



Student-Led Best Practices

Submitted by Bonner Congress Representatives

Name of Best Practice:

Nutritional Packets for Fresh is Best

College/University Name and Contact Information:

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Name of Congress Representative Preparing Report:

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Background:

Middlesex County College partners with Elijah's Promise Soup Kitchen in their Fresh is Best program. Students, volunteers, and AmeriCorps members work with coordinator Scott Smith to put together healthy bags of food for HIV/AIDS patients. Middlesex students have worked with this partner for a number of years, and just recently we started a new initiative: Nutritional Packets.

What Makes This Unique:

Student-led community-based research (CBR) and implementation makes this project unique. Middlesex students saw a need through their service and collaborated with the partner and other volunteers to develop a solution.

How it Works:

A simple concept, the Nutritional Packets are given out with the food each month to promote holistic health. This is yet another example of how service sparks systemic and life change.

1. **Brainstorm:** The first step we took in doing this was to brainstorm improved care options for our clients who are infected with the HIV/AIDS virus. Once we decided what we wanted to do, we began to brainstorm research directives.
2. **Research:** Drawing in non-Bonner volunteers we all worked together to assess the needs of our clients. When researching client needs be

aware of condescension. We also had to make sure the information we were compiling was relevant to their illness and our position as a food service. Citing our sources and reminding clients that we are not doctors were two key elements in communicating our findings to clients.

3. **Draft an Idea:** The result of the research stage was the nutrition packet concept. From there we began putting together what should go out in each month's packet. Packets contain information on health snacks, vitamins, meal plans, food group information, teas, and additional agencies that deliver food. This project will continue until February when the packets will complete our initial index of information.
4. **Reassess:** Our group will reassess the effectiveness of the Nutrition Packets in February. We will most likely begin brainstorming something new to help the clients.

Recommendations:

This project is incredibly rewarding and fun. Be sure to collaborate with your partner. They may have needs, but not necessarily the time to develop solutions.

What I appreciated most about this project is that it gets beyond charity. Many soup kitchens may not have delivery services, or may not serve those with HIV/AIDS. These might be two areas to explore. Educating others about nutrition is a great way to tackle some of the problems surrounding hunger.

Volunteers who work at soup kitchens or homelessness should definitely try a Community-Based Research project like this to deepen the reach of what you do.

Supplementary Documents:

If anyone wants to know more information about this program please feel free to contact me at DianaMichele@comcast.net