Hello, my name is Katie Macdonald. When I first became involved with ‘Run and Read’ 3 years ago, I knew little about the program. I was asked by a friend to volunteer and help specifically with one child who had just immigrated to Canada and who spoke little English. I appreciated the holistic approach of the program and the enthusiasm from both the volunteers and children. Throughout each school year that I volunteer, I am encouraged to see kids develop, grow and gain confidence in themselves. When the kids run up to me or to other coaches and with great excitement tell us about their accomplishments: finishing a whole chapter during reading time; running for 10 minutes without taking a break; or helping to clean up after games; it reminds me that spending 2 hours each week building relationships is a learning and growing experience for everyone involved.

‘Run and Read’ is an after school program offered to children all over Canada living at or below the poverty line. In Guelph, every Tuesday excited kids full of energy pour into the gymnasium at Willow Road Public School to engage in activities that promote physical, mental, emotional and social health. This program started from a desire to instill hope in children and to encourage them to dream and develop skills which will help them achieve their goals. The programming focuses on preparing for a 5k race which takes place annually at the end of the school year. Together the kids and volunteers (or ‘coaches’) train and prepare for this event, while learning valuable skill sets. The program also encompasses a reading aspect, where kids are given a chance to practice and improve their reading skills in small groups or individually. Coaches offer support by challenging and encouraging the kids to work toward their goals and build positive character traits. At the same time, we learn from the kids about creative new ideas, different cultures, and are re-energized through their enthusiasm.

For more information please visit: http://www.kidsfestonline.com/kidsfest-pathways/running-and-reading-club.html
Hello my name is **Dithaya (Jan) Laohaviraphab**. I was born in Thailand and by the time I was the age of nine, I moved to New Zealand for school. I finally moved to Canada when I was twelve years of age and have continued to live here ever since. I am currently a forth year student in the Child, Youth and Family program at the University of Guelph. For the past three years, I have been part of the **Residence Life Staff in the Department of Student Housing** Services at the University.

**Some of my volunteering experiences include:**

- being a teaching assistant at a school for students with hearing disabilities in Thailand.
- being a volunteer librarian at Earl Haig Secondary School in Toronto.
- being a volunteer coordinator of the McKee McKids Reading Program at Earl Haig Secondary School in Toronto.
- being a program assistant at Onward Willow Family Gateway in the City of Guelph.
Hello my name is Ashley Skinner and I am a Senior Peer at The Wellness Centre. I am responsible for coordinating Acceptance Without Limits (AWL), which is an eating disorders and body image awareness group. AWL aims to convey optimistic, preventative messages that promote positive self-image, a healthy lifestyle and self-esteem among individuals. The mandate of AWL is to create a warm, accepting environment that celebrates our diversity and dispels the existing myths behind sizism, arguably the last acceptable form of prejudice.

I also am a member of the Wellington-Dufferin-Guelph Eating Disorders Coalition and chair the Student Health Advisory Group (SHAG). The purpose of this coalition is to increase public and professional awareness of eating disorders and unhealthy body images; provide eating disorder resources to the community; and to provide an opportunity for networking amongst a diverse range of health and mental health professionals, social service providers and others interested in the prevention and treatment of eating disorders.

For more information visit: http://www.uoguelph.ca/studenthealthservices/