

UC San Diego Community Gives Back With a Tradition of Public Service

From Greeks Gone Green to the Peace Corps, UCSD students, faculty, staff and alumni embrace President Obama's call for service

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Judy Piercey

"I see community service as one of those things that everyone can do," says Michael Bland, president of Greeks Gone Green, a group of determined University of California, San Diego students affiliated with the campus Greek community who share a passion for the environment. "By taking a few hours out of our lives, we can do so much to better the lives of others. Even if it's just the little things, it all adds up in the end."

President Obama has challenged all Americans to help lay a new foundation for growth in this country by engaging in sustained, meaningful community service. At UC San Diego (www.ucsd.edu)-recently ranked 2nd best university in the nation by the *Washington Monthly*, based on the positive impact the university has had on the country-public service is as much a part of the campus as its location overlooking the Pacific. One of the nation's top research universities, UC San Diego is dedicated to learning, teaching and serving society through education, research and public service.

"Giving back" is a philosophy embraced by many affiliated with UC San Diego, including alumna Karen Moraghan. Her motto is: "Give where you can, when you can-in your community, to the university, to a cause in which you have an interest or passion. Your gift doesn't always have to be financial. You can contribute time and professional skills; your personal commodity."

Thanks to UC San Diego's diverse campus culture, students, faculty, staff and alumni can get involved with a myriad of socially active and globally conscious opportunities, including:

Alternative Breaks

Lana Tamalpas, center, takes part in a group building exercise this summer at Virginia Tech University.

Instead of partying during their spring or summer breaks, many students at UC San Diego opt to take eye-opening learning trips in the U.S. and international destinations. Participants in Alternative Breaks at UCSD (<http://alternativebreaks.ucsd.edu>)-one of the largest Alternative Breaks programs in the nation-provide humanitarian services as diverse as repairing damages from Hurricane Katrina to teaching English in impoverished, rural areas of Thailand. Students can apply for scholarships to help with expenses. UC San Diego development director and alumna Michelle Glenn recently served as a trip advisor to 11 Alternative Break students. "It was a great opportunity to employ my skills and help others," says Glenn. "I would definitely participate again."

Life Rolls On

Josh (left) and Jesse Billauer founded Life Rolls On in 2002.

Upon graduation from UC San Diego, Josh Billauer knew one thing: he wanted to make an impact on the world. Fast-forward a decade and with a successful career at Bryan-Billauer-Kozo Financial Strategies Group of Wells Fargo Advisors in La Jolla, Billauer has reached his destination. After his brother, Jesse, was left a quadriplegic in a tragic surfing accident, Billauer cofounded Life Rolls On (www.liferollson.org) in 2002, a nonprofit that

raises awareness and funding for spinal cord injury research. Today, the grassroots organization, which counts celebrities and professional athletes as supporters, has raised more than \$2 million for research and assistance for those suffering from severe spinal cord injuries. Beneficiaries include UCSD's groundbreaking Translational Spinal Cord Regeneration Research Program, directed by Mark Tuszynski, M.D., Ph.D.

Student-Run Free Clinic

Medical students volunteer their time in the UCSD Student-Run Free Clinic.

A 12-year-old university/community partnership of volunteers led by students at the UC San Diego School of Medicine, the UCSD Student-Run Free Clinic Project (<http://meded.ucsd.edu/freeclinic/>) provides free healthcare including primary and specialty services, pharmacy, acupuncture, legal, dental and social services at three community sites in San Diego. The Project is one of more than 25 student-run clinic programs in the nation. Students plan, manage and carry out clinic operations under the supervision of licensed physicians and other health professionals. The UCSD Student-Run Free Clinic Project, founded in 1997 by Ellen Beck, M.D., a group of medical students and key community partners, has provided services to more than 7,500 patients. Private support helps the program continue to provide high quality humanistic and empowering services at no cost to San Diego's working poor, homeless and others without access to healthcare.

Service to Our Neighbors

UC San Diego volunteers have helped build and install pavers to prevent flooding in Tijuana.

Some 80,000 people-many of them squatters-live in Los Laureles Canyon in Tijuana. "It's a secondhand town. Everything has been used by somebody else before," says Oscar Romo, a UC San Diego lecturer on urban studies and planning (<http://usp.ucsd.edu>), and the Watershed Coordinator at the 2500-acre Tijuana River National Estuarine Research Reserve in Imperial Beach. Romo takes UC San Diego students and alumni on trips to help improve the conditions in the area, including constructing pervious pavers for the colonia's dirt roads. Volunteers are helping canyon residents-mostly women-build and install 70,000 of these handmade pavers to prevent runoff from flowing into the Tijuana River Estuary and adjacent San Diego Bay.

Saving the Invisible Children

Invisible Children volunteer Sunee Washom (left) with Laren Poole, cofounder of the international movement.

Byron Washom, director of strategic energy initiatives at UC San Diego, and his daughter are active volunteers in the Invisible Children movement (www.invisiblechildren.com). Motivated by the unseen war in Northern Uganda, Invisible Children was created by three young filmmakers to use the power of stories to change lives around the world. One of the cofounders of this global organization is former UCSD student Laren Poole, who oversees the production of creative media, web and print campaigns that fuse advocacy, development and youth culture to transform apathy into activism. Washom explains his involvement: "As a former senior international advisor to the World Bank, I turned down every assignment that involved Africa. But as a parent, where my children invest, I invest. When Sunee took up this cause, I became her supporter and follower to her leadership. I am elated that she has permitted me to be part of this important, passionate part of her life."

Volunteers for Peace

Nemo Curiel is currently serving in the Peace Corps.

UC San Diego alumni have a long tradition of community service through programs such as the Peace Corps, with more than 550 volunteers since 2002 (<http://career.ucsd.edu/sa/PeaceCorps.shtml>). Nemo Curiel, who received a math degree from UC San Diego in 2005, began his service as a Peace Corps volunteer in Kenya in late January. Sarah Termond, a June 2008 graduate with a degree in environmental systems, started her Peace Corps work in the Dominican Republic in March. They are among the 49 UC San Diego alumni currently serving overseas who have helped place the campus 18th on the Peace Corps "Top Colleges" rankings among large universities. The heaviest concentration of UCSD alumni is in Guatemala, Honduras and Namibia; the majority work in health and education.

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