



COMO LEADERSHIP PROGRAM

COMO Leadership Handbook

Stonington Community Center
28 Cutler Street
Stonington, CT 06378
(860) 535-2476

The COMO Leadership Program is a year-round youth advocacy and leadership program for students entering fifth grade through their senior year of high school. As a year-round initiative, members of this group will have access to a diverse selection of volunteering and leadership opportunities.

“Building leaders through volunteerism and community service”

Program Overview:

The COMO Leadership Program (CLP) is divided into two age groups: COMO Leaders are participants in grades 8-12, and Junior Leaders are in grades 5-7. The program has two sessions: a summer and a school-year session. Exceptions can be made for those Leaders who are only in the Stonington area for the summer months.

- **Summer Session** runs from June through the end of August. COMO Leaders must complete at least 20 hours during the summer session with no maximum cap. Junior Leaders must complete at least 10 hours with a maximum cap of 20 hours.
- **The School Year Session** runs from September through May. All Leaders must volunteer at least 10 hours during the school year session, with a maximum cap of 30 hours.

Objectives:

- Develop leadership skills such as communication, teamwork, problem-solving, and decision-making.
- Foster self-awareness and personal growth among participants.
- Encourage ethical leadership values and social responsibility.
- Promote a culture of giving back to the community and making a positive impact.
- Offer training and mentorship opportunities to enhance specific skills relevant to each department, such as coaching in athletics, teaching in education, innovating in the makerspace, and retail experience in the thrift shop.
- Encourage participants to take initiative, innovate, and develop leadership roles within their chosen areas of interest.
- Encourage participants to reflect on their experiences, learn from feedback, and continuously strive for improvement.

Training Week:

2024 training is scheduled for June 21 from 10:00 a.m. to 4:00 p.m. New Leaders must attend the whole day while returning Leaders must participate from 1:00 p.m. to 4:00 p.m.

Volunteer opportunities within the COMO throughout the year:

The time spent volunteering within a COMO department will count toward volunteer hours. The COMO volunteer component of the COMO Leadership program is designed to actively engage youth, providing opportunities to master new skills and learn workplace protocols while also fulfilling volunteer hours.

- Leaders will have access to volunteer opportunities within COMO departments.
- Leaders will provide support at the annual Village Fair during the summer session.
- Over the school year, Leaders will lead and participate in service projects that directly impact the COMO.

Department Overviews:

Athletics:

Being part of youth sports can be an advantageous experience for youth interested in sports management, physical education, and coaching. A mentorship in COMO Athletics will include assisting coaches in all aspects of the sports session. This summer's athletic programs include soccer, tennis, basketball, and a multi-sports camp.

Opportunities/activities may include but are not limited to:

- Lead a small group of children in a drill,
- Develop fun activities to help build gross motor skills
- Facilitate team-building activities
- Research equipment and wishlist needs for the department

Education:

Mentoring in Education allows engaging with children ages 3-12 via fun and enriching programming like preschool, COMO Kids, Middle School Dodgeball, Schools Out, and Camp COMO. Leaders will participate in teacher-led activities and be able to facilitate activities while learning best practice procedures for working with youth in programming.

Opportunities/activities may include but are not limited to:

- Facilitate games and craft projects
- Assist with activity prep
- Participate in programming as a role model
- Assist teachers in completing daily tasks

Makerspace:

A maker space is a room that contains tools and components, allowing people to enter with an idea and leave with a complete project. The goal is to work together to learn, collaborate, and share. The COMO Makerspace has three main workbenches: 3D Creation (3D printing and laser cutting); Digital Production (graphic design, coding, circuits, digital design, e-textiles); and Craft Fabrication (sewing, hand tools, building, paper craft, embroidery). Leaders with skills in technology, art, craft, engineering, science, and other maker themes OR curiosity and commitment to developing such skills would be a match for the maker space.

Opportunities/activities may include but are not limited to:

- Starting a teen maker club
- Coming up with project ideas and completing the project while documenting the process
- Using the Glowforge laser cutter and engraver to design and produce retail items for local businesses and customers

- Assisting in weekly classes and week-long camps on crafting, building, laser cutting, and 3D printing

Thrift:

The Stonington COMO operates one of the oldest thrift shops in the area- offering a wide array of selections at great discounts. Established at the end of WWII and founded by Mrs. A. H. Gildersleeve, who determined the British War Relief efforts should now be directed locally, specifically to benefit the COMO. The shop's inventory of quality clothing for the entire family, gently used furniture, jewelry, kitchenware, books, bric-a-brac, and many one-of-a-kind items come from donations of generous patrons who help to support the COMO and its programs. Leaders will get a thrift shop's hands-on retail experience, from organizing store inventory to tagging clothing.

Opportunities/activities may include but are not limited to:

- Organizing sections in the store
- Putting newly priced items away
- Sort and hand clothing
- Assisting with store displays.

Community Volunteer opportunities with the COMO throughout the year:

Leaders will have the opportunity to volunteer with at least three community-based initiatives during the year. Details regarding each initiative are communicated via the Remind app, email, and Google Classroom.

- The three community-based initiatives provide meaningful volunteer opportunities to develop empathy, compassion, and a sense of community service.
- Over the school year, Leaders will lead and participate in service projects that benefit the community and promote social change.

What happens if volunteer requirements still need to be met?

