



SERVICE LEARNING

at Villa Maria College



Villa Maria College Service Learning Newsletter
Reflections of Villa Maria students leaving footprints in the community.

Villa Maria College students put the College's CORE VALUES into action through Service Learning.

Time devoted to Service Learning at Evergreen Health Services impacted my understanding of HIV/AIDS. I have learned that although treatment for the virus has come a long way, people need to become more aware of the facts and statistics about how HIV affects the body and help break the negative stigma associated with HIV. My Service Learning experience grew my understanding of diverse cultures and communities, and expanded my understanding of related social issues and their root causes.

- Ashton Chatley, Physical Therapist Assistant, Evergreen Health Services

I've always loved the SPCA and being able to volunteer for them was such a wonderful experience in which I was able to interact with other people who cared just as much about these animals as I do. Some of the animals come from hoarding, abusive, and neglectful situations. Just to show these animals any form of affection by letting them take their time and warm up to me, to belly rubs, snuggles, brushing, going for walks, and just spending time with them, which may be something that many of the animals aren't accustomed to, I was able to contribute to their well being. I also loved that I was able to apply my graphic design and photography background as a way to help animals get adopted and a way to promote the SPCA and promote charitable donations. I now see myself as someone who can help just by offering my services in any way they may need and I know I will always advocate the SPCA in Olean as a wonderful place to volunteer and adopt!

- Courtney Ewings, Graphic Design, SPCA



Blessed Angela Care Center

I had the wonderful opportunity to volunteer with Moving Miracles for my Service Learning experience, a truly amazing, non-profit organization. This organization works to give individuals of all ages, with mental or physical disabilities, the opportunity to enjoy every day, physical activities. I was able to assist professional dance instructors weekly (three classes total), encouraging the students to participate in dance class. At the end of the year, a recital was set up which every student participated in, regardless of their disability. This was such a wonderful experience for me. The genuine hugs and kisses I received were my rewards for being a volunteer. I have made friends with the students and their families. This is a perfect Service Learning site for students who want to learn about people, no matter what their abilities are.

- Alexandra Casarsa, Graphic Design, Moving Miracles



Feed My Starving Children

"I feel that I did my part to keep Buffalo beautiful and historically rich. As a designer, it was a wonderful experience learning about yet another possible career path that I could follow."

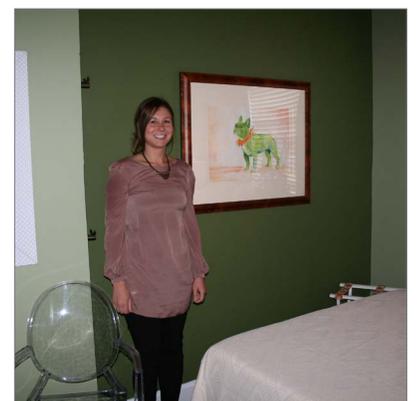
-Kayla Alba, Interior Design, Shea's Performing Art Center



Kevin Guest House

Working at the Just Buffalo Writing Center has helped me hone my leadership skills. My role was to lead groups of students in activities and guide them. The students are extremely competent and sometimes didn't need my help, but when a push was needed, I found myself willing to lead them towards what they needed to do. Even if it was just encouraging them to get up and read a piece they were initially unsure of. This aspect of mentoring and acting as an ally of sorts also boosted my communication skills and forced me come out of my shell and be a leader for exercises or conversations.

- Victoria Cobel, Creative Writing and Literature, Just Buffalo Writing Center



Ronald McDonald House



Squeaky Wheel

Meals on Wheels provides an extremely important role in providing food for residents of the Western New York area who have limitations on their physical mobility or are prevented from leaving their home due to a medical illness or limitation. I was able to contribute directly to my community and provide a necessity like food to people who are unable to drive or walk to a store. It felt like I was actually helping someone and giving something back. I met people in wheel chairs and walkers living on top floors of apartment complexes. I learned that their lives are not physically as easy as mine anymore, someday I will grow old with age as well, but while I am young I want to provide as much to my community as I can and help as many people as possible.

- Marc Noworyta, Animation,
Meals on Wheels

The restoration team at Shea's Performing Arts Center works full time to preserve the theater and repair the damage from the years of frequent use. I worked as part of a team throughout the semester learning about restoration, proper techniques, and actually doing repair work. Being able to feel like a part of history was a unique experience. I feel that I did my part to keep Buffalo beautiful and historically rich. As a designer it was a wonderful experience learning about yet another possible career path that I could follow. It was exciting to discover how restoration work is done and have the opportunity to work on it myself. This experience also strengthened my values in historical preservation. I have always had a love for history so being able to participate in Service Learning at Shea's is truly a special experience for me.

- Kayla Alba, Interior Design,
Shea's Performing Arts Center

Explore & More Children's Museum is a non-profit organization that serves the Western New York Community with high-quality play-based learning for children ages toddler to twelve. I helped the organization by being an extra set of hands on days where they offered free activities to the families that visit the museum. I enjoy working with the employees to create such a fun environment for all kinds of families. My experience while working with Explore & More was beneficial to me as a professional because with becoming a graphic designer, sometimes a child's imagination and creativity help spark and bring out some of my creativity and help me to see things in a way I may not have before. Communication skills, strengthening values, and respect for diversity were definitely benefits of working at Explore & More. The children that I met come from all different walks of life. Working with them has helped me realize that what we say and do around children impact how they act and react to the world around them.

