

Vanderbilt Center for Community Studies Community Matching Program

Community Partners Research and Project Requests

The Center for Community Studies solicited requests for research and project assistance from a group of community partners in late summer 2009. Following here is a compilation of the requests submitted to advise students and faculty members of the top-priority needs the community partners have identified.

Projects that already have been matched with researchers are marked by an asterisk.

Any faculty member or graduate student wanting more information or interested in assisting with one or more of these requests should contact the center's assistant director and program coordinator, Jill Robinson, at jill.robinson@vanderbilt.edu.

Affordable Housing Resources

Areas of Interest: Community Organizing, Counseling, Housing, Foreclosure Intervention

Population Served: Not specified

Targeted Neighborhood(s): Not specified

Support/Research Needs: Creative Solutions/Research, Grant Writing, Interviewing (One-On-One)

Specific Projects: Working with customers to understand the issues and then looking at various options to meet these needs within stimulus program guidelines.

Students Currently Matched with Organization: None

All the King's Men

Areas of Interest: Youth Development

Population Served: African American males ages 10-18 typically from low-income families and considered at risk or higher risk

Targeted Neighborhood(s): North and East Nashville

Support/Research Needs: Creative Solutions/Research, Grant Writing, Reorganization, Survey Design, Survey Analysis

Specific Projects: Not specified

Students Currently Matched with Organization: None

Big Brothers Big Sisters of Middle Tennessee

Areas of Interest: Community Organizing, Family Support, Youth Development, Mentoring, Public Policy

Population Served: At-risk youth, children of incarcerated parents, low-income families

Targeted Neighborhood(s): Public housing and low-income areas, areas with high levels of incarceration

Support/Research Needs: Community Organizing, Interviewing (One-On-One and Focus Groups), Networking, Survey Design, Survey Distribution, Survey Analysis

Specific Projects: To assist BBBSMT in collaboration with other community organizations and task forces to develop a long-term plan to help children and families of incarcerated parents. To help in establishing a strategic planning committee to focus attention to on-going services that will maintain intact families, strengthen family relationships and provide supports once the incarcerated parent is released. The intern would have contact with public and private agencies that have regular contact with these children, families and incarcerated parent. An intern would help with survey design, implementation and identifying current resources. An intern also may gain some public policy experience as this initiative is rooted in Senate Joint Resolution 58 and House Joint Resolution 116.

Students Currently Matched with Organization: None

Centerstone Research Institute

Areas of Interest: Counseling, Crisis Intervention, Family Support, Youth Development, Program Evaluation

Population Served: Individuals with mental health challenges

Targeted Neighborhood(s): Middle Tennessee

Support/Research Needs: Analysis of Existing Data, Creative Solutions/Research, Interviewing (One-On-One), Interviewing (Focus Groups), Literature Review/Summary, Report Writing, Survey Analysis, Survey Design

Specific Projects: The Evaluation Division currently is managing 17 projects with a wide variety of specific interests, all within the field of mental health and/or substance abuse treatment. Several projects focus on child and adolescent mental health, on adults with co-occurring disorders, and on older adults.

Students Currently Matched with Organization: None

Food Security Partners of Middle Tennessee

Areas of Interest: Community Organizing, Faith/Spirituality, Environment, Food Systems, Community Gardening, Sustainable Agriculture, National and Local Food Policy

Population Served: Food insecure individuals, youth

Targeted Neighborhood(s): Re/Storing Nashville Campaign: Edgehill, North Nashville/Charlotte Avenue, and East Nashville/Cayce Homes.

