Abstracts from 2013 Georgia State University MSW Community Projects

Atlanta Community Food Bank

Amy Barrow, Kaitlynn Bobik, Tiffany Boea, Daniel Drew, Mollie Treff

Our group worked with the Atlanta Community Food Bank (ACFB) on their campaign to showcase the work of their partner agency Collins Memorial United Methodist Church (Collins Memorial UMC) through utilizing social media. We assisted ACFB in this endeavor by creating a short video which will be featured on the ACFB website and YouTube channel. We also created a sustainability plan booklet so that the project could be duplicated to showcase other partnerships. During the month of January, we researched the area of Bolton Road where distribution takes place and performed windshield and walking tours to have a deeper understanding of the need of fresh food supply in the community. Additionally, our student group volunteered to assist in distributing food to over 300 people weekly at the food pantry from the end of January 2013 through April 2013. On distribution days, we met with volunteers and clients and gained knowledge about the history of the area from formal and informal interviews. In April, we spent much of our time editing our final video and creating a sustainability plan. Our work with Collins Memorial UMC helped to identify the common interests of the community and key stakeholders: to end hunger and food insecurity. The utilization of social media will help the ACFB disseminate that message that hunger is a prevalent social issue which affects varying classes and populations, regardless of socioeconomic status, race, or gender, available to a wide audience.

ACORN International

Brittany Burgess, Charlene Davison, Alice Lee, Jennifer Phillips, and Tim Zdencanovic

The GSU Remittance Justice Team worked with ACORN International on the current Remittance Justice Campaign to raise awareness about profiteering by banks and money transfer organizations and analyze remittance trends in and around the metro Atlanta area in order to influence these organizations to lower fees on the transactions involved in sending money to friends and family living outside the United States. We collected 204 surveys from immigrants and refugees, developed 8 partnerships with community organizations and created a blog for general interest building and education as well as electronic survey collection. Our resulting data confirmed existing research regarding remittance practices and will provide our sponsor with a view of the local attitudes toward the remittance process and fees charged. Our team learned the importance of engaging key stakeholders within a community and the necessity of approaching an issue from the perspective of the affected parties.
Developing a Mentor Program for Unaccompanied Homeless Youth

Jennifer Greenlee, Amberleia Henson, Lauren Jones, Molly Fraiser Vance, Paula Wilson

Our group worked in conjunction with the Executive Director of StandUp For Kids, the Fulton County Schools Homeless Liaison, and the School Social Worker at Frank McClarin High School to develop a school-based mentor program for unaccompanied homeless youth. The purpose was to provide support and encouragement to improve academic performance among youth, with the overall goal of graduation. We developed The Fulton Effect from the ground up, creating its name, mission statement, goals and objectives, program structure, and policies. We recruited mentors to match with students, as well as coordinated and facilitated bi-weekly meetings. We formed partnerships with local businesses to obtain lunch and monetary donations. We also developed and administered evaluation tools to measure program success. Our experience taught us the importance of utilizing community partnerships skills and understanding elements of successful collaborations in order to build a program that is effective and sustainable.

Furniture Bank of Metro Atlanta

Wendy Jambro, Leticia Williams, Larita Frazier, Melissa Fleurio, Jasmine Moore

We partnered with the nonprofit organization: The Furniture Bank. The Furniture Bank is an organization that provides furniture to individuals who are homeless, have HIV/AIDS, or who are fleeing domestic violence. The primary objective of the project was to provide support to the organization in planning and implementing the annual Chairish the Future event. This event serves as a major fundraiser for the Furniture Bank. Our primary tasks were to solicit and secure donations from local artists and local businesses and to create a video of clients who have received beds from the organization in the past to increase bed sales at the event. We successfully created the video and marketed the event around the metro-Atlanta area. We learned the importance of fundraising and marketing for nonprofit organizations and all the difficulties nonprofits face when attempting to raise funds to sustain the work that they do.

