

ServiceBook CMA

Host Information

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Student and Community

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Community Need	Our program, Youth Empowerment through Sports Activities (Y.E.S.A.), addresses a myriad of social ills. The city in which our program is located, Pierson, Fl, the fern capital of the world, is an ethnically divided city with a burgeoning Mexican immigrant community that remains extremely underserved politically, economically, and socially. Prejudice is rampant and there is a momentous communication gap between those in the local government and the majority of the population. There is inexcusable lack of youth programs in the community; the youth have very few opportunities to become civically engaged. This absence is disastrous as it does nothing to help resolve the issues that plague much of the Mexican immigrant community. The lack of empowerment does nothing to break the intergenerational cycle of poverty, low education, etc. Our program aims to provide positive role models for the youth and to engage them in leadership positions that prove there is a world beyond the ferneries, a world that is readily accessible with the right tools. Although our program is targeted at the Mexican students, we will by no means exclude white students - for one of our most pertinent long term goals is a more racially integrated and civically connected society.
Sharing Decision Making	Service is most effective when it teaches people to help themselves. Providing fun activities for youth afterschool is a great endeavor. However, it does little to institutionalize reform. Consequently, one of our primary goals is to involve the youth in the planning and implementation of the program. This participation will facilitate a sense of ownership among the youth and cultivate leadership skills. This pride and personal responsibility will, in turn, infuse the entire community with a greater sense of civic engagement. Although we are targeting the youth community, our efforts will ideally transcend age groups and instill an element of connectivity that the current community is in dire need of.
Using Data	Y.E.S.A. was founded on the results of a data collection project. As part of a community based research course Florencia Abelenda (me) surveyed multiple people from all different age groups, races, and occupations in Pierson. FlorenciaÂ’s analysis of the responses illustrated the utter lack of social programs in Pierson, particularly those aimed at the youth population. We have utilized FlorenciaÂ’s data to tailor our program to the specific needs and desires of the Pierson community. For example, the reason we have chosen to focus on sports to begin with stems from the most popular response to a survey question that asked students to write in what type of community program they would like best. We intend to continue to use surveys to gauge the effectiveness of our program. Surveys would be distributed to students, parents, and community leaders involved in the project. We would analyze the results and adjust our policies accordingly.
Community Strengths	Despite the oppressive prejudice that exists in Pierson, personal conversations with the youth themselves have revealed a less discriminatory attitude amongst the younger generation. This increased open-mindedness is encouraging as todayÂ’s youth are tomorrowÂ’s future. We plan to capitalize on this tolerance and nurture it to the point where it can become an example for the remainder of the community. Example is a potent persuader, and a more harmonious relationship among ethnically and racially different youth would serve as a precedent for a more equalized community at large.
Recruiting Volunteers	Additional student volunteers will be critical to the success of our project. Our core leadership team, comprised of seven students, will devise the plans and delegate responsibilities, but additional student volunteers will determine the success of the program. Student volunteers will not only be used for logistical purposes such as checking in students, but they will become indispensable role models to the youth. We aim to nurture personal relationships with the youth participants and student volunteers will be mentors to the students. The actual recruitment process will be conducted by utilizing pre-existing volunteer groups on campus such as Bonner and Baptist Collegiate Ministries. We will garner interest in the program through presentations and word of mouth.

Enlisting Partners	As our program expands we would love to incorporate multiple local businesses and organizations. Contributions could be as simple as a monetary donation or as involved as agreeing to host an event for the Pierson youth to participate in such as a recreational soccer league. Stetson has established many relationships with local groups already and we will be sure to take advantage of such networking. Aside from presentations, letters, and interviews, our most effective tool for gaining community support will be our actual project and the youth gain benefit from it.
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Project

Project Title	Y.E.S.A
Project Activities	<p>There is already a vested interest in the Pierson community on the Stetson campus. Despite having one official faculty advisor and one community partner, we have created a much larger group of committed volunteers and contacts. Countless faculty and staff members at Stetson have already pledged their support to the Mexican immigrant population in Pierson and are anxious to establish a firm link between the university and the youth in Pierson. Our program provides an unmatchable vessel for this desire. Through implementing our afterschool program we will become more connected and in touch with the youth community and can convey our findings and experiences to the members of Stetson's community that do not necessarily have firsthand experience in Pierson.</p> <p>The lack of social services in Pierson is blatantly obvious to anyone who looks at the city through an unbiased lens. While local government officials are not readily willing to admit such a deficiency, many community leaders are quick to point out the insufficiency. Although we hope to eventually run our program independently of any pre-existing community organization, we have, in the mean time, established an excellent relationship with the leadership team at Christian Community Assembly. They have generously allowed us to utilize their facilities and their man power. They too are committed to empowering youth and eliminating the ethnic prejudice that pervades Pierson.</p>
Project Results	Ideally we would like to witness a decrease in such social indicators such as teen pregnancies and high school drop-out rates within the community. However, we realize that these statistics do not change at the drop of a hat. The more immediate measurable outcomes would be as basic as having our target population – the Mexican immigrant students from the local middle/high school- not only attend our afterschool program but become actively involved in implementing the program.
Project Measurement	
Project Challenges	Reaching our target population is one of the first obstacles we will face. Mistrust thrives within the Mexican immigrant population and consequently will have to work diligently to establish a sense of trust before our program can be truly effective. We plan to conquer this obstacle through taking advantage of community contacts that are already firmly entrenched within the Mexican immigrant population and have already developed an ingenuous relationship. Based on Florencia's research we may receive some opposition from local government officials who do not believe that their city is obligated to provide any additional youth services, despite an overwhelming desire for such programs. However, we will not allow their antagonism to curb our enthusiasm and we will demonstrate the countless positive effects such programs can have.

Service Learning

Project Integration	We expect to learn how we can build stronger relationships with the community, how to handle sensitive issues as racial segregation between the youth, the best strategies for implementing a project in a low income community, how to better our own leadership skills and how to help participants cultivate their own leadership skills.
Diary	
Budget	Y.E.S.A. has lofty goals of operating outside of local organizations such as the Christian Community Assembly Church. Although we will continue to maintain positive relationships with community partners our long term goal is to have a building of our own. We would like to reach the point at which we are no longer dependent on local organizations but instead simply partners in pursuing social justice. Y.E.S.A. does already have some funding by means of a social justice grant awarded to Florencia Abelenda. We would use the award money to purchase supplies for our afterschool program and further expand the program. Sports activities are our initial focus, but we are eager to encompass other interests such as art and important programs such as tutoring. Such expansion will require us to purchase various supplies. We also aim to host occasional community wide programs, for students and their families, and these events will require additional funds. Our ideas include movie nights, parents versus children soccer games, and live music performances.
Other	Y.E.S.A.'s lead team consists of seven leaders: Colleen Mulholland, Florencia Abelenda, Nicolas Abelenda, Kiryssa Kasprzyk, Josie Warren, Peter Bova, and Lucy Greenlee. All of us are committed to the project and eager to begin working with the youth in Pierson.

[« Back](#)

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