most and enticed you to become a VIP?
As a learning skills assistant, I am able to offer students effective study strategies as well as help with particular course material. What enticed me the most about this VIP position was the ever unattainable ‘best way to study’. As a very busy student with a part-time job and full schedule, becoming a VIP gave me access to the best study strategies that were both efficient and effective! And as we all know, the best way to know you understand something is to teach it to others. Yet as a VIP I have learned so much more than effective study strategies. One of the most important skills I have developed is communication. VIP has taught me to always look beyond what is on the surface and look for deeper rooted problems. I have learned to listen for the deeper questions that arise when talking to students. These are lifelong skills I am grateful to have learnt.

Do you have a bucket list? If so, what is the most adventurous/interesting item on it?
Bungee jumping in Australia, it’s the second highest jump in the world!

Rebecca is in her first year of BSc Honors Specialization in Nutrition and Diabetes with hopes to become a dietitian, having completed her BMSc Honors Specialization in Physiology and Pharmacology last Spring. She joins us in this issue of Helping Hands to share some of her experiences as a Learning Skills Assistant.

How do you balance school, work, and life?
I have found that staying busy makes me more productive and staying organized is the key to my success. I have a four month calendar where I plan out my exams and work schedule in as advance as possible. I slot in all my intramurals, volunteering, going to the gym and grocery shopping, and I make time for the 3 F’s – friends, family and FUN – because these are the things that keep me sane. I don’t do homework on the weekends unless I have an exam. You need time set aside for yourself and friends, even if that means scheduling them in a week in advance!

What was your first day like as a VIP?
I was very nervous on my first day as a VIP. I specifically remember having a student asking questions about first year chemistry. Being in my third year, I had taken the course two years previous and I feared I would not be able to help. After looking at some of the questions, I did my best to seem confident although I was feeling quite the opposite. She seemed pleased with my responses though and before I knew it, we had been working for over an hour and had moved on to time management and some study strategies for chemistry that had worked for me in the past. It was a great feeling to have helped someone with more than what they had originally came in asking for. Since then, I have learned so much about asking questions and listening to students as they reveal more about their situations then simple chemistry questions. I have learnt that having a natural conversation with students can lead to greater discussions and these are often the most revealing.

What is your favorite quote?
“Be the change you want to see in the world”
– Mahatma Gandhi
Jennifer Tom
By: Adrian Chan

Jennifer Tom is a second-year BMOS student with hopes of becoming a senior marketing position at a fashion company. When she’s not busy volunteering for VIP, she is heavily involved in the Western chapter of DECA U as VP Internal Conference. Inspired by her father and mother’s success in the IT and fashion industry, she hopes to incorporate pieces of their careers into her own.

What are some of your duties in VIP?
As an English Conversation Leader, I create and facilitate conversation among a group of international students who are not native speakers of English. As each individual has different needs and goals, I strive to cater to each member by focusing on specific conversational aspects that would help their English skills the most in the context of their personal and academic life. To keep the group sessions entertaining, I develop interesting activities to stimulate enriching conversations. I’m consistently improving my leadership and group facilitation experiences, so I maintain a regular activity log not only for future references, but also for my own personal improvement so that I know which activities worked and didn’t work.

What kind of skills did you gain?
The biggest skills that I’ve gained from this position would be my leadership and listening skills. This role, in particular, requires strong listening skills because as a leader you need to understand and interpret the needs of each member of your group. Through the group’s feedback, I was able to become a stronger leader, and in return, offer stronger mentorship to my group.

What are your career aspirations following graduation?
My future career goal is to have a senior marketing position at a fashion company. Both my mother and father have inspired me to become who I am today. My father is a businessman in the IT industry, whereas my mother is a fashion designer. As a creative businesswoman, I aspire to become just as successful as my parents and to incorporate a bit of their professions into my future career.

What is your favourite quote?
One motto that I live by is “Things happen for a reason”. Having a long-term goal is always achievable; however, the path will most likely be different than one had initially planned. If an opportunity passes or fails, I believe it happened for a reason. With motivation and passion, one will stumble across an equivalent or even greater opportunity that will ultimately lead them towards their long-term goal.
The 2nd Annual VIP Conference
By: Susan Zhe Sheng and Adrian Chan

The 2nd Annual VIP Volunteer Conference was held on March 1st, 2013 in the Dr. Chu Centre at Western University. With this conference, we wish to promote the spirit of volunteerism and help students to realize the importance and benefits of volunteering.

We were pleased to introduce a variety of non-profit social organizations participate in this year’s event: Big Brothers Big Sisters of London & Area, London Cross Cultural Learner Centre, London Employment Help Centre, Sunshine Foundation Western Chapter, and YMCA of Western Ontario. Over 50 undergraduate and graduate students from different faculties and programs joined us for the day and all were eager to learn what the conference had to offer.

Keynote speaker, Lucille Brennan from the London Employment Help Centre, opened the event with her inspirational life story as a mentor and advocate for many individuals with financial and employment struggles. Especially for a non-profit organization, Ms. Brennan emphasized to everyone that they would not be able to offer their services without the dedication and commitment from their volunteers.

Following the keynote speech, each representative introduced themselves, their organization and the volunteering opportunities that they offer. As guests helped themselves to a delicious lunch, many students took the chance to meet the representatives and get more information. It was a great networking opportunity for both Western students and London’s top non-profit organizations.

The event ended with our exciting door prize draw and free giveaways. As the event closed with friendships made and professional connections solidified, many guests left with the message that giving up one’s time to help others is a powerful tool for individuals to make change in their communities.

