TOGETHER.  
SHAPING THE COMMUNITY.

Thank you to all the volunteers, drivers, House Reps, Board Members, and Fellows who have been contributing their time to volunteering on- and off-campus. Thank you to all the CSO partnered organizations for the continuous great work that you all have done. We wish you a great summer ahead and look forward to seeing you all in future CSO short- and long-term projects.

Photo Credit: Business News Daily

CSO Says Farewell to Ellen Lord

This month we say goodbye to Ellen Lord, our devoted Program Coordinator here at CSO for the past three years. Her artistic skills, technological savvy, her tenacity, and support of community service will be missed greatly. Ellen will be moving back to Maine where her son lives. We wish her the best and are so thankful for her time here. Please stop by the CSO office in Wright Hall to say thank you and bye to her.

Photo Credit: CSO

A Message from Karen Banta
Coordinator at Decisional Training

“Decisional Training is an all-volunteer program that teaches skills to men incarcerated at the Hampshire County Jail and House of Corrections. The skills taught include clarity of thinking, careful decision-making, and intentionality in attitudes and behavior and they have the potential to help men transform their lives. I believe that it's beneficial for the men in our program to have positive, caring, professional interactions with women from Smith College who bring creativity and energy. Thank you for your contributions to Decisional Training!”
Karen explains the meaning of the Decisional Training logo.

*The circle of the symbol represents the world we live in. The straight, vertical line represents the present. To the left of the present is the past. That is where some people live—hanging onto hurtful things from the past, old beliefs, attitudes, behaviors, and habits. To the right of the present is the future. That is where those who live intentionally look when they decide their actions and attitudes.*

*The "X" at the far right reminds us of [another Decisional Training symbol]--the challenge of acceptance of our past and the lessons it has for us; the world as it exists and ourselves as unique, important, and lovable. That “X” also reminds us that life is simply a series of situations, each one of which gives us another opportunity to use the 5 steps and decide our actions.*

*The ritual for this symbol is "We Are the People Who Create the Future."*

Photo Credit: Karen Banta

**Featured Story from Francie Hiza ('16)**

**Volunteer at Decisional Training**

I learned about Decisional Training through a friend, and was initially drawn to it because it was an opportunity for me to give back to the community and provide much needed one-on-one attention to an inmate. I've always thought of prisons as the epitome of social failure meaning at which society failed to provide sufficient opportunities and services for these people. One of the inmates whom I was working with told me that the only difference between us was our circumstances and the decisions that we made. Having been a volunteer at Decisional Training for over the past two semesters has continued to change my perspectives on the world and the criminal justice system.

One of the most poignant curriculum in the program is called "Attitudinal Possibility". I explained this curriculum to my trainee in terms of looking at the world through different glasses, or lenses. The world looks completely different wearing victimized versus grateful lenses. This program is designed to giving these men the tools to structure their lives and to help change tenacious perspectives.

Decisional Training has been an opportunity for me to not only teach introspection and decision-making skills, but also work on my own. The program provides me with those same tools, and is an excellent reminder that every human life matters and everyone has a story to tell. I wonder if I had been put in the circumstances that these men had and if I would be on the opposite side of the table each week. I wonder if I would be working with a young college student who is supposed to teach me about how to make sense of my hectic life when she’s never been faced with the decisions I've had to make.

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**A Message from Victoria Silva**

**Case Manager at Big Brothers Big Sisters of Hampshire County,** a program of
Since 1975 Big Brothers Big Sisters of Hampshire County has been providing one-to-one mentoring relationships for some of the most at-risk children in our community. Under careful and ongoing supervision by program staff, a volunteer mentor is paired with a child whose interests and temperament are likely to make a good match. Most of the little sisters are children who need an extra adult in their lives who can provide positive attention and friendship. [This year, 10 Smith students are mentors in Kids to Campus Program.] [They] help [the little sisters] learn to express themselves, make healthy personal choices, experience new life options, and have fun.

If you are interested in learning more about volunteering with CHD/Big Brothers Big Sisters of Hampshire County, call (413)259-3345 or email bbbshc@smith.edu.

Featured Story from Joanna Bagienska ('16)
Volunteer at Big Brothers Big Sisters of Hampshire County

As graduation approaches, my parents asked me what I am going to do after graduation. While thinking about my future prospects, I realized that they are very unclear. However, one thing that I know I will be doing is giving a monthly call to my little sister from the Big Brothers Big Sisters Kids to Campus program.

I became a Big in my second semester of sophomore year. To this day, I still remember my first day. I was matched with a 7-year-old girl who was very shy, but had the biggest smile in the group. Two and a half years later, she has grown and matured to a young lady who is the life of the party and still has the biggest smile, sass, and confidence.

Big Brothers Big Sisters Kids to Campus program at Smith is more than a volunteering opportunity; it has become a family to me. The Littles and Bigs all interact with one another and we know each other on a more personal level. We go bowling together, have pool and friendship parties, make gingerbread houses, go egg hunting, and most importantly just spend time together. Like the other Bigs, I have not only become a role model to the Littles, but also a friend. I have gotten very close to my Little to a point where she trusts me with her secrets and I would definitely call her my sister. Not being a part of the program will definitely be one of the things I will miss about Smith.
Featured Story from Kim Kupinski ('15)
Chairwoman at CSO

Kim has been on the CSO board for two years. She joined the board in fall 2013 the Newsletter Chair. Below is a reflection written by Kim.

During my sophomore year, I learned about the Friends of Hampshire County Homeless Emergency Winter Shelter from two other students in my house who were volunteering there. I started taking on weekly shifts in January of that year, and have been going there ever since. While being home to an elite private liberal-arts college and many small businesses, Northampton has a significant, visible homeless population. Volunteering at the shelter gives me an opportunity to help bridge the divide between the college and the homeless people who share the Northampton community with students. Since we all live amongst each other, I think we should make an effort to connect with one another.

I came in to my work at the Shelter with very mistaken preconceptions about poverty and homelessness, and my nights spent with the guests downtown really made quick work of dissolving those notions. Every week, I meet an array of people who run the gamut in terms of age, education level, and geographic origin. They have many nuanced personal stories and journeys that bring them to the Shelter. It is heartening to see the other volunteers devoting significant amount of time and effort to help others in their communities. Most of all, the guests themselves keep me motivated— they are so thankful for what little help we can provide, and for our company.

Photo Credit: CSO

Featured Story from
Veronica Oberholzer ('17)
House Representative Chair at CSO

Veronica volunteers at Homework House and Manna Soup Kitchen. She will continue to be on the Board next year as House Representative Chair. Below is a reflection written by Veronica.

One thing that draws me to service is the opportunity to work and connect with people from different backgrounds. Volunteer work has led me to form lasting friendships with fellow students. However, many of the people that I volunteer with aren’t members of the Smith community. When I tutor at Homework House, the other tutors are college students, retirees, and nuns. The barriers that might arise from these different life circumstances break down when we enjoy playing tag with the children on the grass outside or sharing tips on how to teach third graders fractions. When I volunteer at Manna Soup Kitchen I prepare and serve meals with people of all ages, socioeconomic status, and ability levels. Working with such a diverse group enriches the learning experience because through the conversation we have when preparing food, I learn what it was like to grow up during the Great Depression and what it is like to emigrate to this
country from India, in addition to learning the best way to peel a parsnip. Time spent volunteering is valuable because of the contributions that you make to the community. But the opportunity to connect with and learn from people that you wouldn't normally encounter is one of my favorite benefits of service.

Photo Credit: Veronica Oberholzer

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