

WNYSLC General Meeting  
July 16, 2009  
3 – 4 p.m.  
Olmsted Center for Sight

#### Introduction of the Olmsted Center for Sight and the Statler Center for Hospitality:

The Olmsted Center for Sight and Statler Center for Hospitality is over 100 years old. Imtiaz Khan runs the contact center, where blind and visually impaired individuals gain call center experience to help build up their resume. Linda coordinates the Olmsted Center's rehabilitation services. These services are provided in 8 counties and serve people of all ages. A holistic approach is taken with each individual, in order to best determine their abilities and limitations. Services then include college and/or work preparation and financial management. Many volunteer opportunities are available. Chaunci Hinton from the Statler Center for Hospitality helps identify career possibilities for individuals with visual or physical disabilities and has worked with Dr. Till at Buffalo State College's hospitality program in the past.

#### Coalition Updates:

Planning is underway for the 2009 WNYSLC Service-Learning Conference to be held October 23<sup>rd</sup> and 24<sup>th</sup> at Medaille College. Proposals are currently being accepted through July 31<sup>st</sup> for presentations and workshops. The conference theme is "Partnering for Success: The Keys to Effective Service-Learning." Last year, approximately 125 people attended from throughout the region.

On September 16<sup>th</sup>, Kathleen Maas Weigert will be speaking about social justice and service-learning at Canisius College. The presentation, question and answers and small breakout sessions will be from 3:30 p.m. until 5:30 p.m. at the Grupp Fireside Lounge in the Student Center.

The WNYSLC Database needs projects and information for service-learning opportunities. In order to be considered for the Fall 2009, projects must be entered by July 31<sup>st</sup>. The deadline for Spring 2010 projects is November 15<sup>th</sup>. The WNYSLC staff is available to help at any time or provide further instructions.

#### Financial Literacy and Service-Learning:

Diane Bessel from the CASH (Creating Assets, Savings and Hope) Coalition started by introducing her organization. CASH is comprised of over 60 member organizations dedicated to promoting financial stability. The goals are to help people get income, keep their income, and grow their income through businesses and investment. The CASH Coalition has a number of programs, including:

- 1.) Tax preparation – Approximately 43,000 returns have been filed resulting in \$50 million in returns for low-income people. The tax preparation is a great

- opportunity for service-learning students to interact with people from throughout the community, as there are typically 12-14 sites that provide the tax preparation.
- 2.) Financial Education – Volunteers are trained to give presentations throughout the community.
  - 3.) Cash Coaches – Volunteers provide financial coaching on budgeting, financial resources, identifying goals and helping people understand the resources available to them.
  - 4.) Poverty simulation opportunities – Individuals are taken through a realistic, impoverished situation to understand the influences and decisions that must be made.

Sharon Benz from the Center for Sustainable Communities spoke about the Income TAXI. The Income TAXI uses the old bookmobile to do mobile tax preparation throughout the City of Buffalo. Accounting students from Daemen and UB provide tax preparation services for people with income of up to \$43,000. In addition to the services provided to the community, the students get good exposure to the community as well as get to see a variety of tax situations.

Sandy Becker with the Belmont Shelter Corporation spoke about the services they provide, including Section 8 housing rental programs, HUD housing counseling programs and financial education. The financial education focuses on banking, investing and other financial management classes. Another program Belmont institutes is the SNAP Safety Net, which provides life skill trainings at community centers to help individuals set goals and learn the services that are available for them to access. In the past, students have done research on the types of speeches that were needed and developed presentations. Students have also helped to follow up with individuals after they have received some training to see how they are progressing on their goals.

Lisa Scherer spoke about Junior Achievement. Junior Achievement uses business volunteers or students to go into K-12 classrooms to provide financial and business education. Each volunteer is handed a curriculum to help in their presentation. Students gain a great deal from this experience, as they can network, boost their resume and reflect on their desires to teach. Junior Achievement works throughout Western New York and provided 660 programs last year.

Marilynn Fleckenstein spoke about the VITA program at Niagara University. This tax preparation program has been on-going since 1992, using junior accounting students to help prepare tax returns. Approximately 5,000 returns are prepared every year. The program has received two awards by the IRS.

Question and Answer:

Q: For Junior Achievement – When do you do the volunteer training?

A: All volunteers must attend a 45 minute orientation. This can be done with a group or individually and is offered throughout the year. Each volunteer is also expected to review and adhere to a code of conduct.

Q: For Junior Achievement – Can volunteers choose the schools they work at?

A: Yes. The curriculum complies with the NYS Learning Standards.

Q: For Junior Achievement – What disciplines do you take students from?

A: Business, education, accounting, social work.

Q: What are the service-learning opportunities for other non-accounting students?

A: Non-accounting students can serve in a variety of capacities, including as cash coaches, classroom volunteers, and can provide financial education.

Other Information and Thoughts:

Cash coaching requires 8-10 hours of training and works best if an organization is paired with a class. The coaches work with clients of all ages. The organization would work to find the most appropriate pairings for the students/clients.

The average college student graduates with \$27,000 in school loans and \$5,000 in credit card loans.

Right now, financial planning is getting a lot of attention.

Students benefit from the service in multiple ways, including learning to get a grasp on their own financial situation.

The poverty simulation exercise can use students from many disciplines. The largest group it can accommodate is 72 participants. The simulation takes 2.5- 3 hours total, including de-briefing. At present, there is no cost for the simulation. Community members and students can take on the roles with the simulation and help in the planning process.