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1,200 Volunteers, 53 Local Orgs, 37 School Buses... One Day of Service

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1,200 Volunteers, 53 Local Orgs, 37 School Buses... One Day of Service

Eighth annual Community Connections mobilizes incoming students during their first days on campus



August 27, 2012

No tornados, tropical storms or thunder and lightning to dampen spirits this year.

One year after Hurricane Irene forced a change of plans to the daylong intro to service for the first time in its history, Community Connections is again a major presence across Rhode Island and Southeastern Massachusetts today, with more than 1,200 volunteers working at sites stretching from Little Compton to Charlestown to 50-plus spots along the way.

In what's become one of the largest service programs in the region – and the only of its kind among colleges in Rhode Island – incoming Roger Williams students are partnering with more than 50 community organizations to do everything from cleaning beaches to running bingo at senior centers to doing art projects with developmentally disabled adults.

Launched in 2005, Community Connections is part of RWU's orientation program for new students. It is designed to introduce them to the Roger Williams core value of commitment to community through service and encourage them to become engaged members of what will be their new home for the next four years.

"To me, it speaks volumes that we're introducing students to service before classes have even started," says KC Ferrara, director of the University's Feinstein Center for Service Learning and Community Engagement. "Community Connections is the foundation for what will be layers upon layers of community engagement during their time at RWU."

Since the program's inception, community service hours at Roger Williams continue to increase every year – during the 2011-12 academic year, students, faculty and staff at the University completed more than 60,000 hours of service. And given that only 6,000 of those hours are logged during Community Connections, Ferrara says the event clearly inspires a culture of service that extends long beyond the introductory experience.

"We get a bumper crop of new volunteers at the Feinstein Center in the weeks after the event," she says. "The opportunities to continue to serve are plentiful – from our office to the Community Partnerships Center, the athletics team to clubs and organizations and more."

For those out and about in Rhode Island today, the Roger Williams students will be hard to miss – whether they are pulling weeds at the Bristol Industrial Park with Mosaico CDC, cleaning emergency vehicles at the Warren Police Department or lunching with residents at the Jewish Seniors Agency of Rhode Island, their bright yellow t-shirts are a sure giveaway.

Do you want to get involved in community service at RWU? Visit the Feinstein Center website at <http://rwu.edu/campus-life/career-community/fsl>.

Slideshow from Sachuest Point National Wildlife Refuge in Middletown, R.I.

Slideshow from The Steel Yard in Providence, R.I.

Slideshow from Fort Barton in Tiverton, R.I.

Slideshow from Mount Hope Farm in Bristol, R.I.

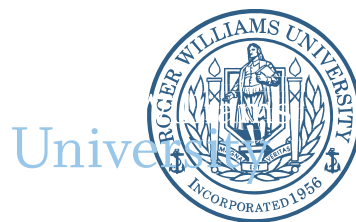
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