Hello Waltham Group Alumni!

We are Marissa Lazaroff and Lee Wilson, the Fall 2017 Waltham Group Co-Presidents. Marissa is a senior from Columbus, OH, majoring in Environmental Studies. Lee is a senior from Northern New Jersey, double majoring in International & Global Studies and Economics.

Our main focus at the beginning of this year was increasing our volunteer numbers. We revamped Waltham Group Recruitment Night and transformed it into a Waltham Group Recruitment Week, with a recruitment event each day of the week. On the first day, we tabled at the Student Activities Fall Involvement Fair. The following day, we organized a tabling session in Upper Usdan for prospective volunteers to learn about the different programs in the Waltham Group. The next morning, we hosted a Wake 'N Shake with donuts and coffee and another opportunity for people to learn about the Waltham Group and get excited about Recruitment Night. Prospective volunteers were given the opportunity at all of these events to join the program listservs of their choice. The final event of our Recruitment Week was Recruitment Night. In order to accommodate the influx of potential volunteers, the programs were divided amongst the Shapiro Campus Center Atrium and Multipurpose Room.

Next semester, we're looking forward to improving upon our new Recruitment Week structure to further increase our number of volunteers. We are also excited to enrich our weekly trainings by hosting a variety of speakers for our Waltham Group coordinators as well as the Brandeis community as a whole. We cannot wait to see what the rest of this year will bring for the Waltham Group!

**Department of Community Service/Waltham Group Headlines:**

Lauren Soares, our own Community Service Specialist, became Lauren Shortall on October 7th when she married her husband Tom. We're sending many congratulations and happy thoughts to the newlyweds!

**In service news, some highlights of the semester include:**

- We hosted our annual Prospect Hill Toy Drive, which ran until December 4. Toys were dropped off at the center on December 6.
Multiple service projects were completed on Kindness Day, such as making no-sew blankets for Cradles to Crayons, adding thoughtful messages to a kindness chain, writing cards for Alzheimer’s caregivers, writing letters to prisoners, and making trail mix bags for the Community Day Center in Waltham.

Disaster relief
- In the aftermath of Hurricane Harvey, the Department of Community Service organized a fleece blanket project in which students could make no-sew blankets to send to the affected areas. Over 35 blankets were made total! As the semester progressed, more blankets were made and sent to other areas affected by hurricanes and natural disasters.
- Department of Community Service partnered with Sodexo on initiatives to make donations to the American Red Cross to those affected by the multiple hurricanes in the Southern U.S., such as displaying specific items that could be purchased from the Hoot Market for donation, donating a dollar for every social media follower Brandeis Dining gained, and donating a dollar for every customer satisfaction survey filled out.
- The Waltham Group Blood Drive held a hurricane relief themed drive this year, from October 31 - November 2.
- Both monetary and toiletry/hygiene product donations were accepted throughout the semester. Monetary donations were sent to the American Red Cross and toiletry donations were sent to the Baker-Ripley Neighborhood Center and the Houston Food Bank.
- The DCS website also lists multiple relief support organizations for Hurricanes Harvey, Irma, and Maria, as well as ways to help following the earthquake in Mexico.

Two new programs were funded and implemented this year:
- The Rich/Collins Community Leadership and Impact Fellowship was introduced this year. Overseen by Program Coordinator for Service Initiatives Will Brummett, the fellowship is a mini-grant program. It awards funding ranging from $500 - $5,000 to students who apply with ideas to develop and implement a community impact project in the Waltham community over the course of an academic year. Applications were due on November 9 and chosen projects will be implemented over the course of the Spring 2018 semester. Mariah Rich Collins ’10 and James Collins ’09, are the married alumni behind this fellowship.
- The Zale Program was also generously funded this year, and Brandeis was able to host the program for the first time. Specifically, the Zale Program aims to “increase the Brandeis University Waltham Group’s capacity to support the goals and aspirations of young adults with intellectual disabilities,” according to the Department of Community Service’s website. The program consists of two half-day conferences, one of which we were able to put on during the Fall semester: “Training and Support”, on October 21. The other conference will be a “Train the
Trainer” conference, on March 3, 2018. Department of Community Service and the Waltham Group also partnered to create a resource library, including digital resources, that are available on the Waltham Group website for anyone who would like to access it and learn more about the topic.

Alumni Spotlight:

Rebecca Bachman, Class of 2013

What were you involved with on campus as an undergrad? (e.g. major, Waltham Group program, other?)

I was a sociology and education studies double major with a minor in social justice social policy. I was a coordinator for Big Siblings and volunteered with Big Siblings, General Tutoring, Afternoon Enrichment, Hunger and Homelessness and Community Connections throughout my time on campus. As an Orientation Core Committee member I coordinated Volunteer Fest. Kindness Day, The Student Union and serving on various university committees also shaped my Brandeis experience. I met some of my best friends through The Waltham Group.

