SOCIAL WORK IN THE CITY LIBRARY: A NEW FRONTIER FOR TRANSFORMING LIVES

By: Alanna Kelley and Adria E. Navarro

Presented at:
NACSW Convention 2015
November, 2015
Grand Rapids, Michigan
SOCIAL WORK IN THE CITY LIBRARY: A NEW FRONTIER FOR TRANSFORMING LIVES

Alanna Kelley, BS & Adria E. Navarro, PhD, LCSW

With support from Kara Riggleman & Ingrid Clara
Azusa Pacific University, Azusa, CA
Introduction

• Part of an accredited MSW program
  ➢ Part-time students (11), evening course
• Experiential community practice
  ➢ Meaningful project
  ➢ Community engagement skills
• City Library of Azusa
Pursuing Shalom

“Speak up for those who cannot speak for themselves; ensure justice for those being crushed. Yes, speak up for the poor and helpless, and see that they get justice.”

~Proverbs 31:8-9

- Social work, the vehicle to ensure justice and bring hope to those on the margins
- Through this project, as an MSW class, discovered the marginalized who’ve made the public library their refuge
- Action plan, to bring continued resources for the betterment of this population
The Arena: California

- Azusa
- Population demographics
  - 47,842 (Census, 2013)
  - 65% Hispanic
  - 60% report speaking a language other than English at home
  - Education level lower than the state and national averages
Community Organizing: Social Work Practice

- Foundation from previous two years of collaboration
  - Student community needs assessment
- University-Community Partnership
- Community request and a commitment to a participatory method involving those directly affected by the organizing effort
- Gap analysis (Mandell & Schram, 2011) – analytical process
  1. Identifying the gap: understanding, raising consciousness
  2. Magnifying the gap: understanding the larger context
  3. Microscoping: determining the action steps
Is there need for Social Services in the City Library?

**Phase I**
- **Community input**
  - Librarian
  - Library Staff
  - Library Patrons

**Phase II**
- **Gap analysis**
  - Scan Environment
  - Analysis of data collected
  - Employment
  - Basic Needs
  - Homeless

**Phase III**
- **Action steps**
  - Resource Guide
  - Staff Training

**Evaluation**
- **Future Plans**
  - Grant
  - Process Evaluation
Phase I – Identifying the Gap

Initial observations & meeting:

- Librarian defines identified gaps in libraries services
- Emphasis on meeting needs but not violating privacy
- American Library Association focus on meeting needs of the disenfranchised
- City budget cuts, reducing staff to 14 FTE (full time equivalents)
Phase I – Identifying the Gap -continued

Staff Survey:

1) What is your typical work day like?
   ▪ Reference desk, computer help, passport services, book mobile

2) What are some things that work well at the library?
   ▪ English/Spanish computer classes, story time for parents & kids, tutoring for kids, ELS classes, strong support for staff

3) What are some things that you think need to be worked on?
   ▪ Consistency in services provided, & how much service staff is willing to do, communication between staff, understaffed, lack of resources
Phase I – Identifying the Gap - continued

4) What are some services that patrons need?
   - Immigration assistance, parenting support, mental health services, jail accounts,
     help with technology, unemployment services, senior assistance, more computers,
     resume building, financial resources (Cal Fresh, Medi-Cal, etc.)

5) Are there services that you are able to provide but do not have enough time to?
   - Translation of forms, job searches, computer classes, adult tutoring, resume
     building, parenting classes, anger management, voting resources
Phase I – Identifying the Gap

Patron Survey:

- Consisted of 23 questions using a Likert Scale (1-5) and included an open-ended question to identify Patron service needs.

- Interviews were administered by the students in English/Spanish and generally were no more than ten minutes in length.

