Welcome to the VIP program!

This spring, I had the rewarding experience of meeting our summer and fall volunteers. Everyone I interviewed was very different, bringing their unique perspectives, skills, and experiences to the program. Yet each person shared the desire to become more involved in the Western community and to give their time and talents to help others. I look forward to seeing the amazing things this group of volunteers will do!

This year is particularly exciting as it is the VIP program’s 20th anniversary. Thanks to the hard work of people like yourselves, the Student Development Centre has been able to dramatically expand the support it has offered Western students over the past two decades. In addition to helping more students, VIP volunteers have developed new skills that have helped them achieve their own career ambitions and enriched their personal lives.

To date, 92 VIP positions have been filled and more applications are being submitted each week. With all that students have to do, it is impressive that so many of you choose to make volunteering to help others a part of your weekly schedule.

I would like to thank you for your effort and dedication. We could not do so much without you.

Rachel Crowe
Interim Program Coordinator
SDC’s Volunteers In Progress

VIP SOCIAL

Meet other VIPs! Food! Prizes!

Our first VIP social will be Tuesday, September 16 at 6:00 p.m. (right after the VIP Orientation) at the Wave.

This is a great opportunity to get to know the amazing people who are VIP!

See you there!
A Word from Your VIP Assistant Coordinators

Greg’s Editorial
I am writing you all from my job at Canada Post
Instead of Sandra, Rachel is now the host
with the most
I don’t mean to boast
But this is my second year
VIP’s never fear
School is a mere few weeks away
Let us not sway from our tasks and tests
Nothing less
But the best
Volunteers In Progress
Before school starts
Make sure you get enough REST!!!

Christina’s Editorial
Hello VIPs
I hope you are all having a great summer. This is my 2nd year as VIP assistant program coordinator and my 3rd year in the VIP program. Last year there were some great social events as well as some fantastic educational opportunities. I hope these events will continue into this coming year. The VIP program is an excellent opportunity to meet new people and expand your personal horizon. My goal this year is to help to make your experience as a VIP the best that it can be.

Enjoy the rest of your summer and I’ll see you in September.

Mandy’s Editorial
Hi Everyone! Whether you are new or returning, I’d like to welcome you ALL to the VIP Program 2003-2004 and thank you for your initiative. Congratulations on your successful application!

Christina and I are THRILLED to be back as next year’s VIP Assistant Coordinators. As the VIP “Dynamic Trio”, we have already started on brainstorming some new and exciting things for the upcoming year. But regardless, do PLEASE give us a shout if you have any fun ideas for socials or info sessions or events that you think would benefit everyone. We would do our best to make them happen!

Meanwhile, break out your beach-gear, take a ride up to the cottage, jump into your backyard pool, and enjoy the summer sunshine and hot weather! We’ll see you in the fall.
SDC’s VIP Celebrates 20 Years!

By Mekielia Nembhard

Longevity, innovation, dedication...

After twenty years, these are still the words used to describe the work of 24 enterprising students that developed Volunteers In Progress in 1983. VIP was the result of a summer project called SEED, or Student Employment Experience Development, which was organized by the Student Development Centre (then called Counselling and Career Development Services).

On September 9, 1983, VIP took its first step with four key programs: Career Issues (now SDC’s Career Services), Foreign Student Advising (now SDC’s International Student Services), Study Skills (now SDC’s Learning Skills and SDC’s Effective Writing Program), and Personal Counselling (now SDC’s Psych Services). There were 24 volunteers that first year.

Ms. Rose Aquino, currently a Counsellor and International Student Advisor in the Student Development Centre, was one of VIP’s founding members and the previous VIP Coordinator. “We started out with a budget of $13,000 and a goal to establish a program that would supplement the services offered by then the CCD (Counseling and Career Development Center) while providing its volunteers with work experience and opportunities to develop their communication and interpersonal skills.”

Its current Program Coordinator, Ms. Sandra Pehilj (on leave until spring 2004), has been key to the development of the program since 2000. The SDC’s Volunteers In Progress has continued to grow under her guidance, with 140 VIP positions filled last year.

But what is truly being celebrated after 20 years is the motivation and hard work of Western students. Because of people like yourself, the Student Development Centre has been able to provide an increasing quality of support to the student community at Western. And with your continued dedication, we’ll keep getting bigger and better. Thank-you VIPs!

Volunteering Off-Campus

Have you ever wondered how to get involved outside of Western? Why not try volunteering with an organization in London?

A good place to start would be the listings under SDC’s Career Services at www.sdc.uwo.ca/career. Once you’re at the website, click on ‘Students Enter Here’, and then ‘Volunteers’. SDC’s Career Services provides listings of volunteer positions as well as links for organizations that have their own lists of volunteer jobs (like Charity Village at www.charityvillage.com/ and Pillar-Volunteering Sector at www.pillarv.com).

You can also go to www.info.london.on.ca to find out about volunteering with specific organizations. Just go to ‘Web Links’ and look at some of the categories listed. A variety of organizations are listed under each heading, some of which need volunteers. You can also look under the category of ‘Volunteers’ for other organizations.
SDC’s Services for Students with Disabilities

By Wendy Dickinson, Counsellor with Services for Students with Disabilities

* Who are the students that use the services provided by SSD, and what kind of challenges are they dealing with as students at UWO? SSD provides services to about 850 students with disabilities each year. In general, any medical condition or disorder that affects their ability to function while at university or while doing their course work may be considered a disability. Some of these include learning disabilities, attention deficit disorders, mobility impairments, manual/fine motor disabilities, acquired brain injuries, blindness and low vision, chronic health conditions, being Deaf or experiencing hearing loss, psychiatric disorders and communication disorders. Depending on the nature of their disability, students can experience a variety of challenges at university. Some students have difficulty getting around campus or taking a complete set of notes in class, or they may require alternate format text books or need specialized equipment to write examinations and to access information in the library.

* What would you like the general student population to know about SSD? What are some of the common misconceptions students have about SSD? In general, most students are not aware of our service, in part because we provide services to a relatively small number of students and in part because the services we provide are confidential. I think a common misconception that students have about SSD relates to their perception of what constitutes a disability. People often tend to think of a person with a disability as a person who uses a wheelchair or someone who is blind. I would like students to be aware that SSD provides assistance to students with a wide variety of disabilities and conditions, most of which are invisible disabilities that other people might not be aware of.

* What might surprise UWO students about SSD (or the students that use the services)? I think many students would be surprised that we serve over 800 students and administer over 3500 exams under specialized arrangements each year. They may also be surprised to find we assist students with disabilities by providing counselling, financial assistance, specialized classroom arrangements, alternate format text books, state-of-the-art assistive technology and learning strategy help for students with learning disabilities. Also, I think that UWO students would be surprised to learn that the most common disabilities among the students who use SSD are learning disabilities.