Collaboration with the Salvation Army was implemented into the NLM 160 class as a group service learning project that was graded by instructors. Students were divided into teams, each focusing on a different need that was identified by SALDSAC staff and the students. Teams worked on tasks such as fundraising, media relations, organization of cultural activities, and provided assistance to seniors using the social media at the Center. Some teams also renovated rooms at the Center. Most of all, they engaged in a mutually rewarding dialogue with seniors.

The project progressed into two consecutive semesters: Fall 2013 and Spring 2014 and focused on a different need that was identified by SALDSAC staff and the students. Teams worked on tasks such as fundraising, media relations, organization of cultural activities, and provided assistance to seniors using the social media at the Center. Some teams also renovated rooms at the Center.

The experience from the project is summarized in the words of one student: “I thoroughly enjoyed the time I spent getting to know the seniors! From talking with them to playing pool and listening to country music, I truly experienced the generational gap being closed. At the same time, I also grew a much deeper knowledge of both program development and volunteer organizing and it was a joy to spend my time at such a lovely organization!”

In order to provide a theoretical background for the project, students learned about Asset-Based Community Development and the concept of the abundant community (McKnight, J., & Block, P. 2010. The Abundant Community. San Francisco, CA: Berrett-Koehler).

In their final reflection at the end of the project, students were asked to interpret their experience from the project using literature from the NLM 160. This is what they wrote about abundant community:

“The authors talk heavily about the importance of everyone in a community coming together and contributing their gifts and talents in order to make the community a thriving one.”

“An abundant community is created when people come and share their gifts and talents and create relationships.”

“The uniqueness of the relationship makes our community one of a kind and gives all members...a type of satisfaction that can’t be found anywhere else.”

“Respecting [the students] as individuals, not looking at them as ‘you kids’ or ‘young people’.” (SA staff)

“The uniqueness of the project, together donating more than 1,300 hours of their time. Students acquired 3 Telikin Senior computers (worth $1,000 each) for the Center.” (SA staff)

“Over the course of 3 semesters, more than 170 students have taken part in the project, together donating more than 1,300 hours of their time.” (SA staff)

“Students acquired 3 Telikin Senior computers (worth $1,000 each) for the Center.” (SA staff)

“The project was featured in the College Times, and on the main ASU website.” (SA staff)

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