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Barrow, Amy; Bobik, Kaitlynn; Boea, Tiffany; Drew, Daniel; and Treff, Mollie, "Dispelling the Myths of Hunger: The Atlanta Community Food Bank and Collins Memorial UMC" (2013). *School of Social Work Community Projects.* Paper 1.
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Community Project Final Written Report:

Dispelling the Myths of Hunger:
The Atlanta Community Food Bank and Collins Memorial UMC

Amy Barrow, Kaitlynn Bobik, Tiffany Boea, Daniel Drew, Mollie Treff

SW 8800

4/26/13

Abstract

Our group worked with the Atlanta Community Food Bank (ACFB) on their campaign to showcase the work of their partner agency Collins Memorial United Methodist Church (Collins Memorial UMC) through utilizing social media. We assisted ACFB in this endeavor by creating a short video which will be featured on the ACFB website and YouTube channel. We also created a sustainability plan booklet so that the project could be duplicated to showcase other partnerships. During the month of January, we researched the area of Bolton Road where distribution takes place and performed windshield and walking tours to have a deeper understanding of the need of fresh food supply in the community. Additionally, our student group volunteered to assist in distributing food to over 300 people weekly at the food pantry from the end of January 2013 through April 2013. On distribution days, we met with volunteers and clients and gained knowledge about the history of the area from formal and informal interviews. In April, we spent much of our time editing our final video and creating a sustainability plan. Our work with Collins Memorial UMC helped to identify the common interests of the community and key stakeholders: to end hunger and food insecurity. The utilization of social media will help the ACFB disseminate that message that hunger is a prevalent social issue which affects varying classes and populations, regardless of socioeconomic status, race, or gender, available to a wide audience.

Results/ Outcomes/ Accomplishments

After our initial discussion with our project sponsor, terminology that became reoccurring was “breaking or dispelling the myth of hunger.” Subsequent to meetings with key stakeholders at the ACFB, our group set out to establish a purpose and goals that could be successfully completed within a four-month time frame as well as make as much of an impact on the community that we were working with, leaving a heightened sense of hope with those in need.

It seems as if the main goal of any organization that is dealing with hunger is to raise awareness, which is paramount when trying to battle such a crippling social issue. It was decided that the purpose of this project would be to highlight the efforts to fight food insecurities by one of the Atlanta Community Food Bank’s partnering agencies: Collins Memorial United Methodist Church. The method to do so was determined to be through the use of social media. By documenting testimonials and operations via photography and video filming, awareness about food insecurities and efforts to eliminate it could be uncovered and the stories of the food recipients and volunteers would finally be disclosed to a larger audience.

Based on our purpose and goals, we established three objectives to ensure a successful completion of the project. The first objective was to complete five interviews, which were to include food recipients, Collins Memorial’s volunteers, and community residents and leaders. The second objective was to use those interviews to create a storytelling video for the Atlanta Community Food Bank social media campaign. The last objective was to create a sustainability plan to provide the information and materials needed for successful duplication of the project if it is ever to be decided that another community highlight video should be created. That also includes the transfer of all materials that we created and obtained over to the ACFB for their own storage and future use.

After the finalization of this project, it has been determined that we successfully completed all of our set objectives. The first objective was an absolute requirement because without having successfully completed the interviews, we would not have been able to create a video. We were able to interview the variety of individuals, including food recipients, volunteers, and community leaders. By doing so, we gained various perspectives on hunger, allowing for better-rounded storytelling. Also during the interviewing process, we built relationships that resulted in increased participation, trust, and an extreme amount of gratitude and thankfulness. At that point, not only was the completion of the interviews a success, but the realization of the impact of hunger by a handful of college students was the just the beginning of raising awareness, which can easily be considered a success.

We also achieved our second objective: the creation of a storytelling video that highlights the partnership between the Atlanta Community Food Bank and Collins Memorial UMC. During our initial planning for the components of this video, we decided that it should be no shorter than two minutes and no more than four minutes long. We achieved our goal of remaining within this time frame by ending the video at approximately three minutes and fifty seconds without a failure of getting the point across. Not only was the actual final product a success, but also through the process, we made it known that there is a presence of assistance in the community.

