UPDATE
Hello, it’s great to be back – despite it being the summertime and the service not being operational, it’s been quite busy. Please find below a summary of what we’ve been up to since March.

VOLUNTEERS
Traditionally, we hire all of our executives and non-first year volunteers towards the end of the school year for the upcoming year. The executive team this year consists of myself and four other people: Peter Youssef (Research and Advocacy Coordinator), Naomi Bender (Events and Programming Coordinator), Candy Niu (Promotions Coordinator), and Ashley Lam (Volunteer Coordinator). I’m thrilled with the team, as I am confident in each and every one of their abilities; as well, I’m also looking forward to being able to work with a team that I hired first-hand. This will also be the first year with the new service structure, so there is a lot of learning and adjusting to do, but I’m confident in the team’s abilities.

We have also hired all of our non-first year volunteers, with a team size of 33 currently. There are a lot fewer returning volunteers this year, which may actually bode well with regards to the restructuring, as there will be less unlearning to do. We are hoping to hire about ten or so first years, depending on what the quality of applicants looks like. This is a small increase from last year, when the team was under 40. Increasing the volunteer base was done to counteract second semester attrition and aid in shift coverage, along with working to be more in line with the new service structure. Our hiring schedule for first years is always quite tight due to Welcome Week, and will be tighter this year as we are pushing the deadline to apply back to accommodate for our presence at the Wellness Fair (more on this below), which we’re hoping will be a good opportunity for promotion.

As such, the dates we are looking at are:
- Applications open: August 20th
- Applications close: September 1st
- Interview offers made: September 2nd
- Interviews: September 3rd-6th
- Offers made: September 7th
- Training weekend: September 9th-10th
PAST EVENTS, PROJECTS & ACTIVITIES
I had an executive training session on June 11th. It consisted of an MSU Orientation session, along with a look at our operating policy, a SWOT analysis for the service, vision boarding based on the analysis, a review of team expectations, brainstorming for the year to come, and a team hike to Princess Point. I found the session to be overwhelmingly successful – the team gets along really well and there were so many excellent ideas that came up and are now being followed up with. I had also asked my executives to complete a rough draft year plan before coming to training, and resubmit them after training, which I found really helpful. Their ideas very much align with my vision for the upcoming year, and you will see this reflected in my year plan submission for this year.

UPCOMING EVENTS, PROJECTS & ACTIVITIES
The summer has been quite busy as we are much more involved in Welcome Week than we were last year, which is really nice and something I was keen on doing. I am currently sitting on the Alcohol Awareness and Mental Health/Illness working groups, which has been very exciting. With regard to the former group, I’m really looking forward to seeing how the Feed Your Hippo campaign will be reworked. Similarly, I have met with Lauren McClinton, the Maccess Coordinator, to chat about working together to create the promotional video for the new mental health campaign and I’m really thrilled with what we’ve come up with. A rough outline of the script for the video has been completed and I think does a good job of integrating what material was great about Feed Your Hippo, but also address some of the main concerns that we heard last year.

In terms of more hands-on involvement during Welcome Week itself, I am in charge of organizing a Wellness Fair that will be happening on August 31st in Mills Marketplace right after MacConnect. The premise of the fair is to have services table but also provide small events and programming that is low-key and not very labour intensive, but also interactive like a photobooth or a mural where students can contribute tips/goals that they might have. Right now I’ve invited all of the peer support services and am waiting to hear back from two (the other three have confirmed) – I think this will be a great opportunity for the MSU to promote its peer support services as resources during the school year and also have a place for students to chill out following very high energy programming.

Additionally, I have been in touch with ResLife through some ROAs who have reached out to see if the service could provide programming during Welcome Week in residence. A really amazing idea that the executive team came up with in terms of more engaging programming is to do a showing of the movie *Inside Out*, and use the opportunity to talk with students at the end about mental health (i.e. why feeling negative emotions is okay, what to look out for if you're worried about someone or yourself, what resources to access on/off campus, etc.). We think watching the film is a good way to break the ice and get students talking about what is normally a tough topic and help them identify resources and support if necessary (i.e. what is encompassed by the Mental Health and Illness strategic priority for this year's Welcome Week). The ROAs have responded exceptionally positively, and I am currently waiting to hear back from the ROP to see if this can be a residence-wide event.
BUDGET
It’s summertime, so there hasn’t been a lot of spending on volunteers with the exception of some executive appreciation after training. However, I do foresee a lot of promotions money being used in the next little while due to the service rebranding. I have already purchased rave cards for the year, but other expenses are on the horizon include a new pull-up banner, volunteer t-shirts, stickers/buttons, and a wall banner to go in the MSU windows during the year. We are also looking into getting the pillar outside the office wrapped (similar to the MAPS office) so that we can let people know what we provide now that the window frosting has been done. I am a little worried about how much things are going to cost, as I was fairly stringent last year on promotions money being spent, as I didn’t want anything with the old logo to have to roll over, but will keep an eye on things.

CURRENT CHALLENGES
Not a whole lot of challenges to report – it’s just very busy and vigilance will be necessary to ensure that everything gets done on time. There are lots of projects that my execs are keen to tackle (which is a better problem to have than no one having ideas), so the tough thing will be ensuring that there’s adequate follow through and nothing falls into the cracks. Nevertheless, my team and I are communicating well and setting deadlines far in advance, so I’m not too worried. Probably the most challenging things coming up is that the five of us are all in different places and have different schedules for the summer (inclusive of Welcome Week). This will make our already tight schedule for first year hiring even tighter, but I think we’ll cross that bridge when we get there, as I’m not sure how many applicants we’ll get at all (another challenge: promoting applications during Welcome Week, a notoriously high-traffic time).

Also on a side note, I’m wondering about the logistics of showing a Disney film for the ResLife event – does anyone know if I need to get permissions or copyright or something? It’s a non-commercial purpose, but I don’t want to get anyone (or myself) in unnecessary trouble. My internet searches have proved less than helpful, so any feedback would be super appreciated.

SUCCESSES
I honestly cannot stop talking about how great the executive team is, so I won’t. They’re really and truly a great bunch and I’m so stoked for the year to come. The cohesion that I’m feeling now is very gratifying as it was a big motivator for the restructuring of the service, so it’s nice to see that at least one part of it is working.

Another thing that I’ve really enjoyed but did not anticipate is being a support to new PTMs. It’s been nice to spread the knowledge I wish I had going into last year, and I figure that if I’ve already been around the block once, I should put myself to use. It’s been great to support my coworkers and really help and see them shine despite the tough circumstances they might find themselves in.