

Community Social Psychology Practicum Placements 2010-11

Placement: Center for Family, Work and Community

Website: <http://www.uml.edu/centers/CFWC/default.html>

Overview: The Center for Family, Work and Community, through grant writing, program development and participatory research activities, focuses on sustainable economic and social development, leadership development, family enrichment, capacity building, and empowerment in areas such as environmental quality, community-based economic development, education and college access and the connections between work and family life. The Center places particular emphasis on expanding the capacity of organizations and community groups to address cultural diversity, changing community leadership and family roles, and urban youth participation

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Supervisor: Robin Toof: Co-Director of the Center for Family, Work and Community; robin_toof@uml.edu

My practicum experience at the Center for Family, Work and Community allowed me to become a valuable contributor on a number of community and university projects aimed at encouraging student participation and civic engagement. I took on leadership and collaborative roles for various projects at the center, including: The Lawrence YMCA Mentoring Program, Lowell Immersion: Alternative Spring Break, REACH OUT, the Community Engagement Showcase, VITA, and more. Since September of 2010 I've worked specifically on involving students with community projects and emphasizing the importance of reflection and leadership development. In doing so, I developed a booklet called "I'm a Volunteer, Now What Do I Do?!" for first time volunteers that provides insight on working with culturally diverse communities and reflecting on the volunteer experience. By working with the staff at CFWC, utilizing community resources and networks, and enhancing programs offered by both UML and CFWC, I have benefited both the student population at UML and the community based organizations in the Greater Lowell area. Furthermore, my practicum at CFWC allowed me to garnish leadership and program development skills throughout the production of the weeklong event, Lowell Immersion: Alternative Spring Break. This program involved building community partnerships with local organizations and soliciting donations from neighboring corporations. Significant effort was placed on recruiting student volunteers from the university, and encouraging the emergence of leaders from a select group. This program alone allowed me to develop considerable skills that will be valuable for my future as a community leader.

Placement: Center for Hope & Healing (formerly known as the Rape Crisis Services of Greater Lowell)

Website: <http://www.centerforhopehealing.org>

Overview: The Center for Hope & Healing's (CHH) mission is to dedicated to the healing and empowerment of survivors of rape and sexual assault through counseling, advocacy and education. CHH is committed to creating an environment that is not racist, sexist, classist, homophobic, and where sexual violence and other forms of oppression are eradicated. CHH is committed to creating a community where individuals and society can break the silence that surrounds the issue of sexual assault. CHH's philosophy is reflected in their service for survivors, the survivors' families and partners.

This organization provides services to the Greater Lowell area which includes the following communities: Acton, Billerica, Boxborough, Carlisle, Chelmsford, Dracut, Dunstable, Groton, Littleton, Lowell, Tewksbury, Tyngsboro, Westford, and Wilmington.

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Throughout this practicum experience, I have been using many of the skills I have learned throughout the past year of Community Social Psychology courses, and applying those skills to my work with the Center for Hope & Healing (CHH). The Community Social Psychology competencies that I hope to develop are: Program Planning and Development, Community Assessment, and Community Organizing and Coalition Building. In regards to Program Planning and Development, I will be researching and reviewing curriculum for any schools that contact the CHH about giving classroom presentations. The subject the CHH has been focusing on recently has been school bullying. In my practicum I have been gaining knowledge in this area and have been able to give a presentation to a class on my own and also with a partner. In terms of Community Assessment, I have been helping to hand out and analyze the new Community Assessment Tool (surveys) to figure out how we can alter our ways of educating the community on issues involving sexual violence. Some of my potential projects for my practicum include: Aiding with the Community Assessment Tool being used to identify best methods for prevention work in the Greater Lowell community, and aiding in the development and research for progressive curricula to address primary prevention of sexual violence. So far throughout my experience, I have expanded my knowledge about Community Social Psychology with hands-on learning in the community and I have also gained confidence with public speaking in the process.

Placement: Central Massachusetts Respite Project (CMRP)

Website: <http://www.sevenhills.org/index.php?s=cmrp>

Overview: The Central Massachusetts Respite Project (CMRP) is a non-profit organization based in Worcester County which is designed to acquire respite care for children and adults with special needs. It was started in the fall of 2007 as a project of the Central Massachusetts Partnership (CMP) who recognized the dire need of respite services for families in their area. The CMRP is a collaboration between community agencies, colleges and universities, and families in need of services. The community organization provides respite worker training and oversight to a student intern from the nearby university and matches them up with a local family. This gives the intern real world experience in the field, satisfies their college credit need, and provides help for the family who desperately needs it.

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During my practicum, I had the unique opportunity to be a member of a non-profit organization that is in its beginning stages. I was an integral part of the first steps in developing the organization which involved creating a vision and mission statement, creating an organizational chart, and devising marketing materials for family members, colleges, and other agencies. In addition, I researched grant opportunities and was instrumental in applying for a number of those grants. I also formed partnerships, networks, and collaborations with state and private agencies including a membership to the new Massachusetts Lifespan Respite Coalition.

