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**The Role of Community Outreach Programs in Partnership with the University of
Mississippi in Combating Food Insecurity in the Oxford/Lafayette Area**

By Gabrielle Miller

A thesis submitted to the faculty of The University of Mississippi in partial fulfillment of
the requirements of the Sally McDonnell Barksdale Honors College.

The University of Mississippi

University, MS

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Approved by

Advisor: Dr. Annie Cafer

Reader: Dr. Timothy Yenter

Reader: Dr. Castel Sweet

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Table of Contents

Acknowledgments	3
Introduction	4
Phase I: Program Development & Implementation	7
Phase II: Program Sustainability	14
Outcomes	17
Reflections	20
Conclusion	24
References	26
Appendices A-G	29

Acknowledgements

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Introduction:

Poverty is a social determinant of health that is influenced by several systemic factors. These factors have played roles in the lives of generations of Americans living in poverty. It is a weed that spreads and affects every aspect of a person's life. Though socioeconomic status can change over time, the health effects of being born into, or living for a period of time in poverty, can be felt throughout the entirety of a person's life. In the United States, more than 15 million children live in poverty (Francis, 2018). Often children who grow up in poverty experience a long-lasting negative impact on their mental and physical health. Many studies have cited “toxic stress” as a reason for this long-lasting impact. Toxic stress is defined as “strong, frequent, and/or prolonged adversity” (*The Science of Aces & Toxic Stress*, 2022). Prolonged segments of stress, when experienced during early childhood or during critical developmental periods, without buffers such as a strong support system, can disrupt the development of the brain as well as other organ systems (*The Science of Aces & Toxic Stress*, 2022). Research also suggests that the effects of toxic stress can be prevented and potentially reversed (*Toxic Stress*, 2020). The role that responsive relationships play, where caring and responsible adults are coming into constant contact with the child, can buffer the toxic stressors (*Toxic Stress*, 2020).

It is not easy to change a family's socioeconomic status, however, it is possible for communities to come together and recognize gaps where children and families are in need and address those needs. One can begin to address the gaps by taking into consideration a family's social determinants of health (SDOH). The Centers for Disease and Control, as well as the World Health Organization, define SDOH as “nonmedical factors that influence health outcomes”.

These nonmedical factors can include access to safe housing, transportation, access to nutritious foods and physical health opportunities, quality health care, quality education as well as economic stability (*Social Determinants of Health at CDC, 2022*). As early as prenatal and as late as old age, the quality of housing, education, access to healthcare, food, and transportation all play key roles in the overall health of a person.

To combat the effects of poverty, many approaches have been taken. One approach is through formulating community outreach programs. These programs are very broad and can have various levels of impact on a community. Many factors come into play that will determine their success or failure. Often these programs begin with the intent of addressing a need that has been identified. To determine a specific need within the community, it is important to utilize a needs assessment. Within the realm of social work, a needs assessment aims to gauge a community's deficiencies and or gaps (Royse, 2009). This can be difficult because in many ways, what is “needed” is relative and contingent on a person's perspective. In many cases it is reasonable to expect residents of a community to have differing views as to what is most needed for that community. A needs assessment does not mean that *everyone* will be in complete agreement, but that a sizable portion of the population have their views represented.

In the state of Mississippi, where 13 of the state's 82 counties were found to have extreme child poverty (child poverty rate of 50 percent or more), it is imperative that efforts are made in rural communities to combat the effects of poverty and toxic stress (Farrigan, 2022). Many community outreach programs have been implemented throughout the state to combat various forms of obstacles that persons with few resources face. One program that exists within the Mississippi Delta, We2gether, has worked with community members as well as organizations outside of the Delta to provide access to fresh produce. They also work to address many other

needs in the community such as remedial education for elementary and high school students, parenting classes, as well as stress and anxiety reduction classes (*Programs and Initiatives*, n.d.). Drew, Mississippi, is located within Sunflower County which holds a 28.5 percent food insecurity rating from Feeding America (*Child (<18 years) Hunger & Poverty in Lafayette County, Mississippi, n.d.*). Much of Mississippi is rural, 54 percent of its residents live in rural communities (*Rural Health*, n.d). Often people who live in rural areas experience higher rates of poverty, have more difficulty accessing doctors and quality health care resources as well as face a larger difficulty in finding transportation to access resources than those located in urban areas (*Rural Health*, n.d). With so much of the state being rural it unevenly distributes resources and results in a greater impact on the level of health of its residents.

Lafayette County holds a childhood food insecurity rate of 20.5 percent which is higher than the national average of 10.2 percent (*Key Statistics & Graphics*, 2022). Within Lafayette county resides one of the state's 8 Institutions for Higher Learning, the University of Mississippi. This institution is located in the town of Oxford, Mississippi which in 2020 held a population of 25,416 (United States Census Bureau, 2022). The university on average has an enrollment of 20,000 students. In 2021 the University of Mississippi's enrollment was at 21,856 students which then grew to 22,967 in the fall of 2022 (Mississippi Institutions for Higher Learning, 2022). The town of Oxford doubles in population when the school year is in session, which can lead to several issues. The sheer number of students as well as staff can exacerbate the housing crisis, however, the university's presence can offer additional aid and stand as an outlet for resources not typically available in a rural setting.

