

COMMUNITY LEARNING

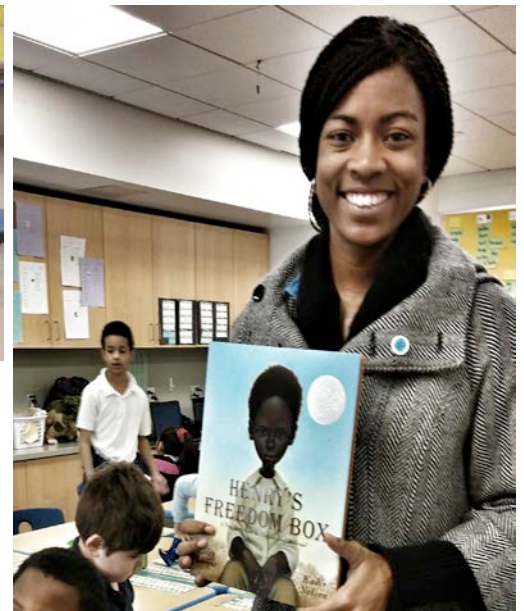
CONNECTICUT COLLEGE

OVCS NEWSLETTER

February 2014



Chakena Sims '16 and Ed Cohen, College Relations, reading with students



Chakena Sims '16

Dream...Continue the March Towards Justice

was this year's theme for the series of events the Connecticut College Common Purposes Committee organized to honor the legacy of the Reverend Dr. Martin Luther King. Those events included the Dr. King Service Awards Luncheon that recognized Anthony Sis '14, OVCS Associate Director Kim Sanchez and Professor Leo Garafolo and their work in communities to continue the march towards justice and demonstrate the ideals of Dr. King. Citizen activist Peyton Propere from Jackson, Mississippi spoke at a dinner with students, staff and faculty in commemoration of the Fiftieth Anniversary of the March on Washington and Freedom Summer. Members of the College community also shared their activist experiences from that era.

The Dream....Continue the March Towards Justice series also included a community learning component to honor Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. and his legacy of non-violent social change and civil rights. Connecticut College OVCS and the New London Winthrop Elementary Math & Science Magnet School implemented the second annual Dr. King Loved to Read. Members of the Connecticut College campus traveled to the Winthrop School on Friday, January 31 and read selected books in each of the 13 classrooms in the Expanded Learning Time at the school. The readers and the children dialogued about the books and the connected themes of social change, justice and civil rights. OVCS donated the books to the Winthrop School library.

“This is my second year participating in Dr. King Loved to Read and I must say that my love for this program continues to grow. So many students asked if the book I had read to them would be available in the library. Their excitement to read, analyze and make connections, demonstrates the short and long-term impact this program has on the students. It is important to encourage students to take control of their own learning at an early age in order for them to be the change they want to see as they grow older.” Chakena Sims '16

The New London Experience

By Jennifer Cunningham '13, AmeriCorps VISTA

Although I have lived in New London for nearly five years I am constantly learning new things about the place that I call home. On January 31st I embarked on a tour of New London with my fellow AmeriCorps Vista members who are serving throughout the state of Connecticut. AmeriCorps VISTA is a year-long national service program that works to fight poverty and I am one of the AmeriCorps Vista Members at Connecticut College. This month's

AmeriCorps training took place in New London and I had the opportunity to show other Vista members my service site. Our cohort started the tour after we met with New London Mayor Finizio in City Hall. He gave us an update on plans to further develop New

London.

The tour was led by OVCS Community Learning Coordinator David Cruz, a New London native. The tour gave me an opportunity to experience downtown New London with people who had never been there before and it was cool to show off my host site. As we walked through the Hygienic Art Park we viewed interesting works of art and observed a space used for annual festivals. There are countless murals and statues

located in downtown New London which is a testament to the rich culture and talent that I am exposed to on a daily basis. As the tour progressed I came to realize how important it was to help introduce the city to my fellow AmeriCorps members who are committed to ending poverty and revitalizing underresourced communities.

Although New London is struggling economically there are initiatives to strengthen



its economy. The proposed construction of The National Coast Guard Museum in New London will help bring revenue to the city and honor the history and work of the Coast Guard. In a few years the Museum will open on the waterfront and become a national tourist attraction. David also described the rich history of New London. The Custom House downtown was where the Amistad ship first came to shore and contributed to the long process of ending slavery.

