



Stony Brook Serves

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AmeriCorps Spotlight: Kenneth Yee

by Victoria Vollaro

For those that don't know, AmeriCorps, a scholarship program at Stony Brook University, is a nationally recognized initiative. Open to undergraduate and graduate students, its members are given the resources they need to become involved with the issues that matter most to them.

This issue's spotlight shines on Kenneth Yee, who found out about AmeriCorps through the Career Center right here on Stony Brook's campus. He is involved in the AmeriCorps State & National program. This requires a yearly 300-hour commitment. It can be done either full-time or part-time. This kind of flexibility allows Kenneth to complete the program while taking classes.

When asked what sparked his interest in this organization, Kenneth replied, "I thought that by joining AmeriCorps, I could really set myself apart from everyone else. I fully committed to the program because I wanted to actively make a change in the community. It is one thing to say you want to

do something, but it's another to actually do it." It is this attitude and drive that has helped Kenneth, along with his colleagues, help those who need it most.

Kenneth and the rest of the members were extremely involved with Hurricane Sandy Relief across New York City and Long Island. Yee explains, "I mucked out houses in the Far Rockaways [and] helped with debris removal, mold compression, and demolition. The work I did allowed home owners to move back into their houses quicker, it allowed for families to restore balance in their daily lives." He also volunteered at the Far Rockaways Action Center, helping to package and distribute food and supplies to families affected by the hurricane.

Through all of the community service, Kenneth's favorite part is meeting the people that he helps. He says, "They're always so grateful and happy that you're there. It means a lot to people when complete strangers go out of their way to help them."

Kenneth explained that learning about and applying for AmeriCorps is very easy. Information is available through the Career Center's website at www.stonybrook.edu/career.



Photo courtesy of Kenneth Yee.

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Serving Abroad: Apeksha Vora

by Olivia Basileo



Apeksha Vora with women from the community of Piriati Embera. One woman braids Apeksha's hair while the student rests from building a greenhouse.

This past winter break, Stony Brook student, Apeksha Vora, traveled to Panama with the Environmental Brigades to serve a local community. She and thirteen other students, along with a professor from Stony Brook, spent a week in a rural community called Piriati Embera, where they experienced a very different lifestyle. Their destination was entirely rural. Vora says, “Electricity and water [weren’t] always guaranteed in this Community, unlike the U.S. where we don’t have a shortage of either. [Their] roads were very bumpy and there were stray dogs almost everywhere.”

Apeksha and her colleagues worked one-on-one with the families in the community. Their main objective was to help the people, mostly farmers, make their land more

fertile and increase their crop productivity. Through daily presentations, Apeksha encouraged the people to grow different kinds of crops and taught them how to take better care of the land, so that they might be more successful. In addition, she and her colleagues took on a very draining project—building a greenhouse. Apeksha says that building the greenhouse was the most physically demanding part of her trip, but it was also very rewarding once it was finished.

Apeksha Vora says her most memorable moment of the trip happened on a hot day while she was helping build the greenhouse. When she sat down for a break and moved to tie back her hair, an older woman of the tribe immediately took her hair and began to braid it for her. Vora says, “I felt like I was accepted to be there and welcomed in their community. This was a very special moment for me.”

The people Apeksha interacted with, an indigenous tribe, are very traditional. While the women tend to the home and craft-making, the men hunt. Both men and women work on the farms. It was the people’s sincere desire to improve, learn, and accept her help, that motivated Apeksha to work as hard as she did. She describes, “I could see the appreciation the community members had for us brigaders being there.” Their gratitude drove her forward and proved her efforts worthwhile. Her greatest accomplishment, she says, was being able to give daily presentations to the people. Helping them learn and answering their questions made the trip worthwhile. The knowledge she gave to the people of Piriati Embera would be put to good use.

Apeksha embarked on her journey to Panama with the desire to see the world and help those in need. What it gave her in return was a sense of accomplishment, unforgettable experiences, and a deep gratitude for luxuries at home she had previously taken for granted. Serving abroad was a brave and truly inspiring act. Apeksha says, “The bond I built with the families there are irreplaceable,” and she hopes to visit them again one day. She also looks forward to visiting many other places to make an impact and spread her love for healthy, sustainable living. This trip has confirmed Apeksha Vora’s plans to become a Physician Assistant. She is currently working on her Health Science major and Biology minor, and she has her mind set on big plans for the future.

Sigma Delta Tau Sorority

by Kristina Kuznetsova



Sigma Tau Delta at their 2013 Involvement Fair.

Every group and organization at Stony Brook strives to bring attention to and spread awareness of issues in society today through their support of prevalent causes. The situation is no different for the sisters of Sigma Delta Tau sorority, who believe in the importance of not taking anything for granted. They derive their strength from the notion that they are making an impact, no matter how small, on the lives of others. Sigma Delta Tau is an on-campus sorority dedicated to raising money for a variety of causes, such as child abuse prevention, breast cancer awareness, and lupus. This group operates as a big family, maintaining a close relationship even after graduation. As a result, Sigma Delta Tau members work hard to support any causes that their fellow

group members have been affected by, either on a personal level or through familial connections. Special attention is given to matters for which there is very little support.

