The Formation of Community-Student Partnerships:
YouU in Guelph

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Program Description and Impact

YouU in Guelph is a program established by Student Life in Fall 2010 to address an expressed desire from students to build relationships with other students and community members while engaging in the economic, social, and cultural dimensions of life in the Guelph community.

Our team, comprised of one Coordinator and 4 student facilitators, accomplishes these objectives through directly connecting students with local not-for-profit community organizations called Neighbourhood Groups (NG) throughout the City of Guelph.

It is our intent to build a collaborative and long term mutually beneficial partnership for both the students involved and the NGs.

Activities in the Community

Table 1. Student participation in community events in Fall 2010 and Winter 2011 semesters

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Neighbourhood Group</th>
<th>Event/Activity</th>
<th># of Student Participants</th>
<th># of Returning Students</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Two Rivers</td>
<td>06/11/10- Food Drive + Fliers 19/11/10- Supper Social 23/11/10- Soup Social 06/02/11- Winterfest</td>
<td>19 7 3 8</td>
<td>4 6 3 1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>West Willow Woods</td>
<td>30/10/10- Pumpkin Carving 16/11/10- Holiday Hamper Registration 06/02/11- Winterfest</td>
<td>8 3 3</td>
<td>4 2 1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Grange Hill East</td>
<td>30/10/10- Filer Delivery 06/11/10- Clothing Drive 06/02/11- Winterfest</td>
<td>5 5 8</td>
<td>2 4 4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Waverly</td>
<td>11/23/10- Food Drive 06/02/11- Winterfest</td>
<td>5 10</td>
<td>4 1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Brant</td>
<td>06/02/11- Winterfest</td>
<td>3 1</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Parkwood Gardens</td>
<td>06/02/11- Winterfest</td>
<td>8 0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TOTAL</td>
<td>14 95 76</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Activities on Campus

- Three-day winter clothing and paper products drive for Waverly Neighbourhood Group in November, 2010
- Weekly winter clothing collection and promotion in January, 2011
- Promotional booth at pre-existing events

Learning Outcomes

- Consistency
  - A committed person or organization is needed to create consistency due to transient nature of students
  - Student facilitators and the YouU in Guelph Coordinator must be in regular contact with NGs

- Financial Sustainability
  - Low inputs and overhead costs allow for increased sustainability of the program

- Understanding the Needs and Constraints of NGs
  - NG staff are dedicated but have limited time; it is important to respect their time and work
  - Communicate in a way that suits the NGs, and be honest and clear about student involvement

- Program Flexibility
  - Any work of this nature must be highly flexible
  - Adapt and respond to the needs of students and NGs through revision, reflection, and consultation

- Building on Student Interests
  - Working with the talents, passions, and skills of students and grounding the model within an educational framework ensures more relevant and meaningful experiences
  - Program facilitators focus on the logistics with support from the Coordinator

- Student Flexibility
  - Students are a very transient population with busy and inconsistent schedules
  - Partnerships with students require diverse options that work to decrease barriers to their involvement and optimize opportunities for learning and development

- Interactive Involvement
  - Students value connecting and interacting with community members
  - Providing students with the opportunity to actively engage with community members encourages commitment and continued community involvement

- Engaging Student Groups
  - Connecting student groups that have already been formed on campus is more effective than trying to form new groups of individuals
  - Students are more likely to participate in events with people they know or share something in common with

Testimonials

“We are still receiving donations and increasing interest with regard to our food cupboard. I feel this has been a great reflection upon all the flyers that you and both your teams delivered. We certainly could not have done this without you; what a gift.”

Carleen, Gunn-Carr, Community Development Worker: Grange Hill East

“The delivery of the pamphlets by the students which outlined the services our Neighbourhood Group offers reached families we never would have otherwise had contact with; some first time families both came to access the food cupboard, and others came to give donations.”

Michelle Pilgrim, Community Development Worker: Two Rivers & Waverley

“Thank you for the team of volunteers!... Besides helping, they seemed to have a lot of fun and it was an important part of setting the tone for a fun afternoon... we hope the students will want to do it again!”

Rhonda Alger, Winterfest Organizer

“I loved helping and I would do it again in a heartbeat. I would recommend this to all students. I really enjoyed how it was hands on and that we actually got to interact with the community.”

Student

Our Models

- University Students
- Neighbourhood Groups
- Skills and Resources
- Expressed Needs
- YouU in Guelph
- Meaningful Community Engagement

Next Steps and Future Plans

- Build awareness on campus and continue to promote YouU in Guelph to students.
- Expand program to other NGs as more students become involved.
- Continue to develop relationships with NGs and the community to respond to needs.
- Develop increased student participation in after-school programs.
- Promote community-service learning opportunities in courses and among faculty.
- Encourage students to complete independent study courses with a community focus.
- Explore opportunities for student involvement in long term research in NGs, such as needs assessments and program evaluations.