Lastly, we completed our sustainability plan objective, which includes specific information relating to our community project, informed consent documents from each person on photo/video, methodology, a literature review, ethical considerations, and lessons learned with suggestions for replication. The ACFB now has all materials that we gathered and used for this project to hold in case they decide to highlight another partnership in a similar manner, or would

like to use the other materials such as pictures separately within various aspects of the organization.

Due to successfully completing our objectives, there is nothing that was planned at the beginning that has been left unmet. However, there are aspects of this project that will need to continue past our presence at the Atlanta Community Food Bank and Collins Memorial UMC. The ongoing goals are beyond our capabilities because of time, organizational access, and financial restraints. The first ongoing goal is the continuation of raising awareness of food insecurity. This will need to include displaying the video for public viewing through various media outlets. The more outlets in which this video can be shown, the more people it will reach. Some of the future viewers of our video may already partner with the ACFB, while others may have been thinking about it, and this persuades them to join in and help the community. This idea will hopefully create a snowball effect, reaching more people that were not aware of the social issues surrounding hunger, or of the various types of assistance available in the community to obtain food.

Relationship building between food recipients, organizations, and the community is the second ongoing goal. The more relationships that are built, the closer the community will become, and ideally, the more people will want to participate or create organizations that could partner with the ACFB and serve as a food distribution pantry. Lastly, alterations will need to be made to the sustainability plan for future use based on the resources and abilities of the ACFB and the partnering organization. Every time this project is replicated, circumstances in which the project is being created will vary. The next group most likely would have different audio/video equipment, another organization to highlight, a more flexible schedule, available monetary

funds, and/or access to resources that were not available to us. Whatever worked best to create the best product possible will need to be documented in the sustainability plan.

Overall, our project concluded with a very favorable outcome. The success of our met objectives can now be measured by the excessive amount of material that we collected and the finalization of the video and sustainability plan. Even though we do not know exactly what type of an effect or the scope of it that this video will have on the community, we completed the assignment that was created amongst the project sponsor and ourselves at the beginning of the semester.

Results Analysis

As a group, we were very successful in meeting all of our project goals and objectives. The reasons for our successes were two-fold. First, we maintained an organized and cohesive group dynamic. Working well together allowed our group to remain focused on each of our individual and group tasks. We were also able to hold each other accountable to ensure that deadlines were met. This group dynamic was an important aspect in the creation of our storytelling video and sustainability plan. The second reason our project was so successful was due to the relationship between Collins Memorial UMC, the Bolton Road community, and our student group. The relationship that Collins Memorial UMC has with the community was instrumental in establishing a positive rapport between the food recipients and our student group. Establishing this relationship was a key aspect of the interview process. The food recipients felt comfortable to share their story with us. In fact, due to our strong relationship building, we exceeded our original goal of two recipients interviews and two volunteers, and conducted three volunteer interviews and over 10 recipient interviews. This was a testimony to the positive relationship we had worked so hard to establish.

The main lesson learned from our project success is the importance of establishing relationships in the community. This lesson will be a valuable tool used in our future careers. We were also able to use this lesson to create a storytelling video, which was personal and focused on the importance of community partnerships, as well as the relationship between giving back and those impacted.

Our project met all of it's intend goals and objectives; however, we believe that the objectives are ongoing and require continued participation among ACFB, Collins Memorial UMC, and the community at large. These objectives are ongoing not because our group was unsuccessful but because of the magnitude and scope of the issues associated with hunger.

The project experience taught us about the ongoing issues of food insecurity in the Atlanta area, as well as worldwide. As our project progressed, we realized that our project would be an asset to raise awareness of a partnership between ACFB and Collins Memorial UMC. However, we recognized that raising awareness on a larger scale would take more time than we had allotted for the purpose of this project. It is our hope that ACFB will utilize all of the materials we collected for the purpose of continuing to raise awareness about the issue of food insecurity. We learned from this experience that it is our duty as members of the social work profession to educate others about pressing issues facing our society, with food insecurity being a relevant and important example of a pressing social issue. As we begin our careers we must remember to bring awareness to this issue.

The successful outcomes achieved by our project reinforced knowledge found in scholarly publications during our research and literature reviews. Our initial literature review focused on the academic definitions of food insecurity, food deserts, and the myths of hunger. To complete our project outcomes we had to first research the community. During this research and

the volunteer-phase of our project, we found that the definitions found in the literature applied to the Collins Memorial UMC community. Our work on this project and completion of our project outcomes reinforced the knowledge found in academic literature on the subject.

