Happy 25th Anniversary VIP!

By: Sameera Chaudhary, Harsh Thakkar and Jessica Gong

On Friday, January 23rd 2009, VIP celebrated its 25th Anniversary in Conron Hall with an extravagant celebration that brought together past and present VIPs as well as the supervisors who have all helped the VIP program make history.

Thank you to Rose Aquino for the creation and development of VIP over the years and thank you to Sandra Pehlij for bringing the VIP Program to new heights and for making the VIP program the success it is today. Thanks to Kaitlynn Hodgins and Megan Cook for organizing such a great event and to all the VIPs, past and present, for being there in person or through inspirational words. Finally, a special thanks to former VIP, presently a musician and singer/songwriter who tours the world, Brenda McMorrow, who entertained us with her beautiful musical performance.

Volunteers In Progress is a student-run volunteer program at Student Development Services that was created to complement students’ academic life at Western. The program provides Western students with an opportunity to develop their skills and gain career-related work experience. In addition, with the recruitment of over 100 volunteers, the VIP program enables Student Development Services to offer a wider variety of programs and services to Western’s community. As our second semester comes to an end, we can definitely say that our experience as VIP student coordinators has been amazing. The best part of our position is that we have the unique opportunity to personally interact with all the volunteers and make great connections. We provide them with any support they need as well as facilitate fun social events and community involvement days, thereby giving VIPs the opportunity to meet fellow volunteers and get involved in the London community. We also ensure that VIPs are recognized for their contributions at our Recognition Night and by highlighting their experiences in our VIP Newsletter which we publish each semester.

VIP recruits new volunteers every year and we ensure that our volunteers take part in exciting events full of rewarding experiences as well as make great friends. The best thing about the VIP Program is that it brings together student leaders making the program better year by year. VIP has experienced the success of its volunteers since 1983 and with the same enthusiasm and energy we celebrate the 25th anniversary of VIP.

Thank you VIP volunteers, supervisors and SDS for the support that has made the VIP Program what it is today, and for providing the program with what it needs to continue its success in the years to come.
The VIPs celebrated one of their biggest events, VIP’s 25th Recognition Night, on March 26th at the Wave. Recognition Night was very successful. A lot of VIPs came and many of them also brought friends to this big event. After the opening remarks from Sandra and the VIP Student Coordinators, VIP certificates signed by Dr. Paul Davenport and Dr. Gail Hutchinson and were distributed to VIPs to show our appreciation of their contributions to the VIP Program. Some VIPs have been in the program for more than four terms! “25 years of success at Western” VIP T-shirts were also distributed to all VIPs who came to the event. After speeches and the distribution of the certificates and T-shirts, people enjoyed great food and drinks.

It was also a great opportunity for VIPs to connect and spend time with each other. During the dinner, people were impressed by the slideshow about VIP and its previous events, especially when they saw their faces appearing on the slides. VIPs reminisced about past events and experiences with the program. At the end of the night, door prizes were awarded. We received great responses from VIP supervisors and VIPs on how successful the VIP Recognition Night was. There is no doubt that VIP’s 25th Recognition Night was a perfect ending to this academic year.

Reflection on Volunteering and Working with The VIP Program

The year has come to an end, and I’m sad to see it go. Looking back on my experience with VIP, I realize that without it, I would not be where I am today. As a volunteer with VIP, I had a wonderful time helping international students better their English skills; through that experience I was able to become an administrative assistant with ISS, which ultimately led to the position of VIP Program Assistant.

I have been involved with the VIP Program since September 2006, and I have been the VIP Program Assistant since May 2008. It has been a wonderful and rewarding experience, and over the past year I have learned many things that have complemented my graduate work in Corporate Communications and PR. Helping to run the program during the summer and working closely with the volunteers was a great experience. One of my favourite things about being a part of VIP was interacting with and meeting the volunteers who help make VIP the phenomenal and instrumental program that it is.

I also had the privilege of planning VIP’s 25th Anniversary which took place on January 23. It was such an honour to pay tribute to this extraordinary program that has grown from a handful of volunteers in 1983 to over 100 volunteers in 2009. It was so exciting to see the event through the early stages of implementation to its success the day of.

Those who can, do.
Those who can do more, volunteer.
-Anon.

I am very honoured and proud to be part of a program that has made such an impact on people and has helped so many students in their university careers, which will in turn help them in their future careers and endeavours. It has impacted and changed my life in a way that no other program could have. VIP has built a strong foundation over the past 25 years, and it has given me a strong foundation for my future career. Thank you to all the volunteers and staff who have made this an amazing year and have in turn made my experience amazing. I wish you all the best.

