The UCC Family: A Profile of Service

The core of the UCC mission is to serve the entire family with an array of comprehensive services. This starts with the UCC staff who are part of our family and core for each client with the same passion and dedication that one possesses for their own family. We hope this series will help you understand some of the amazing UCC family members who shape our mission every day!

What is the most satisfying aspect of working at UCC?

In Human Services the biggest immediate challenge that clients face is staying clean from addictions. The HSD is a safe place where staff work tirelessly to help each person individually. They inspire hope that each one of us can make it if we work hard.

How do you balance your personal life and work life at UCC?

I have learned during my journey the importance of practicing self-care, especially in the Human Services field of work. I spend time with my family, go to meetings and stay involved in my recovery by helping to educate the community that people with substance abuse issues do recover and become productive citizens in our communities.

As a child, what did you want to be when you grew up?

When I was little, I loved to dance, and I still do. I used to watch American Bandstand, and Swan Lake, and I wanted to be just like them.

Who is one of your idols or mentors?

I don’t have idols. I do however have a mentor. Arthur Byas and Liz Weindroter were my peer support specialists while I was in Drug Treatment Court. They inspired me to do my best in any situation, good or bad.

Favorite quote or motivational saying?

“The Devil whispered in my ear, “You are not strong enough to withstand the storm.” Today I whisper in the Devil’s ear, “I am the storm.” This quote reminds me of where I have been and who I am.

Biggest UCC project you are working on for the future?

Recovery Month. We are going to have an event that will not only commemorate those who have lost their fight to this horrific disease, but will let people know that recovery is possible.

What do you hope people you work with will remember about you?

The goodness of my soul.

Laura Haas
Certified Peer Specialist
Employed at UCC One Year

Summer Sun Brings Summer Fun

This bittersweet time of year is filled with exciting new beginnings but also marks the end of the long, sunny, summer days filled with fun experiences. While many schools are left with quiet hallways during the summer, our center is a hub of activity from our six week summer school session, to our summer recreation program filled with educational but fun activities, college visits, and leadership opportunities for our students. Check out our “How I spent my summer vacation” spread and learn all about the amazing opportunities and activities our students had this summer.

Now, as we get back to school, we can also look ahead with anticipation and excitement. This fall, we plan to break ground on our new UCC Acosta Middle School which will open in the Fall of 2018 at the southeast corner of 6th and Washington. This new facility will help us educate 250 more students and expose them to hands-on learning with a technology focus. We are actively looking for funding and program partners for this new school – find out more online at www.latinocdc.org.

We hope to see you this fall at one of our many events including the groundbreaking for our new school!
My Summer in the Youth Volunteer Corps

This summer, more than 150 teens flocked to the UCC Campus to spend five weeks in the Youth Volunteer Corps (YVC). As a member of the YVC, these young adults lead recreational activities and act as mentors to Bruce-Guadalupe Community School (BGCS) students during the afternoon Summer Recreation program. Many YVC members are BGCS alumni, like Denise Cevilla (DC), a recent graduate (8th grade, BGCS). Denise shared with us why she chose to spend her summer participating in this unique program, and her most memorable moments with the 7th and 8th graders she mentored.

Q: Why did you decide to spend your summer volunteering as part of the Youth Volunteer Corps (YVC)?

DC: When I attended the Summer Rec program at BGCS as a kid, I really interacted, connected and created a strong bond with the YVCs. I’m the youngest in my family - I don’t have younger siblings. I wanted to get involved in the program to have the experience of being a big sister, and have an impact just like my older siblings and the YVCs had on me. And, to give back.

Q: What was your most memorable moment this summer?

DC: The leadership activities with the kids, seeing them grow and seeing them work as a group. I worked with (and mentored) incoming 8th graders. We were close in age, so it was a lot easier for them to look at me and see me as a role model. But it was easier, in a way, to connect with them and have that trust level with them. So that was my favorite memory – seeing them work as a group, and interact with each other.

Denise Cevilla, Youth Volunteer Corps First Year Member, BGCS class of 2017, who is attending Brookfield Academy this fall helped students prepare for their future.

Volunteers Help Students Prepare for Their Future

This summer, United Community Center and Bruce-Guadalupe Community School (BGCS) students were fortunate to receive the support of many community volunteers. The graduating 8th grade students embarked on a five-week Summer Bridge program to prepare for high school, college, and beyond. Many volunteers from organizations such as BMO Harris Bank, Rockwell Automation, Carroll University and many others participated as career presenters, speaking to students about the important work they do and what it takes to succeed as a professional. Students were also able to visit and tour local colleges.

Some highlights of each volunteer’s service includes:

- Practicing public speaking with Mary Alice Tierney of Right Management
- Fun team building exercises and learning about female leadership with BMO Harris Bank Women’s Leadership Group
- Touring Rockwell Automation
- Hands on session to learn from Nursing from Carroll University Nursing Program
- And finally, getting to know each other better while learning from all of the fantastic volunteer presenters

While summer has come to an end and students prepare for the upcoming school year, the Law Office of Odato J. Chikwu, Prime Financial Credit Union and Michael Best & Friedrich, LLP have made it their mission to ensure that BGCS students have the necessary school supplies and materials they need to succeed and learn this school year.

Traveling Outside of Their Comfort Zones

An exciting seven-day unplugged journey to the Rocky Mountains this past June helped 33 Bruce-Guadalupe students and alumni challenge themselves to try new things and exist outside of their comfort zones. The trip was a capstone project for the Youth Empowered to Succeed (YES) program, which has been coordinated and funded in conjunction with Marquette University for the past five years. With Etes Park, Colorado as their base camp, the group went on many adventures including white water rafting, horseback riding, rock climbing, and flying fish. For most of the students this was their first experience participating in these types of excursions.

While the trip also included hiking, compasses, swimming and games, the most valuable takeaway for many of the students was conquering their fears, trying new things, and challenging themselves physically. Some were afraid of rock climbing, others hesitant and fearful of the rafting. On the last day, the group was challenged with a long hike and then asked to work in teams to make a shelter. Exhausted, the students had to persevere with their friends to complete the task.

It was a trip of a lifetime, one that the chaparones hope sparked interest in new things for the students and most importantly a belief that they can conquer their fears and accomplish great things, even if it first appears difficult.