- Maria Deveso, Graphic Design,
Explore & More Children's Museum



Architecture+Education partnership with Buffalo Public Schools

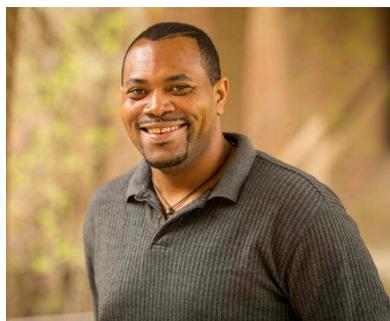


Festival of Trees

The Buffalo Wolverines Jr. Sports Organization is important because it provides opportunities for inner city youth to learn how to play football and cheerlead. This organization also installs positive values in each and every child that is a member of the organization, stressing the importance of not only football but academics and community service as well as providing the children with positive adult role models. This experience helped me learn how important volunteers are to children's youth organizations. I realized that children don't have a lot of positive things they like to be part of outside of school and I realized that I played a big part of making that possible for some of these kids. This experience impacted me professionally by allowing me to work closely with the pediatric population and allowed me to see some of the injuries that we learned about in PTA classes. I was also able to put some of the knowledge I learned in class to use by teaching the children different ways to properly stretch before practice and helping with strengthening exercises.

- Eboniece Hilliard, Physical Therapist Assistant,
Buffalo Wolverines Jr. Sports Organization

Service Learning Takeaways: Phillip Lee, '17



Creative Writing and Literature major Phillip Lee shares one of his most important takeaways from his Service Learning experience:

"Service Learning helped me to discover just how practical a liberal arts education is in the real world. Classes I had only considered a welcome change from my major proved especially and surprisingly useful during my internships and service work."

The Benefits of Service Learning

Service Learning enables students to apply course concepts to a real life experience that meets a community need and to reflect upon all aspects of that experience. Through Service Learning, the students are given the opportunity to live out the Catholic/Franciscan ideals of the College and put into practice the **Core Values of respect for human dignity, compassion, transformation, solidarity with the poor, and justice and peace.** Service Learning contributes to the growth of academic development and educational success in areas of career, personal, and social development.

Thank you to all of the organizations who partner with Villa Maria College:

Meals on Wheels
St. Lukes Mission
The Salvation Army
City Mission
Haven House
Gerard Place
Aspire of WNY
Leonardo DaVinci High School
Mary Queen of Angels School
Feed My Starving Children
Sister Josette Food Pantry
Buffalo Philharmonic Orchestra
The Buffalo History Museum
St. Christopher's Parish Outreach
Elderwood Assisted Living
Childcare Resource Network
Women and Children's Hospital
Junior League Decorator Show House
Festival of Trees
William-Emslie Branch YMCA
Resurrection Life Fellowship
Boys and Girls Club/Blackrock
HEART Cat Shelter
St. Paul's Lutheran Church
St. Vincent de Paul Society
Shea's Performing Arts Center
Theater of Youth
Dress for Success Buffalo
The Iroquois National Wildlife Preserve
Ladies of Charity
Evergreen Health Services
Ronald McDonald House
Explore and More Children's Museum
The Chapel at Crosspoint
Nativity of Our Lord Parish
DeGraff Memorial Hospital
The Special Olympics
Boy Scouts of America
Wesleyan Church of Hamburg
Western New York Books Arts Center
CEPA Gallery

Faculty Perspectives

"It was a wonderful experience to be a part of the Service Learning at Children's Hospital and Gerard Place. I enjoyed interacting with the students and the organization that they were giving back to. The most enjoyable part for me was to see how the students embraced what they were doing and really put their all into the tasks that they were completing."

-Professor Shantell Reid, Fashion Design and Merchandising



Villa Maria students participate in Service Learning activities at Women and Children's Hospital and Gerard Place in Buffalo, NY.

"The Interior Design program has truly been blessed to have students so willing to share their talents for the benefit of others less fortunate, from Junior League of Buffalo, to Habitat for Humanity to Architecture + Education. Helping others has shown our students the path to becoming good citizens and life long volunteers."

-Professor Sandra Reicis, Interior Design

"I have found Service Learning to be an indispensable tool in the classroom. It has made ethical theories and concepts concrete and real for students and has helped to make the Core Values and Franciscan heritage of the College practical and applicable in the real world. Our students are exposed to our community and gain an appreciation for its diversity. They are challenged to make positive and life-long contributions to the betterment of our society."

-Professor Dr. Donald Monnin, Philosophy and Religious Studies

Service Learning Requirements

All Service Learning requirements are designed in support of Villa Maria College's Mission and Core Values. Every student at Villa Maria College is required to complete two designated Service Learning courses to be eligible to graduate. Learn more about these requirements at VILLA.EDU.

More Information

You can learn more about Service Learning at Villa Maria by contacting:

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