

Penn State Altoona
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Penn State Altoona and the Altoona Housing Authority are working together for better education for our students and improved quality of life for Housing residents.

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Intern for Fall 2007 with Altoona Public Library

Jill Maurer, Communications major at Penn State Altoona set a goal to introduce new populations to the Altoona Area Public Library and to reading and writing in general. She put programs in place that allowed intergenerational groups to enjoy or read a story in advance and share their ideas. Teaming up with the Altoona Area Public School District she promoted literature-related clubs throughout the schools. She enjoyed arranging intergenerational holiday storytelling events, focusing on area nursing homes, and working with the Altoona Housing Authority to establish story hours at the Fairview Hills and Towers communities. She created a collection of writing and other materials that could be passed on to the Altoona Area Public Library and its community partners and used to maintain the programs she established.



Jill Maurer, Communications Major at Penn State Altoona, worked with Altoona Area Public Library.

Leverage Community Resources

The Blair County county-wide needs assessment is being prepared by the Blair County Office of Human Services and the Blair County United Way. This assessment effort will be consistent with the United Way COMPASS II method. Dr. Dan Lago, COPC Grant Director, has been appointed as a member of the planning group and a member of the household survey and data analysis subgroups. This work is underway with a household sample of 596 persons completed. Dr. Lago's HDFS 312 research methods class has helped with constructing tables of priority needs for various community subgroups and developing an Excel database with social indicators from Pennsylvania public data sources that compares Blair County statistics with Pennsylvania averages. This work will continue with his spring class. The report and database will provide quantitative support for future projects and strengthen working relationships between PSU Altoona and community partners.

The Altoona Housing Authority, Blair Community Action Agency and Family Services Inc. worked with the HUD COPC faculty to develop a new proposal to HUD. The ROSS grant program promotes family home ownership. It is focused on residents of Fairview Hills. As of Spring 2008 we have not heard whether this project will be funded

If you have questions or suggestions contact the Project Coordinator, Susanna Tomlinson, at smt133@psu.edu or 814-949-5367, or Project Director, Dan Lago, at djl@psu.edu or 814-949-5524.

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Penn State Altoona and the Altoona Housing Authority (AHA) continue to work together to promote community based learning for the Penn State students while improving the quality of life for Altoona Housing residents at Green Avenue and Eleventh Street towers and at Fairview Hills.

Internships: Community Learning with Community Partners

Penn State Altoona through the HUD COPC Grant and Altoona Housing Authority offer internships as a “capstone” course for the students who are focused in a community services setting. For the past three years Eleven interns have partnered with local agencies. Altoona Police Department worked with Courtney Garvey, Altoona Public Library worked with Amy Ferguson and Jill Maurer, Blair Recreation and Park Commission worked with Mike Batcher and Sara Ciaverella, Blair Senior Services worked with Angela Bendahan, and Roseanne Clair, Family Resource Center worked with Monica Greenwald, Teen Link Connection worked with Amanda Diehl and Head Start worked with Amanda Ritchey.

COCP Grant Internships are strongly targeted toward HUD policy priorities, “Improving quality of



Courtney Garvey, Criminal Justice Major, Interns with Altoona Police Department and community policing at Fairview Hills.

life in our nation’s communities”.

Students agree these internship opportunities offer a practical application to the theory they learn through classes.

“Institutions of Higher education, employers and students are looking more and more to internships as a bridge between college like and the professional world,” states Tom Shaffer, Internship Coordinator fro Penn State Altoona. Tom has worked one-on-one with the 11 students involved in the COPC Grant internships program, faculty members,

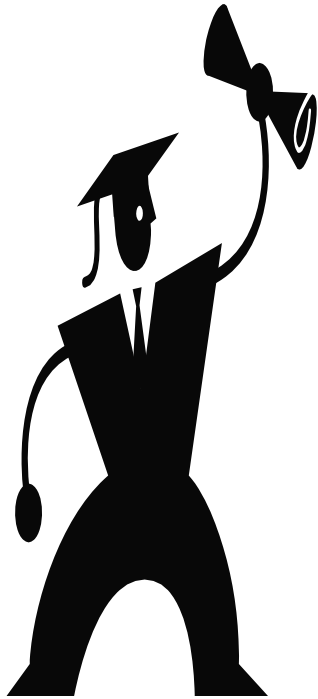
and with a wide range of community partnerships to facilitate top-quality internship experience. Spring ‘08, Penn State Altoona’s Candice Holiday will have an internship with Blair Senior Services at the downtown Tower buildings under the supervision of Sherry Symons. This opportunity allows the HDFS student to interact with residents and have guidance from a community agency mentor. Internships allow the grant to reach our goal of improving quality of life for residents at Altoona Housing Authority.