- As an incentive, Target gift cards ($5) were presented in exchange for participation.
Phase I – Identifying the Gap - Survey Outcomes

- A total of 32 Patrons were surveyed
- Gender: slightly more female, 56% ($n=18$)
- Majority aged 35-59: 47%
- Race/ethnicity: majority Hispanic, 78%
- Greatest need: 56% identified Computer Education for Adults
- Followed by:
  - Tutoring for 7-12th grades
  - Computer education for children
  - Food resources
  - Parenting classes
Phase II – Magnifying the Gap

Environmental scan

- Online research of national, county and city library services and resources available

Findings:

- National
  - San Francisco, San Jose/NASW, New York, Baltimore, Pima County
  - Resources: street cards, homeless guide for resources
  - American Library Association special emphasis on assessing the needs of low-income patrons
Phase II – Magnifying the Gap: Comparison to nearby Library Services

County and City Findings

- Aggregated services offered in surrounding counties: Riverside, San Bernardino, Kern, and Ventura
- Compared with services available at Azusa City Library

Review with the Librarian

- Services requested: employee training, community resource guide for patrons, and a social work presence

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>COUNTIES</th>
<th>Los Angeles</th>
<th>Riverside</th>
<th>San Bernardino</th>
<th>Kern</th>
<th>Ventura</th>
<th>Azusa Library</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>SERVICES</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>211- Information</td>
<td>1</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cal-Fresh/ SNAP</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td></td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Citizenship</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Health Care</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Homeless Resources</td>
<td>1</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>1</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Job Search/Resume</td>
<td>1</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>1</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Legal Forms</td>
<td>1</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Literacy</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mental Health</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Notary Services</td>
<td>1</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nutrition</td>
<td>1</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Parenting</td>
<td>1</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>1</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Passport</td>
<td>1</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>1</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Senior Citizen Resources</td>
<td>1</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Small Business Info</td>
<td>1</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Social Security</td>
<td>1</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tax Forms</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Veteran Affairs</td>
<td>1</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>1</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td><strong>11</strong></td>
<td><strong>6</strong></td>
<td><strong>2</strong></td>
<td><strong>3</strong></td>
<td><strong>12</strong></td>
<td><strong>10</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Phase III – Microscoping: The Social Service Needs

**Homeless**

- Staff and patrons believed that the homeless needed referrals for social services
  - Employment services, housing/shelter services, food banks and translation services
  - Staff believed an on-site social worker would be beneficial

- Staff were concerned that the homeless were having difficulty accessing computers without a library card
  - Difficulty obtaining a library card without an address
  - Issued computer cards but staff staff believed the process needed to be streamlined
  - Many patrons need a great deal of assistance with computer usage
Phase III – Microscoping: Identified Social Service Needs

**Basic Needs**
- Patrons expressed needing help to address basic needs, such as Medi-Cal, CalFresh
- Programming for children was a strength, yet increased opportunities for parents while children were occupied was recommended

**Employment**
- Many sought to complete online job applications
- Patrons had difficulty utilizing computers to receive food handlers certification
- Patrons needed assistance with creating email accounts
  - This required a great deal of assistance from staff
  - Frequently required translation service
Phase III – The Exit Meeting - Possible Action Steps

- Computer assistance desired by patrons
  - How do we offer this without placing added burden on staff?
  - Classes? Intern? Written instructions? Workshops?

- Addressed pros and cons of an internship
  - Explored the possibility with field faculty
  - Internship is possible but difficult to implement at this time

- Partnership proposed and introduced
  - Representative present from AP Recovery
  - Mental health and triage services

- Staff uncomfortable with mental health issues
  - Safety for all patrons vs. privacy
  - Training opportunities through AP Recovery or campus counseling center
Action Steps Taken

Resource guide created for homeless patrons:
- Current resources outdated
- Partnership with an APU student for creating resource guide

Mental health training for staff:
- Community partnership
- Privacy vs. safety concerns
Future Plans

Neighborhood Connections grant funding:
- Social work presence
- 19 hrs. per week

Future process evaluation:
- Continued partnership with APU learners
- Future cohorts will conduct evaluation of grant usage

1. Learning from community
2. Connecting to those in need
3. Quality assessment of services
4. Sustaining &/or scaling options

Data collection & assessment
Focus of vision, with linkage to 250 clients
Planning post grant period
Technical assistance & satisfaction
Comments and Questions Welcome

Thank you