Did anything in the Waltham Group impact your career trajectory? Values? Ethics? How else has the Waltham Group impacted you?

The Waltham Group experience tremendously impacted my career trajectory and has helped me get to where I am today. Being a Waltham Group coordinator and volunteer gave me several years of experience managing community partnerships and doing direct service. Through the Waltham Group, I frequently participated on committees to plan events like Kindness Day, Volunteer Appreciation Night and Celebration of Service. Those experiences helped me hone event-planning skills. I landed at an education nonprofit in the development department. I am the point person for 5-10 events a year raising over one million dollars annually. Although I am not on the ground working directly with our students, I still take any opportunity to go into our partner schools to volunteer.

What advice would you give to other WG students or alumni?

Students, step out of your comfort zone – volunteer for the program that you’ve always wanted to but were not sure about. Go on the volunteer vacation that you don’t think you have time for.

Alumni -- Waltham Group has been around for over 50 years, there are tons of amazing people to connect with. Use the Waltham Group network.
Looking back at your Brandeis experience as an alum, what do you wish you’d done?

I always wanted to go on a trip to volunteer, and still haven’t had the opportunity to do so. I wish I’d gone on an alternative spring break while I was at Brandeis.

Program Spotlight:

Community Connections

Community Connections is a Waltham Group program that creates one-time events during the semester in the Waltham and Boston area. We primarily aim to work with clubs and students who cannot commit to a weekly volunteer group. This past semester, we implemented our first Mini Day of Service. The Mini Days of Service are held on weekends, so more students can get the opportunity to participate. For the first Mini Day of Service, we went to Land’s Sake, NuDay Syria and The Samfund with over 40 students! Next semester, we will be having three more Mini Days of Service and are excited to continue to let this program grow!

LEAP

LEAP (Language Empowering Action Project) is a community service group focused on English language skills. We recognize the power of language and its ability to change people’s lives. LEAP provides opportunities to tutor non-English speaking adults in the Waltham community, either one-on-one or in group settings. In addition to English classes, tutors give the opportunity for learners to experience American culture and become comfortable with common cultural gestures. This semester, we launched a new initiative which provided free English classes to adults in the Waltham Community on the Brandeis campus. We partnered with English at Large to create small classroom settings in which our volunteers can engage with learners as a group. This new program has been successful and we are proud to see it come to fruition. We look forward to continue to expand our program both in numbers of learners and tutoring volunteers!

Welcome new Department of Community Service staff members!

Emily Odgers
Emily joined the Brandeis team in the Fall of 2017 as a Campus Compact AmeriCorps Vista. In her day to day work, Emily focuses on developing and strengthening Brandeis student volunteer partnerships with the Waltham Public Schools’ English Language Learners community. While completing her undergraduate degree in Sociology and Anthropology at Warren Wilson College, Emily participated in the Bonner Leaders program for three years. As a Bonner Leader, Emily led a wide array of community engagement projects, including an afterschool mentoring program, integrated educational and service workshops focused on food security and housing, and other educational access initiatives. Throughout the years, Emily also has spent extensive time tutoring ELL (English Language Learner) adults and youth, both in the US and abroad, as well as facilitating workshops on social justice and privilege. In her free time Emily will be spotted practicing martial arts, working on political campaigns, and reading feminist theories.

Will Brummett

Will Brummett joined Brandeis's Department of Community Service team in the Fall of 2017. Will and his partner Grace relocated to Brandeis in August for Grace to start her Master's in Conflict Resolution and Coexistence at the Heller School, and Will was thrilled to be lucky enough to join the DCS team. In Will's role, he supports students and organizations going on alternative break service trips, helps coordinate the Commitment to Service Award program, and oversees the Rich/Collins Community Leadership and Impact Fellowship. Will's greatest joy is working alongside students to find the intersections between their passions and ideas and the community's strengths and needs. Before Brandeis, Will served for four years as the Student Development Coordinator for the Bonner Center for Service-Learning at Carson-Newman University where he oversaw their Bonner Scholar program. Will graduated in 2013 from Elon University with a B.A. in Religious Studies and minors in Nonviolence Studies and Political Science. At Elon, Will was active in their Kernodle Center for Service learning as well as their Leadership Fellow program. In his free time, Will enjoys exploring the outdoors and local art scene with his fiancée Grace, watching West Wing marathons, and practicing his uncoordinated dancing in anticipation for his wedding.

The success of the Waltham Group is due to our active and engaged students. As alumni, we hope that you will continue to stay involved. Click here to learn about the variety of ways you can support the Waltham Group.

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