Support/Research Needs: Analysis of Existing Data (GIS maps), Creative Solutions/Research, Report Writing, Survey Distribution, Survey Analysis

Specific Projects: Our Re/Storing Nashville campaign to bring affordable healthy food access to Nashville's three identified food deserts (Edgehill, North Nashville/Charlotte Avenue and East Nashville/Cayce Homes) has the need for mapping and survey analysis, which will be used in community outreach, marketing and fundraising efforts. Tennessee State University Professor David Padgett is updating his GIS maps of Nashville's food system, from which we will need to extract key statistics and information. Vanderbilt medical student Carmen Adams, who interned with the Re/Storing Nashville campaign this summer, chose to survey six Nashville neighborhoods as her emphasis project. Adams is continuing to administer these surveys, and we will need assistance gleaning information from the completed surveys. In addition, we may need assistance creating action items based on research materials, including interfaith and youth initiatives, public transportation and business incentive policies. Community organizing is a key aspect of the work of Re/Storing Nashville, garnering community support and understanding residents' needs and wants when it comes to sustainable food access and resources. This work also includes policy research and development in regard to transportation and economic and zoning incentives to encourage healthy food vendors and supermarkets to locate within the target neighborhoods.

Students Currently Matched with Organization: None

Housing Fund, The*

Areas of Interest: Housing

Population Served: First-time homebuyers/ individuals in need of down-payment assistance/ local housing agencies that need loans

Targeted Neighborhood(s): THF serves individuals and agencies in the Davidson county, Bowling Green, Ky., and the Clarksville metropolitan statistical areas. Currently THF is coordinating efforts to carry out the Neighborhood Stabilization Program (NSP), which is targeting northeast, south and southeast Davidson County.

Support/Research Needs: THF needs students to assess the need and demand of low-income homebuyers so that they can better serve their clients. Additionally, THF is updating the research component of their website and would like to have interested students provide analyses for interested community members. In addition to other NSP activities, THF is spearheading the shared equity homeownership program in Nashville.

Specific Projects: Not specified

Students Currently Matched with Organization: Andrew Greer, Vanderbilt Peabody College Community Research and Action doctoral program

Magdalene/Thistle Farms*

Areas of Interest: Counseling, Education, Housing, Poverty, Job Placement for Women in Recovery

Population Served: Women with criminal histories of addiction and prostitution

Targeted Neighborhood(s): Not specified

Support/Research Needs: Creative Solutions/Research, Grant Writing, Networking

Specific Projects: We need assistance finding affordable housing for women who have graduated from the program. Additionally, the organization is in need of accessible resources regarding potential job placement (for both residents and graduates of the program), which often entails education and training. Coordination of education needs for the women also presents as a potential project.

Students Currently Matched with Organization: Vanderbilt Peabody College Action Research students

Metro Public Health Department – Ryan White HIV/AIDS program

Areas of Interest: Community Organizing, Housing, Public Health, HIV/AIDS

Population Served: Primarily persons who are HIV+ (most often low-income and minority)

Targeted Neighborhood(s): Primarily Davidson County, but also 12 other counties in the Nashville-Murfreesboro metropolitan statistical area.

Support/Research Needs: Analysis of Existing Data (data on HIV/AIDS, survey results, service utilization), Community Organizing, Creative Solutions/Research, Grant Writing, Interviewing (Focus Groups), Literature Review/Summary, Survey Design, Survey Distribution, Survey Analysis, Working with Consumers (HIV+ Persons) to Increase Their Level of Participation and Empowerment.

Specific Projects: Many of the tasks are related to a yearly community needs assessment that is completed by the research analyst. We also have an interest in learning more about “social determinants of health” relevant to HIV/AIDS. Additional tasks are related to building the capacity of the community planning body and include: how to increase community input and collaboration, and expand the range of stakeholders and get them to work together; effective use of technology for increasing community involvement; alternative ways to get consumers involved, including how to increase their knowledge so they can play a larger role in decision-making; and training on advanced group dynamics and communication.

