

# Community UConnections

Office of Community Outreach

## INSIDE THIS ISSUE

- 2 SEMESTER IN PICTURES
- 3 RECOGNITION ITEMS
- 4 FALL ALTERNATIVE BREAKS
- 5 FEEDING CHILDREN EVERYWHERE
- 5 PEACE JAM

## CONTRIBUTING WRITERS

GEENA RUSSO  
 JIMMY DUONG  
 FEJIRO OKIFO  
 SAVANNAH GARRISON  
 OLIVIA DENEGRE  
 NICOLE HELLTHALER

## NEWSLETTER STAFF

AILEEN TOBIN  
 CHRISTINA HONEYCUTT  
 JIMMY DUONG  
 GEENA RUSSO  
 VALERIE LACHAPPELLE

# DPE

## DEMOCRACY AND POLITICAL ENGAGEMENT

*Community Outreach's Democracy and Political Engagement is a non-partisan Community of Practice which enriches the learning experiences and lives of the UConn student body. DPE strives to increase the awareness, interest, and involvement of UConn students in current political and social issues.*



**Fall 2013 Events**  
 Ashoka Youth Venture  
 PeaceJam (page 5)  
 Register to Vote  
 Circles of Change  
 Meetings with Elected Officials

## ASHOKA YOUTH VENTURE COMES TO UCONN

by Geena Russo, 2014, CLAS

Businesses aim to maximize profit but social enterprises aim to *maximize social impact*. The idea that businesses need to restructure so that they are making change in their community came from a man who started the organization called Ashoka. Ashoka encourages entrepreneurs to take their passion and intelligence and turn them into a business model that can bring around change for their area and the world. Since ideas come from all people, big or small, Ashoka started a youth venture, encouraging teens and young adults to turn their big ideas into reality. The youth venture allows them the tools they need for a business plan and helps them grow and expand. Community Outreach's new Community of Practice, Democracy and Political Engagement, hosted the Ashoka Youth

Venture: Be a Changemaker Bootcamp for UConn students on November 17th. The day started with ice breakers and workshops to introduce the group to the topic and become more familiar with Ashoka. Feeding off of each other's intelligence, we worked through our passions that could be turned into ideas that had intent, and what that project would look like. With any good business model we had to consider challenges we would face and the solutions that could address those challenges. We learned that a message that would catch an audience, a "sticky message" has to be simple, unexpected, concrete, credible, have emotion, and tell a story. After working through the process and creating a business plan we had the opportunity to pitch our ideas in two minutes to the room and get some valuable feedback. It was exciting to be able to share what you came up with and express why there is a need for it. The day was a success and each person in attendance left with a seed that could grow and blossom into something beautiful.



# Semester in Pictures



Student leaders collaborate during #AugustTraining



A few CO alums and staff got a chance to catch up at the Homecoming football game



Dodging for Dollars was a great success for Special Projects in support of Special Olympics CT



Did you see the famous rock at UConn decorated CO style by the coordinators?



Family Weekend brought out CO enthusiasts of all ages



No Freeze and Holy Family Shelter's Voices of Homelessness Art Exhibit



Congressman Joe Courtney accepted the Legislative Champion "Determination" Award from Jumpstart



Feeding Children Everywhere helped pack more than 20,000 meals for kids



2013 was the first year the Involvement Fair was held outside



Muffin party at 4H Vernon Afterschool



Volunteers of the Month were recognized at their pizza party



1,078 items were collected during the November Food Drive with UConnPIRG

# RECOGNITION!

## 2013 Community Partner of the Year Mansfield Discovery Depot

by Geena Russo, 2014, CLAS

Last May, Mansfield Discovery Depot (MDD) was the recipient of Community Outreach's Community Partner of the Year award. This award recognizes an outstanding community partner or collaboration that exemplifies the mission of CO and has significantly impacted CO affiliated participants, by demonstrating a commitment to promoting community engagement and educational development. MDD has been a community partner for 10+ years and has maintained their involvement with CO through the America Reads program, hosted Jumpstart teams, MLK Day projects and international volunteers through the summer SUSI program.

MDD has been in their current location at 50 Depot Rd in Storrs, CT for 22 years. They open at 7am everyday and work with preschool and kindergarten age children and serve over 100 families. The facility consists of classrooms, one big one where Jumpstart is held and outdoor spaces for the kids to play in. When talking with the Assistant Director, Lisa Young, she had some great things to say about MDD. She started as the cook and has been with the organization for 31 years. Young said her favorite part of her job is "building relationships with all the families." MDD also works with others in the community including, E.O. Smith High School students who job shadow or volunteer, University

of Connecticut students, including Jumpstart and other individuals from the Mansfield community.

