

Alumni Spotlight: A CO Love Story

By: Stephen Pelletier, 2013

For anyone who knows anything about Rachel (Hunt) Delicate '07 & '08 and Rob Delicate '06, it is no surprise that their wedding on October 27, 2012 was New Orleans themed. The couple loves that city. Rob, an attorney in Hackensack, NJ and Rachel, a kindergarten teacher in Harlem, will both admit that they hope their careers take them there one day. Their love for the city stems from an event that shaped much of New Orleans and the gulf coast area as we know it today, Hurricane Katrina.



Rob and Rachel Delicate on their wedding day

The two met on the first Community Outreach alternative break trip to the region, right after the devastation of Hurricane Katrina. At the time both wanted to do some good for a community in need. Little did they know that a lifetime commitment to service and a lifetime commitment to each other was what would come from their alternative break experience. *(Continues on page 2)*

CO's Sandy Relief Drive

By: Meghan Gagnon, 2014

The phrase, "You don't know what you have until it's gone" was never so applicable to the East coast until it was ravaged by "Superstorm Sandy" this fall. 38 people were reported dead, 8 million people lost power, and thousands more faced displacement after their homes were destroyed. While UConn was not directly affected by Hurricane Sandy, many of its students call New York and New Jersey home- the two states most effected. This fact caused many of us at Community Outreach to wonder what we could do to help. The week before Thanksgiving break, we combined our usual food drive for local families in need with a Hurricane Sandy relief effort. Various faculty offices around campus hosted drive boxes, and the results were amazing! We managed to 500 articles of clothing, over 650 food items, collect 50 batteries, 58 cleaning products, and over 700 toiletry items. The outpour from UConn faculty, staff and students was an incredible sight to see, and it hasn't ceased yet. There are days when all of us, including myself, take for granted the simple everyday things; having a warm blanket at night, internet connection...and even something as small as toothpaste! Many of our neighbors were left without all these things and I'm so proud to be a part of a community that goes out of its way to do something so meaningful for people we may never meet.



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Staff:** Ashley Marshall,
Chelsea Wirt, Andy Nagy,
Rob & Rachel Delicate

Contributing Writers:
Stephen Pelletier, Mike
Chiluisa, Lateef Arnold,
Meghan Gagnon



Rob and Rachel on one of their many service trips to the Gulf Coast

“Talking to the survivors taught me that life is short and to never ever take one single day for granted, and to help who you can, when you can.”



The proposal!

Alumni Spotlight: Continued from Front

Rachel and Rob, what CO programs were you both involved in during your time at UConn?

Rachel: During my time at UConn, I was involved in many CO programs. Freshman year, I volunteered for Campus Big Buddies (CBB). I remained involved with CBB throughout my time at UConn, eventually becoming Assistant Program Director, and then Program Director. I also volunteered for the Windham Heights Tutoring Program, Natchaug School Tutoring and I went on an Alternative Break Program to Boston and then to the Gulf Coast after Hurricane Katrina.

Rob: I participated in the Gulf Coast Relief Trip to Mississippi and Campus Big Buddies my Senior year.

What were some of the most memorable moments from your service trip and what did you learn from them?

Rachel: The most memorable moment from our service on the trip was meeting all of the residents of the communities we helped. The families that we met had lost virtually everything in the storm, yet they met us with open arms, sincere appreciation and often times a hot lunch! They were so genuine and told us their heartfelt tales. I will never forget one woman named Denise who told us her story from the time Katrina made landfall. She could not swim. When the water started coming in her house, she grabbed an exercise ball that she had and floated around on it for 3 days before being rescued. Talking to the survivors taught me that life is short and to never ever take one single day for granted, and to help who you can, when you can.

What has continued to inspire both of you to return to the gulf coast since going with CO?

The Gulf Coast is an amazing place. We have especially fallen in love with the city of New Orleans. We love everything from the food, the music, the rich culture and most of all, the people are incredible. We have continued to go down to New Orleans to volunteer every year since our first trip. We have done everything from demolition, to building and landscaping projects. Every time we leave New Orleans, we feel more and more like the next time we come back, we won't leave.

Tell us a bit about your love story!

Rob: We had a meeting at the Student Union a few weeks before our trip left so everyone could meet for the first time. I remember sitting in a room when Matt Farley came out and told us we would all be on one of 5 teams. I thought to myself “I hope I get to be on the team with the cute blonde girl. I never get to be on the team with the cute blonde girl...” When they were calling out Rachel's team, my name was called, I had gotten my wish.

During the trip Rachel and I hung out a lot, and the more I got to know her the more I liked her. Her happiness, positive attitude and smile were contagious. It was a joy just to be around her. We began dating about a month later. The rest is history...

Rob proposed on the banks of the Mississippi River, overlooking the city of New Orleans in July 2011 and we were married, in a New Orleans themed wedding in Connecticut on October 27, 2012.

Any words of wisdom for current CO students?

When it comes to volunteering, put yourself in situations that are out of your comfort zone. Often times, that is when you will learn the most about yourself, and most likely meet the most amazing people while doing so.

