

Diversity Works

Office of University Partnerships

Minority-Serving Institutions Developing Partnerships, Building Communities

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Grantee Training Provides Critical Life Skills

Lehman College (LC) Nursing Professor Keville Frederickson wanted to strengthen the institution's existing partnership with the Mosholu Montefiore Community Center (MMCC). So she and Rita Santelia, assistant executive director at MMCC, turned their attention to encouraging and promoting conflict resolution among the children in the MMCC afterschool program. Children were solving issues with their fists, and consultations with MMCC's afterschool supervisors revealed that this problem was rooted, in part, in their inability to communicate with each other and adults and to make healthy and informed choices. This situation disturbed and moved Frederickson and Santelia.

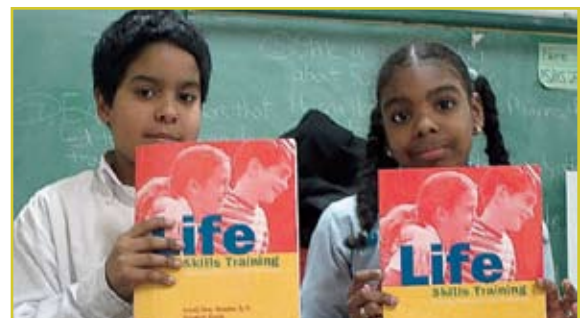
Ironically, Frederickson was already collaborating with another LC professor, Eleanor Lundeen, on a grant proposal that focused on improving the quality of life for residents in the north central neighborhoods of the Bronx, where 30 percent of the population is under the age of 18. The timing was right, and Frederickson and Santelia decided that LC and the community together could do something to improve the children's quality of life. Frederickson realized that the best way to do this would be to address their aggressive behavior and the core issues of low self-esteem, desire for peer acceptance, and curiosity that contribute to this behavior.

The first step was to identify a successful program for children ages 8 to 10. After much research, Frederickson discovered the LifeSkills Training (Level 1) program, which had an elementary school curriculum for third- and fourth-graders. This program, identified by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention as one that "works," specifically helps participants increase self-esteem; develop healthy attitudes; improve their knowledge of essential life skills, including conflict resolution; and address general substance abuse prevention.

Once the program was identified, Frederickson and Santelia decided that they needed trained bilingual (English and Spanish) supervisors to teach the large (more than 50 percent) Hispanic population the center serves. So in partnership with MMCC, LC's Department of Nursing applied for and received a 2003–2006 Hispanic-Serving Institutions Assisting Communities (HSIAC) grant to train the trainers. Frederickson, faculty member Mirian Zavala, and two LC nursing graduate students trained 30 bilingual individuals to teach the LifeSkills Training program.

Training the Trainers

"The first step in the training was to train Ms. Zavala," says Frederickson. "She was selected because she had assisted with previous community-based programs, lived in the neighborhood, and is bilingual (English and Spanish)." Zavala worked with 15 supervisors selected from 7 of MMCC's afterschool programs and 14 high-performing afterschool workers whom the supervisors selected to join the training. Zavala and the LC graduate nursing students provided training for the supervisors and afterschool workers, and undergraduate students provided support for the trainers.



Children show their LifeSkills workbooks

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Xavier Exemplifies Universities Rebuilding America

Xavier University of Louisiana is one of 16 universities to receive financial support through the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development's Universities Rebuilding America Partnership (URAP) initiative. It is using its \$350,000 award to establish and operate two Neighborhood Technology and Health Information Centers (NTHICs) serving low- and moderate-income residents in three storm-devastated communities: Hollygrove, Gert Town, and Treme. Like Xavier University, Gert Town and Hollygrove, which are adjacent to the university, were under 6 to 8 feet of water following Hurricane Katrina. Nearby Treme suffered severe wind damage.

Responding to Community Needs After Katrina

Internet access and computer literacy are critically important to low-income New Orleans residents, not only to repair and rebuild homes but to access education, jobs, and health and other services.