Money is raised for off-campus organizations through fundraisers and walks hosted by the group. What is perhaps the most frequent fundraiser, Prevent Child Abuse America, is held every week. This is an organization that “works towards building awareness on child abuse and neglect.” Money is raised primarily through tabling and occasional bake sales at the Student Activities Center on Wednesdays during Campus Lifetime.

At the end of the semester, in addition to sending a check to PCAA, members participate in Pinwheels for Prevention. This event takes place in April, which is designated as “Child Abuse Prevention Month.” It is centered around encouraging students to take an oath to prevent child abuse, and is named for the symbol of the cause: the pinwheel. During the event, students who take the pledge have the opportunity to sign their names on pinwheels that are then placed in a location on campus. Sigma Delta Tau also teams up with other groups on campus, hosting events that educate students.

Students who would like to learn more and are thinking about joining Sigma Delta Tau can attend Universal Night on February 11th at the Student Activities Center in Ball Room A. The time for the event will be announced at a later date. For more information, feel free to contact Christina Geraghty at christina_geraghty@ymail.com.

International Students Organization (ISO)

by Yaël Saint-Armand

Stony Brook University’s International Student Organization, founded in the fall of 2011, is a campus group that supports international students as they experience American culture and campus life. Out of the 24,017 students that attend Stony Brook, 3,611 of them, representing 110 countries, are international students. That is to say, 15 percent of the student body resides in another country. I spoke with Yany Wu Feng, President of ISO, to get a deeper understanding of the organization and how it works.

“It stands for International Students Organization. We advocate for international students to integrate into the Stony Brook campus life experience. It was officially started in Fall 2011. We started this club with the mission to help international students to experience the American cultures more, and to get more involved at Stony Brook University.”

The mission of the International Student Organization is to provide a common ground for international students to enable interaction with other international students and American students alike, as well as to foster understanding about diversity of various cultures. (Continued on Next Page)

International Students Organization, Cont'd

by Yaël Saint-Armand



Photo courtesy of International Students Organization (ISO).

ISO also gives a helping hand to incoming students in their transition from their home life to the new atmosphere at Stony Brook University. The final goal for ISO is to address the needs of international students so that they can achieve their goals and improve their academic performance at Stony Brook University.

“ISO tries to provide an avenue to bridge the gap between international students and American students by collaborating with other clubs, organizations, and departments in events that can draw together students from all around the world, achieving a

significant cultural exchange experience for them.”

“We offer a number of programs and activities that are open to the entire campus to join and have fun while developing their teamwork and leadership skills. Such opportunities include the English Pal Program, off-campus trips, the involvement fair, the Hurricane Sandy Relief Food Drive, Food Night, etc.”

“All undergraduates of Stony Brook University may join the association. There are three forms of membership: new, active, and inactive. New members have not yet attended three general body meetings within one semester. Upon completion, one becomes an active member. Inactive members are active members who have missed three general body meetings. Those considered active are also granted voting privileges within the association.”

The organization meets Tuesdays at 8:30PM in SAC 306. They also have a Facebook page and website, be sure to show your support! Visit their Facebook page at <https://www.facebook.com/stonybrookISO/>. You can also check out their website at <http://stonybrook.collegiatelink.net/organization/internationalstudentorganization>.

Sports Club Council and the Community

by Lisa Crimando



Team members at a recent toy drive.

Stony Brook's Sports Club Council ardently participates in community service. Although the Council is a relatively new organization, their outreach to those in need is unwavering. Community service provides aid for those in need, as well as allowing for a sense of accomplishment among active individuals.

Community service is an important ideal for the Council. Those members who partake in the organization's outreach programs will aid the less fortunate. While providing aid, members can contribute to a higher cause. The underlying feeling of accomplishment that

develops from community service could develop a strong sense of respect in those who administer aid.
(Continued on Next Page)

Sports Club Council, Cont'd

by Lisa Crimando

The organization ultimately hastens the need for other campus community outreach programs because through pooled resources, "a great deal of good can be done." Through their communal efforts, most Campus organizations could create a stronger, more amiable community. If organizations would participate in at least one community service activity each semester, their members could help create a pleasant living environment.

The Council performs many community service projects. Organization members realized their need to help those who lost their livelihoods and belongings during Hurricane Sandy. Last semester's food drive raised funds for those who suffered from the catastrophic event. The Council can effectively change the community since the organization is always growing in size and number. Some members would like to host blood drives or winter coat drives. The organization's growing numbers would permit an opportunity for members to enthusiastically help those in need.

The Council aids those with medical as well as financial needs. Some members of the organization participated in the Stony Brook University Bone Marrow Drive. Members realized the importance of contributing to a cause, and believed they could raise awareness about saving lives.