Leaders must meet the volunteer requirements to be eligible to continue participating in the program.

Assembly Meetings

Leaders meet as a whole group several times yearly as needed to prepare for initiatives and group activities - meeting dates and times will be communicated via the Remind app and email. Meetings typically run from 6:30 PM -7:30 PM. It is crucial to the solidarity and harmony of the program that you attend these meetings. Regular attendance at these meetings is essential to the program's continued success and cohesion of the group's members.

Absentee Policy for Volunteering and General Assembly Meetings

General Assembly meetings are mandatory, and Leaders are permitted one unexcused and two excused absences per school year. The Leader must communicate with the Youth Program Administrator in advance.

Communication

Program communication is via email and mass text (using Remind). Therefore, you must participate and check your email/text messages regularly. Information regarding COMO and CLP functions, policy changes, monthly meetings, and, most importantly, volunteer events are all promoted within our emails and text alerts.

Transportation

The Leader are responsible for arranging transportation to and from the COMO. COMO Staff is not allowed to provide rides in their vehicles. Exceptions to this rule are extenuating circumstances where a staff member can provide transportation in the COMO van.

Lunch/Snacks When Working with COMO Youth Programs

- Please do not share snacks/lunch with the campers.
- Be conscious of camper's allergies - the como is a peanut-free facility

Dress Code

Each Leader's responsibility is to be consistent with the positive representation of their role at the Stonington Community Center. All Leaders must present a professional image. Our policy is that each Leader's dress, grooming, and personal hygiene should be appropriate to the volunteer situation. For instance, Leaders who regularly volunteer with camp on behalf of the COMO would adhere to more casual weather and task-appropriate images than those who engage in primarily indoor activities. Those who appear to be volunteering inappropriately dressed will be sent home by the Youth Program Administrator and directed to return to volunteer in proper attire. All attire should be clean and free of rips, tears, or stains. As a guide, but not an exhaustive list, Leaders should not wear suggestive attire: shorts or skirts that are higher than one's fingertips; flip flops or open-toe shoes when responsible for the care of children or completing maintenance responsibilities; t-shirts that depict or promote inappropriate or controversial messages; pants below waist level; hats or hoods inside the COMO; and similar items of casual attire that do not present a professional appearance. Hair should be clean and well-groomed. Leaders will be issued COMO Junior Leader t-shirts, their preferred attire when volunteering for events and special occasions.

Behavioral Expectations (Code of Conduct): All leaders are prompt at events and meetings, exhibit positivity and professionalism, and communicate potential lateness or absence. In addition to COMO staff, advisors, mentors, and volunteers, Leaders should engage and evoke positivity when working with youth and peers. It is imperative to show respect and model respectful behaviors for others.

Our core values and the Fish! Philosophy

In keeping with the mission and core values of the COMO, the COMO Leadership Program embraces the FISH! Philosophy (www.fishphilosophy.com). As a Leader, it is your responsibility to maintain positive relationships with our supporters, customers, and community partners, as well as your peers and the children in the COMO's care. Therefore, we expect you to possess a positive attitude, skills, and work ethic to develop respectful and caring relationships. The FISH! Philosophy is an approach that applies to both professional and personal relationships. The goal is to create a positive work environment based on mutual respect.

The four principles of FISH! Are:

- PLAY - Carry a light heart; Work does not have to be the opposite of play.
- CHOOSE YOUR ATTITUDE - Just as you select your attire each morning, you can choose your attitude for the day regardless of what the day brings.
- BE THERE - Give your full attention to the individual before you; be fully present.
- MAKE THEIR DAY - Go the extra mile; Give a compliment.

Disciplinary Procedure

1. Verbal warning
2. Written reprimand on file, copied and communicated with parents/guardians
3. Meeting with Youth Program Administrator, Junior Leader, and parents/guardian
4. Suspension
5. Dismissal from the program

CLP Evaluations

Leader evaluations by COMO staff are based on the criteria listed below in the review example. In addition, the Youth Program Administrator will review evaluations with Leaders as a teaching and training resource. A breakdown of expectations is as follows:

Engagement with youth: Leaders spend time with children and engage in play and activities during their shifts.

Ability to take direction: Leaders can take and follow instructions from COMO staff and exhibit follow-through.

Overall Attitude: Leaders emote a positive attitude while volunteering in all COMO programming.

Overall punctuality: Leaders arrive on time for shifts and are ready to take direction from COMO staff.

Taking the initiative:

Modeled appropriate behaviors: Leaders consistently exhibit positive role model behaviors while on-site and volunteering in programming.

Modeled respect for the space and grounds: Leaders model care for the area and shared spaces of the COMO.

Modeled respect for staff and youth: Leaders show respect to themselves and others when volunteering with the COMO.

CLP Volunteer Evaluation

Name of Leader:

Department:

The following qualities for the Junior Leader(s) are rated based on feedback from summer and school year sessions.

1= Outstanding 2= Good 3= Fair 4= Poor

Engagement with Youth	1	2	3	4
Ability to Take Direction	1	2	3	4
Overall Attitude	1	2	3	4
Overall Punctuality	1	2	3	4
Taking the initiative	1	2	3	4
Modeled appropriate behaviors	1	2	3	4
Modeled respect for the space and grounds	1	2	3	4
Modeled respect for staff, youth, and COMO patrons	1	2	3	4

Additional Comments: