On March 22, 2007, our VIPs gathered in the UCC Council Chambers to celebrate many accomplishments over the past eight months. The annual Volunteers in Progress Recognition Night gave us a chance to reflect on our experiences, and be rewarded for our dedication to the Student Development Services.

The night began with speeches from the VIP Program Coordinator Sandra Pehilj and the SDS Director Dr. Gail Hutchinson, followed by award presentations for all the hard-working volunteers of the SDS. The gifts included mugs, water bottles, gift certificates, and VIP tote bags!

The Recognition Night festivities came to an end with an incredible Michael Jackson dance performance by English Conversation Leader Payam Ashoori. His rockin’ rendition of Billie Jean helped display the many talents of our VIPs — we’re not just dedicated volunteers!

While enjoying food, fun and entertainment, our volunteers took the time to celebrate achievements, reflect on a great year, and look forward to exciting opportunities in the future.
Events

VIP Potluck
By: Omer Moharram
VIP Student Coordinator

On Tuesday February 13th, VIPs gathered for our best social yet- a potluck featuring foods from around the world. Over some great homemade specialties, VIPs got the chance to talk and get to know one another. It was especially interesting hearing about everyone’s experiences with the VIP program this year. Some of the great dishes that were prepared included:

- Trista’s nacho dip, which was devoured in minutes
- Madhu’s homemade pakora, made of potatoes, spinach, and broccoli
- Zena’s family’s famous hummus
- Sameera’s homemade samosas
- Mandy’s Jamaican patty’s
- and so many more!

By: Omer Moharram
VIP Student Coordinator

Community Volunteering
By: Madhu Gupta
VIP Student Coordinator

VIPs volunteered in the community on February 20th, 2007 at the Boys and Girls Club of London.

The Boys and Girls Club of London offers children, ages 5 - 18, a safe place to channel their energies into positive, challenging activities that encourage personal growth, learning, and healthy living. Their approach is to understand the fundamental importance of nurturing young people’s self-esteem by engaging them in activities that challenge and enrich their minds, bodies and spirits.

The VIPs had the opportunity to partake in the physical activities planned for the children. We connected with the children by playing with them in the foam and ball rooms and we quickly discovered that you are never too old to jump in as well. Other VIPs played with children on the trampoline. Later, we organized different basketball games which brought out everyone’s competitive side!
School is almost out and I know you’re all going to miss volunteering at the SDS. Lucky for you, you can volunteer all year round and it can be tons of fun in the summer! So to help you with ideas on how to keep busy this summer, we’ve compiled a quick list of websites where you can get started. Make sure to check them out and we look forward to hearing exciting stories once you get back in the fall! Enjoy your summer!

www.CharityVillage.com
This one is particularly useful because it organizes volunteer placements according to location, type of position, and organization focus. Updated regularly. A must-see!

www.CrossCulturalSolutions.org
Looking for an international experience this summer? Cross Cultural Solutions offers placements all over the world including Morocco, Peru, Russia, and Thailand. You can choose to volunteer for a week, or up to twelve weeks depending on your availability.

www.Volunteer.ca
Volunteer Canada is a great place to check out various volunteer centres all over Canada. Can’t commit to a long-term volunteer placement? Browse through their community events calendar to see if you can schedule in some time to help out at local events.

www.Career.uwo.ca/students
If you’re spending your summer in London, take advantage of opportunities around campus and across the city. For starters, our very own SDS has openings for English Conversation Leaders in circle and group workshops. The Career Services website also lists volunteer positions on campus and in London, along with many other helpful links—just look under Volunteering!

Student Development Services hosted its 2nd annual Info Night on March 15, 2007. Speakers included Sarah Carter, Learning Skills Counsellor, and Ghazaleh Namavarian, Learning Skills Assistant. Tristalyn Russel, who has volunteered as a VIP for 6 terms, spoke about how her experience is helping her in finding work once she graduates. Omer Moharram reflected on his first year as a volunteer with the program, emphasizing on skills he strengthened and acquired, such as public speaking. The audience also had the opportunity to hear from past volunteers, Allie Hobbs, Zi Xuan Huang, and Zena Al-Saady, who expressed appreciation for their previous roles and where it has lead them today. By sharing experiences and inspiring stories across their many positions, the speakers not only informed the audience of the breadth of opportunities available within the VIP program, but also conveyed the immense rewards of volunteering, making the event a success.
“The events were a fun way to connect to other VIP’s and get to know them better. They were something to look forward to together on the weekends. It was also a great way to get together with our leaders and stay informed about upcoming events.”