Phase I: Program Development & Implementation

Needs Assessment & Program Development

The initial needs assessment completed at CB Webb took place in the fall of 2020. It was done from my vantage point: a young female college student who was not a resident of the CB Webb community. It was important in my initial assessment to be cognizant of the biases I held as well as the lack of understanding of the community I was stepping into. I recognized that I am not a woman of color and that I was stepping into a predominantly African American community. I recognized that I was not of the same socioeconomic background as the residents I would be encountering and that I was stepping into a place where the community members are below the poverty line. It was important to me that I evaluated my perspective and sought out those who were a part of the community. I sought out perspective from those older than I am, as well as solicited the help of African American students who were also passionate about community outreach. It was crucial that the needs and desires of the community were taken into consideration in order to formulate a useful plan. Myself and one other student spent several weeks speaking with residents to gain their perspective and what they would like to see change and improve within their complex. I recognized that it is one thing to step into a community and give items but it is another to step into the community and listen, work, and become a part of it. In order to better understand what can actually be done to help long term, one must listen.

Grow Club was formed from a period of listening which allowed recognition of a need within the Oxford community to be heard. During my time at the University of Mississippi, I worked with 'Flower for Life: Food Rescue' an organization that worked to gather cooked meals from various greek organizations on the college campus, and to redistribute them out to housing units in Oxford. This organization was formed by Jackson McArthur, a current student at the University, due to his desire to fill the gap of food need and food waste that exists in our

community. Jackson reached out to Betsy Chapman, Oxford Community Market director, in the fall of 2020 and partnered with the Oxford Community Market to create his food rescue. While working alongside Jackson and his organization I recognized that there were several young children running around who lived in the complex. I spoke with them as we passed out meals and quickly learned that they were out of school due to COVID and were doing online school work instead. Many of them voiced to me that they were struggling with online school and some even stated that they were not doing their work at all.

Program Development

It was at these complexes that I began to recognize a need for what would then become Grow Club. Through serving with Flower for Life, I began to form connections with the residents at CB Webb, one of the 4 complexes managed by the Oxford Housing Authority. There I found that many of the residents were either elderly or single parent households. Each week that I visited CB Webb, I learned more about their residents and the needs that each of them held. I began to work specifically with the kids who lived there. I recognized that many of them, due to the pandemic, were at home doing school via Zoom. I wanted to work with the kids to help remediate much of what they were missing by not being in a school setting. In order to do this, Grow Club initially would do fun activities on Friday evenings that then formed into fun educational activities as well as remedial academic activities.

We now meet twice a week, Mondays and Fridays, with the kids at CB Webb. Although we have had success in our efforts with the students, Grow Club has potential to grow even further beyond what we have formed. While working with the kids I have recognized that some struggle with speech impediments. To help develop their speaking skills, I have reached out to the School of Science and Disorders to partner with their graduate students to offer aid to those

students. Through our weekly meetings, I have been able to form relationships with the children and I recognize many of the social determinants that impact their lives. I saw Grow Club as an opportunity to not only work on academic coursework but as a learning experience in every sense of the word. Each week we share a small part of our lives with the kids and through our work we have been able to leave just as much of an impact as they have on us. That is why we expanded and have since added on more university students to volunteer as well as forming a mentoring program for the middle school and high school aged students. This allows them to form a connection with us and to ask us questions about how we have gotten to college, what choices we have made or just be a friend and offer a listening ear to the students. Our goal is that these students will be able to come together and through our weekly meetings form a deeper sense of community with those who live in the complex but also grow in their own self confidence.

As a student studying social work at the university, I could see much of my coursework being represented in the lives of those who I was directly involved with. I began to recognize how cyclical poverty is and that many of the residents have never been able to escape it. Poverty is a social determinant of health and in a state like Mississippi where resources such as Medicaid have not been expanded upon, health disparities are staggering. The kids in this complex are limited to the quality of housing their parents can afford, which limits their quality of life. This will hold an impact not only on where they are zoned for school, but their options in regards to health care, food access, extra curricular activities, as well as many other aspects of their lives. Due to the complex having been built in the 50's the units are structured independently of each other without communal spaces and many residents are cut off from the front portion of the lot near the main office. For those who have disabilities this makes it more difficult for them to

move about the property. The lot is set up on several hills, the buildings are red brick fourplexes that have 3 bedrooms each and a bathroom. CB Webb currently holds a 60/100 Housing Quality Rating, 23.1 points lower than the state average (83.1). This rating is considered passing under HUD (United States Department of Housing and Urban Development) regulations, however, it still leaves much room to improve conditions (Parker, 2018). Another factor that we took into consideration is the location of CB Webb. It is situated on Molly Barr Road near the police department office and a Chevron gas station. It is a 3.1 mile drive to Walmart, and a 3 mile drive to Kroger. For residents who do not have a mode of transportation, Walmart is a 3 mile walk while Kroger is a 2.4 mile walk. If they are unable to drive themselves or walk there, they are forced to find other ways to acquire groceries. There is a Chevron gas station located directly across the street from the housing complex. Many residents cross the street to purchase goods they need as it is more convenient. Until this past May, the street did not have a crosswalk and many residents would have to try and cross the street with oncoming traffic. One resident was hit by a car trying to cross to get to the chevron in October of 2021. With all of this, I began to recognize the need for secure access to food.