In the future, two additional interns will work Summer 08 at Fairview Hills to initiate a summer program for the youth and their families.



Angela Bendahan, HDFS major, works with Blair Senior Services

Mentoring to Higher Education: Ivyleaf Magazine Fall07



For people living in the Fairview Hills housing complex in Altoona, attending college is a dream many of them never realize. There often are too many obstacles for these residents to overcome in pursuing higher education, especially when it comes to the financial challenges. But there is something out there designed to change that, and it's already working. Penn State Altoona student Shannon Beaver started the Mentoring for Post Secondary Education (MEPSE) program as part of a work-

study project. The program guides participants through the college application and financial aid processes. Scholarships and grants are often secured for the prospective student. Shannon says the program has already helped eight people enroll in institutions of higher learning, and each semester more Fairview Hills residents are taking advantage of it. The program is connected to Altoona Housing and Penn State Altoona's U.S. Housing and Urban Development Community Outreach Partner-

ship and is fairly inexpensive to run; the ongoing challenge is finding donors and volunteers to keep the program self-sustaining. One group of volunteers who have pledged to help drive MEPSE to reach more potential students is Penn State Altoona's Alumni Society Board of Directors. Tom Smith, current president of the Alumni Society Board, states, "Each of us has been through this process, and we understand how overwhelming applying to schools and securing funding can be".

Arts and Humanities and Tower Residents

Literature Club Volunteers

Story Afternoons with Towers residents is a program that is now in its second year and is continuing to gain new participants. Four afternoon programs done at the Green Avenue Towers involved 15 residents. The Literature Club's goals in undertaking this project include helping the residents to remain mentally active through discussing literature and their own life stories. Volunteers enjoy helping the residents to see the value in the stories they have to share, and encouraging the residents' to use their imaginations as well as creative and critical thinking skills. From the perspective of the students, the project's goals include engaging in intergenerational discussions to learn about lives and ideals outside their own and improving their skills in presenting and explaining their ideas and creative works. Students challenge themselves to create activities that will be interesting and stimulating for all involved.

Dr. Rotunno feels "Arts and Humanities programs as well as those spearheaded by COPC faculty all adhere to the philosophy that worlds can be enriched when people let their imaginations run a little wild, for. When that happens, people start to imagine what their world can be and begin to take steps to make those ideas reality".

Summer 2007 Arts Involvement at Fairview Hills

Three summer interns in HDFS worked to promote exploration of various media, and to link those experiences to self esteem and improved social interaction. Youth were also invited to Penn State Summer Camp for a week of additional learning.

Our project's faculty have been largely based in the Division of Education, Human Development and Social Sciences. With Dr. Laura Rotunno joining our group, the Division of Arts and Humanities became a key player in the project. We have had participation from three of the four academic

Divisions of the College. Based on the positive response to the story-telling initiative in Spring 07, we undertook an effort to promote more faculty involvement in community-based projects with these organizations and with local children and their parents. Specifically, we hired a summer project associate to work in Fairview Hills to promote and support arts and humanities summer programs in that Altoona Housing Authority community. Ms Jacqueline Condron, a recent Psychology graduate from Penn State Altoona, was hired after competitive interviews to work with the program. A work group of faculty assembled

and several faculty and staff resource persons agreed to participate in a variety week-long sessions devoted to one or another aspect of the creative arts, dance, poetry, theater, painting, and photography.



Youth from Fairview Hills visit Penn State Altoona Campus for photography project

Healthy Living in the Towers

During the fall semester, six students enrolled in the RN to BS courses titled NURS 496, NURS 465, and NURS 418 sponsored four blood pressure/weight screenings and three Healthy for Life Programs: Are You At Risk For Falls?, Safeguarding Your Home, and Safe Guarding Yourself.

Three residents from the Green Avenue Towers continued the walking program initiated in Spring 07 with daily recording of pedometer readings. The RN to BS program also collaborated with Altoona Regional Medical Center to conduct an osteoporosis screening for the residents of both Towers. Eleven residents

from 11th Street Towers and Green Avenue Towers participated in the screening. Home Nursing Agency of Altoona continues to collaborate with this program to assist residents with weekly services.



Resident Katie Neason has her heel scanned by X-ray technicians, Grace Bere and Sandi Smith, from Altoona Regional Health Systems.