- Rami Abu-Ayyash
English Conversation Leader

“I feel like the english conversation program has made me realize how one can give back to a community that once gave to me. Overall this program has provided for me a sense of satisfaction to see students improve as the weeks go by and help them develop a sense of confidence in their own lives when speaking english.”

- Nima Mirpourian
English Conversation Leader

“Volunteering with the VIP Program was an opportunity to make a positive impact and it was a great learning experience.”

- Rahul Sharma
English Conversation Leader

“Being a Student Partnership Member has allowed me to contribute my voice and those of other students to improve the integral services the SDS provides to the Western community. Furthermore, it has allowed me to enhance career-related skills and make many new friends whether in the boardroom or hanging out at the Wave! Thanks VIP for such a fabulous volunteer experience!”

- Bertha Wong
Student Partnership Member
Hello everyone,

My name is Youky Yuan Zhuang. I graduated from ACS in fall 2006. Now I’m working as an accountant for a large corporation in Edmonton, Alberta.

I was with VIP program for two years before I came to Edmonton. I volunteered as an International Program Assistant and Office Assistant during those years. It was a fantastic experience to volunteer as a VIP.

The first time I heard about the VIP program was from my Peer Guide, Joyce. When I was facing turmoil in my life, Joyce helped me. I soon discovered that SDS has a lot of valuable resources for students. I joined VIP to help other students and expand my knowledge. Working for SDS was a lot of fun. I met new people and learned many things that I never learned from textbooks. SDS is a great place to work because they are an excellent group of people. I still remember those days when the staff at ISS helped me with my Visa application, job searching, applying for the VIP program; those days when Kanna Nicholls taught me how to face job hunting stress and when Brent Scott was an amazing supervisor. SDS is just like a big family. Within the family, I found love and support.

Hopefully, more and more students will join and enjoy their days in the VIP program.

-Youky
**Last Words:**
Reflections from this year’s VIP Student Coordinators

**Madhu**
Being a VIP for the past two years has been an amazing experience. This past year as a VIP Coordinator was challenging at first, but now is something I’ll never forget. The enthusiasm and understanding that all of you have brought to this program is truly inspiring. From everyone in this program, I’ve had the opportunity to grow and learn about our community and the difference that volunteers can make. I’d like to thank all the VIPs for making this organization a success because without your commitment all of this would not be possible. I hope that your experience was as positive as mine and that you can use the skills that you have learned throughout this year in the years to come.

**Natalia**
Over the past two years I’ve had the opportunity to work as a VIP, both as a student partnership member and as a student activity coordinator. While I enjoyed giving back to the community, I truly loved the social events. It has been great getting to know you fellow VIPs. I hope that your experiences as have been as positive as mine and you are motivated to continue on as a VIP. If you are graduating as I am, I hope you take the skills learned from the VIP program and use them for even bigger and better things. I would especially like to thank my fellow activity coordinators for this past year. And remember- once a VIP, always a VIP.

**Omer**
Since this was my first year as a VIP, the Student Coordinator position seemed a little intimidating. The jitters wore off quickly, however, and I soon felt very welcome with the Volunteers in Progress. Throughout the year I have met so many great people and have had the opportunity to get involved in lots of different activities. I would really like to thank all the VIPs who found time to participate in our socials and community involvement events – and let’s not forget about the dedication of the VIP volleyballers! From playing in the foam room at the Boys’ and Girls’ Club, to bowling at Fleetway, to serving it up with the VIP volleyball team, I’ve had a great year and I hope you can say the same.

**Saeeda**
As excited as I am to be graduating this year and beginning a new chapter in my life, I am definitely going to miss Western. It’s been a great run and I’m lucky to have made so many memories, especially through the VIP program. Being a part of this organization has helped me learn much about myself and my capabilities, and I emerge more confident than ever. Most importantly, it has been a pleasure to meet and work with all of you. Through each and every one of your positions, you make a positive impact on the Western community and listening to your experiences has been inspiring. Thank you all for the passion and dedication you bring to your work. You truly help make the VIP experience a great success.

**Special Thanks**
Congratulations to the following VIPs who have volunteered for four or more terms:

**4 Terms:**
- Elizabeth Vang
- Jay Wong
- Justine Giddens
- Madhu Gupta
- Megan Wells
- Nadia Torrieri
- Natalia Hetmanczuk
- Nicole Fich
- Saeeda Irfan
- Yiwen Diao

**5 Terms:**
- Candice Kwok
- Jodine Rosenberg
- Michelle Weir

**6 Terms:**
- Kelvin Shek
- Lindsay Lee
- Necia Martins
- Reta French
- Tristalyn Russell

**7 Terms:**
- Kelly Anna Heffernan

We appreciate your hard work and continuous dedication to the VIP program!