Students Currently Matched with Organization: None

Nashville Area Habitat for Humanity

Areas of Interest: Family Support, Housing

Population Served: Working-class families

Targeted Neighborhood(s): Davidson County

Support/Research Needs: Analysis of Existing Data (Family Demographics), Creative Solutions/Research, Report Writing, Survey Design, Survey Distribution, Survey Analysis

Specific Projects: Research the following Habitat communities as intern time and availability permit: partner families, including (1) the selection process; (2) sweat equity process (3) support after home purchase (4) and family demographics; building volunteers, particularly as related to (1) build supervisors-on-site; (2) HomeStore; (3) and family services; HomeStore customers, including (1) level of service; (2) and price-value measurement.

Students Currently Matched with Organization: None

Nashville Area Metropolitan Planning Organization*

Areas of Interest: Transportation

Population Served: All residents

Targeted Neighborhood(s): Davidson, Rutherford, Sumner, Williamson and Wilson Counties

Support/Research Needs: Analysis of Existing Data, Creative Solutions/Research

Specific Projects: School Siting Project and Health Impact Analysis

Students Currently Matched with Organization: Vanderbilt Peabody College Action Research students

Nashville Stand for Children

Areas of Interest: Community Organizing, Education

Population Served: Not specified

Targeted Neighborhood(s): Not specified

Support/Research Needs: Community Organizing, Grant Writing, Networking, Administrative Support, Data Entry

Specific Projects: Team building

Students Currently Matched with Organization: None

Neighborhoods Resource Center, The

Areas of Interest: Community Organizing, Education, Housing, Poverty, Youth Development, Predatory Lending, Gentrification, Crime and Safety, Quality of City Services

Population Served: Neighborhood groups with an emphasis on low-to-moderate income areas

Targeted Neighborhood(s): Metro Davidson County

Support/Research Needs: Analysis of Existing Data, Community Organizing, Survey Design

Specific Projects: The bulk of the projects are research-oriented, but there often is an opportunity to share that research with neighborhood leaders, group members and sometimes even elected officials in a community meeting setting. Some student volunteers working with us even have had the opportunity to speak in front of the Metro Council and at hearings in committees at the Tennessee Legislature. We have found that this approach has worked well with the many students we have worked with through the Vanderbilt Legal Clinic in the past, which we no longer have as a resource since Professor Laurie Hauber left.

Issue	Objective	Task
Predatory Lending	To identify what kinds of alternatives to payday loans and title loans exist; to organize that information in order to promote those alternatives and to use that information to determine if there is a need for the creation of additional alternatives	Research and catalog small-dollar loans available at credit unions and banks in Tennessee; more specific priorities/tasks would be fleshed out together with Coalition for Responsible Lending
Predatory Lending	To examine the influence of campaign contributions on policy making in the State Legislature	Research campaign donations to Tennessee legislators from the title lending and payday lending industry; emphasis on key committees making relevant decisions
Predatory Lending	To learn about payday and title lending customers from the results of existing self-report surveys	Analyze the results of surveys collected statewide at free Volunteer Income Tax Assistance (VITA) sites
Predatory Lending	To map payday and title lending locations statewide with an emphasis on key legislative districts	Assist NRC information specialist to organize database of title lenders and learn about GIS mapping with such data
Halfway Houses / Group Homes	To research best-practice information on the regulation and oversight of group homes that is most relevant and applicable to Tennessee law and policy	Follow up on work completed by past students in the Vanderbilt Legal Clinic; they completed research on the landscape of regulation and oversight in Tennessee and began research on best practices for the regulation and oversight of halfway houses; Metro Law Department has asked for best practices from other states and municipalities in the 6th Circuit specifically
Gentrification	To follow up on work done by Vanderbilt and others on the subject of gentrification	Conversations with students, NRC staff and neighbors would need to take place to identify the specific steps to be taken

Students Currently Matched with Organization: None

North Edgefield Organized Neighbors (NEON)

Areas of Interest: Community Organizing, Education, Youth Development

Population Served: Not specified

Targeted Neighborhood(s): North Edgefield (East Nashville)

Support/Research Needs: Community Organizing, Creative Solutions/Research, Grant Writing, Survey Design, Survey Analysis

Specific Projects: NEON needs energy, creativity and know-how in organizing our community regarding a marathon on Dickerson Road (Buffalo Run), community survey and analysis, community choir, tutoring and music classes.

