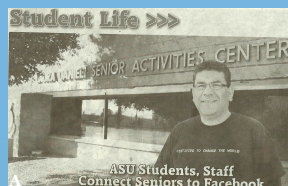


1. Practice

Project evolution

How can a service-learning project best connect two organizations located less than mile from each other? What makes such a partnership sustainable long-term? This poster tells a story of a partnership between Arizona State University (ASU) students and older adults and staff of the Salvation Army Laura Danieli Senior Activity Center (SALDSAC).



In Spring 2013, ASU student Marco Mendoza was instrumental in creating ties with the Salvation Army. As he was working on an independent service project, SALDSAC opened their doors to him and the relationship grew into something bigger. Seeing a need in the Center for computer training Marco made contacts with student instructors of a class he took at ASU a year earlier: NLM 160 "Voluntary Action and Community Leadership".

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 consequent semesters: Fall 2013 and Spring 2014 and formed the hands-on back bone of the class syllabus. In the process, the partnership between ASU and the SALDSAC has formalized into a mutual long-term commitment.



Some of the successes of the project include:

- 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.
- Students acquired 3 Telikin Senior computers (worth \$1,000 each)
- The project received ASU College of Public Programs Dean's Cup Award
- The project was featured in the College Times, and on the main ASU website.

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!"

2. Theoretical Grounding

Community abundance

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."

Learning on the go

In order to learn from the project, we are using data from the following sources:

Student reflections

- Spring 2013: 25 (class of 52 students)
- Fall 2013: 25 (class of 62 students)
- Spring 2014: 37 (class of 65 students)

Focus groups

- 3 Salvation Army staff
- 4 seniors from the Salvation Army



Inspired by the project, one student from the Fall 2013 cohort, Miyuki Ketchum, created a public art piece with the title: "Dare to dream, dare to fly, dare to live".

Miyuki wrote: "We learned to be tolerant, to see things through different eyes, and the beauty found in each of us. The class made the origami Tsuru, representing flight and our journey together."

4. Implications

Keys to partnership sustainability

Respect

- "[Seniors] have so much wisdom, insight, and knowledge to share about life and the world... that we should all value." (Student)
- "Respecting [the students] as individuals, not looking at them as 'you know they're just a teenager or a young adult.'" (SA staff)

Relationships

- "This project has worked on breaking down [my] wall of apprehension and distrust of new people." (Student)
- "I don't want to share them, I want them for me! [laughing]" (SA senior)
- "We can... identify with young people that aren't our family." (SA senior)

Communication

- "Communication is extremely essential in having a successful group project." (Student)

Flexibility & Patience

- "The key is remaining level headed and open minded. I learned that you can't be stuck on your own ideas." (Student)
- "I have learned to be patient, which is universally needed in all areas of work and volunteering." (Student)

Mutual learning

- "We learned that if I'm going to ask them to do a project, I'm gonna make sure that it's doable on both ends." (SA staff)

Commitment

- "I really believe in all of the hard-work and passion that [SA staff] put into their work." (Student)
- "When you said you were going to do something you followed through on it." (SA staff)

Acknowledgements

We express our gratitude to the seniors and staff of the Salvation Army, NLM 160 students, and ASU's Partnership for Community Development. A special thanks goes to those who have provided us with reflections or were willing to be interviewed. Photos: (A) College Times; (B), (C) Felipe Ruiz of ASU College of Public Programs; (D) M. Pstross

ASU Partnership for
Community Development
ARIZONA STATE UNIVERSITY
<http://scrd.asu.edu/pcd>

We'd love to hear from you!

- (1) In your opinion, what are the keys to sustainable and abundant university-community partnerships?
- (2) What recommendations & comments might you have for us?

If you like, write your answers to any of these questions on a note and post it on the frame of this poster! You can also reach us by email: Mikulas Pstross (Mikulas.Pstross@asu.edu).

Community Service Learning as a Path to Abundance: Lessons Learned from a Long-Term University-Community Partnership

Mikulas Pstross, Heekyung Sung, Marco Mendoza, Craig A. Talmage, & Richard C. Knopf
Arizona State University, School of Community Resources and Development, Partnership for Community Development
Community Development Society Conference, Dubuque, IA, July 20-23, 2014