

Building these relationships, making connections, and providing expertise are essential because problems don't simply disappear.

community focus group participant

Adapting to Changing Needs

Developing Youth Capacity in the University District

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Courses: Education P&L 271 & 271J, English 567C

The shared vision of university-community partners in The Neighborhood Services, Inc. Youth Program Initiative was to develop an after-school program at Maynard Avenue United Methodist Church for middle school youth in the University District. The original plan called for students to provide tutoring/mentoring and grant writing support for the program. The best partnerships, however, are responsive to changing community needs. Discovering that there were already a large number of underused programs in the area, the project leaders shifted the focus to facilitating the use of existing after-school programs. Students conducted research on community capacity that resulted in creation of an easy-to-read flyer describing after-school programs, so that families could locate the best program for their children. More than 5,000 flyers were distributed at a summer camp, the Neighborhood Services Food Pantry, and area churches.

Sustainable approaches that meet community needs

Healthy Choices

I learned that we spent a lot of time modeling with the children. I noticed they pay attention better when they are observing and participating rather than just sitting and listening.

Nutrition student



An Afterschool Service-Learning Project to Address Childhood Obesity

Gail Kaye, Program Director, Human Nutrition. Community Partner: YMCA of Central Ohio

Course: Human Nutrition 704

I learned that children and adults are quite similar in that, though the "correct" or healthier option is known, it doesn't always win out.

Nutrition student

Healthy eating habits need to begin early in life, but statistics show that childhood obesity is on the rise in central Ohio. Data about childhood obesity in Franklin County were used to develop "Food Fit," a behavior change nutrition curriculum for elementary school children at risk for childhood obesity. Through a partnership with the YMCA of Central Ohio, students learned how to assess community and target group data to broaden their understanding about the prevalence and consequences of childhood obesity. They were trained to be mentors and delivered six Food Fit lessons to children at five YMCA after-school sites, and completed formative, process, and summative evaluations. The results showed that children improved their ability to identify food labels and calories on different snack food items. They also learned to identify serving sizes and servings per container. A significant number of the children reported that they wanted to use their new nutrition knowledge to make healthy choices, such as choosing drinks without added sugar and eating raw vegetables for a snack. Students learned about community and target group assessments, program planning, implementation, and evaluation as they actively engaged in these activities. They also learned the value of modeling desired behaviors and how to evaluate and improve programs as they progress. As a result of their collaboration on this project, OSU and the YMCA have begun working together on another

community-based initiative. Food Fit will be delivered in six different YMCA sites during the 2007-2008 school year. Dietetic Interns enrolled in HN 789.01 will be trained to implement and evaluate Food Fit at these sites.