

This session will present a template and rationale for developing a Service Learning project by taking into consideration the needs of three audiences – (1) the funder, (2) the student volunteers and (3) the service recipients. Recognizing the needs of each stakeholder will aid in the decision-making process.

### **Foundations for the Original Project -**

The first service learning project was the Community Financial Education Program (CFEP). The program would address family financial literacy. This program would be delivered by students and faculty of Kingsborough Community College (KCC) and implemented at a site run by the New York City Housing Authority (NYCHA). The site chosen – for logistical reasons – was in the Coney Island section of Brooklyn, a borough in the City of New York.

Residents of NYCHA housing generally have low or moderate incomes. Low- and moderate-income households are less likely to have received even the most basic financial literacy education and generally lack access to the financial institutions that would support healthy financial behaviors. Participation in financial education programs has been generally found to increase behaviors that support financial health, including household budgeting, paying bills on-time, and opening checking accounts. We anticipated the need to present this very basic education.

Through the CFEP, 40 parents and their young children living in the Coney Island (Surfside, Carey Gardens, and O’Dwyer) NYCHA developments would learn how to develop and stick to a family budget and open checking and savings accounts. Children would understand what money is, learn how they can contribute to their family’s financial health, and master basic financial concepts that will lay the foundation for their own financial health.

Funding for the original project was arranged by a local bank. The contact at the bank is a member of the KCC Advisory Board.

The program for the adult recipients needed to be developed. That job was tackled by a member of the KCC faculty. The program for the children was developed by the Junior Achievement (JA) organization. The JA organization sent a trainer to the campus and several of the students were trained to use and facilitate the JA materials with the young audience at the Community Center.

The Service Learning students were to be identified from members of the campus Bull & Bear Finance Club. As it happened, they were actually recruited as in-class top-achievers. Schedules were coordinated between the availability of the NYCHA Community Center, the faculty and the students. This service learning project differs from others as the entire program, providers and recipients would meet for the same session for several weeks.

### **During this Session –**

The needs of the stakeholders in any Service Learning activity need to be identified, analyzed and solved for. In this session, identifying funding sources, service-recipients and student-learners will be addressed. Via an environmental audit, funders may be analyzed as to what their current needs are and elements of your program may be adapted to solve their needs. Finding both students and recipients in themselves may be an issue – then you have the added problem of matching the right students with the right recipients. The needs of both parties must be considered. Facilitating a program may have many inherent issues. Once again, the needs of the community, recipients and students must be addressed.

## **Status of the Project –**

The project first operated in the Fall of 2009. There were twenty-one service recipients (10 adult and 11 children – one set of twins) and four Service Learning students. An anonymous survey taken upon the completion of the seminar-series showed that the recipients were very satisfied with the Financial Literacy education which they received. Their children appeared to respond in a very positive way with their activities and take-away materials. As I write this report, we are about to start our second round of seminars with a new group. The same NYCHA Community Center will be used (O’Dwyer) but with a new group of recipients and a new group of four students. Over the past several weeks the students have been trained by the JA representative.

The service learning students were very enthusiastic about the project. Some of the children were more rambunctious than they expected but they grew into their responsibilities. Two of the students graduated and two are finishing up their studies in night classes. There is a new group of four for the Spring 2010 semester. They have completed their JA training and are looking forward to working at the NYCHA Community Center. Each student received the same books and materials given to each of the parent-recipients of the weekly seminars.

Less than a year ago, I had very little knowledge in the area of Service Learning. The SL team at the college changed twice since I started the project last Fall. The contact at O’Dwyer housing has changed. The recipients – by design – have changed and the students – by default – have changed. It appears that I have become the senior member of the team in just a few short months!

Finding, Funding, Facilitating

Maxine McGarvey, Instructor, City University of New York @ Kingsborough

The Development Office at KCC is looking to renew the grant for the CFEP project. The project was originally funded by a bank. The economy, being what it is, may wind up putting this project on the back-burner.