"In the days following Hurricane Katrina, access to the Internet was a treasured asset," says Xavier's Kimberly Reese-Buckner, assistant dean of students. "Without computer access, evacuees found it difficult to register for emergency disaster assistance from the Federal Emergency Management Agency, apply for Road Home funds (the federal and state program that provides grant funds to homeowners to close the gap between the cost of rebuilding and insurance proceeds), perform job searches, and create and print resumes."



Adult NTHIC participants

To develop and operate the technology centers, Xavier recruited and trained a cadre of volunteers, including university faculty and students, community residents, and health professionals. Key partners included Xavier's Student Leadership Center, the New Orleans City Health Department, McDonogh 35 High School, Earthwalk,

Inc., the United Negro College Fund Special Programs, Inc., and AmeriCorps*NCCC (the National Civilian Community Corps).

Recruiting Partners

"To recruit partners, we simply explained the goals of the program and asked if they were interested in partnering with us. All partners were excited and understood the importance of health and technology in our post-Katrina world," says Reese-Buckner.

Xavier's Center for Student Leadership and Service trains student volunteers who tutor in the afterschool program and teach computer basics to adults and children. Twelve students currently volunteer at the technology centers for 3 to 4 hours each day.

"AmeriCorps*NCCC was a great new and unexpected partner," explains Reese-Buckner. "After the hurricane, a large number of AmeriCorps*NCCC members were deployed to the Gulf South to assist with the recovery of the area. We received nearly 10 teams, and they all added something new and different to the technology center. We could not have done it without them."

Two Centers Now Open

In February 2007, Xavier opened its first NTHIC at Little Zion Baptist Church to serve the residents of Gert Town and Hollygrove. The university also partnered with the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People's Gulf Coast Advocacy Center and the Gert Town Revival Initiative to open the center. The center is open weekdays, including Wednesday and Friday evenings, and on Saturday.

In March 2007, the second NTHIC opened at McDonogh 35 High School in Treme. Its hours are 3:30 p.m. to 6 p.m. Monday through Thursday and 11 a.m. to 1 p.m. on Saturday. The school's existing health center provides services to residents coming to this center.

To publicize the centers' programs, Xavier University sent out a number of press releases. Local news outlets have covered the opening of both centers, and the New Orleans Public Library displays signs advertising the technology center. There are yard signs posted throughout both communities, and volunteers routinely distribute NTHIC flyers to local churches, schools, and health centers.

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New Classroom Extension To Promote Healthy Living

In 2003, Salish Kootenai College (SKC) in Pablo, Montana, decided to intensify its campaign of educating its students and community members about the importance of maintaining an active lifestyle. To achieve this, they used a Tribal Colleges and Universities Program (TCUP) grant from the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development's (HUD's) Office of University Partnerships (OUP) to construct a fully equipped health fitness center.

Now Salish has expanded its commitment to improving the quality of life of students and community members living in HUD housing. It has used funds from its 2005 TCUP grant to construct a classroom addition to the Health Fitness Center that will allow faculty and local health professionals to provide health education and health screening activities.

Changing the Odds

Heart disease and stroke are the first and sixth leading causes of death and disability among Native Americans. Moreover, Native Americans are more than twice as likely to develop diabetes than the rest of the U.S. population, and to develop complications from diabetes once they have the disease. However, as daunting as these facts are, these conditions are preventable, and Native Americans not only can beat the odds, they can change them. SKC President Dr. Joseph McDonald believes in this. He was a driving force behind the construction of the Health Fitness Center and an instrumental figure behind the construction of the new classroom addition.

"Tribal health has become an important issue to Dr. McDonald, and it was with the thought of educating individuals in proper healthy activities and lifestyles that the classroom addition became a priority to him," says Lon Whitaker, vice president of business affairs at SKC. "This classroom will give the college an area to develop a curriculum to help educate individuals in healthy eating habits, exercise, correcting unhealthy habits and lifestyles, and overall health issues."

Construction of the classroom, which was funded with TCUP grant funds, began in 2006 and was completed in November 2007. "This has been a complex project that includes not only the classroom additions but a full gymnasium for physical education courses and intramural activities, an indoor walking track, and office spaces funded through other sources," says Whitaker.

"Because Pablo is a small community, a project of this type is always watched with great interest and anticipation. The college has been open to community inquiry and has allowed access to the project through public forums and question-and-answer sessions."