Completion of our project outcomes also helped to contribute to the knowledge found in current literature. Our outcomes included highlighting a partnership through storytelling interviews. These stories were compiled into a short video as part of a social media campaign. This video will be available to view on the ACFB website. Giving the public access to this video will help to contribute to available knowledge on the subject. It will provide additional empirical and academic based works, which can be used for future research. It is also an entertaining and interactive way to dispel hunger myths by sharing the unique stories of the food recipients.

The community practice framework used was Rothman's (2007) capacity development. Throughout the project, we spent one day a week volunteering at the Collins Memorial UMC food pantry. During our time volunteering, we were able to see capacity development in practice. This reinforced prior knowledge stated in Rothman's (2007) work. The research states that change is possible through community involvement and empowerment. We were able to witness this to be true. The entire community is actively involved and aware of the good works done at Collins Memorial UMC. Each volunteer is a member of the community. The recipients are also empowered to create a better life for themselves. Not only are they fed from week to week, which helps to create a better life for their family, but they also have the opportunity to participate in literacy and GED classes. The resources available at Collins Memorial UMC give recipients the opportunity to empower themselves and create better opportunities. Our project helped to highlight such stories of empowerment.

Ethical Issues

During our project, a number of ethical issues emerged. One of the most blatant and important ethical issues that arose during our work with ACFB and Collins Memorial involved the connection between the food pantry and church service at Collins. The food distribution at Collins occurs directly following the Wednesday morning church service, and food recipients are strongly encouraged to attend the church service before receiving food. While the service was presented as optional, our group was concerned that the service could have functioned as mandatory, as the food recipients receive their place in the food distribution line during the church service.

After speaking with our contacts at the Atlanta Community Food Bank and Collins Memorial, we confirmed that community members who did not attend the church service were still given food. However, those who attended the service received the earliest numbers, meaning that those who chose not to attend church were the last to receive food. This often meant a more limited selection of food items, as the more desired items such as meat were sometimes gone by the time the last group went through the distribution line. The system used at Collins to assign an order for the food distribution, therefore, effectively forces the recipients to attend church service if they want to receive the best food available. This practice violated the clients' rights to self-determination, as their religious choices impact their receipt of services (NASW, 2008, p. 7).

In addition, we recognized a potential ethical issue early on in our project related to the safety of the food distributed at the food pantry. Members of our group noticed food items at Collins Memorial that could be deemed inedible, including bread with visible mold and oozing bananas. We consulted with our contacts at the Atlanta Community Food Bank to ensure that no

ethical boundaries were being breached. The ACFB employees informed us that, while they try to distribute food that has not yet passed its prime, ultimately the decision about what food is edible belongs to the clients. They will not distribute dangerous items such as spoiled meat, but clients can choose whether or not to take over-ripened fruit or molding bread. We were told that the clients would not take the food if they did not want it, but that it is acceptable to give them the choice. It was important for our group, in this case, to consult with the experts at the Food Bank and learn about their policy on this issue.

Two ethical issues, which we had not foreseen, arose in relation to informed consent, privacy, and confidentiality. First of all, our group had planned on obtaining informed consent from all clients who were photographed, videotaped, or recorded for our media project. We were able to receive informed consent from all of the recipients and volunteers who we interviewed, and we were able to receive informed consent from all of those whose photographs we used in our video. However, we only received an informed consent form from the Atlanta Community Food Bank in English. A significant percentage of the clients at Collins Memorial are Spanish-speaking, and when it came time to distribute informed consent forms, we did not have a form in Spanish to give to a family whose children were going to be used in our video. As a group, we decided that it was not ethical to have this family fill out an English version of the form.

We requested a version of the form in Spanish from ACFB, which took a few weeks to receive from them, as they did not have one readily available, and they needed time to translate the form for our group’s project. The NASW Code of Ethics (2008) states, "In instances when clients are not literate or have difficulty understanding the primary language used in the practice setting, social workers should take steps to ensure clients' comprehension" (p. 8). We considered having a Spanish-speaking volunteer at Collins explain the form to the Hispanic family and

translate for them, but we decided that a translated form would better ensure the protection of the clients' rights to informed consent. We received a Spanish version of the form and had a Spanish-speaking volunteer translate our explanation of the document to the family. In the end, we were able to receive informed consent ethically and responsibly.