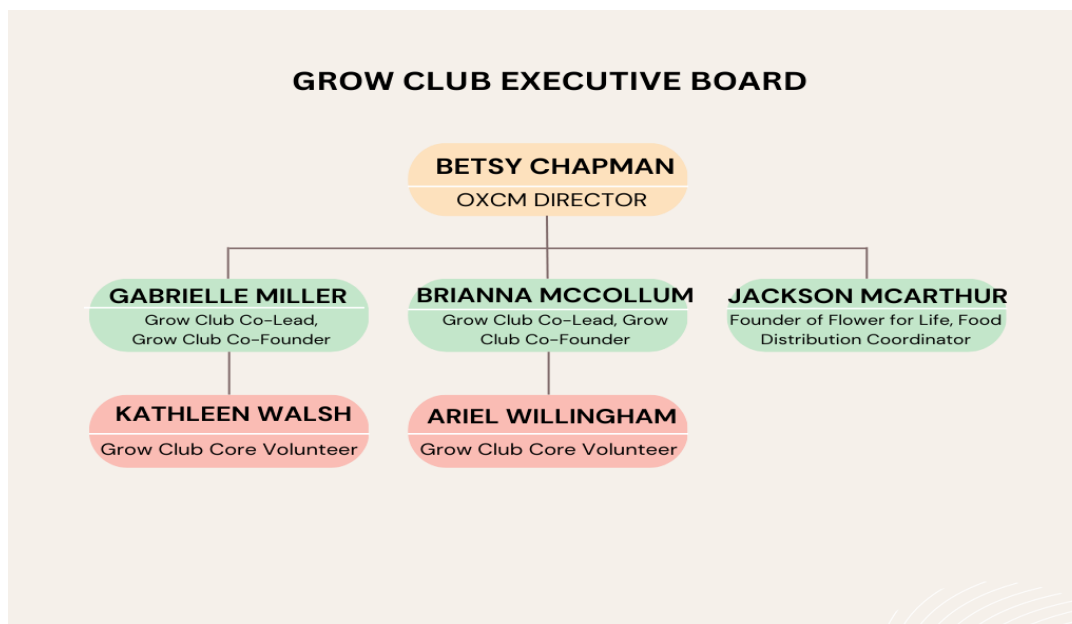
With the help of the Oxford Community Market, we built 6 garden boxes for the residents to utilize. We began planting fruits and vegetables with the kids and teaching them about all that goes into tending crops. We held activities on how to use the fruits and vegetables from the garden in easy recipes. Our goal was to add variety to their diets while also helping them feel confident that they can “cook” for themselves. Our goal now is to incorporate all of the residents and build more gardens throughout the complex for those who live further away from the front of the property. We are currently working to build park benches and plant trees, as well to add a sense of community and enable the residents to enjoy the property more. Along with

this, I have proposed that we find a community space to hold classes such as prenatal courses for many of the young mothers, cooking classes, career tech, credit building, financial literacy, etc., for the residents.

Program Evolution

By speaking with many of the residents, we have been able to incorporate them into our work. We do not want to merely be a group of students who come in to “do good” and then leave. We recognize that when we are stepping into this housing complex, we are stepping into peoples homes and lives. We want the residents to be as involved in the project as they are willing to be. We have started with the kids, but we recognize that our work is impacting all residents of the complex. The gardens and park benches are for all residents to utilize, and with classes and courses, the entirety of the housing complex can reap a benefit. Food accessibility is crucial to health outcomes, but there are also many other social determinants that come into play. We are working currently with the department of transportation to promote bus ridership and improve residents' knowledge of bus stops, routes, and access to grocery stores and medical aid.

Our initial goals for the project stemmed from addressing the academic needs of the children but have expanded to offer a more wrap around style of aid. We began by meeting every Friday at 4:00 p.m. at CB Webb. Initially the volunteers consisted of myself, as well as another undergraduate student, Brianna McCollum. From the two of us we expanded to include a total of 10 consistent student volunteers.



Brianna and I would begin each semester meeting to discuss lesson plans for each Friday as well 1 hour weekly meetings to discuss logistics of who would bring what materials and confirm our initial lesson plan would work with that said week. Brianna and myself would arrive at CB Webb between 3:30 and 3:45 each Friday. We initially would work with whatever kids were roaming around the complex, however, this eventually changed as we built connections with each student. About a month in, Brianna and myself had a list of each student and their complex number. We would begin each Friday setting up our matts and materials in the garden space and then go door to door rounding up the kids. Our activities would begin around 4:00 and last about an hour to an hour and a half. Once we had built up a student volunteer base, Brianna and I would delegate roles such as set up and kid round up. We would lead the groups and allow for each child to have a student mentor to work with. On average, we would have anywhere from 10 to 15 students attend. Thanks to Betsy Chapman, Director of Oxford Community Market, Grow Club had some funds to purchase supplies for programming. Brianna and myself presented our ideas and hopes

for Grow Club to Mrs. Betsy and we began to meet as a leadership team weekly via zoom as well as in person to form and achieve our goals. Through Betsy, our program was able to grow further and attract more student volunteers who had been working with the market and Flower for Life. With this increase of volunteers and interest in the program we saw a need to begin an intake and vetting process. We had a new wave of volunteers enter in fall of 2022 when we began literacy advocacy on Mondays. We decided then to hold an intake meeting before they met the Grow Club students. We held a meeting in the community room at CB Webb and broke down expectations for the role of student mentor. The rules we established were as follows: No requesting personal contact information, no giving your personal contact information, no leaving the central areas with a child, all student activities are to be conducted in the community space, no speaking inappropriately to the kids or around the kids, no touching inappropriately and no permitting children to sit in laps. We emphasized the importance of adhering to these rules and that when working with kids it is crucial to be careful of what you say and how you say it so nothing could be taken out of context. We established a buddy system so that volunteers were held accountable by myself, and Brianna but also by their peers to ensure safety at all times.