The new extension will function as a reservoir of information, promoting life-changing insight such as how to achieve and maintain active, healthy lifestyles, and will provide a variety of health-screening activities. It will also provide healthy cooking and food preparation classes and physical education classes.

"These types of services are needed by the students and community at SKC as personal health and hygiene becomes a larger issue in society," says Whitaker. "With increasing rates of diabetes, heart disease, and other health-related diseases, education on these topics will not only help improve lifestyles for our students and community members, but it may save their lives in the long run."

One of the main thrusts of health education will be the importance of combining dietary reform with a regular exercise program, particularly since exercise tackles several risk factors of diabetes and heart disease at once. It results in weight loss; keeps blood glucose, blood pressure, and cholesterol under control; helps the body use insulin more efficiently; strengthens the heart and lungs; and gives more energy. Studies show that populations at high risk for diabetes, such as Native Americans, who combine a moderate exercise program with a healthy diet that results in a 5- to 7-percent weight loss, can delay and possibly prevent Type 2 diabetes.

Through the construction of the Health Fitness Center and now the addition of the new extension classroom, SKC faculty and staff are helping to revolutionize the health habits and lifestyle of its students and local residents, thus improving their quality of life and making a tangible investment in the future of Native Americans.

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“Xavier staff, students, community residents, and AmeriCorps*NCCC members staff the NTHICs,” says Reese-Buckner. “URAP funds help pay the salaries of community folks who staff the centers. We identified hours of operation to assist residents looking for jobs, school-age children who need homework assistance after school, and residents who work and need access to computers after they get home.”

Providing Essential Services

The centers host health fairs where residents can receive vaccination shots, blood pressure and cholesterol screening, and important information about mold, according to Reese-Buckner. The centers also serve as clearinghouses for health, education, and technology information, where residents can find out about the nearest free health clinic or community pantry. Information about new school openings and the registration process is also on hand.

“Computer classes are offered weekly to assist residents who are not accustomed to using computers,” says Reese-Buckner. “The classes offered include creating an e-mail account, creating a resume, and searching the Internet.”

The NTHIC program does not directly assist residents and small business owners in rebuilding but provides them with the necessary resources. “Residents may complete licensing and background checks on prospective contractors, receive information on mold abatement, and other pertinent information about rebuilding at the center,” continues Reese-Buckner. “Residents may also research how to obtain the appropriate building permits. The grant does provide for some direct services, such as gutting and mold abatement. Xavier students and AmeriCorps*NCCC have gutted homes of residents, and we are now offering mold abatement services for residents in the rebuilding phase.”

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Equipping Young Minds

After training of the supervisors and afterschool workers was complete, implementation of the LifeSkills Training program’s elementary curriculum began. Two-hour training sessions were held once a week for 4 weeks at one of seven MMCC afterschool sites throughout the Bronx, reaching a total of 240 children. The curriculum included instruction and training that provided the children with the necessary skills to:

- * Resist social pressure to smoke, drink, and use drugs.
- * Help them develop greater self-esteem, self-mastery, and self-confidence.
- * Enable them to cope effectively with social anxiety.
- * Increase their knowledge of the immediate consequences of substance abuse.
- * Enhance cognitive and behavioral competency to reduce and prevent a variety of health risk behaviors, all of which promote healthy and positive personal development.

“One class session provided scenarios of friendship decisionmaking. Children were asked how they would

decide which scenarios indicated true friendship: the friend who insisted on doing what he or she wanted to do, or the friend who considered the previous obligations of the other person,” says Frederickson. “This training program for third and fourth graders has received recognition from many agencies for its success,” she notes.

Mutual Benefits

“The staff and afterschool workers were introduced to fairly simple interventions that could help children make good decisions,” says Frederickson. “They learned strategies and the words to use to help children resolve conflicts.”

