

1-23-2013

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Recommended Citation

Abernathey, Elizabeth; Bryden, Meredith; Carr, Kristin; Crannell, W. Christian; King, Colin; Nobe, Andrew; VanHorne, Michelle; Contompasis, Stephen; and Kounta, Jenny, "The Sara Holbrook Community Center: A Needs Assessment" (2013). *Public Health Projects, 2008-present*. Book 90.

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The Sara Holbrook Community Center: A Needs Assessment

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Introduction

The mission of the Sara Holbrook Community Center (SHCC), located in the heart of Burlington's Old North End (ONE), is to "develop responsible and productive children, youth and families through social development, educational and recreational opportunities."¹ SHCC offers an after school program for 36 elementary school students. In recent years, disrespectful behavior and bullying have become a growing problem in the program. We conducted a needs assessment of the SHCC and staff. The assessment examined the strengths and challenges facing the program and devised potential recommendations to address staff-identified issues.

Demographics Across VT²



- 86% of students at the Sustainability Academy at Lawrence Barnes are eligible for free/reduced price lunch.³
- The median income of the Old North End is \$34,000 per year, with 8-12.9% earning less than \$10,000 per year.²

Overall Themes

Home & Community

Resources

Strengths

Unstructured Free Play

Positive Community

Reputation & Impact

Staff Dedication & Diversity

Ability to Stretch Budget

Challenges

Resistance to Change

Demographics of Old North End

Staff Communication & Roles

Limited Time, Space & Money

Governance & Administration

Program Structure

Recommendations

Field Trips

External Programming

Parental Communication

Student Individuality

Frequent Staff Meetings

Clarify Staff Roles

Focus on Staff Training

Develop Fundraising Campaign

Methods

We created and administered a 21 question interview in a semi-structured format to the 6 staff members. Each interview was recorded, transcribed and rendered anonymous. From these transcripts, we conducted a qualitative needs assessment and identified 4 themes. We highlighted strengths and challenges for each category and developed recommendations to address these challenges.



Afterschool participants during "Circle Time"



Mural outside SHCC

"...to have a place that is very safe and gives them a sense of safety and fun, it just goes a really long way."

-SHCC Staff Member

"...kids come to us in kindergarten and leave us in 5th grade and I have seen a huge amount of growth in that period of time."

-SHCC Staff Member

Conclusion

The needs assessment revealed various strengths and challenges of the SHCC after school program. Addressing two or three of the challenges while also nurturing their strengths will ensure SHCC's continued vital role serving the Old North End.

References:

¹SHCC Website (www.saraholbrookcc.org); ²U. S. Census Bureau, 2010 Census; ³Burlington School District Food Service