In spring of 2023 I met with Dr. Shawnboda Mead, Vice Chancellor of the Division of Diversity and Community Engagement, Lauren Jones, Director of the Center for Inclusion and Cross Cultural Engagement, and Dr. Castel V. Sweet, Vice Chancellor for Diversity and Community Engagement at the University of Mississippi to discuss Grow Club and its future and potential impact. During our meeting training for organizations working with children was brought up. They discussed with me the opportunities that the university offers for this training and that it is a requirement for all organizations wishing to join the university. Going forward

with Grow Club I see a structured system of child protection training as a benefit to the program and for the population we are working with.

Phase II: Program Sustainability

As we continued expanding the program, we began to set tasks for ourselves.

Goal 1: Establish a consistent group of volunteers

Task 1: Finding a source of volunteers

Brianna and I were both honors college students so we identified that honors students could be a consistent source due to their needing volunteer hours. We also utilized our connections within our friend groups and respective communities as well as our schools of study to find community minded individuals.

Progress: Each year we have been able to maintain a set group of volunteers. At the beginning of each school year we regroup to see if those individuals are still able to contribute as well as recruit new volunteers.

Task 2: Making content to recruit volunteers

Brianna and I utilized canva to create flyers and other informational graphics to distribute via email as well as social media platforms

Progress: Word of mouth still is one of our favored methods of recruiting. As well, we contacted the advisor within the school of social work to send out informational graphics to social work students. We were able to recruit some volunteers this way. Many students will also reach out to the Oxford Community Market and this allows for them to be directed to us.

Task 3: Organizing volunteers and maintaining contact with them

We utilized the application “groupme” to distribute information and communicate with our volunteers.

Progress: We still utilize groupme for our communication with volunteers.

Goal 2: Formulate an intake and vetting process for volunteers

Task 1: Research and utilize university resources in order to learn more about resources currently available

Progress: A meeting was held with the Office of Community Engagement at the University of Mississippi to discuss options for holding a seminar/training to our volunteers who are working with minors. Before this, a meeting was held with current Grow Club volunteers at the beginning of the semester before they came into contact with the residents to establish what rules and expectations were to be followed as volunteers in the community.

Goal 3: Establish a source of funding

Task 1: Attaching ourselves with the Oxford Community Market

Working alongside Jackson with Flower for Life allowed me to meet Betsy Chapman. I pitched to her my idea for Grow Club and she was on board.

Progress: We have since become a subgroup of Oxford Community Market and Betsy Chapman is still our biggest supporter.

Task 2: Forming a budget

Brianna and I formulated lesson plans for each week's activities at the beginning of each semester. This allowed us to preplan our events and determine what supplies we would need. We then communicated this with Betsy and she was able to either purchase or get donations for materials and snacks for the kids activities.

Progress: We now meet with Betsy, myself, and Brianna at the beginning of each semester to formulate a lesson plan and discuss a budget. Typically Grow Club does not require a large expense. Most of our projects are conducted with similar materials and we replenish those as

needed. Due to our connection with OXCM, we are able to work together to apply for scholarships and grants to continue expanding the program. Oxford Community Market was allotted funds from the office of Diversity and Community Engagement from an award we had applied to. We received the Excellence in Community Engagement award and were able to distribute the funds across the various programs.

Goal 4: Formulate lesson plans for group activities

Task 1: Identifying students needs

Our initial Friday activities were geared towards aiding the students with their homework as well as playing games. Through this we were able to identify areas where each student was struggling socially and academically. We then came up with a set lesson plan where each Friday we would tackle a different subject area. Due to the demographic we work with, each Friday can be different. Typically the age range is between 4 and 12, however, we have had kids join in who are 1 to 2 years of age. When this occurs we typically pivot and continue with the lesson plan but adapt to the range of ages. We will break the kids out into groups based on their age/grade level to work with 1-2 mentors.

Progress: Currently Brianna and myself meet at the beginning of each semester to organize a set lesson plan for the semester. We then hold weekly meetings every Monday at 9:00 at the Oxford Lafayette public library with the Core Team which consists of myself, Brianna, Jackson McArthur, and the OXCM Vista intern. This allows us to organize for the upcoming week as well as organize materials. Betsy Chapman also joins us and we brainstorm ideas and make adjustments as needed.

Task 2: Finding sources of information for student activities

Once we identified subject areas we then began to brainstorm ideas for games, educational worksheets, and activities that we could do with the students. We utilized websites such as education.com, and pinterest to find creative materials.

Progress: We currently still utilize pinterest and educational websites, as well as books from the public library. Our volunteers are also creative and often have ideas for potential projects.

Goal 5: Expand upon community resources

Task 1: Identify current local organizations

We recognized that we could partner with local organizations who were actively working within the same or similar demographic. By communicating with local churches, on campus student organizations, as well as utilizing Betsy Chapmans community connections, we were able to identify potential sources for partnerships.

Progress: We currently have identified partners in the community who consistently offer support via donations such as books, art supplies, and snacks for our weekly activities. Those partners include Oxford Community Market, Oxford University Methodist Church, Oxford Housing Authority, UM Office of Sustainability, Oxford Garden Club, LOU Home.

Outcomes

Formation of Grow Club

Myself and one other student were able to form a student based educational after school program for local Oxford elementary students who live in income based public housing

Grow Club was formed over the course of several months out of the recognition of a need within the CB Webb community. The progression of this program has been constantly assessed and

re-assessed for quality and relevancy purposes. Myself, as well as Brianna McCullom have worked within the community speaking with residents and their children to see what is needed and wanted. Each semester we would reassess our work to evaluate its effectiveness. Myself, Betsy Chapman, and Brianna McCollum would all meet to discuss whether or not we had met our initial goals that were set at the beginning of the semester. We would also ask the kids what they thought of how the year went and what could have been done differently. This constant conversation being had both with the executive board as well as with the residents was valuable in ensuring that the program was effective and maintaining relevancy.

