Featured Article

Jin Sook Park ('15) is a volunteer at Treehouse. She shared with the Smith community her volunteer work and activity at Treehouse.

Have a story to tell?
Please contact Aixin Li at ali31@smith.edu to featured on the CSO Contributor.

The Treehouse Foundation: The Definition of a Community

By Jin Sook Park '15

The Treehouse Foundation is a close-knit community organization that provides a support network for foster children and their families. As a volunteer at Treehouse, I tutor students in subjects such as reading and math. Volunteering at Treehouse is fun and stress-free and it is unique in that I am more like a companion rather than a tutor to the students at Treehouse.

The small group of Smith volunteers and I look forward to interacting with the students at the Treehouse community center. Our interactions range from helping them with any homework, projects, summer program or college applications, reading books, playing games, to just simply listening and catching up on the past week. For me, the best interaction is helping students with homework while discovering their interests and hobbies. When I worked on figuring out fractions with an eager 11-year old student, I learned that one of her favorite Disney characters is Elsa from Frozen and her favorite music is by One Direction.
Smith. The CSO wishes you a happy new year.

The second CSO Community Service Fair of the academics year will be on Wednesday, February 4 at 4 pm in the CC Carroll Room. Please come and meet with agency representatives. Pizza will be provided.

While tutoring at Treehouse, I learned that many foster care children encounter hardships in school, have trouble with attachment and abandonment. Therefore, it is very important for all the volunteers to stay committed, be present at Treehouse weekly, and become reliable resources for the students who need us. It also helps Treehouse community to provide a supportive environment where students can engage in any conversations, including sensitive topics such as adoption and foster care. The students know that they are safe at Treehouse and can talk freely without feeling stigmatized.

Kensington School will host a recruitment orientation on Thursday, February 5, 12 - 1 pm and Homework House will host a recruitment orientation on Friday, February 6, 12 - 1 pm. Please come to the CSO office at Wright Hall 013 for the orientations. Lunch will be provided.

A Message from Kerry Homestead, Treehouse Community Facilitator

"We love having Smith students at the Treehouse Community! Each week, no matter what the weather, they bring sunshine. Smith students have wonderful connections with our youth. They offer academic support, have fun, read stories and build meaningful relationships that show their genuine interest in and appreciation of each and every child and youth. They are good teachers and help youth
Thank you to members of the Smith community who donated blood at the biannual blood drive hosted by the CSO. A total of 138 units of blood were collected at this blood drive. Statistics from the Blood Center of the Pacific show that one pint of donated blood can help save as many as three people's lives. Thank you again to all the donors. The next blood drive will be on Tuesday, February 24 and Wednesday, February 25. To donate at the Blood Drive, please click here. To volunteer at the Blood Drive, please click here.

Every year, the Smith community comes together to sponsor winter gifts for children with the Hilltown Churches Food Pantry. Smith sponsored Winter Gifts to 67 children and $84.00 in cash this year. Thank you to everyone who made this contribution a possibility.

A Message from Kelly Francis, Smith Fellow at the Treehouse Foundation

"Treehouse, a part of the Re-Envisioning Foster Care in America (REFCA) Initiative, is a multigenerational community that brings together families who are involved in the public foster care system with senior [citizens]. Members of the community engage with each other daily, sharing time, interests and skills to promote support, stability, and lifelong connections within a system that is traditionally unstable and places youth at an increased risk for homelessness, incarceration, unemployment, early parenthood and lives of poverty. To learn more, visit their website, http://refca.net/.

A Message from Michelle Park and Izzy Ross, the CSO Short-term Project Chairs Michelle

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Thirteen students volunteered at Enchanted Forest, an annual event organized by the Hitchcock Center in Amherst. Each year, the Enchanted Forest attracts children from all around the Pioneer Valley for two nights of fun and magic. Our volunteers led children on forest walks, meeting funny characters along the way. Other games and activities included fortune telling and pumpkin carving. Thanks to the volunteers for setting up the event and for the great turnout. Special thanks to our drivers for making this a memorable experience for the children who attended.