The Community Outreach office would like to thank Mansfield Discovery Depot for their constant support of CO programs and dedication to working cooperatively with CO participants.



Jumpstart 2013 Service Day at MDD

## Monthly Awards

### STUDENT LEADERS

September



**BRENNA CONRAD**  
2016, CLAS  
Windham High School Tutoring

September



**NICOLE HELLTHALER**  
2014, CLAS  
Boston Alternative Weekend Break

October



**CHRIS AZZOLINO**  
2014, CLAS  
Jumpstart

November



**GEENA RUSSO**  
2014, CLAS  
Public Relations

### PROGRAMS

Community Outreach would like to recognize the following programs for outstanding service

- September** America Reads
- October** UConn Brooklyn Collaborative
- November** New London Alternative Break

### DRIVERS

Community Outreach would like to recognize the following drivers for outstanding service

- September** Brian Sheehan
- October** Ryan Allen
- November** Katy Jablon

### VOLUNTEERS

**America Reads**  
Angelina Hernandez  
Rashmi Paskankar  
Laura Dulla

**Big Brothers Big Sisters**  
Ashley Gravina  
Lauren Lagassie  
Kevin Broems  
Katy Harmon  
Calleigh Reardon  
Cindy Chiem

**Campus Big Buddies**  
Mike McGowan  
Madeline Moulton

**Campus Connections (Easter Seals)**  
Nicole Muraski

**English as a Second Language**  
Kathryn Nolte

**Generations Connect**  
Megan Deroy

**Holy Family Shelter & Stafford Teen Night**  
Jimmy Duong

**Horace W. Porter School Plus Program**  
Rebecca Edwards  
Victoria DeBietto  
Joe Couture

**Jumpstart**  
Emily McCaffrey  
Meaghan Reynolds  
Eric Agron  
Fortesa Isufaj

**MYS Big Friends**  
Carson Cross

**MYS COPE - Goodwin**  
Meaghan Lynch

**Natchaug After School Tutoring Program**  
Erica Ambrogio  
Alexandra Catarino

**Windham Heights After School Tutorial Program**  
David Santiago  
Mohamed Lahnin

**Windham High School Tutoring**  
Katherine Katehis  
Amber Dickey

# Fall Alternative Weekend Breaks

## New York

**Trip Director: Savannah Garrison**

Our group focused our service-learning experience on HIV/AIDS awareness in the New York City community. Students worked with organizations that are supporting the community of HIV/AIDS. HousingWorks is an organization that helps support the homeless HIV/AIDS community through providing housing that is financially supported through thrift shops, cafes and bookstores around the city. Another organization students worked with was Project Achieve. At Project Achieve, their mission is to increase awareness on prevention and they also run HIV vaccination trials. Now that we've returned to UConn, our student group hopes to spread their knowledge about HIV/AIDS through various activities. It is important that as Alternative Breakers we will continue our mission once back at UConn to help spread interest in fighting for the HIV/AIDS cause.

*by Savannah Garrison, 2014, CLAS*

## New London

**Trip Directors: Carly Zerr, Madeline Droher, Olivia Denegre**

The focus of our Fall 2013 New London Alternative Break was homelessness and affordable housing. A combined delegation of twenty UConn Storrs and Avery Point students went to New London, Connecticut to help tackle these issues. Our Friday night service focused on homelessness and we had the privilege of volunteering with the Thames Valley Council for Community Action Shelter for the Homeless in Norwich, Connecticut. Saturday and Sunday's service projects were spent at a Habitat build site and the Habitat ReStore in Waterford, Connecticut. While having fun, we collectively accomplished a successful weekend of service, formed strong relationships with community partners, and bonded across two campuses. Many participants joined in on a second build with Habitat on Saturday, November 16. Participants continue to encourage everyone in their campus communities to join Habitat's Advocacy Campaign! Their efforts are so important in keeping service alive outside of the weekend immersion trip.

*by Olivia Denegre, 2014, CLAS*

## Boston

**Trip Director: Nicole Hellthaler**

The focus of our Boston Alternative Break trip was homelessness. We worked with many different agencies. The first was Haley House Café, which is an organization that employs individuals that were previously incarcerated and provides job training. We also volunteered at Boston Rescue Mission, which serves several purposes, but we worked to prepare meals and serve them to individuals that are homeless. This trip allowed us to immerse ourselves in a community different than our own and learn ways in which we can help those who are homeless. Our goal for this trip was to learn the causes of homelessness. We know the stereotypes, but wanted to dig deeper and understand why poverty and homelessness are occurring in our communities. With this knowledge, we hope to help the communities near UConn, as well as become active citizens in our everyday lives. This was a chance for us to pop the bubble we live in, and empathize for others in order to understand these major issues facing society and what we can do to fix them.