Career Exposure and Preparation for Foster Youth in Dekalb County’s EmpowerMEnt Program

Angel Eto, Alisha Clements, Sonjachardé Mixon, Katie Morgan and Cheertiza St. Germain

Partnership with the Multi-Agency Alliance for Children (MAAC) worked to develop DeKalb County’s EmpowerMEnt program, an initiative led by and for foster youth to provide resources needed for self-sufficiency and financial stability upon emancipation. Proceed, Succeed, Exceed (PSE) is an initiative developed to provide foster youth with tools to secure and maintain employment after emancipation. PSE aimed to expose and prepare youth for employment through a career panel and workshop and shadowing sessions. On February 23, 2013, PSE’s career panel served 27 youth. Career panel attendees reported an increase in exposure to non-conventional careers. Youth interest in shadow sessions was minimal, therefore it did not occur. On April 6, 2013 a career preparation workshop was planned but was unattended. Development of PSE enhanced students’ knowledge of barriers within the foster community, increased
teamwork and communication skills, and instilled invaluable lessons about inclusive community organizing, especially with relation to youth.

A Prepared People: Disaster Preparedness in the Metro Atlanta African American Community

MSW Students: Brittney Adams, Franci Frazier, Breanna Kelly, Tiffany Person, Brandi Shine

Our group collaborated with the National Association of Black Social Workers (NABSW) Disaster Preparedness Task Force. The project focused on decreasing disparities amongst African Americans in regards to disaster preparedness. We conducted research and developed an evidence-based model to increase awareness of the necessity of Disaster Preparedness in the African American community. The group conducted five community workshops in the Metro Atlanta area; at a senior community center, professional social service agency, professional community organization, an inner city community center, and at an African Methodist Episcopal (AME) Church. Over 150 community residents attended the workshops and reported an increased knowledge of disaster preparedness. The research and workshop outcomes were presented at the NABSW Annual Conference on April 4, 2013. The research and community workshop outcomes identified the need for more efforts in educating the African American community on the importance of disaster preparedness.

Rock the House for Homelessness

Master of Social Work Students: Nicole Fenstermaker, Mirna Patricia McKee, Kumiko Miyake, and Chiquita Turner

Our group worked in collaboration with United Way of Greater Atlanta on their initiative to end chronic homelessness in Metro Atlanta. We assisted United Way in planning a fundraiser that incorporated health and wellness to contribute monetary donations to two nonprofit agencies that work diligently to end homelessness, Project Community Connections, Inc. and Veterans Empowerment Organization. Rock the House for Homelessness was held on March 2, 2013, was a night filled with a Zumba workout with Atlanta’s own KTX Fitness Zumba instructor Reginald Allen. The night consisted of giving away 10 raffle prizes, an hour of Zumba, and testimonies from individuals who overcame the barriers and hardships of homelessness. As a group, in comparison to last year’s event, we were able to have 39 participants and tripled the amount of monetary contributions with $1,820.00. Planning this event helped us develop leadership skills, fundraising techniques, organizational communications, and volunteer management.
The Midtown Alliance of Preschools

MSW students: Katie Burt, Kate Edwards, Rebecca Elder, Rebekah Reynolds and Tanesha Richards

Five Master of Social Work students from Georgia State University partnered with the Samaritan Counseling Center of Atlanta (SCCA) in the creation of the Midtown Alliance of Preschools (MAP). Students designed the foundation of the program, including the name, logo, and social media outlets and proceeded to build relationships with community partnering preschools while surveying parents on educational interests. Students then coordinated and hosted the first MAP event, a Brunch and Learn held at SCCA, with expert speakers on child development and education. Parents who attended the educational event increased their knowledge about the topics of interest. Through the creation of this daughter program and event, SCCA has become more engaged in the surrounding community, awareness of the organization has increased and a partnership between GSU and SCCA has commenced. Through the event coordination, students learned about communication, networking, fundraising, social media and the importance of formal logistics (ie. contracts).