Overview:

The Middle Earth Peer Assistance Program was founded in 1970 and was known as CRISIS 5300 and was staffed by a small group of student volunteers. These students created CRISIS 5300 in order to help their fellow students who were challenged by the drug culture and other issues during the 1960's. Today, Middle Earth contains one of the country's oldest student run hotlines. The volunteer staff of 10 students has grown to over 150, and students now receive course credit for their work. In a typical year, the Middle Earth Hotline receives over 1,500 contacts. The program's early focus on drug related issues and education has expanded to also encompass peer support, peer education through peer theater and campus media, and providing information and referral services.

A focus of the program is to train our student staff in peer helping skills. In addition, peer counselors and peer educators receive instruction from professionals from the community about a variety of issues such as eating disorders, sexual assault, alcohol and other drugs, gay/lesbian/bisexual/transgendered issues, disabilities, contraception, HIV/AIDS and other STI's, and multiculturalism.

Middle Earth is the peer assistance arm of the University Counseling Center, Division of Student Success. The program is sponsored and funded by the Student Association and Division of Student Affairs of the University at Albany and is one of the largest student organizations at the University. Middle Earth has also been recognized by the U.S. Department of Education and Center for Substance Abuse Prevention as a Model Program in the area of Alcohol and Drug Prevention. Middle Earth consists of three major components: the **Hotline Service**, **Peer Education Service**, and **Staff Development/Training Component**:

- **The Hotline Services** functions as the campus peer assistance agency, especially after hours when other campus support services are closed. Trained student volunteers staff the hotline. A self-help information tape service is also provided. The Hotline is staffed from noon to midnight Monday through Thursday and 24 hours a day on weekends throughout the academic year.

- **The Peer Education Service** has the primary responsibility for the coordination of agency-wide programming efforts, consultation, seasonal preventative theme weeks, and resource development. We also have a peer theater group, the **Middle Earth Players**, and a responsible for a campus newspaper column and radio talk show on our campus radio station. Trained peer educators on campus do presentations, workshops and peer theater performances for sororities, fraternities, athletic teams, residence halls, and other campus groups. Topics include drugs and alcohol, dating and relationships, study skills, eating disorders, sexual concerns, diversity, and other issues.

- **The Staff Development/Training Component** is responsible for ensuring the smooth functioning and continued growth of the Middle Earth organization. As part of our staff development component, we offer several credit-bearing courses through the University. We provide hands-on training for all of our undergraduate members and offer advanced training opportunities for graduate students in programs such as clinical psychology, counseling psychology, and social welfare.
General Requirements of Middle Earth Trainees (ECPY 400):

Middle Earth Trainees may enroll in ECPY 400, a credit-bearing course. All trainees are required to:

- Attend a three hour class that meets once a week (traditionally on Tuesday evenings),
- Participate in a training weekend that takes place during one of the first weekends of the semester (Training weekend takes place Friday evening, and during the day on both Saturday and Sunday), and
- **Hotline Trainees:** participate in a three-hour training shift with an experienced hotline counselor on a weekly basis. During this time, trainees learn the logistical tasks associated with working on the hotline and participate in role-plays designed to incorporate information learned in class.
- **Peer Education Trainees:** participate in a weekly laboratory class that provides education on basic communication and workshop presentation theory as well as working with campus media and techniques of peer theater. The lab allows trainees to gain experience in researching, constructing, and presenting peer education programs. Peer education trainees also gain hands-on experience throughout the semester staffing informational tables and exhibits at various sites on campus (often at the Campus Center). This work involves educating peers and providing informative materials, videos and posters, or brochures.

Middle Earth returning students may enroll in the following courses after the training semester: ECPY 403, 404, 405, 406, and 497. All are credit-bearing courses that involve the following expectations:

**Requirements of a Hotline Counselor (after the training semester):**

- Participate in a weekly shift on the hotline (3 hours).
- Participate in two (2) 4.5-hour weekend day shifts, and at least one (1) overnight weekend shift during the semester.
- Participate in at least one (1) temporary shift during the beginning and end of the semester.
- Participate in a one-hour weekly supervision group led by one of the Coordinators.
- Participate in agency retreats and in-services as assigned.

**Requirements of an Outreach Peer Educator (after the training semester):**

- Conduct thirty (30) hours of presentations, exhibits, or other peer education activities during the semester.
- Complete 10 hours of office hours for the semester.
- Participate in a weekly 2-hour supervision/training group led by one of the Coordinators.
- During the semester, research and construct a peer education presentation on a topic jointly determined by the student and supervisor.
- Participate in agency retreats and in-services as assigned.