Hurricane Sandy: Volunteer Reflections

Many students have been volunteering their time to assist with Hurricane Sandy relief efforts. Here are a few of their stories:

My name is Erin Kunz, and I am the Chief of Operations of the Stony Brook Campus-Community Emergency Response Team (or SB C-CERT). SB C-CERT was able to assist during Superstorm Sandy in many ways. First, we were put on standby, meaning members of our group all across campus were given radios, flashlights, traffic vests, and other equipment to be ready at a call's notice. We were on standby for many hours when we got the call to get to Chapin - where we helped evacuate some of the apartments that were damaged



Photo courtesy of Erin Kunz.

from falling trees. It was very exciting, and almost scary, as the roads were covered with fallen trees and the wind and rain was treacherous. Later that night, there was a blackout across campus. SB C-CERT was there to help shut off ovens, check stuck elevators, and just keep people safe and inside. It was nothing short of an exciting night. It was a valuable learning experience for me and our team members - we got to put our training to use and work effectively as a team with other emergency responder groups, Camp Res, and UPD. We are always glad to assist the campus during emergencies and large events, and this was truly a unique experience. SB C-CERT, though experiences like that of the

- Erin Kunz, SB C-CERT Chief of Operations, double major in biology and anthropology, Senior

Hurricane Sandy Reflections, Cont'd

I engaged in cleaning up a house near the south shore of Long Island, because I felt that people that suffered the disaster with me need help. This the most American spirit I have felt in the half year since I came to this country. – **Qifeng Gary Zhou, 1st Year MBA student**

I have collaborated with Island Harvest to conduct a food drive project in Stony Brook University. I worked with members of my club, International Students Organization (ISO), to advertise the project, and collected donation food all around campus. The experience was very significant for me because I improved my ability to help others in a more diverse context, and at the same time improving my leadership and social skill.



Brent and Megan Wilson; photo courtesy of Victoria Vollaro.

a bar, Shine's, located on California Street, that was almost completely destroyed. The owners, Brent and Megan Wilson, who live upstairs, cleaned as best they could, rounded up some grills, and served lunch and drinks to anyone who wanted it, including FEMA workers- free of charge. They even served as place for people to gather, enjoy donated food, and seek refuge during the aftermath of the storm. The people in the area just tried to lend a helping hand, dry socks, or a bottle of water to everyone else. It was amazing and beautiful to see strangers come together in the worst of times and make the best of it. “ - **Victoria Vollaro, English Education major, Junior**

Through volunteering in disaster relief projects, I have broadened my sense of community service, and all the little steps that we can take to enhance social quality in the community. I was inspired by the myriad organizations that work very hard to make a change in society, and I will carry on their mission to help as much as I can to achieve a positive social evolution. -

– **Yany Wu Feng, anthropology major, Junior**

"After spending some time in Long Beach after Sandy, I saw first hand the definition of community. Neighbors helping neighbors, even though their houses were destroyed as well. There is

Communal Love for Service

By Victoria Vollaro

Even with Valentine's Day behind us, people everywhere are showing love for those around them. This edition of the Student and Staff testimonials deals with just that--love for the community. Our participants were asked to answer this question:

"What acts of volunteer or community service do you love to see happening around you?"

"Community gardens! They are a great way to grow free vegetables and fruit to share with food pantries, where people usually only have the option of getting canned and dried food. I am very lucky to have gotten to participate in the work of LICAN, the Long Island Community Agriculture Network, which has been starting community gardens in Nassau and Suffolk County. They provide mentors to help teach you how to garden. My group grew over a hundred pounds of peppers, eggplant, beans, kale, and other good stuff that we gave to the Huntington Family Service League to give away. If that sounds like fun to your readers, they'd love to have more volunteers. Their URL is "<http://www.lican.org/LICAN/Home.html>"

- **Nancy Tomes, Professor of History**

Communal Love for Service, Cont'd

By Victoria Vollaro



Photo courtesy of Nancy Tomes.

"There are a lot of retired members of the community that volunteer their time at Atlantis Marine World. They are part of the education staff, so their job is to walk around, talk to the guests, and teach them about the exhibits. It's 100% volunteer. It's also nice to see because you can tell that the volunteers are having so much fun learning about the animals, as well as teaching people about them." - **Jeannine Vestuto, Marine Vertebrate Biology Major**



Photo courtesy of Jeannine Vestuto.



English PALS Program at Stony Brook University.

Photo courtesy of Bente Videbaek.

"At SBU, we have a large contingent of foreign students who come over to study and are not always as prepared to study in an English speaking country as they probably should be. We have the possibility to volunteer to work with these students, both to help them learn English as it is spoken "for real" and in the classroom, but also to help them understanding (popular) culture." - **Bente Videbaek, Lecturer of English**

Submit Your Articles!

The Career Center encourages students, faculty, and staff to get involved with community service activities. Our publication is the place to share your stories with the Stony Brook community! Submit articles and photos, share information about projects, and list upcoming events. Please send all submissions to **Taryn Kutujian, Internship Consultant, Career Center**, at taryn.kutujian@stonybrook.edu. Be sure to include your name, phone number, and email address.