

The University of Arizona
Mel and Enid Zuckerman College of Public Health

Documenting Our Neighbors Pantry Clients' Experiences with Poverty and Our Neighbors Pantry

Organization Name The *Graham County Interfaith Care Alliance* is a 501(c)(3) running two Projects: *Our Neighbors Pantry* (a food bank) and *Our Neighbors Farm* whose primary responsibility is raising food for distribution by *Our Neighbors Pantry* and other nonprofit organizations, and being a site for school children and others (e.g., the Boys and Girls Club) to learn what food is and where it comes from.

Level of Expertise Needed As described shortly, activities the intern will participate in center on interviewing, a body of theory and methods of central importance to Public Health because interview findings often point to/answers to important questions (e.g., the case-control study identifying the cause of toxic shock syndrome). The goal to be addressed then, builds on students' existing knowledge bases and bodies of experience on (1) what interviewing is, how it works, common problems in interviewing and how they're addressed, and (2) ensuring students appropriately use what they've learned under the guidance of experienced interviewers. The experienced interviewers will help them plan what they're going to do, guide their interviewing activities, and evaluate what they've learned both as it relates to their skill development and the findings of other interviews.

Internship Project Title Documenting Our Neighbors Pantry Clients' Experiences with Poverty and Our Neighbors Pantry, a Study Engaging Mel and Enid Zuckerman College of Public Health Interns.

Project Description Several people associated with *Our Neighbors Farm and Pantry* have experience interviewing and teaching interview skills to graduate and professional (e.g., medical) students. These people will ensure interns have experiential backgrounds appropriate to the interviews they'll be expected to do both through teaching about the practice of interviewing and supervising interns as they do practice interviews and gain experience in "live" settings. These people will then supervise the interns as they collect, analyze, and interpret the data they collect. Note that issues considered in the instruction include attributes of the cultural anthropology's *participant observation*, characteristics of good and bad interviews, and ways to maximize good interview attributes and minimize bad ones.

Following the precepts of participant observation, interns will make contact with potential interviewees through "volunteering" at the food pantry so they'll be known to the population of potential interviewees beginning the same time as their interview training. On completion of their training, they'll identify potential interviewees, approach them, and arrange for interview to take place. Results of all interviews will be analyzed and summarized to produce descriptions of how Pantry clients interact with the Pantry's volunteers, how the Pantry impacts on their lives, etc. These results will also produce "stories" interviewees tell describing the pantry and farm, stories that can be used for fundraising, informational, and publicity purposes since all interviewees' names will be replaced with pseudonyms. Fictional details unrelated to

the thrust of the interviews will be added to further ensure anonymity. Note that these additions will be made collaboratively by the interns and those supervising them.

Student Characteristics Development of interviewing skills is central to the Core Functions of *Assessment* and *Policy Development* and, we suspect, also useful in other of the core functions and essential services. Thus we anticipate Interns will show up with some experience in interviewing, we'll talk with each intern to determine their learning needs and progress from there. In other words, while it is likely graduate students will be more experienced with interviewing, some undergraduates will as well. And we will take the intern from wherever they are providing instruction, supervision, and discussions as needed to ensure they gain as much as possible from their experiences.

Organization Background The Graham County Interfaith Care Alliance began Our Neighbors Pantry two years after GCICA began and Our Neighbors Farm four years ago. Currently, the Pantry provides monthly food boxes for 400 Graham County households (i.e., about one of every 19 county residents) while the Farm produces 25,000lbs of fresh produce distributed in the Pantry's food boxes. In addition, public schools and youth groups (e.g., the Boys and Girls Club) regularly visit the farm for hands-on experiences allowing them to learn what food is and where it comes from.

The Interns' activities will contribute to the described activities by providing descriptions of experiences realized by some clients of the Pantry and the Farm. As noted, these descriptions will benefit The Alliance by providing qualitative information on what it is we do, and by providing anecdotal information useful in educating others about what we do. We expect this information will help with fundraising, program development, and communications with similar organizations.

Where All activities will take place at Pantry and the Farm in Safford, AZ. When classroom space is required, it is available nearby at the First United Methodist Church. Clients of the Pantry come from Graham County generally, with the Safford-Thatcher-Pima communities in the Gila Valley providing the majority of those coming for monthly food boxes.

When This is negotiable, though Spring and Fall might be best since some of those who will be doing the teaching are unavailable during the summer.

Supervision Primary responsibility for the intern will rest with Sherri Clixby, the Pantry's Director and so the person most familiar with both those volunteering at the Pantry and those receiving monthly food boxes.

Application Contact Information Those interested should be in touch with Sherri, Max Crain (the Director of the Farm), or Hank Slotnick (a Board member). Include résumé and a 1-page cover letter stating interest.