When we would hold our meetings a majority of the content was shared verbally. We would send out lesson plans, and scheduling via google documents and google calendar. We would discuss where we were at in projects, what was not able to be completed within the semester as well as if we were hoping to carry those plans over into the next semester. We often were able to recognize gaps that we encountered throughout the semester that inhibited us from accomplishing our initial goal and allowed for us to pivot. For example, one semester we had quite a bit of inclement weather on Fridays and were unable to meet. We then reached out to the main office of the complex to see if we could utilize their spare community room. We were allowed access and were able to hold some activities there for the kids on rainy days.

Established a central location at CB Webb

In the summer of 2020, Oxford Community Market built 6 garden boxes behind the main office of CB Webb. By building these boxes it helped to form a more centralized location to hold group activities. We recognized the importance of creating a space within the community where

members could come together and feel that the complex was suited for their needs. With the flower boxes being there we decided to build off of this by establishing our weekly activities there. This began with the food distribution of Flower for Life and then Grow Club kids activities, our weekly literacy advocacy followed and has begun to grow and expand to include other community organizations a space to enter and collaborate with residents. Recently, a member of a local boy scout troop reached out to OXCM to utilize the garden space for his cub scout senior project. The student asked how he could meet one of our needs. We talked about the benefits of adding small touches to add to the appeal and versatility of the space. We agreed upon the building of benches for the community space. This would add to the existing area and draw in more community members to enjoy the space.

Created a literacy advocacy sector to Grow Club

Through working with students at CB Webb a need for literacy mentoring was recognized. We decided to form a separate day, Mondays, to work at CB Webb with the students to improve their reading skills, reading comprehension, as well as pronunciation and oral skills.

Our initial assessment found that several of the students living at CB Webb held reading skills below what was average for their age and grade level. For example, an eleven year old in 6th grade was unable to read and comprehend short stories that were suited for 4th grade reading level. We then formed programming for every Monday 4:00-5:00 to have a group of student mentors work one on one with students to practice reading comprehension and pronunciation. We would keep a list of sight words for each student that coordinated with their grade level. Each

week we would work on these sight words as well as reading exercises and discussions of what was read with the group allowing them to recite what they comprehended from the stories.

Promoting a spelling bee with the kids and finding ways to make learning fun enabled the students to eagerly read and learn. We found that spelling bees were a good motivating factor and many of the students were able to expand their vocabulary.

Reflections

When considering a student to take over operations it is important the student has some form of understanding that they are not just stepping into a housing complex, that the work they are doing has an impact. It is also important that the student is cognizant of the demographic and social norms. The population is predominantly African American and about half of the residents are around or above 60 years of age while the other half are young families. Seeking out fellow students and community members who can add perspective and voice different roles that reflect the demographic in the CB Webb community is crucial. Being open to finding new ways to incorporate volunteers and residents is a core trait that would be encouraged for an incoming team lead. A student can learn many of these social aspects but it requires someone who is open to listen and learn. A student with a background in anthropology, sociology, social work, psychology, early elementary education all could find rewarding work and would have a decent basis to cultivate further engagement within CB Webb.

When working with children, consistency is key. If a volunteer is not able to consistently attend and be fully present then a leadership role is not for them. In this setting, your actions hold a weight, you are dealing with people's lives, you are stepping into their homes. This can be a little daunting, however, this can be a motivating factor and inspire you to continue attending.

We challenge any student who is interested in volunteering to form a “why” in order to truly be inspired and push to shape and transform the setting they are stepping into. It is not always easy finding motivation at the end of a busy week to go and give an hour of your time but when you have formed a why and can feel invested, in those moments you can reflect and find the motivation to push through and serve. The act of volunteering each week should be a growing experience for both CB Webb students and the university students. We have found that by allowing yourself to find a “why”, enables you to become more invested and truly enjoy the work that you are doing. It becomes more than a weekly chore, it allows you opportunities to encounter people in the community, discover their desires and challenges they have faced and offers a moment to come together to figure out ways to question those issues and work towards solutions. When I initiated this program it came naturally to me, I saw an issue, I sought out the feedback of the community, found partners, and began to form a small group to address the work to be done with the kids. Upon this, Grow Club formed into what it is today. I began to recognize that there were resources available beyond myself and those currently volunteering. I began to look outside of Oxford in more rural areas of the state to see what was working for other community outreach programs. I found an organization based in Drew, Mississippi, called We2gether. There I saw how founder Gloria Dickerson had recognized a need within her community and called upon other residents in the area to come together and advocate for the residents living within Drew. Her organization began its work in September of 2009 where she