Students Currently Matched with Organization: None

Oasis Center

Areas of Interest: Counseling, Crisis Intervention, Family Support, Housing, Poverty, Youth Development

Population Served: Teenagers/young people

Targeted Neighborhood(s): Middle Tennessee

Support/Research Needs: Interviewing (One-On-One), Supervision, Role Modeling for Teens

Specific Projects: We would love to have a mature college student serve as an intern in our outreach center. This would allow time for more programming and outreach to homeless teens.

Students Currently Matched with Organization: None

Spruce Street Baptist Church

Areas of Interest: Community Organizing; Faith/Spirituality; Family Support; Education; Housing; Poverty

Population Served: Varied (low-income and elderly)

Targeted Neighborhood(s): Downtown Nashville

Support/Research Needs: Analysis of Existing Data; Grant Writing; Creative Solutions/Research; Report Writing

Specific Projects: We need graduate assistance during grant location and grant writing efforts, and support facilitating the expansion of existing grants and community housing programs. The church provides extensive outreach to the elderly and youth. It wishes to possibly expand these opportunities into other projects to meet social justice needs in the community.

Students Currently Matched with Organization: None

**Tennessee Health Care Campaign/
Tennessee Small Business Coalition***

Areas of Interest: Community Organizing, Health Care Reform

Population Served: Not specified

Targeted Neighborhood(s): Not specified

Support/Research Needs: Community Organizing, Interviewing (One-On-One and Focus Groups), General Office Work

Specific Projects: We need various types of support ranging from administrative work (data entry), making phone calls for event turnout, calls to legislator turnout, writing reports, assisting in handing out packets, attending large meetings and taking notes, photos, interviewing folks to obtain their stories and more.

Students Currently Matched with Organization: Tyler Frazier

Tennessee Voices for Children

Areas of Interest: Community Organizing, Crisis Intervention, Family Support, Youth Development, Mental Health, System of Care

Population Served: Families, children and adolescents with mental illness

Targeted Neighborhood(s): Statewide

Support/Research Needs: Creative Solutions/Research, Grant Writing, Networking, Program Evaluation, Survey Design, Survey Distribution, Survey Analysis

Specific Projects: Grant writing/evaluating our Statewide Family Support Network

Students Currently Matched with Organization: None

Urban Housing Solutions*

Areas of Interest: Community Organizing, Education, Housing, Poverty, Health Promotion

Population Served: 1,000 individuals and families, many of whom have special needs and all of whom are very low income

Targeted Neighborhood(s): Residents of our apartment complexes and group homes

Support/Research Needs: Analysis of Existing Data, Community Organizing, Literature Review/ Summary, Report Writing, Survey Design, Survey Distribution, Survey Analysis

Specific Projects: Projects ideas include:

Health Matters project – We think we have created a model program here to increase health care access, promotion and awareness within disenfranchised populations. For more than four years we have been implementing health care interventions with our Mercury Courts previously homeless population. Morbidity rates are down, emergency room visits are less frequent and emergency transport service has decreased. We want to document this program in terms of its effectiveness and its processes so that we can submit it to the Department of Housing and Urban Development and other supporters of disenfranchised residential communities in a manner that others can replicate. This entails documenting what we believe to be a “best practice” approach.

New Lease – This is a new two-year project to move homeless individuals and families into housing and independence within six months. The intern would analyze which indicators on the front end help predict success for the individual.

Mercury Courts – This property has 157 residential units. The researcher/intern would analyze which indicators predict that a resident will stabilize and have success at Mercury Courts.

Resident survey – What services are needed? What skills do residents have? How can we improve our support of their independence?

Work production project – Using the information gleaned from the resident survey, design a social enterprise that can employ some of our residents and financially break even or perhaps even produce a small profit.

Students Currently Matched with Organization: Vanderbilt Peabody College Action Research Students

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