The ship was moored at this site at 150 Bank Street in 1839 until it was auctioned off a year later. The sites we passed are not only historical landmarks but also vital parts of social and economic development. As we toured New London we passed by several OVCS community partner organizations such as Safe Futures, the Covenant Shelter and New London Main Street. The Covenant Shelter and the Homeless Hospitality Center in

New London work to mitigate homelessness and Connecticut College students work and learn with their staff and residents. New London Main Street is an organization that works to revitalize the waterfront district and promote local businesses. As the tour came to

a close with lunch at Mi Casa I felt a great sense of pride in New London and was grateful to share this experience with fellow AmeriCorps Vista members.

AmeriCorps VISTA
applications are available
on the website of The
Corporation for National
and Community Service.

www.nationalservice.gov

My Four Years at OVCS

By Jackson Murphy '14

When I first walked into Cro 217 in October of my freshman year, I did not realize the extent to which OVCS would shape my Connecticut College experience. I sat down at the front desk, met the staff, and tried to absorb all of the information about phone procedures and ride schedules that I could. I met Tracee during that same shift. Not realizing she was the Director of OVCS, I asked if I could help her with anything—something I figured front desk workers would normally do. Despite my obliviousness, Tracee kindly introduced herself and welcomed me to the OVCS family. By the end of my shift, I knew that I chose the right work-study job.

A couple of weeks later, I picked up some driving shifts. My first ride took place on Election Day, and OVCS ran a shuttle to New London High School so students could vote. I have a vivid memory of the passenger, reading aloud directions for a route that I now

know like the back of my hand. Left onto Williams, right onto Broad, left onto Colman, and so forth. My experience as a driver connected me with New London, providing me with a familiarity and appreciation for the city.



Thanks to OVCS, New London is not just a place where I attend college; it is a second home to me.

In addition to driving, I became a site coordinator during my sophomore year—a position I still hold today. Making the van

ride schedule gave me even more of an appreciation for how well the office engages Connecticut College with the New London community. Everything that the office does—from designing mentor program curriculums to perfecting its transportation system—is the product of meticulous planning and collaboration, all for the purpose of enriching the experiences of students and their community.

It is difficult to believe that I am in the midst of my last semester with OVCS. The atmosphere of this office, along with its supportive and caring staff, makes me look forward to each shift I work. Throughout these last four years, the people and experiences from OVCS have helped me grow both personally and professionally. As my education at Connecticut College comes to a close, I will be sure to appreciate each ride I drive and each schedule I make, from now until the last time I walk into Cro 217.

Save The Date: Upcoming Events!

Feb. 25- Local and Transitional Activism: Political Consciousness at Conn College
Ernst Blaustein, 4:30pm-6:00pm

Feb. 27- “The New Public” Film Screening
Blaustein 210, 4:30-6:00pm

Feb. 28- Reflexion Spoken Word
Cro West, 7:00pm

Mar. 7- International Children’s Expo
Cro 1962 Room, 10:00am-1:30pm

April 11-12- Tunnel of Oppression
KB & Larrabee Tunnel

Para Siempre Peru

By JJ Ramos '15



You are going to be greatly missed. Today I feel immensely alone. I do not know what is happening to me. I cannot console myself with your departure. I am falling in love with you and was not expecting it. Every day my appreciation grows for you. I will always be dreaming of you. They have always said that great things have their end. But I do not accept that. What was ours IS special, and one day I shall return to you...

I have many fond memories of my fall semester studying in Peru: relaxing on the beaches of Punta Hermosa; enjoying ceviche in the bohemian district of Barranco; hiking and experiencing the spiritual enlightenment in Machu Pichu; my time in Peru was entirely unforgettable. To the amazing, heartfelt, and critical consciousness conversations held with many fellow Peruvian comrades. To the beautiful, welcoming, and humble experiences in Lima, Ollaytatambo, Cusco, and Iquitos. To the long lasting, mutual, and compassionate friendships built

abroad. Peru, nunca para! Cheers!

I came back to the states with more than just photographs, souvenirs, and memories; my experiences abroad contributed to an overall change in my academic and personal goals and gave me the opportunity to experience a culture similar to that of my own.

As a whole, studying abroad was an invaluable and life-changing experience that enhanced my academic goals and inspired me to pursue international education as a secondary academic focus. I developed an appreciation for differences in cultures and an interest in how these differences affect interactions between people of different backgrounds. My study abroad experience in Peru has become a foundation for my academic and career goals, and has given me the drive to develop cultural knowledge and language proficiency to internationalize my education.



Community Learning is published by the Connecticut College Office of Volunteers for Community Service

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