They also learned developmentally appropriate expectations for children ages 8 to 10. The community viewed the college as a partner, and a total of 15 graduate and undergraduate nursing students were trained in community mental health prevention strategies. In addition to supporting the MMCC supervisors’ and afterschool workers’ training and teaching times, HSIAC funds also supported Zavala

Bringing Educational Opportunities Closer to the Community

Located more than 800 miles from the University of Alaska Fairbanks' main campus, the Bristol Bay campus serves a 55,000 square-mile area, roughly the size of Ohio. While this region of Alaska is home to one of the richest red salmon fisheries in the world, its economy and infrastructure are still very much like those of a developing country. For example, there are no roads connecting the region's 32 villages, and there are no interregional roads between Bristol Bay and the rest of the state. Travel between villages is possible only by snowmachine, boat, or small plane, all of which may be hampered or halted by seasonal weather conditions. Groceries and other basic necessities are transported to the area by barge or air service, dramatically increasing the cost of living. Employment in this part of Alaska is mostly seasonal and related to the fishing industry. Other employment opportunities are scant and limited to community service, education, or government work.

To overcome the obstacles that lay in residents' paths to obtaining a higher education and earning a livable wage, the University of Alaska Fairbanks used its 2005 Alaska Native/Native Hawaiian Institutions Assisting Communities (AN/NHIAC) grant to extend its rural human service program to the Bristol Bay campus. "By hosting the program on the campus that is located in the region's community hub of Dillingham, Alaska, and in various villages, students did not have to make the costly, two-leg flight to Fairbanks to attend the weeklong intensive training sessions that are part of the program," says Dr. Deborah McLean, director of the Bristol Bay campus. "In addition, students who earn their rural human services training certificate receive the necessary skills to fill a variety of vital employment positions in their villages and make the most of the limited, non-seasonal employment opportunities."

Helping Residents Help Their Communities

The University of Alaska Fairbanks' rural human service program is a 32-credit certificate program developed for Alaska village-based human service providers. A combination of distance-learning lessons and intensive weeklong training sessions, the program provides culturally appropriate training in crisis intervention, suicide prevention, and community development, and counseling in mental health, substance abuse, interpersonal violence, grief, and healing. The program also allows students to further develop their skills and credentials in the helping professions.

"The training model used for the program has been very effective and has received a variety of awards," says McLean. "Because the villages in our region have a demand for trained counselors, we wanted to make it easier for people to receive the necessary training. With the AN/NHIAC grant, we hired a full-time coordinator at the Bristol Bay campus who taught the intensive sessions and coordinated off-campus sessions that were held at various locations and villages in the region. At the sessions held in the villages, village elders taught the students traditional counseling methods."

No Funding Does Not Mean No Training

The AN/NHIAC grant allowed the University of Alaska Fairbanks to support a satellite rural human service program at the Bristol Bay campus for 1 year. During that time, eight students were enrolled in the program.

"I was hoping that at the end of the year, we would secure funding to continue offering the rural human service program at the Bristol Bay campus," says McLean. "Unfortunately, that didn't happen, and our students have to make the journey to Fairbanks to continue their training. However, we did create a smaller scale rural human service program that is proving to be very beneficial."



Young mother attends class with her baby

McLean hired an adjunct faculty member to create a curriculum and coordinate a rural human service training program for students at a local alternative high school and for residents and staff at a women's shelter. Approximately 10 students earn high school and college credits while receiving training in early childhood development.

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“Even though we are not currently able to offer the rural human service program at the Bristol Bay campus, we are using the lessons we learned during the 1 year we had the program to continue to deliver human service provider training to the community,” says McLean. “We have the AN/NHIAC grant to thank for that and for allowing us to continue to strengthen the communities we serve.”

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and her management of the onsite training, which included observing the trainers teaching the children, observing the graduate students training the trainers, and evaluating the onsite components of the project. Following the observation, Zavala worked with the supervisors to refine their teaching strategies.

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HUD's Office of University Partnerships (OUP) provides grants to institutions of higher education to assist them and their partners with the implementation of a broad range of community development activities, including neighborhood revitalization, housing, and economic development. This newsletter, *Diversity Works*, highlights the efforts of grantees in OUP's Historically Black Colleges and Universities, Hispanic-Serving Institutions Assisting Communities, Tribal Colleges and Universities, and Alaska Native/Native Hawaiian Institutions Assisting Communities grant programs and includes a variety of interesting projects, compelling grantee profiles, and other valuable resources for minority-serving institutions.