Another aspect of my responsibilities during my practicum was to hold group supervision meeting with the CMRP interns. I devised a 13 week curriculum containing important topics in the area of Human Services for these weekly group supervisions. The curriculum included readings, videos, guest speakers, and field trips related to the chosen topics.

Placement: Coalition for a Better Acre

Website: <http://www.coalitionforabetteracre.org/>

Overview: The Coalition for a Better Acre (CBA) is a membership-based Community Development Corporation dedicated to resident empowerment and sustainable community revitalization for current and future residents of Lowell.

As a Community Development Corporation (CDC), CBA is a professional, not-for-profit organization providing economic development, real estate development, and resident empowerment to promote and support our community. Like most CDCs, we serve a specific geographic location -- in our case, the city of Lowell -- and focus on lower-income residents and struggling neighborhoods.

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Supervisor: Robyn Long-Navas CBA community organizer: robyn.long.navas@cbacre.org

I had the opportunity to get involved in NeighborCircles, an initiative that CBA promotes to strengthen relationships, build trust between neighbors and engage resident leaders in community revitalization. I also worked in other activities related to community building like monthly potlucks with CBA's members and the CBA's annual meeting. My work in NeighborCircles was related to all the areas that were required to implement the program such as facilitation of the NeighborCircles meetings, community outreach and training of NeighborCircles hosts and facilitators. I developed an outreach plan and organized presentations and network with members of the community that were interested in NeighborCircles like neighborhood groups or church members. I also adapted NeighborCircles materials so that they were appropriate for their use with the Lowellian community and created advertising materials to promote the program.

Placement: Division of Planning and Development

Website: www.lowellma.gov/depts/dpd

Overview: The City of Lowell's Department of Planning and Development (DPD) is responsible for the administration of the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development's (HUD) Community Planning and Development programs. These programs utilize funding from Community Development Block Grant (CDBG) program, the Emergency Shelter Grant (ESG) program, the Home Investment Partnership Program (HOME), and the Housing Opportunities for Persons with AIDS (HOPWA) program to fund local activities which benefit low-income and moderate-income residents and neighborhoods. Projects supported must conform to program regulations and focus on the City's priority needs, as identified in the City of Lowell's 2010-2015 Consolidated Plan.

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Supervisor: Linda King, Community Development Specialist; lking@lowellma.gov

During my practicum, I had the opportunity to work with Linda King, who is a community development specialist, on Lowell's *Partnership for Change: Action Plan to End Homelessness*. The Action Plan provides a broad roadmap to assess the current system of "managing" homelessness and explores the new, more innovative and cost effective "Prevention" and "Housing First" approaches that are greatly reducing and/or eliminating homelessness in communities all across America. These approaches are critical for the plan as they help the system transitioning from the expensive shelter temporary solutions to the cost-effective affordable housing long-term solutions. I worked both on the action plan and the implementation plan on different tasks and I found this experience really rewarding as I became familiar with the vast social problem of homelessness in Lowell. I also, participated in the 10YP subcommittees' meetings, provided data collection training and I had the chance to meet people from the community and important community stakeholders. Moreover, I had the chance to become familiar with the Annual Homeless Census and analyze data that helped me acquire perspective regarding homelessness in Lowell.

Placement: Lowell Community Health Center, Teen Coalition

Website: <http://www.lchealth.org>

Overview: Lowell Community Health Center (LCHC) is a diverse, community-based health care agency with non-profit 501 (c)(3) status. The mission of LCHC is to provide caring, quality, and culturally appropriate health services to the people of Greater Lowell, regardless of their financial status. They are committed to enhancing the health of our community and to empowering each individual to maximize their overall well-being. The LCHC Teen Coalition focuses on prevention youth violence, teen pregnancy, HIV/AIDS and STDS, and substance abuse through: educational retreats, cultural enrichment, strengthening family connections, art and dance, mentoring and tutoring.

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Supervisor: Linda Sou, Director of the Teen Coalition, lindaso@lchealth.org

I had the opportunity to co-facilitate the Youth Reaching Out (YRO) program, which is the Teen Coalition's violence prevention coalition. This program provides youth, ages 13-18, with the opportunity and skills to educate the public about violence prevention through such things as hosting events and educational retreats. I helped create the agenda and the curriculum for YRO and attended weekly meetings with a member of the United Teen Equality Center, (UTEC) which is the co-lead for YRO. I helped organize and host community events such as "Get Hooked" and "We Got the Power." For our larger event, "We Got the Power," which was in response to the New Year's Eve shooting in Lowell, I was instrumental in the creation and hosting of the event. It was an art event created alongside the youth that combined different forms of art (dance, music, and painting) with educational activities.

Also I was involved in finding grants suitable for the Teen Coalition and was a part of the grant writing process. I performed outreach to both teens and local business to either get more youth involved with the program or to promote events that were being held by the Teen Coalition. I evaluated the Teen Coalition as a whole, as well as each program individually and was able to provide feedback to the staff about the effectiveness of their programs. I regularly attended meetings, seminars and conferences that included: program evaluation, youth funding and program implementation, outreach works and immigration. The work that I did with the Teen Coalition provided me with the opportunity to work with both the youth population and community as a whole.