Our second unexpected issue with consent, privacy, and confidentiality involved a domestic violence issue. When asking for informed consent to use a photo of a child in our video project, a volunteer at Collins Memorial informed us that the mother of the child had recently fled a domestic violence situation. As such, we realized that the mother and child could be put in danger should the video be seen by the perpetrator of violence. The photo would link the family to Collins Memorial and potentially provide the perpetrator with knowledge about their whereabouts. The volunteer at Collins told us that she would ask the mother, but our group decided not to put the family in that situation. We did not want to pressure the mother at all, so we decided not to use any photographs or videos of the child or parent in our project. The NASW Code of Ethics (2008) states, "Social workers should respect clients' rights to privacy" (p. 10). This is especially important in cases of domestic violence, as exposure could cause harm to the families. Risk of exposure could potentially cause the family to have to move, cease receiving services, or of course be put in harm's way. We believe that, in assessing and handling the series of ethical issues that arose, our group acted ethically throughout the completion of our project and took the necessary steps to ensure ethical conduct with clients and community partners.

Summary/ Lessons Learned

As a result of our work on this community project, we have learned many lessons along the way. As a group, we discovered the importance of the photo release form. There is

significant liability attached to publication of images of people who do not give written consent, especially when working with a well-known organization, such as The Atlanta Community Food Bank. Therefore, before submitting the video to the food bank for their use, everyone involved had to sign a release form. We also considered the diverse population that Collins Memorial served weekly; therefore, we requested a Spanish version of the consent documentation to ensure that each participant comprehended what the document entailed before giving us their written permission.

The importance of creating significant interview questions was another lesson learned. Before beginning the interview process, our group met with Lauren Waits from Story Corps. Mrs. Waits provided us with examples of similar interviews that her organization had administered as well as helpful tips to use when conducting interviews. As a group, we had to collectively decide on the purpose of our project and our goals for the film. By recognizing our intentions before filming, we were able to create questions that would produce great results. In addition, we also learned how to conduct meaningful interviews. Several weeks prior to interviewing weekly participants, as a group we volunteered to hand out the food items to the weekly participant at Collins Memorial. During these weeks, we truly got to know the participants. Most of the individuals shared their life stories while waiting patiently in the lines to get their groceries. For the most part, these were the individuals that we took photos of and interviewed. Building rapport with the participants made it extremely comfortable and easy to conduct interviews.

While working on the community project there were some things that we realized that we would do differently. As a group, we decided to conduct the entire interviews at Collins Memorial on a Wednesday morning during the distributing of the food. This was a beneficial

idea, because it was very convenient for the weekly participants; however we failed to make the necessary accommodations with Collins Memorial before finalizing this decision. On the day we decided to film, Cindy, the leader of the food pantry operation, did her best to accommodate us; however we were interrupted and moved to several different locations because the room was assigned for meetings. This factor delayed the entire filming process.

Our community project also called for technical devices that were extremely difficult to use. One of the group members learned how to use the sound equipment; however the device did not match up to the video recording device used. Unfortunately, we did not discover this mishap until the beginning of the editing process. If we could do things differently we would definitely practice using these devices before filming, and we would review the results before conducting the actual interviews.

Our last phase of our video project was the editing process. Through this period, we discovered that editing is a very tedious and can very quickly become a time consuming procedure. Therefore, if we could do things differently, we would ensure that we give the editor adequate time to allow for edits, by completing the interview and filming processes more rapidly. This would allow our editor more time to put the final product together. As a group we had to watch the video several times. Each time we watched it, we noticed things we had to cut, add, crop, and enlarge. As a result, our editor had to make several changes to ensure that our film respectively highlighted the partnership of Collins Memorial and ACFB.

Although there were a few things we would do differently, the end results were constructive and encouraging. We completed our objectives and learned many lesson while completing our community project. As a group we demonstrated the works of The Atlanta Community Food Bank through their partnership with Collins Memorial Church.

References

National Association of Social Workers. (2008). *Code of ethics*. Washington, DC: NASW Press.

Rothman, J. (2007). Multi modes of intervention at the macro level. *Journal of Community Practice*, *15*(4), 11-40.