Gaining experience at Middle Earth is an excellent way to prepare for a career in psychology, medicine, social work, education, communication and a variety of other fields. If you have an interest in helping people and a willingness to learn from your volunteer work, make a commitment and apply to join the Middle Earth Peer Assistance Program. Middle Earth is an equal opportunity employer and welcomes applications from all segments of our diverse campus community.

### INSTRUCTIONS FOR APPLICANTS:

Please print or type and be sure to mark clearly on your application whether you wish to apply to the Hotline, Peer Education, or both components of Middle Earth. Return the application to the Middle Earth Reception Desk or place it in the envelope on the door of Room 202 on the 2nd floor of the Health and Counseling Building. Unless otherwise advertised, the application deadline for spring semester training is **November 15**, and the deadline for fall semester training is **April 15**, unless otherwise announced. You will be contacted later during the semester so that an interview may be arranged.

**For further information, please contact:**

M. Dolores Cimini, Ph.D., Director
Middle Earth Peer Assistance Program
University Counseling Center
Health and Counseling Building, Second Floor
University at Albany, State University of New York
Albany, NY 12222

**Phone:** (518) 442-5800  **Fax:** (518) 442-3096
**E-mail:** dcimini@uamail.albany.edu

**World Wide Web Address:**
www.albany.edu/counseling_center/
Unless otherwise advertised, applications for fall semester training are due no later than April 15, and applications for spring semester training are due no later than November 15 (unless otherwise announced) at Middle Earth, Health and Counseling Building, Second Floor. Please print or type.

NAME __________________________________________________________

CLASS YEAR________ MAJOR________________________ G.P.A. ______________

STUDENT I.D. NUMBER________________________ LOCAL PHONE NUMBER ______________

LOCAL ADDRESS __________________________________________________________________________

EMAIL ADDRESS __________________________________________________________________________

PERMANENT ADDRESS _______________________________________________________________________

I AM APPLYING FOR FALL 20________ SPRING 20________

CONSIDER MY APPLICATION FOR:
Hotline only_____ Peer Education only____ List preference)____

What do you have to offer Middle Earth?____________________________________________________________________

____________________________________________________________________

What do you expect Middle Earth to give you?____________________________________________________________________

____________________________________________________________________

What kind of job and/or life experiences have you had that would help you in your work with Middle Earth?
____________________________________________________________________

____________________________________________________________________

Briefly describe what constitutes a helping relationship.____________________________________________________________________

____________________________________________________________________

What kinds of interests and/or involvement do you have other than school? (hobbies, extra-curricular, etc.)
____________________________________________________________________

____________________________________________________________________

____________________________________________________________________
Describe what it means to be a role model for other students.

How would you address issues of alcohol and other drug abuse on campus?

Do you have any particular interests or projects that you would like to pursue under the auspices of Middle Earth?

Other Comments:

- Please answer “Yes” or “No” to all of the following questions. If you answer “Yes” to any of the questions, you must explain your answer on a separate sheet of paper.

  - [ ] Yes  [ ] No  Have you ever been on academic probation in college?
  - [ ] Yes  [ ] No  Have you ever been suspended or expelled from school?
  - [ ] Yes  [ ] No  Have you ever been referred to the Office of Judicial Affairs or mediation program at the University at Albany or at any other college or university?
  - [ ] Yes  [ ] No  Have you ever been fired from a job?
  - [ ] Yes  [ ] No  Have you ever had any problems with the law?

REFERENCES: Please provide us with the names, addresses, and telephone numbers of three individuals who know you. At least one of these references should be from a faculty member.

1. __________________________________________________________________________________
2. __________________________________________________________________________________
3. __________________________________________________________________________________

I verify that, to the best of my knowledge, the information I have provided in this application is accurate. Furthermore, I understand that any position offered to me by the Middle Earth program is on a semester-to-semester basis and that continued participation in Middle Earth will be determined based upon an evaluation of my performance in Middle Earth and academic and judicial standing. I hereby authorize the Middle Earth Director to verify my student status, academic performance and judicial standing.

Applicant Signature: __________________________ Date: __________________________

FOR OFFICE USE ONLY

Date contacted to schedule interview: __________________________
Date and time of interview: __________________________
Interviewer: __________________________

Disposition:  _____ Accept for hotline  _____ Accept for outreach
             _____ Wait list for hotline (#___)  _____ Wait list for outreach (#___)
             _____ Reject - encourage to reapply  _____ Reject - encourage to reapply
             _____ Reject  _____ Reject