As I continued my search to discover more about what had been working elsewhere in the state, I met with a gentleman named Lee Scott who works with the Jackson Leadership Foundation. Jackson Leadership Foundation is a nonprofit based in Jackson Mississippi that works to aid in

funding community outreach programs in under-resourced communities to allow for a more streamlined approach for volunteers to find a nonprofit to work with as well as less overhead for the nonprofit in regards to funding and managerial work. Lee expressed to me that you can think of the organization like an umbrella and within it houses several projects in the Jackson area to promote and empower leadership and change towards lasting growth to permit better access to basic resources for community members. I was able to discuss with him what we had begun to form in Oxford and he then informed me of one organization that is housed under JLF's umbrella called Red Door Jackson. Red Door was founded by Emily Hardin in the hopes of building relationships amongst students in the Jackson Public School System. It is a program that connects JPS students with a mentor to enable them to excel in academics and social skills. I was able to briefly speak with Emily and discuss what her initial steps were and where the program hopes to go. She shared that the program began in 2005 in hopes of working with students who lived in a region near StewPot Ministries. She began with about a two square block radius. Many of the students in the summer time would roam the neighborhood and did not have much to do. She decided to offer her front porch to host events and activities for the kids. Through this it grew to her porch and her neighbors and eventually then expanded to work along with a local church where the activities now reside. After learning more about We2gether and Red Door Jackson, I sought out a type of restructuring of Grow Club. I met with Lee in the summer of 2022 and decided that going into fall semester I wanted to form a more unified version of Grow Club. This looked like more consistency in executive meetings, documentation of volunteer hours, working with more on campus programs to promote growth of programming opportunities. I recognized that we could facilitate a deeper level of outreach within the community beyond our weekly sessions with the kids. I began to see it from a full picture

approach. I recognized that we had spent most of our energy towards planning programming for the kids.

As students we found that by being connected to the university we can bring aspects of the university to those we encounter at CB Webb. Information, resources, connections, we were able to offer all of this to those we worked with. It allowed for a bridge to be formed and for us to have a moment to reflect on what we were also receiving. We were able to enjoy conversations, cook outs, playing games, gardening, and so many moments with people who stretched a variety of ages and backgrounds. I do not believe my experience at the university would have been the same without these moments.

Lessons Learned

While formulating and maintaining Grow Club we faced several limitations. I recognized that my own personal educational background aided me in many ways with regards to recognizing a need and conducting a needs assessment, however, I do not hold a background in early childhood development and was embarking on forming a remedial educational program. I would recommend to others wishing to formulate a program such as Grow Club to research and seek out the necessary resources in order to formulate a seminar to inform their volunteers on methods to best deliver remedial educational programming as well as how to behave and treat elementary aged children. I recognized that not everyone we recruited had a background or experience working with children, having this curriculum in place would improve the quality of service we are able to provide. For Grow Club specifically this could include utilizing university resources and reaching out to educators within the school of education. Another limitation we

encountered was scalability. This program began with CB Webb with approximately 15 elementary students. It was presented to us to expand upon the programming and formulate a similar program at another housing complex within the Oxford community. As college students, Brianna and I both had busy schedules and were unable to recreate the programming we had done as well as maintain the work we had begun at CB Webb. She and I were both university students with limited time and energy and we realized very quickly that we wanted to focus on CB Webb and aim for quality programming over the possibility of reaching several units. In order for community programming to truly have a positive impact it requires focussing in and forming relationships with the community members. Myself and Brianna would not have been able to commit to another programming outreach and have it hold the same impact due to our lack of time to be intentional in both places. It would still be possible, however, for another student who has interest in taking the format of what we have formed and implementing it.

Conclusion

Now that we have formed a space where CB Webb residents can meet, garden, and connect with university of Mississippi students, it is crucial to establish a format to sustain this program. In order to ensure the longevity of the program, certain steps must be taken. Those steps include, establishing a group of students to transition into leadership roles and delegate tasks, break down training to them for the roles that have been occurring, as well as partnering with additional university schools of study and/or organizations. I am currently working along with various departments within the University of Mississippi, School of Social Work, School of Public Health, to connect with students and faculty who hold interests in food insecurity, housing insecurity, education, preventive care, and communication sciences and disorders in order to

expand upon and maintain Grow Club. This partnership with a university entity would allow for continuation of what we have begun as well as the potential for future generations of students and CB Webb residents to maintain and foster a positive connection.

We currently have three core volunteers who are in their second year at the university. They have worked with the program for the past year and will now be taking over upon mine and Brianna's departure from Oxford. The onboarding and training process has begun for these three core team members which has included meetings with the current core team, Brianna, myself, Betsy Chapman, and the current OXCM Vista volunteer, to explain breakdown of hours and commitment¹, distribution of materials, and preparation for the following years lesson plans. Allowing the new leaders to slowly onboard in a hands-on way makes the process less daunting and enables them to feel that they also have a say in planning for the upcoming year and end of this current term. The program will remain active for the upcoming 2023-2024 school year and with the continuation of the steps laid out, as well as evolving when needed, the program will be able to be sustained by future generations of residents and volunteers as long as the program is deemed useful.

¹ Appendix C: *Grow Club Program Guide*

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Appendix

A

Sight Words:

Flash Cards for Reading and Spelling Practice

First grade Dolch sight words:

after	again	an
any	as	ask
by	could	every
fly	from	give
going	had	has

6th Grade Spelling Bee Words
from www.spelling-words-well.com

action	climate	express	increase
mammal	surface	gaze	teaspoon
simply	further	noisy	poem
gesture	heroes	squawk	bough
solar	grief	hyphen	spaghetti
pressure	sailor	listening	recently
quote	myth	rumor	safety
wrestle	rehearse	whose	rural
jealous	headache	grateful	separate
partial	scarcely	governor	ambulance
temperature	scientific	hangar	emergency
inquire	marriage	sword	sentence
museum	excellent	ingredient	comfortable
especially	league	ancient	nationality
patient	vault	honorable	struggling
intermission	acquire	vacuum	persuade
mechanic	requirement	accidentally	performance
disastrous	scissors	vegetable	appearance
studios	descendant	systematic	audience
violence	unbelievable	separately	lightning
unsuccessful	independence	variety	encyclopedia
immediate	strengthen	noticeable	operational
acknowledgement	desperately	courageous	restaurant
unmistakable	recyclable	exaggerate	convenience
preferable	millionaire	rhythmic	mischievous

