This spring, the VIP Program has recruited another excellent and enthusiastic group of students who have been selected to volunteer in different areas of SDC. Compared to previous years, this year the volunteering positions with leadership skills or international experience were particularly popular. Considering a limited number of respective positions with opportunities to gain the above skills, it was quite a challenge to place all of the VIPs in the positions of their interest. As well, more international and graduate students applied this year to volunteer with International Student Services as Activity Coordinators or English Conversation Leaders. Volunteering opportunities with Career Services are also in high demand this year, as students want to explore different career paths pertaining to their academic programs.

In this edition of Helping Hands, find out how innovative SDC’s services are, and how the upcoming changes in these areas will meet the demands of their increasing client population, since you will be a part of their respective service.

Special thanks to our summer volunteers and the VIP Assistant Coordinators, Greg, Christina, and Mandy for their input in creating this edition of Helping Hands. And to all of you, let this experience of volunteering in SDC become an integral part of your educational and professional development.

Sandra Pehilj
VIP Program Coordinator
A Word from Your VIP Assistant Coordinators

Mandy’s Editorial

I trust that everybody is having an amazing summer!
I just wanted to take this opportunity to welcome you all to SDC’s VIP Program and thank you for making the commitment and initiative. My name is Mandy Lai and I will be one of your VIP Assistant Coordinators for the upcoming year, which is going to be my 3rd year at Western. Currently, I’m working hard, studying hard, and enjoying the beautiful warm sunny weather.

As a volunteer in SDC’s Career Services last year, I had a lot of fun meeting new people and discovering the benefits of SDC. With that in mind, I am even more excited about the prospect of meeting you all in September. Along with my fellow teammates, we hope to enhance your volunteer experience to the fullest. Meanwhile, have a super-awesome summer, stay safe, and we will see you in the fall.

Greg’s Editorial

Welcome everyone

To another year of cheer and University
Hope you find good company
Great to be a part of VIP
Hope to keep the tradition alive
That drives students to connect
Treat each other with respect
And make the experience
Last a lifetime
Let’s enjoy these times
And let the sun shine

Christina’s Editorial

I am looking forward to meeting all of you in the fall. I would like to congratulate you for your successful application and thank you for your interest in SDC’s VIP Program. This is my second year as a VIP. Last year I helped in the organization and production of the University Wide Career Fair. It was a great experience as I met some really terrific people as well as learned a lot about myself.

I hope this year will provide all of you VIPs with a fantastic experience. I hope all of you will come out for some of the social events throughout the year so that we can get to know each other better and make the VIP Program the best it can be. If you have any suggestions as to how to improve the program please do not hesitate to let me know.

I look forward to hearing about any ideas that you may have. Have a great summer and I’ll see you in the fall.
Volunteering Abroad

Volunteering in one of the most untouched and isolated communities in Negros, the small city in the southern Philippines, was indeed an unforgettable experience. While attending the International High School of Manila, we were asked to help build a modest schoolhouse in a small local community. We knew that we would benefit from interacting with locals and exchanging customs and cultures. Additionally, we were expecting it to be a new experience that would give us a sense of achievement, but it certainly exceeded our expectations by becoming the most rewarding experience of our life.

We started our two-week volunteering journey by meeting the locals, working with them and hoping that they would benefit from our efforts. Since we didn’t speak a word of Tagalog, we were certain that a language barrier would hinder all of us to work as a team. Regardless, we worked hard together. One day, while we were moving bricks to be placed on a one-foot wall, we noticed a small child staring at us. With his wide brown eyes, he signaled us to follow him, and we did. Suddenly, we felt honoured being welcomed by his family into a dilapidated one-room shanty home. A sense of guilt came over us as we realized how proud they were of their little home, and how a family of six felt privileged to have a tiny roof over their heads, a roof that we couldn’t even imagine was big enough for one of them to live comfortably. The walls were covered with scraps of material, a floor was swept clear of leaves and stones, and we could tell that his mother had done all she could to make the little dwelling into a comfortable home for her family.

The family, with its gleaming smiles, offered us a homemade rice wine. Since we could not properly communicate, the moments of silence carried a powerful feeling of mutual respect and appreciation. We thanked the family with handshakes and a friendly “Salamat Po” (thank you), and left the house. We felt that they had given us so much in those ten minutes than we could ever give them in our next few days of volunteer work. We had finished building the schoolhouse, and as our volunteering journey was coming to an end, we were spending numerous hours with locals. The children sang songs in Tagalog and an elderly man conveyed his thanks with speech leaving us in tears. We returned home with a new sense of accomplishment and a whole new outlook on life.

If a similar volunteering opportunity ever crosses your way, we recommend you help those who are less fortunate.

Denise van Vriesland and Justin Maharaj
SSD’s Reception, Information, and Exam Assistants (summer)

New @ SDC

Student Development Centre
View our NEW SDC brochure that presents our services at a glance describing briefly the mission statement of each service.

SDC’s Volunteers In Progress
Coming soon: a NEW web page, designed to be more attractive and user friendly, with new sections added, such as story of a month, upcoming events, & Alumni sections

SDC’s International Student Services
The ISS Welcome Team will be available for newly arrived International Students before classes begin, to provide one-to-one assistance with transition and adjustment issues.

SDC’s Learning Skills
SDC’s Learning Skills Clinic introduces the LASSI: assess your learning strategies & discover how to improve your grades.

SDC’s Services for Students with Disabilities
SSD is offering new services for students who have learning disabilities; the services will be provided by a Learning Strategist and an Assistive Technologist.

SDC’s Career Services
Career Services is launching the resume and cover letter workshops for international students to enable them to learn the basics of resume and cover letter construction.
Farewell for Now...

Since SDC’s English Conversation Program first began many years ago, registration has skyrocketed from just several applicants to almost three hundred. By being part of a conversation group, many of Western’s international students and visitors have attested to their increased confidence and knowledge of the Canadian culture, slang and idioms as well as wonderful friendships being established with new friends. Our groups are facilitated by an amazing team of specially trained, volunteer English Conversation Leaders consisting of culturally sensitive individuals with a desire to help others become more attuned to everyday English. It is because of their wonderful dedication that makes the success of our English Conversation Program.

Last fall, I was invited to join the program by taking on the role of ECP Assistant Coordinator. Because of this, I had the opportunity to help pioneer our largest term ever with over 200 applicants and more than 50 leaders. In fact, this ECP experience has definitely prepared me for an exciting internship opportunity beginning this September now that I have completed my degree here at UWO. I am really looking forward to meeting this new challenge that will be taking place on the campuses of the University of British Columbia as well as the University of Victoria! I’m really grateful for the countless skills I’ve gained from ECP that I will undoubtedly implement as a leadership intern.

To potential applicants and leaders, I truly encourage you to consider joining SDC’s English Conversation Program experience because I’m sure it will open many hidden doors for you as it has for me. And many thanks to the terrific ISS staff for being such encouraging and inspiring individuals!

All my best,
Cat-Dan Lai
ECP Assistant Coordinator 2001-2002

Available Positions

English Conversation Leaders: 5 Positions
Reader (Services for Students with Disabilities): 2 Positions

Thank You to All of Our Summer Volunteers!

Jennifer Lau
Sanjiev (Cy) Khanna
Ophelia Bou
Hazel Ann Rona
Samira Chams
Wendy Edwards
Cham Roeun
Jennifer Van Nest
Michelle Norman
Fred Chen
Calen Lau
Moniquekell B.P. Johnson

VIP Fall Orientation 2002

Wednesday, September 18th
Student Development Centre
Resource Centre, UCC 210
5:00 p.m. – 6:45 p.m.