Placement: The Northeast Center for Healthy Communities

Website: www.nc4hc.org

Overview: The Northeast Center for Healthy Communities is one of six Regional Centers for Healthy Communities in Massachusetts. It is a program of The Greater Lawrence Family Health Center. The NCHC does health prevention and promotion work in communities of Northeastern Massachusetts, such as underage drinking prevention, smoking cessation, and oral health initiatives. It also provides capacity building, technical support, and consultation to various non-profits, partnerships, and coalitions.

Student: Theresa Bergazzi

Supervisor (s): Tami Gouveia, Director of Programs & Laura Hillier, Community Health Specialist

During my practicum, I had the chance to work on many exciting projects relating to health. I was involved in data assessment for a grant to establish a primary care facility in a hospital nearby in my first semester, in which we had to prove there was a need for more primary care facilities. Also, I participated in the evaluation of Youth Risk Behavior Surveys. These surveys are used to evaluate patterns of risky behavior in middle and high school students. I took a lead role in doing a community assessment of physicians in Lawrence, to see if it could be considered a physician shortage area by The Massachusetts Department of Public Health. Another project I was involved with involved sending gambling prevention information to parents through school superintendents and health coordinators. Through the various projects I worked on during the year, I saw that important community health centers are essential to public health.

Placement: St. Patrick Parish

Website: <http://www.stpatricklowell.org>

Overview: Since 1831, St. Patrick Catholic Church has stood tall in the heart of the Acre neighborhood. Today, in addition to serving Irish and French parishioners, the church offers native language services to small communities of Cambodian and Vietnamese Catholics. To Lowell's Cambodian community, St. Patrick's Church represents even more than just an invitation to practice Catholicism. It is the home of An Ros, America's first Cambodian deacon, only the second in the world. St. Patrick's Parish School has a student body that is primarily Asian. The church is also the site of civic debate and discussion, allowing Southeast Asians to address and resolve important neighborhood issues. It served as the first home of the St. Julie Asian Center, (now located in the Lower Highlands), offering instruction in English, child care, American citizenship, nutrition, and health and safety. For reasons beyond religion, St. Patrick's is an institutional anchor within an often changing neighborhood landscape.

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I started out writing grants for the Parish so that they could obtain funds to fix up their Church and the Rectory and then moved on to being the note taker and organizer for their building committee. I emailed reminders to every one of the times, dates, and locations for every meeting and also created the agenda that was used during the meetings. I am CC'd in on a lot of emails so that I can know the

status of a particular project that the Parish has taken on and I also print these emails out and created a binder to keep everything organized. The project that I am working on for the community is to assess the needs of the immigrant community. I created a one page survey to be handed out to various organizations. I've been in contact with several different organizations who have agreed to take on some of the surveys and pass it out to the community members that they are in contact with. The surveys are still being passed out until the end of this semester and hopefully after gathering the data, I will be able to figure out what the needs of that particular community is and how the Parish can be of assistance to them.

Placement: YWCA Haverhill

Website: www.ywca.org

Overview: The YWCA (Young Women's Christian Association) is a worldwide organization consisting of regional councils and local associations. The overall mission of the YWCA is to "eliminate racism, empower women and promote peace, justice, freedom and dignity for all."

In an effort to carry out their mission, YWCA associations incorporate what is referred to as "hallmark programs" that strive to achieve racial justice and women's economic advancement. Each local association implements specific programs based on their own community's needs while incorporating the goals of the hallmark programs. For example, one of the programs offered at the YWCA Haverhill is a domestic violence program where the goal is to not only ensure the safety and well-being of women in need, but also assist them with their own self-esteem and advancement in society.

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Supervisors: Bette Gorski, Interim Executive Director and Fundraising Coordinator, and Tracey Stearns, Youth Services Program Director (traceys@ywcaverhill.org); 978-374-6121

My two main focuses for practicum were resource development and community building. My experience at the YWCA Haverhill was instrumental at also teaching me about organizational development across all levels of the hierarchical ladder. I was exposed to all of the programs including the child care/after school program, the domestic violence program and the GED program. Beyond program involvement, I gained experience in grant writing, coordinating community events like Earth Day, learning about the finances and assisting with fundraising events (i.e. the Tribute to Women). One of my greatest achievements was assisting the YW Haverhill with promoting public awareness. I created marketing materials and designed and developed the association's newly unveiled website. Contributing to this initiative afforded me the opportunity to help move the organization into the 21st century, and it is my hope, help them continue to sustain themselves through the use of electronic technology tools like online donations and memberships as well as advertising upcoming events to drum up interest.

Beyond working with the YW Haverhill staff, I had the opportunity to also work with several staff members from its nearby sister association, the YW Lawrence. It was a wonderful complement to my overall experience because the Haverhill association is a very small organization operating on a much smaller scale including budget, number of programs and staff whereas the Lawrence association is much larger in all regards. Both serve its communities as best as they can and are committed to the YWCA's overall mission and making a difference in the lives of those they serve.
