South Reading Youth Initiative Volunteer Handbook
Our Mission

Rooted in the Franciscan identity of Alvernia University and its mission as a teaching and learning institution, the Holleran Center for Community Engagement identifies, cultivates and sustains strategic partnerships to strengthen both campus and community life. By making these community partnerships an essential part of the curriculum, the Holleran Center strives to foster the University mission and improve the quality of life in our community and to develop in its students a lifelong commitment to service as engaged citizens.

Our Vision

To integrate Alvernia’s curriculum and co-curricular activities with the external community the Holleran Center will:

- Initiate strategic partnerships that enhance Alvernia’s mission, leverage campus and community expertise, address community needs and produce mutually beneficial results;
- Serve as the central resource for students, faculty, and staff to engage in community-based projects and as a catalyst for expanding community-based learning of all types—including internships, field experiences, and service-learning projects;
- Serve as the central point of access for the community to campus resources and serve as an incubator for projects to address community needs;
- Establish Alvernia as a leader in community-based learning and civic engagement—locally, regionally and eventually nationally.

“Never doubt that a small group of thoughtful, committed citizens can change the world. Indeed, it is the only thing that ever has.”
-Margaret Mead
Volunteer Description

As a tutor with the South Reading Youth Initiative and the Holleran Center for Community Engagement, you are responsible for helping students with their homework, supervision, as well as participating in activities sponsored by the program. South Reading Youth Initiative programs will run on Mondays, Tuesdays and Wednesdays from 2:30-5:30pm, usually out of St. Peter’s Church, but also out of various locations in Reading. You will be informed in advance of any location or time change. You are responsible for your own transportation to and from program sites. If necessary, arrangements for car pooling can be made with other volunteers or with the Holleran Center staff. Hours worked with the South Reading Youth Initiative can be used towards Alvernia’s community service hours or to fulfill a service-learning class.

Leaders vs. Followers

When leaders make a mistake, they say, “I was wrong.”
When followers make mistakes, they say, “It wasn’t my fault.”
A leader works harder than a follower and has more time;
a follower is always “too busy” to do what is necessary.
A leader goes through a problem;
a follower goes around it and never gets past it.
A leader makes and keeps commitments;
a follower makes and forgets promises.
A leader says, “I’m good, but not as good as I ought to be;”
a follower says, “I’m not as bad as a lot of other people.”
Leaders listen;
followers just wait until it’s their turn to talk.
Leaders feel responsible for more than their job;
followers say, “I only work here.”
A leader says, “There ought to be a better way to do this;”
followers say, “That’s the way it’s always been done here.”
Volunteer Policies

- Please dress appropriately. You will be working with kids, which sometimes involves sitting on the floor or doing arts and crafts projects!
- Some of the SRYI participants have Facebook accounts, MySpace pages, and/or cell phones. Please do not accept ‘friend requests’ or exchange cell phone numbers. It is important to maintain a professional (but still friendly) relationship with the students.
- We discourage the use of cell phones by our participants during SRYI programs. Please help set a good example by refraining from using your cell phone during programming. If you have to use your phone, please notify a staff member and step away from the activity.
- Make sure you are never in a situation where you are alone with a child. Ensure that you are with another volunteer or with a group of participants.
- Never come to a SRYI-sponsored event under the influence of drugs and/or alcohol. We need to set positive examples for our participants.
- We do most of our work in downtown Reading. Please always be mindful of your surroundings and use common sense to ensure your safety and the safety of your belongings.
- You have signed a liability waiver; this waiver applies to any program, event, or activity sponsored by the South Reading Youth Initiative, the Holleran Center for Community Engagement, and/or Alvernia University.