The VIP Social Events team extends a warm-hearted thank you to all the guests and organization representatives who took time from their busy Friday afternoon schedules to join us in this event of learning and appreciation. We look forward to seeing you next year where we will continue to build upon each year’s successful event!

Keynote speaker Lucille Brennan with members of the VIP Team

“The volunteer conference was well-organized! The turnout was excellent and the keynote speaker was well chosen. Your event was one of the best ones I’ve ever attended so congratulations to the team! Invite us for next year!”

- YMCA Representative
"I enjoyed the keynote speaker. She was very enthusiastic and engaging. I also enjoyed talking to the volunteer organizations and finding out about their volunteer opportunities. The food was great too!"

- Participant
Brent is an Intake Counsellor with SDC Administration. He grew up in Forest, Ontario and moved to London at the age of 19 to pursue his undergraduate studies at King’s.

Favorite movie:
Because of my Scottish heritage, I enjoyed the original Highlander movie (laughs).

Most Exciting vacation:
It would have to be my honeymoon with my wife on the East Coast of Canada, and then Texas, one week each.

Do you have any useless talents?
Play the bagpipes (laughs). Again, I have a Scottish ancestry.

Who did you dress up as for Halloween as a kid?
I always had inexpensive costumes. I remember I dressed up as a Christmas tree made from green garbage and pink and blue egg cartons as ornaments.

If you can time travel to any era and never come back, which would it be? Why?
Well, I have a degree in religious studies, so I would be fascinated to go back to biblical times and see if it’s all real. I was a youth pastor for 5 years and I enjoyed working with the youth and enjoyed the community.

Who/what is your biggest inspiration in life?
My uncle who has been a mentor for me. He was in a wheelchair since he was 19 due to a toboggan accident. He has influenced me in so many ways, so I highly admire him, next to my parents of course (laughs). He actually was the one who taught me to play the bagpipes. Even though he was disabled, he still came to Western to get a multiple degrees. As a teenager, he took me on holidays and was there for me whenever I made big mistakes.

If you were a kitchen appliance what would you be and why?
Blender - because I like to bring all kinds of people and ideas together. But at the same time I don’t want them to lose their uniqueness, so maybe I’d like to be a food processor so that everybody can be together in a meal but yet still maintain their individuality.
Heather is a Learning Skills Counsellor with SDC’s Learning Skills Services. She grew up in Fort Frances, Ontario and moved to London in 1988 to pursue her undergraduate studies at Western.

Favourite dish: Bacon wrapped scallops.

Favourite movie: Braveheart (I’m Scottish, what can I say?!).

Favourite song: Anything by Great Big Sea or The Beatles.

Most exciting vacation: Scotland, summer 2012 (The Isle of Skye is not to be missed!).

What scares you the most? Heights (which made driving in the mountains last summer interesting).

Do you have any useless talents? I can wiggle my eyebrows really fast.

Who did you dress up as for Halloween as a kid? A mad scientist (picture lab coat and big back-combed hairdo).

Met any celebrities? Canadian astronaut Roberta Bondar spoke to my class when I taught in Pond Inlet, Nunavut.

Favourite quote: “Anyone who has never made a mistake has never tried anything new.” - Albert Einstein

Who/what is your biggest inspiration in life? People who work to recognize and meet the needs of others (like “Me to We” founders Craig and Marc Kielburger).
Our annual recognition night this year was a tremendous success! It was a time for reminiscence and reflection, as we look back in retrospect to the growth and development that we made this year in the VIP Program. Friends were formed and contacts were exchanged in this fun and integrative volunteering community.

Although Dr. Gail Hutchinson, director of the SDC, was unable to attend, Dr. Deborah Stuart, Coordinator of the Services for Students with Disabilities, thanked VIPs on her behalf and presented them their certificates of recognition. As Dr. Stuart accurately described it, the VIP program would not exist without the hours and tireless effort put forth by its wonderful volunteers. Supervisors agree that VIPs play a significant role in their ability to implement and coordinate these services—the SDC just would not be the same without its campus volunteers. VIPs also received gifts in gratitude for their hard work, commitment and support of the VIP program. It was a fun-filled night with good food, new friendships, and VIPs went home with the knowledge that their contributions to the SDC and WI was recognized by all.

As we begin preparations for a new year of VIP, we look forward to another year of great success and seeing the growth within the program and in our volunteers. Good luck in your future endeavours and most importantly, keep volunteering and making change!
Thank You!

Thank you volunteers and VIP supervisors for another great year in the Volunteers In Progress Program! Together, we continue to make a positive change in our Western community.

Volunteers In Progress Student Coordinators
Volunteers In Progress Social/Community Event Coordinators

Student Development Centre Office Assistant
Student Development Centre Marketing Assistant
Student Partnership Members

Indigenous Services Office Assistants
Indigenous Services Communications Assistants
Indigenous Guest Services Assistants

English Conversation Circle Leaders
English Conversation Group Leaders

International Student Activity Coordinators
IESC Newsletter Assistant Editors
IESC Newsletter Illustration Artist
IESC Photographer
IESC Spousal Events Assistant Facilitators
IESC Transitions Program Assistants

International Learning Administrative Assistant
International Learning Marketing Coordinators
International Learning Volunteer Coordinator
International Learning Assistant Coordinator
International Learning Communications Coordinator

Learning Skills Assistants
Learning Skills Assistant (Indigenous Services)

Services for Students with Disabilities Peer Mentors

Writing Support Centre Peer Writing Counsellors

Special thanks to Joe Lin, Adrian Chan and Joanne Lac for photographing the memorable moments highlighted in this issue of Helping Hands.