

ODK Links Cadets with Volunteer Opportunities

By Ashlie Walter

At VMI, there's a new initiative to pair staff and faculty looking for volunteers with cadets willing to volunteer. But what was needed was a conduit to connect the two, according to Col. Howard B. Sanborn IV, professor of international studies and political science.

Sanborn is the faculty adviser for Omicron Delta Kappa, a national leadership honor society, which started a chapter, also known as a circle, at VMI in 2003. The chapter currently has 40 cadet members.

"I don't think we have done enough service, not for lack of desire—cadets are genuinely helpful but they are amongst some of the busiest college students, from the academic side, military side, and athletic side," he said. "I kept trying to find ways to reduce the transaction cost for cadets."

Former ODK chapter president Bethany King '18 came up with the idea of a service fair where cadets could go to one place on post and sign up for volunteer opportunities. Coincidentally, the national ODK organization was hosting a grant contest for service ideas and the VMI chapter won a \$500 grant for its service fair idea.

The inaugural fair, held in Preston Library Nov. 5, attracted dozens of cadets to organizations such as the Valley Mission in Staunton, Rise Against Hunger, and the Discovery Heights Children's Museum. VMI alumnus David Ellington '71 also connected the organization with the Rockbridge Area Free Clinic, Sanborn said.

"If a cadet linked up with an organization, we not only found them a potential partner but also help with facilitating that," Sanborn said.

He added it seemed like an opportunity waiting to be filled. There are cadets who want to help and there are faculty involved in many community organizations, so it was just a matter of linking them together.

"The idea worked very well and in the future, we would like to expand its reach across post. We want to look at the timing and extra funds to support something like that," he said of possibly organizing next year's event. ✪



Joseph Nieto '22 explores local service opportunities during the ODK fair Nov. 5.—VMI Photo by H. Lockwood McLaughlin.



Thanksgiving Dinner

Cadets attend an early Thanksgiving dinner in Crozet Hall Nov. 5. Parkhurst Dining provided traditional Thanksgiving food for the cadets including turkey, pumpkin pie, and sparkling cider.—VMI Photos by H. Lockwood McLaughlin.