*by Nicole Hellthaler, 2014, CLAS*

# Feeding Children Everywhere

*by Jimmy Duong, 2014, CLAS*

On November 3rd, over 200 UConn students headed over to the Field House to volunteer for Feeding Children Everywhere's (FCE) second annual Huskies Fight Hunger. FCE is a non-profit organization that holds events where volunteers combine their efforts to scoop and pack thousands of healthy meals that are then donated to hungry individuals all over the world.

Jen Su, an FCE intern and president of Kappa Phi Lambda, hosted Huskies Fight Hunger for the second time with her sorority. The goal for the event was to raise \$5,000 and pack 20,000 meals to go to food pantries and soup kitchens in local communities. Other UConn students that intern for FCE also joined to fundraise and recruit volunteers for the event including Zoe Basso and Jimmy Duong, two student leaders of Community Outreach that also intern for FCE. Using the support system that we had from Community Outreach, we were able to gain some help from additional student leaders and staff members. Dahiana Guzman and Rahul Seghal, Program Directors of Community Service Days, helped to promote Huskies Fight Hunger to pull in

volunteers. On the day of the event, Special Project's Coordinator, Rebecca Spatz led 21 volunteers to the Field House. Fellow student leaders such as Chris Gelino, Amanda LoStimolo, Geena Russo, and Aileen Tobin came to volunteer as well. The Community Outreach office also set up Coins For A Cause boxes around campus to collect donations for Feeding Children Everywhere which raised \$477.02 towards the fundraising goal. With Zoe and Jimmy sharing their fundraising pages, they were able to raise \$1,461 to go towards Huskies Fight Hunger.

The meal that volunteers produce is lentil casserole and was formulated to not only satisfy appetites, but to combat the effects of malnutrition. The cost of each meal is 25 cents, hence a \$5,000 goal to pack 20,000 meals. By the end of Huskies Fight Hunger, \$4,766 was raised and about 21,000 meals were packed.

For more information on Feeding Children Everywhere, visit [FeedingChildrenEverywhere.com](http://FeedingChildrenEverywhere.com).

# PEACEJAM

*by Fejiri Okifo, 2016, CLAS*

The world needs global citizens. As Dr. Seuss once iterated, "Unless someone like you cares a whole awful lot, nothing is going to get better. It's not." Going through your daily life and encountering something that bothers you should prompt you to pause and consider whether you can do something to change that situation. For the many students who feel like they don't know how to make the difference they wish to make, Democracy and Political Engagement aims to help them understand key issues and the dynamics involved in effecting social change so that when it does come time to effect change, students will feel ready and able to do so.

PeaceJam fits perfectly into this agenda because it is calling on youth from all over the world to step up to the plate of making this world a more peaceful place. Instead of allowing that responsibility to rest on world leaders, the PeaceJam foundation realizes that youth can take strides to improve the world. Through an immersive curriculum developed by Nobel Peace Laureates themselves, leadership training to mentor other youth, and a global-call-to-action project focused on a specific community service project, students are learning at an earlier age what it takes to effect change on both the local and global level. The results have been enormous, with millions of

global-call-to-action projects being started by youth all over the world to address the core issues that plague the world today. This year, the UConn PeaceJam group will work on a global-call-to-action project related to 'Breaking the Cycle of Violence' and learn about how Nobel Peace Prize Laureates have in the past made a difference in their homeland. In addition, UConn will be hosting the PeaceJam Conference Spring 2014 with special guest President Oscar Arias all the way from Costa Rica. I believe PeaceJam will empower students to make the world a better place with the tools and the skill set to do so through this program.

KFS 3124570

**University of Connecticut**  
**Office of Community Outreach**  
**Department of Student Activities**  
2110 HILLSIDE ROAD, UNIT 3008  
STORRS, CT 06269-3008  
PHONE 860.486.1165  
FAX 860.486.8821  
communityoutreach.uconn.edu



/UConnOutreach



“The best way to find yourself is to lose yourself in the service of others.”  
- Mahatma Gandhi

**UConn**

STUDENT ACTIVITIES  
COMMUNITY OUTREACH