If you have any questions or concerns regarding these policies, please contact Meghann Burton at meghann.burton@alvernia.edu or at (610)-568-1527.
Volunteer Safety

- Be aware of your surroundings and travel in pairs
- Always walk confidently, and appear as though you know where you are going
- Do not leave personal belongings where others may be tempted to take them (it is best to put items in the trunk of your vehicle)
- Do not take/wear items of value (cell phone, expensive jewelry, watches, etc)
- Do not report to a program under the influence of drugs and/or alcohol
- Dress appropriately for the site and work you plan to do
- Do not tolerate or engage in verbal or nonverbal exchanges of a sexual nature
- Children participating in any program must be directly supervised at all times
- If you are riding in University provided transportation, be sure that someone with you is carrying the driver’s cell phone number and Public Safety (610-796-8350) number in case of emergency
- If you need to provide a phone number to someone you are working with, you may provide the Holleran Center for Community Engagement’s number (610-790-1925)
- If you are uncertain about how to perform a task, ask someone to help you
- Do not overestimate your ability to deal with a difficult situation such as breaking up a fight. Injuries incurred by you can also be damaging to the agency you are working with as well as the University. Remember, you are a representative of Alvernia University.
- Only administer First Aid to the level that you are comfortable
  - A First Aid Kid is available at all events and programs.
- Please discuss any questions or concerns with the Project Coordinator (Jessica Umbenhauer), the PACC*VISTA (Meghann Burton), or the Director (Ginny Hand)

Please contact Jessica Umbenhauer (610-790-1923) or Meghann Burton (601-568-1527) with any questions or concerns.
Tips for Tutors

- Expect to GAIN as much from these students as you give.
  - Consider yourself a co-learner
- Take time to get to know your student!
  - Ask questions that show a personal interest in him or her. Use questions that cannot be answered with a “yes” or “no.”
- Do not hesitate to take leadership in answering non-homework related questions.
  - Both you and I are at the same level of authority when it comes to working with our participants—that includes giving them permission to use the bathroom!
- Do not make moralistic judgments about the student’s socioeconomic, ethnic or cultural background.
- Do not limit yourself to working with just one child at all times. Each of our participants has a wonderful and unique personality...get to know as many as you can!
- Do not judge a child's intelligence based on their verbal communication.
  - Many of our kids speak Spanish in their homes, and while they all can speak English, they may be a bit self-conscious.
- Don’t judge, just listen.
- Be flexible.
- Be patient.
- Don’t just give the students answers for their homework, help them figure it out for themselves.
- Try to get them to read!
- HAVE FUN!

For more information, please contact Meghann Burton at meghann.burton@alvernia.edu or (610)-568-1527.
Rules/Regulations
for SRYI participants

All participants of the South Reading Youth Initiative are required to sign a behavior contract ensuring their knowledge of the rules of our programs. Below is a list of rules and regulations that will be presented to the SRYI participants during the first week of programming.

- Show respect for fellow students, teachers, supervisors, guest speakers, and all other university personnel at all times.
- Keep a positive attitude during the various parts of the program.
- The older participants (ages 10-14) are allowed to use their phones for texting. They may also make phone calls to their parents with your or my permission, but they cannot listen to music or play games on their phone.
- If they disobey any of the rules here on this sheet, their phone will be confiscated for the rest of programming that week.
- Handheld games and mp3 players are not allowed during programming.
- Show willingness to cooperate and follow directions.
- No running inside!
- Use appropriate language (no name calling, swearing, etc)
- No harassment of another student, volunteers, or other Alvernia staff.
- No fighting, hitting, punching, etc!
- No possession or use of drugs or alcohol.
- No possession of any weapons, pepper/mace sprays, etc.
- No stealing of property at any program location.
- No causing damage to university property (students will be held financially responsible for any damages).
- Do not leave campus/program location without permission.

Questions?
Please contact Meghann Burton at meghann.burton@alvernia.edu or at 610-568-1527.
Consequences
for SRYI youth participants

If any SRYI youth is not following the rules that are in place, there are certain consequences that the Holleran Center has set up. While regular Alvernia volunteers are expected to enforce the rules and are able to impose consequences, if you are not comfortable disciplining the participants, please find a Holleran Center staff member and report the behavior.

1. Verbal Warning
   - Participants get 2 verbal warnings if they are misbehaving. At the time of the second warning, please be clear that it is their second and final warning.