Hank Slotnick: henry.slotnick@email.und.edu or 928-651-5691

Additional Information

Mel & Enid Zukerman College of Public Health's Mission, Goals and Objectives The College's mission speaks of "an emphasis on achieving health equity," and so fits well into the project's primary client group: Those in poverty and the working poor. Since the thrust of the project relies on the intern's development of communication skills for understanding and working with these people, the intern will receive instruction in and have experiences using skills for understanding the poor generally, interviewing them more specifically. These skills address the College's mission by preparing the intern to use these skills, to learn about ways in which the project has impacted on them and their families' lives, and see contrasts between these views and those coming from the interns' middle class backgrounds.

Instructional Goals and Objectives

Objective 2.1. Field-based activities. Although the student will participate in an internship and not a field-based course, that person will gain experience in an experiential/applied setting. This will happen through the intern's being intimately involved with the four individuals described shortly in hypothesis generation, development of data gathering skills, analysis of the data collected, and interpretation of findings as they relate to the goals of the activity.

Objective 3.5. Student authorship. The intern will be expected to participate actively in the preparation and revision of any manuscripts arising from the project.

Service Goals and Objectives

Objective 1.1. Interns will be involved in activities expected of College of Public Health faculty and academic professionals.

Objective 1.2 The intern will be involved in activities designed to identify health disparities, and build collaborations targeted to AZ Healthy People 2010 goals & Public Health Preparedness.

Project Participants

Sherri Lynn Clixby (MA in Education, Antioch College, 1993) Director, Our Neighbors Pantry

Sherri has been an educator for over 30 years, as a speech/language clinician, home teacher for preschool children with special needs, an elementary classroom teacher, and as a special education teacher working with high school students on the autism spectrum. Many of these positions involved working closely with parents living at and below the poverty level. For two years she worked in a rural grassroots community organization which ran a homeless shelter, transitional housing, a food kitchen, and provided educational opportunities and job training for community members. For the past three years, Sherri has been the director of Our Neighbors Pantry. Her primary duties involve fundraising and managing the food bank which serves over 500 families each month.

These experiences allowed Sherri to develop an appreciation of challenges faced daily by people living in poverty. She has earned the respect of food bank clients and so will be able to introduce the interns to them and food bank volunteers in a way that will facilitate the intern's having a productive experience and so the project's successes. Sherri will listen to the observations of the interns and so help them to understand and summarize the data that they are collecting.

Max Crain (BS in Liberal Studies, St Johns in Maryland, 1975) Director, Our Neighbors Farm

Max has been an avid gardener since he was a young child. He was owner of a small business, Cottage Gardeners, where he designed and maintained perennial gardens on summer estates on the coast of Maine. He worked as technology coordinator there in several elementary schools. Max raised funds for and built a greenhouse and garden for one of the schools, a garden that continues to provide food for the school lunch program.

Over the past four years, Max has designed, developed, and maintained Our Neighbors Farm that provides 25,000lbs of produce annually for the food bank and other nonprofit organizations such as Meals On Wheels, The Senior Center, the Mount Graham Safe House, and the Boys and Girls Club. Though the farm is only 1.3 acres, the volume of produce grown is due to the fact that Max grows crops 12 months of the year, the crops changing depending on the season.

The garden also serves as an educational center where school children, scout groups, and other community members work on a weekly basis learning how to grow vegetables in the challenging desert climate. Building a community garden powered by volunteer labor has provided Max an opportunity to meet and work with a large cross section of the community. He has mentored students from the University of Arizona (Tucson) and Eastern Arizona College (Thatcher) and can serve a sounding board for interns as they interact with community members and process the information they collect.

Mary Lou Fuller, PhD (Multicultural Education, University of New Mexico, 1982). Mary Lou is a Professor Emeritus in the College of Education and Human Development, University of North Dakota. While there, she held the Rose Isabel Fisher Kelly Chair in the college and was a Chester Fritz Distinguished Professor. Mary Lou has researched and published on poverty but, more importantly, is experienced in teaching college students about poverty. This instruction involves reading and discussion, and through students working with children in poverty (and their families). She helps them identify insights into poverty by guiding their reflection on their experiences through journaling and discussion. Mary Lou will work with Sherri helping the intern begin understanding poverty by guiding the intern's reflections on the experiences of initially working at the food bank and then interviewing some of the food bank's clients.

Hank Slotnick, PhD (Education, University of Illinois at Urbana Champaign, 1971), PhD (Applied Statistics, University of Northern Colorado, 1986). Hank is Professor Emeritus in the School of Medicine and Health Sciences, University of North Dakota. While his research emphasis was on how professionals learn in clinical practice, he and several colleagues taught first year students the rudiments of medical interviewing. Some of the things they taught (e.g., how to put the interviewee at ease, how to encourage interviewees to expand on what they'd just said) will be taught to the intern so that interviews with clients of the food bank can be put at ease and gently encouraged to answer questions of importance to the **i**ntern.