Making a Difference in Providence

By: Mike Chiluisa, 2014

This semester I was given the opportunity to lead the Alternative Break to Providence, RI and it was one of the best weekends I have ever had. The focus issue of the trip was Youth Development & Education, where we explored several topics such as the academic achievement gap.

Over the course of our trip we took a tour of Trinity Academy of the Performing Arts which is a local charter school that has integrated the performing arts with their curriculum. The school caters to children between 7th-9th grades and offers several majors such as film, music, and voice. Afterwards, we

worked with YouthBuild U.S.A. of Providence. YouthBuild is a national program that offers low-income young people an opportunity to earn their G.E.D. while incorporating carpentry and service learning into the curriculum. While this particular site was only a pilot program, the positive effects it had on its participants was already evident.

For our last day in Rhode Island we went to visit the Providence Youth Center which is a small center that focuses on getting children real work experience. The Center takes students between the ages of 16-23 and offers them a variety of

resources to ensure that they follow the right path and find a career that they actually enjoy. Working with this particular Community Partner solidified my belief in the benefits of Alternative Breaks because of the Center's gratefulness and generosity. The workers there went above and beyond to make us feel comfortable. We spent the afternoon sprucing up the facility and painted all of the offices alongside some of their students. Everyone was having an amazing time, and watching all of the interactions that took place was a reminder to me of the effects of community service.

Every minute that went into this break was completely worth it and I advocate for anyone interested to apply next year. If not for this particular trip, then for Alternative Breaks in general because each one is nothing short of remarkable.



Members of the Providence Alternative Break '12

CO Student Spotlights!



Name: Rebecca Spatz

Hometown: Fairfax, VA

Major/graduation year: History, 2014

How did you get involved with CO/your program? I began as a Team Leader for Community Service Days 2 years ago, and I loved going to the sites and meeting new people on each trip. Because of this I have continued as a Team Leader and am now the Program Director.

Why did you get involved? I became involved because I wanted to give back to the community, and because community service has been instilled in me by my parents.

When did you get involved? I began as a Team Leader my freshman year at UConn.

Where and when will your program take place? My program takes place on many different sites; primarily in the local area and mainly on weekends.



Name: Jill Thompson

Hometown: Sudbury, MA

Major/graduation year: Elementary Education, 2015

How did you get involved with CO/your program?

I saw Campus Big Buddies at the Involvement Fair freshman year and I thought it looked fun!

Why did you get involved?

I love kids and liked the fact that Campus Big Buddies was outside of a normal classroom setting. I also loved the idea of bringing the kids to UConn's campus to show them all the possibilities that college holds.

When did you get involved? I have been a volunteer with Campus Big Buddies since Fall 2010.

Where and when will your program take place? Fridays from 4-6 pm in the Student Union

University of Connecticut
Office of Community Outreach
Department of Student Activities
2110 Hillside Road, U-3008
Storrs, CT 06269-3008

KFS 3124570

www.communityoutreach.uconn.edu



/UConnOutreach

Giving Back Over Break

By: Lateef Arnold, 2014

Over the winter break I volunteered at the YMCA by tutoring children in the L.E.A.D Program. L.E.A.D. is an acronym for Leadership, Enrichment, Academic, Development. In high school when I attended this extracurricular program, I received the needed academic guidance to help me succeed. I feel as if it's a personal obligation for me to help those just as I have been helped in the past. I also worked with my mother's job, Exchange Club Parenting Skills Center of Stamford, by overseeing their annual toy drive for underprivileged children who live in the local women's shelter. The toy drive joins with Toys for Tots to deliver. It was wonderful to see how grateful these families were to receive gifts for their children. Something new I did this year was preparing my high school basketball team for their season by running drills and teaching gameplay strategies. There are just so many ways to get involved over the holiday season, and I do my best to get involved as much as I can. CO has instilled in me a love for service, and I encourage others to make a volunteer commitment all year long.



Lateef (middle, right) is the Hoops of Hope Program Director for Community

Volunteers of the Month!



October 2012

Wesley Contro– BBBS
Tucker McCrabb– BBBS
Gigi Diguseppe– CAPT Tutoring
Victoria Aguilera– ESL
Emily Janice– America Reads
PJ Hutnik– Campus Big Buddies
Lindsey Hewins– Campus Connections
Hailey Ullinger– BBBS

Anna Vanderleest– MACC
Amy Panaleo– Windham Center
John Peters– Stafford Teen Night
Tania Mohamed– CSD
Aileen Haque– Willington Center
Xiao Li– Generations Connect
Kaleigh Kupstis– PAA
Kaitlyn Gaudio– BBBS

Rachel Winsor– BBBS
Paige Rhymer– ESL
Christina Groccia– Windham Heights
Laura Costello– America Reads
Melissa Pierce– Willington Center
Elizabeth Marshall– Campus Conn.
Andre Savadjian– Windham Hospital
Hiba Bilal– Windham Hospital

November 2012

Briana Miller– Stafford Teen Night
Laura Collins– Campus Big Buddies
Katherine Harmon– BBBS
Erin Holden– BBBS
Kristin Shaw– Gen.erations Connect
Lauren Cunningham– BBBS
Amanda Ballerini– Transportation
Dan Flynn– Transportation