B

Grow Club Kids Activities

Reading and Sight words every Monday @ 4:15

Date: February 10th, 2023

- Reading
- Make bookmarks
- Draw a summary of what they read

Materials:

- Cardstock/colored paper, markers/crayons, hole puncher, ribbon, books, plain paper,

Date: February 17th, 2023

- Field day > egg race, hula hoop contest, jump rope, wheelbarrow race
- Speak on importance of being active

Materials:

- Jump ropes, egg race, water, snacks, prizes for winners

Date: February 24th, 2023

- Healthy Eating/ nutrition talk

1

- Characteristics of Healthy eating: Moderation & Balance, Adequacy & Variety
- Jams, and canning how to sheets
- Nutritional label reading
- Does your meal have each component of the food chart?
- Yes this food is cheap, but is it nutritious?
 - Importance of access to healthy food (ex: farmer's market)

Materials:

- Food labels, healthy snacks (fruit, veggies, etc.) bread, jam, seeds, myplate print out maybe

Date: March 3rd, 2023

- Impulse spending & Building Wealth
- Ways to build wealth: ownership, investing in property, long term saving

Materials:

- Spending worksheets, revisit savings account sheets, money bags, healthy snacks, Money game

Date: March 10th, 2023

- Yoga

Materials:

- Yoga mats if we can find them in the shed, speaker, yoga book

2

C

Grow Club

A program guide and breakdown of the organization

OVERVIEW & PURPOSE

Grow Club began in the fall of 2020 as an after school educational activities group to offer a safe space for CB Webb students to feel supported. Now we hope to grow and expand the options and quality of the program for our students. We meet every Monday from 4:15-5:15 for Literacy Advocacy. This is a time for university students to work one on one or in small groups with students on reading and sight words. On Fridays from 4:00-5:30 we dedicate our time to fun educational activities that allow students to grow closer to those in their community as well as learn more about topics such as social skills, financial literacy, life skills, health and wellness, and so much more!

CURRENT RESOURCES

1. Betsy Chapman - Director of Oxford Community Market
 - Betsy has aided us in organizing events as well as funding some of our purchases for materials. Most of our materials and snacks for the kids comes from donations made to the market on behalf of Grow Club
2. Student outreach
 - We have sourced snacks and materials for various clothing drives or events we held to benefit the kids from campus and Oxford organizations. For example, we have held book drives in the past as well as a coat and hat drive to offer winter clothes to the kids.
3. East St. Peter Church
 - Pastor Scott with East St. Peter Church has helped out with school supply donations for our back to school party we held for the kids as well as he has donated turkeys to the families at CB Webb around thanksgiving and christmas. He has offered his van for us to bring students to campus or to the market and is a great resource.
4. Oxford Housing Authority Deputy Director CB Webb - Teesha Sanders

OBJECTIVES

1. Causing no harm to students or volunteers (physical, emotional, etc.)
2. Continuing to work towards maintaining and growing the activities held in the garden space at CB Webb
3. Gauging progress of students (reading levels etc.)
4. Offering a safe space for students, volunteers and residents to enjoy

MATERIALS NEEDED

1. We have several mats for the students to sit on as well as a variety of books, papers, coloring materials, scissors, glue, white boards, etc.
2. Planning the lesson plans in advance allows for you to figure out what materials would be needed and plan accordingly with what materials are already available or to make a purchase order with Betsy.
3. See inventory list for specific materials and quantities

*Typically we meet once a week to make any needed changes to the original plan that is made at the beginning of each semester. We currently do this on Mondays to give us enough time to plan for Friday. The most planning is for our Friday events, the books and materials for Mondays myself or Brianna leaves in our cars to utilize. We have white boards and dry erase markers, books, sight words, and a few activity books that we utilize while doing literacy advocacy on Mondays.

TRAINING

Beginning of each semester recruiting of volunteers, followed by a training session to inform volunteers on expectations as well as teaching strategies. In the past we have spoken with the office managers at CB Webb and they have allowed us to reserve the community room to hold this training. (See training guide for more details)

COMMITMENT LEVEL

This role typically involves about an hour of planning each week and then two to three hours of actual volunteer work between Monday and Friday. Delegation of responsibilities is crucial and recommended if possible. As long as atleast one core member is there to

