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## VCU Gives Back

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# VCU Gives Back

## **Team Members**

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Sue Ann Messmer

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Dr. Chuck Klink

## **Project Description**

We propose the establishment of an organization wide series of community service events beginning at homecoming and culminating in April during National Volunteer Week with a large scale event, in an effort to bring a sense of unity among the students, faculty and staff within the organization while helping the communities surrounded by VCU.

## **Project Goals**

- Create an infrastructure to engage students, staff, and faculty in community service activities
- Ensure that events and ongoing opportunities are relevant and welcomed by the community
- Assess success from the community partners standpoint in addition to that of volunteers
- Provide positive “bonding” experience and learning opportunities for students and employees
- Identify a structure that is scalable to larger themes and groups of participants
- Integrate formal recognition methods for both students and VCU employees
- Provide leadership opportunities for students and employees within the structure
- Continually improve the program through assessment and redesign

## **Project Strategies**

- Establish one oversight area/Department that is responsible for contacting agencies and coordinating the service activities. This Department will act as the intermediary between the VCU volunteers and community organizations.

- Establish a Service/Volunteer Database for registering volunteer opportunities, volunteer participation, and tracking activities over time

### **Action Steps**

- Develop theme for each year that all projects, both large and small, can revolve around
- Establish a marketing and promotion plan
- Organize a kick-off event that would have a speaker and service activity to build enthusiasm while providing an opportunity to pledge hours for upcoming periods
- Slate of organization/agency defined volunteer descriptions and counts, including leaders to staff and manage the events and oversee volunteers
- Recognition: Track volunteer hours of activity in order to incorporate in at least some of the following recognition methods: transcript records, peer recognition, honor walls, certificates, commencement announcements, tenure and promotion documentation, employee work plans, etc.
- Have a “closing” event to thank and recognize participants and organizations that were helped and distribute appreciation certificates
- Re-evaluate the program on a routine basis and determine whether there still a drive on campus to volunteer and where does the need for volunteers lie

### **Process Observations**

There was an effort already underway to begin a project of this nature, we as a group have simply defined and outlined one potential way to create an Organization wide community service event.

This GEHLI team project year was like no other, each team was given a topic to produce a project about which has clients and stakeholders.

### **Recommendations**

- Determine where the responsibility should rest for this project
- Determine how to incorporate as many as possible of our faculty, staff, and students from both campuses
- Either purchase or develop a database that will track both the community organizations that are seeking volunteers and the individuals on campus who would like to volunteer

### **Conclusion**

VCU and its neighboring communities could positively benefit from an organized community service program. This would provide the opportunity for community organizations to have a single contact that could connect them with willing volunteers to assist with their needs. Conversely, it will provide a large population of individuals who have the desire to help but may not know which outlet to follow. It would also better

ensure VCU's neighbors that the University and Health System are not here to interrupt their community, but instead the Organization wants to lend a helping hand where it is necessary.