

Students Encouraged to Get Involved

SECOND ANNUAL VOLUNTEER FAIR SWEEPS LECTURE CENTER

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The State University of New York (SUNY) at New Paltz held its second annual Volunteer Fair in the Lecture Center north and south lobbies and in the Humanities 105 lobby on Tuesday, Sept. 21. Hosted by the Career Resource Center, students made a quick visit to learn more about many of the different volunteer opportunities on campus.

Fifty organizations came together to educate and recruit students for local, national and international volunteer opportunities.

"The volunteer fair is a great way to bring students and community organizations together," said Service Learning Coordinator Erica Wagner.

The Alzheimer's Association, Clearwater, Big Brothers Big Sisters of Ulster County and the New Paltz Youth Program were among the many organizations who offered SUNY New Paltz students volunteer opportunities.

Many organizations offered their services in being a part of a child's life, like a big sister or brother. Other services, such as the Court Appointed Special Advocates for Children (CASA), offered volunteering services where an undergraduate or graduate stu-

dent or volunteer can speak for a child and know the best interest of a child who has been abused or neglected in their lifetime.

Alyssa Field, a first-year student, attended the volunteer fair.

"What I would have liked to see was some opportunities to volunteer on-campus, especially for students without cars here," said Field. "Overall, the information I gathered while at the fair was useful in choosing a volunteer project."

The Volunteer Fair served as an opportunity for many students to get involved in their community. Although many students, especially first-year students, may not have the time because they are still adjusting to a new atmosphere, Wagner said she believes that volunteering in one's community is important.

"Volunteering is an opportunity to get involved in your community; to make a difference, learn new things, meet new people and have fun at the same time," Wagner said.

Vera De Leon, second-year student, volunteered last year, as an Emerging Leader. De Leon was required to complete 10 hours of community service per semester. Vera had volunteered in both UNICEF and the Tap Water Project.

"The Tap Water Project consisted of me walking to different restaurants and asking the owners if they would ask their customers if they would pay a dollar for what would regularly be free tap water," said De Leon. "The money being paid would be later on used for underdeveloped countries who did not have clean water."

Although it was a requirement, De Leon found volunteering in her community to be an experience she would never forget.

"I gained more perspective on the real world and the fact that I might have something others are dying for, makes me aware of what I have and now I appreciate it more. This experience had also made me want to help out more in my community and globally by taking small steps, which inspired me to later on volunteer in Puerto Rico as well," she said.

Wagner suggested that volunteering could be beneficial in exploring careers, making contracts, sharing knowledge and learning new skills that can be useful for the future.

"My advice is that every student should volunteer," said Wagner. "Even a few hours each month can make a large difference to someone in your community."



PHOTO BY LAURA LUENGAS

The second annual Volunteer Fair was held to serve as an opportunity for students to get involved.