2. Time Out
   - Time out lasts for 5 minutes. The time starts when the student is sitting in the chair facing away from the activities and is behaving. If the student gets up before his/her time out is over, talks to other students, or becomes disruptive, the time resets.

3. Call Parents
   - If the bad behavior continues, a Holleran Center staff member will take control of the situation (if they have not already). The child’s parents will be called to inform them of the behavior issues, and if possible the student will be sent home for the remainder of the program. If the student cannot be sent home, they will be removed from the rest of the day’s activities.

4. Formal Meeting
   - In extreme cases, a face-to-face meeting will be set up between the child’s parents and the Holleran Center staff to discuss the problem and potential solutions.
Bonus Bucks

Bonus Bucks can be handed out by Holleran Center staff members, work-study students or volunteers who attend SRYI programming on a “regular” basis (more than 5 times during a given semester)

- Bonus Bucks are to be given out to reward good behavior, making good decisions, being helpful/polite, or any other action that goes above and beyond the normal expectations of behavior
  - We have high expectations for behavior of our students, so Bonus Bucks are to be handed out for exceptional behavior (which is subjective and left to the discretion of the person awarding the Bonus Bucks)
    - If you are unsure about whether something deserves to be rewarded, just ask a Holleran Center staff member!
  - Examples:
    - Helping set up chairs/tables
    - Helping other kids with homework questions
    - Helping to clean up
    - Holding the door for other students

- SRYI participants will be allowed to keep track of their own Bonus Bucks or they will have the option to put them in the SRYI “Bank” which tracks how many each student has earned

- Bonus Bucks can be used to purchase items in the “Store” (little toys, books, supplies, etc) or “Donated” to a selected charity/organization
  - Donated Bucks will be pooled together to support an outside organization
  - Holleran Center staff members will set a goal for the donated Bucks, and if the goal is reached, there will be a reward for the group
    - Bucks that are used in the store will not be counted towards the group total for the reward

For more information, please contact Meghann Burton at meghann.burton@alvernia.edu or (610)-568-1527.
First Aid Tips

A First Aid Kit is available at all SRYI events and programs.

If the situation is an emergency:

- Make sure the environment is safe (for you, the victim, and the other students)
- Call 911
- Have a student get a staff member
- Stay with the victim, administer first aid appropriate to your training/experience

If the situation is not an emergency:

- Refer to First Aid Manual in First Aid Kit
  - (for head injuries and cuts there are printouts with more detailed information)
- Make sure you keep yourself safe (wear gloves if there is blood etc.)
- If you are uncomfortable administering First Aid, find a staff member to help you
- Notify the Holleran Center staff of any incident that requires First Aid
ABOUT THE VOLUNTEER PROTECTION ACT
The Volunteer Protection Act of 1997, signed into law on June 18th, 1997, was created to “provide certain protections to volunteers, non-profit organizations and governmental entities in lawsuits based on the activities of volunteers.” The time of the bill coincided with the April Presidents’ Summit for America’s Future, calling for all Americans to get involved in community service and was aimed at removing potential volunteers’ fear of liability.

The Act provides liability protection for volunteers under the following conditions:

The volunteer was acting within the scope of the volunteer’s responsibilities in the non-profit organization or governmental entity at the time of the act of omission;

If appropriate or required, the volunteer was properly licensed, certified or authorized by the appropriate authorities for the activities or practice in the State in which the harm occurred, where the activities were or practice was undertaken within the scope of harm occurred, where the activities were or practice was undertaken within the scope of the volunteer’s responsibilities in the non-profit organization or governmental entity;

The harm was not caused by willful or criminal misconduct, gross negligence, reckless misconduct, or a conscious, flagrant indifference to the rights or safety of the individual harmed by the volunteer;

The Act does not affect that “liability of any non-profit or governmental entity with respect to harm caused to any person,” nor does it affect a non-profit’s taking civil action against any volunteer or the non-profit. For more information, see US Public Law No: 105-19

(Summary provided by Campus Compact 2006)