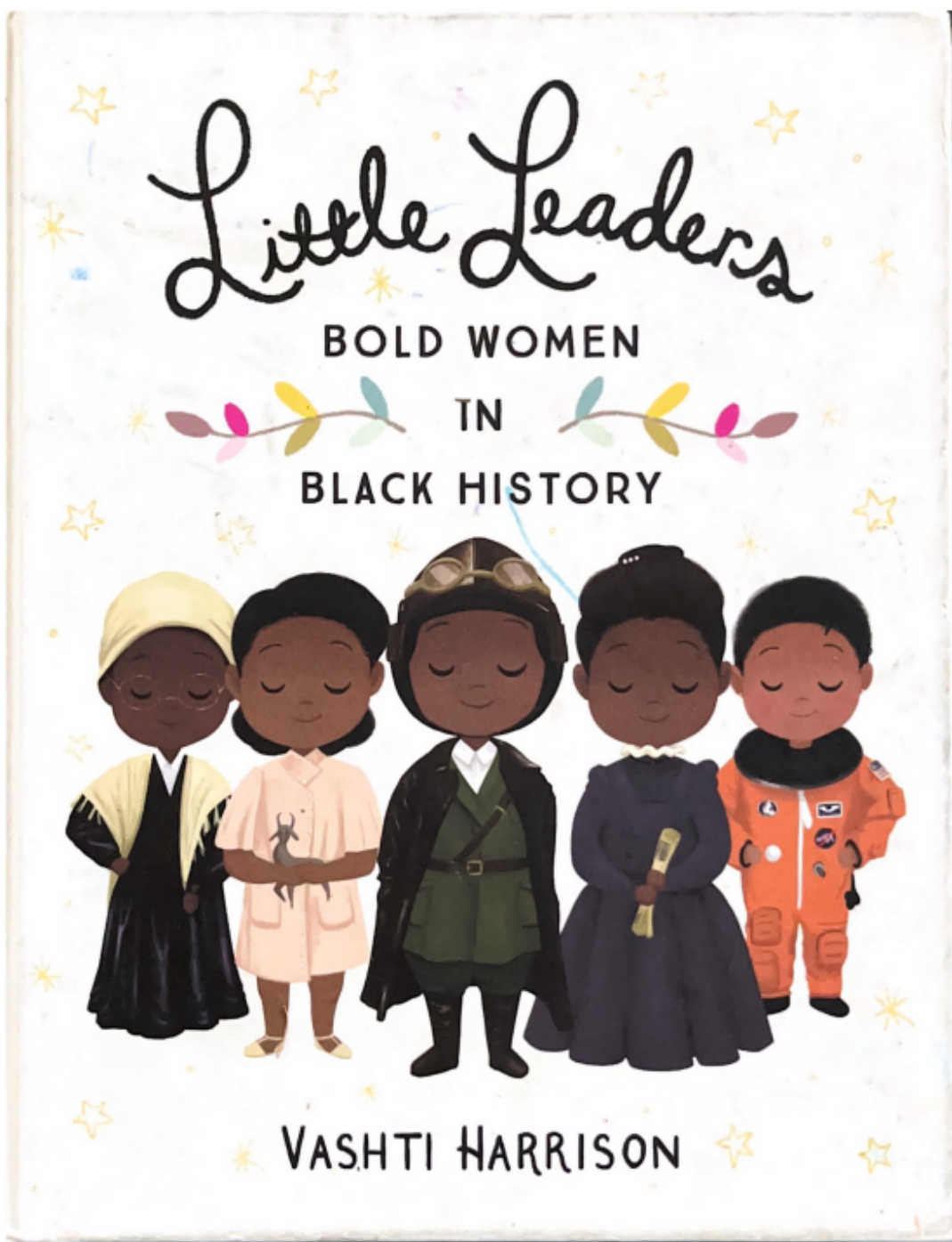
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volunteer and supervise other volunteers are able to take on roles to support programming.

D

C	D	E	F	G	H	I	J	K	L	M
EVENT/ROLE	START	FINISH	HOURS		VOLUNTEER DATA FOR MONTH				FOOD RESCUE MEAL DATA FOR MONTH	
FR	15:00:00	18:30:00	3:30:00		NEW	11			DATE # OF MEALS	
FR	15:00:00	18:30:00	3:30:00		MANAGED	9			9/3/2021	105
FR	15:30:00	19:00:00	3:30:00		NAME	HOURS	NEW?		9/10/2021	114
FR	15:00:00	19:00:00	4:00:00		Alex Kirsch	1:30:00	NO		9/17/2021	116
FR			14:30:00		Alexis Malin	1:00:00	YES		9/24/2021	106
					Begimai Ailchinova	3:15:00	YES		SEPTEMBER TOTAL	
OXCM	14:30:00	20:00:00	5:30:00		Binish Fatima Bashthia	4:00:00	YES			441
OXCM	17:00:00	20:00:00	3:00:00		Brianna McCollum	6:15:00	NO		TOTAL VOLUNTEER HOURS FOR MONTH	
OXCM	17:00:00	18:30:00	1:30:00		Cynthia Nguyen	4:45:00	NO		HOURS RECRUITED	45:20:00
OXCM			10:00:00		Emilie Mai	3:15:00	NO		HOURS MANAGED	70:00:00
					Iqra Saeed	3:50:00	YES		SEPTEMBER 2021	127:50:00
FR	15:30:00	17:15:00	1:45:00		Jackson McArthur	25:30:00	NO		OXCM	72:35:00
FR	15:30:00	17:15:00	1:45:00		Joseph Jiles	3:15:00	YES		FOOD RESCUE	42:45:00
FR	15:30:00	17:15:00	1:45:00		Kathleen Walsh	1:45:00	NO			
FR	15:30:00	17:15:00	1:45:00		Keila Weatherby	3:30:00	NO			
FR	16:00:00	19:30:00	3:30:00		Lily Gray	16:30:00	NO			
FR	17:15:00	19:30:00	2:15:00		Randall Retana	9:05:00	YES			
FR			12:45:00		Regan Lee	2:00:00	YES			
					Taemar Campbell	3:30:00	YES			
GLEANING	12:30:00	19:00:00	6:30:00		Terry Hilliard	7:00:00	NO			
GLEANING	12:30:00	17:00:00	4:30:00		Thidalat Poiithikhoun	7:05:00	YES			
GLEANING	15:30:00	17:00:00	1:30:00		Wenn Blevins	5:05:00	YES			
GLEANING			12:30:00		Yasmine Anderson	3:15:00	YES			

E



G