Helping Hands Winter 2009
Events

Children’s Museum

By: Jessica Gong
VIP Student Coordinator

Last semester, VIPs volunteered at the London Regional Children’s Museum for our Halloween Community Involvement event. The event was very successful, and this semester, VIPs were invited back to the Children’s Museum to support them in their Engineering Week activities on March 4th and 5th. Many VIPs went to volunteer their time on both days.

Volunteers assisted in the Bridge Building Challenge in which children attempted to build a bridge out of Kleenex Boxes, suspended it between two bases and piled weights on top until the bridge collapsed. VIPs recorded the greatest weight the bridge could support and at the end of the game, two winners were chosen and given prizes. VIPs also helped children learn how to build and create structures out of Kleenex boxes, introduced them to proper vocabulary, and gave them tips on how to make their structures stronger.

During the programming activities, a lot of kids and their parents went to the Children’s Museum and participated in the Bridge Building Challenge. The children truly enjoyed the challenge and had a very exciting and meaningful time. VIPs also enjoyed their time with the children, especially seeing the smiles on their faces when we helped them build their bridges and told them how to make their structures solid. When their bridges could afford more and more weight with our assistances and guidance, we felt what we did was significant. VIPs left feeling that they made an impact on childrens’ development through both of their visits.

Student to Business: Networking Conference

On Monday, January 26th, 2009, the second annual Student-2-Business Networking Conference was held at the London Convention Centre. VIP volunteers joined over 500 students and 250 business and community delegates to attend the conference.

Students were invited to attend two of the following workshops of their choice:
Where the Jobs Are
Career Path Strategy
Navigating Electronic Applications
Business Etiquette
Career Opportunities for International Students

After the individual workshops, everyone gathered for the opportunity to hear the latest economic perspectives from keynote speaker Dr. Richard Florida. They then participated in a networking session, talking about London businesses, particular industry sectors and making connections with organizations in the community. The conference offered a great opportunity to learn more about how to get a job and meet future contacts. Check it out next year as it’s an annual conference - you won’t be sorry!

By: Sameera Chaudhary, VIP Student Coordinator
A special thank you to all the VIP Supervisors. It is with their hard work and dedication that the program has continued to thrive for the last 25 years. They are always willing to invest in people and give everyone a chance. They also make sure that the volunteers get the best experience possible, and it doesn’t stop there. Their determination, warm spirit and helping hands are a true inspiration to all volunteers.

I am leaving this year and continuing my journey at Laurier in the fall. I have learned so many things from my supervisor, Sandra Pehilj, that I will carry with me for the rest of my life. This experience has meant the world to me. I started out as a volunteer and the opportunity came up for me to be the VIP administrative assistant. I have met great people along the way, developed my communication skills, organization skills, and been truly inspired by Sandra’s dedication and experience.

I plan to continue expanding my horizons as I move on to the next chapter in my life, never forgetting what I have learned and the people I have met here in the VIP Program. Take what you have learned in the VIP Program and carry it with you. If you have not had a chance to get involved, I strongly encourage you to do so!

By: Megan Cook
VIP Administrative Assistant
INTERNATIONAL FOOD FESTIVAL

June 26, 2009 - June 28, 2009
The International Food Festival strives to promote multi-culturalism through international cuisine and live cultural entertainment in Victoria Park. This event makes it possible for all to enjoy Victoria Park each spring with an enlightened view of the many diverse cultures that make London so great. For more information about this event please visit www.fscanada.com.

SUNFEST 2009

July 9, 2009 - July 12, 2009
Sunfest is Canada’s Premier Celebration of the Global Arts, held without an admission fee in beautiful Victoria Park. This unique, high profile event features over 30 top professional world music, dance and jazz ensembles based in Canada and abroad. Visit www.sunfest.on.ca for additional information.

FROM YOUR VIP STUDENT COORDINATORS

We would like take this opportunity to thank all the volunteers and supervisors who have supported the VIP Program with their hard work and dedication all year long. Special thanks to Kaitlynn for organizing the wonderful celebration for VIP’s 25th Anniversary and to Sandra and Megan for their wonderful support, guidance and cooperation throughout the year. It has been a very rewarding experience for us!

Thank you for helping the VIP Program celebrate 25 years of success!

We wish you all a great summer and luck in all your future endeavors!

Your 2008-09 Student Coordinators,
Harsh Thakkar - Sameera Chaudhary - Jessica Gong