



Getting Involved – Student Volunteering Week 2010

Student Volunteering Week will take place between **22-28 February 2010**. The week was established in 2001 and is now an annual fixture in the calendar for the student volunteering sector raising the national profile of Further and Higher Education volunteering.¹

V, the **National Young Volunteers Service** thinks that raising awareness of the benefits of volunteering for students comes at a particularly pertinent time with graduates facing the worst job market in decades and local residents often sceptical about the value of students' community contribution.

V's **CEO Terry Ryall** said, "Student Volunteering Week is a great way to bring to life the great work that young volunteers are doing across the country. It also introduces people to the added value that volunteering can give you alongside your studies. Given the current climate students need to be more equipped than ever to compete for jobs and volunteering is a valuable asset to have alongside academic achievement."

This is why **V** has established projects such as '**vinspired students**': a programme encouraging universities to recognise the real value of student volunteering as part of their core activity. Working in partnership with local residents and grassroots community organisations, the programme hopes to take more active steps to integrate students with the local community and to address local priorities.

Ten successful pilot projects are already happening at universities across the country ranging from an arts project at the University of Northampton that aims to encourage creative arts students to volunteer their time to inspire underachieving local youngsters; to an intergenerational programme at the Royal Holloway, University of London involving a local residential home and a number of local schools. While each project is unique they all promote innovation, by drawing on the ideas and talents of students and tackling barriers to volunteering and community inclusion. (*For a full summary of projects – please see notes to editors.)

Jamie Darwen, vinspiredstudents Project Manager said: "Volunteering is a fantastic way for students to develop skills, meet new people, and apply their learning in the 'real world'. The vinspired students programme shows that students, through their passion and energy, can make a really positive contribution in their local communities."

Students can benefit from volunteering in a number of ways:

- By building up their CV to enter the job market, volunteering is great for developing skills and gaining valuable work experience.
- By making the most of their spare time at university or college; volunteering shows prospective employers that students have initiative and drive which might help them secure that first job.
- Or simply, by using their time constructively while working out future plans; volunteering is a great stop gap to try out new ideas, meet new people and broaden horizons.

Research also shows that employers think young people engaged in volunteering are more employable.²

James Caan (Entrepreneur & Dragon's Den Star): "In these financially challenging times it has never been more important for young job seekers to stand out and be noticed by employers."

Martha Lane Fox (Business Woman & lastminute.com founder)

"I salute anybody who volunteers. Not only does it give you valuable experience but it makes you eminently more employable. And who knows you might even have some fun too!"

¹ Volunteering England

² Research: Employer Survey: Attitudes to Volunteering and Career Progression

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Notes to Editors:

v, **The National Young Volunteers Service** aims to inspire a new generation of volunteers (aged 16-25) in England. It does this by funding voluntary organisations all over England to create inspiring, diverse opportunities and by helping to overcome barriers that stop people from taking action to improve lives, communities and the planet. v's aim is to create a culture where volunteering comes naturally and where the benefits of volunteering are understood and celebrated.

**Visit: www.vinspired.com for more information on what we do and how we do it.
(including full copies of our research)**

The **vinspired students** programme has been set up to provide compelling evidence of the impact of volunteering on students, communities and universities and to encourage universities to recognise the value that student volunteering can provide for their core strategies, including teaching and learning, the student experience, and wider engagement with the public. The programme is being run by the National Co-ordinating Centre for Public Engagement (NCCPE), and has been funded by v, the national youth volunteering service.

For more information about the work of the NCCPE or the vinspired students programme, please visit www.publicengagement.ac.uk or contact nccpe.studentvol@uwe.ac.uk

vinspiredstudents University Projects include:

1. University of Bath Students' Union – “Oldfield Park Growing Together”

A project (in response to a local lack of allotments) that seeks to match underused student household gardens with local people who wish to grow their own food.

2. University of Brighton – “On Our Doorsteps Volunteering Project”

A project that will enable students and local residents from the immediate deprived local area to work together to bring improvements to the local community to benefit everyone.

3. University of Derby Students' Union – “two to the left, two to the right”

A project based around the very simple idea of encouraging students to get to know their neighbours, ‘two to the left and two to the right’. (Skill share ideas, community newsletter and local celebrations etc)

4. Newman University College – “Newman Community Volunteers”

A project working in partnership with the local Extended Schools cluster to include volunteering activity in schools, children’s centres, after school clubs and holiday provision, libraries and open spaces etc

5. University of Northampton – “ArtBlast”

A project that aims to encourage creative arts students to volunteer their time to inspire underachieving young people to return to study or training and re-engage with their community.

6. University of Plymouth Students' Union – “ViP:VIP (Volunteer in Plymouth : Very Important Project)”

A project complimenting current student-led activities with a specific focus on the need for inclusion of disabled students in both the student population and the wider community.

7. Royal Holloway, University of London – “Intergenerational Reminiscence Project”

An intergenerational project involving Age Concern Runnymede, a local residential home, the local daycentre in Egham and a number of local schools overseen by students from the university.

8. University of Southampton – “Integrating student coursework and volunteering”

A project offering voluntary work as optional coursework thus enabling students to achieve their educational objectives in an innovative way.

9. University of Warwick – “Double You”

A project that aims to create a new relationship between Warwick students and the community, which promotes collaboration, flexibility and innovation through the use of key community partners.

10. University of York – “Kids College Transport and Cookery School modules”

A project developing innovative and exciting learning modules for disadvantage children working closely with key business supporters, schools and university departments.