Appendix

Appendix A: Outreach to Media

Appendix B: Copies of Thank you Letters

Appendix C: Deliverables (Video, Sustainability Plan)

Appendix D: Powerpoint Presentation

Appendix A

April 6, 2013

Kevin Riley, Editor
Atlanta Journal Constitution
223 Perimeter Center Pkwy
Atlanta, GA 30346

Dear Mr. Riley,
We are writing in the hopes that through awareness, education, and social media we as concerned citizens can dispel the myths of hunger. As Master of Social Work students at Georgia State University we have created a community social media project which highlight the good-works done by an Atlanta area food pantry: Collins Memorial United Methodist Church.

Right here in Atlanta, approximately 17.4% of Georgia families are affected by hunger or food insecurities as reported by the Atlanta Community Food Bank. This statistic illustrates the dire need for food security awareness in Georgia. Hunger affects all types of people from all walks of life. However, the issue is often ignored or misunderstood. It is our hope that this project will shed light on the issue of food insecurity in the metro Atlanta area through the use of social media advocacy.

Our project focuses on the partnership between the Atlanta Community Food Bank and the food pantry at Collins Memorial UMC located on Bolton Road in Northwest Atlanta. Run by Cindy Corona, her family, and close friends, this food pantry started 3 years ago serving 14 families, and now feeds between 300 and 400 individuals each Wednesday. The predominately low-income community of Bolton Road exists in a food desert, in which there is limited access to fresh fruits and vegetables via public transportation or within walking distance. In fact, the closest retailer of fresh foods is a minimum of two miles away. Many members of this community are disabled, retired, or experiencing other financial burdens. For this community, Collins Memorial UMC is the only supplier of fresh fruits and vegetables. Collins Memorial UMC utilizes the Atlanta Community Food Bank to provide this service each week.

We have created a three and a half minute video, which documents the weekly service. The purpose of this video is two-fold. First, we hope that our video will generate awareness of the issue of hunger and dispel the myths. Subsequently, we wish to document the partnership that exists between the Atlanta Community Food Bank and their partners such as Collins Memorial.

As concerned citizens and students we are writing to encourage others to educate themselves about this pressing issue, and to get others involved to create a solution. Please visit www.acfb.org for more information on hunger and food insecurity.

Sincerely,
Amy Barrow Kaitlynn Bobik Tiffany Boea

Danny Drew Mollie Treff

Appendix B

Dear Chris,

We are writing to express our deepest gratitude for the guidance and support you offered us during the completion of our community project. Thank you so much for taking the time out of your busy schedule. Without your knowledge, experience, and attention we would not have been able to complete this project successfully.

Your knowledge of the hunger issues facing metro Atlanta gave us an excellent jumping off point to get the project started. Giving us the creative freedom and trusting us to find our own direction with the interviews and video gave us the opportunity to create a project that was meaningful and special. I hope that our enjoyment of working with the members of Collins Memorial UMC and the Atlanta Community Food Bank came across in our final product.

We want to further thank you for your guidance with the MSW program itself. Having been there before us your valuable insight and knowledge helped us to create timelines that were possible. You also were instrumental in helping to ease our anxiety and anticipation about our final semester. We also appreciate all of the personal interest that you have taken in us individually. From forwarding us job prospects to taking a genuine interest in our lives. Working with you was a fun and relaxed environment for which we are truly thankful.

For each of us this project was a labor of love, as we all believe that the issue of hunger is a topic that deserves worldwide attention. It is our hope that our finished work will serve as a valuable tool for the Atlanta Community Food Bank.

Once again thank you!!

Amy Barrow Kaitlynn Bobik Tiffany Boea

Danny Drew Mollie Treff

Appendix B

Dear Cindy,

We wish to express our sincerest gratitude for your help with our Georgia State MSW Community Project. Thank you so much for taking the time out of your busy schedule. Without your guidance, knowledge of the community, and relationships with the congregation we would never have achieved such personal and thoughtful interviews.

The work you and the volunteers do each week for the Bolton Road community is awe-inspiring. We admire the determination, dedication, hard work, and love that go into the weekly food pantry. Being able to serve each Wednesday helped to keep each of us focused on why we chose the field of social work.

Once again, thank you for all the time you spent helping to make this project so successful. We hope that you are just as happy with the final outcome as we are. It is our hope that our video will help to raise awareness to not only the issues surrounding hunger but the good-works you provide each week.

Sincerely,

Amy Barrow *Kaitlynn Bobik* *Tiffany Boea*

Danny Drew *Mollie Treff*