Helping Hands: Where to Find a Helping Hand in Muncie and Delaware County

Senior Honors Creative Project (Hnrs499)

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An Honors Thesis by Jessica Schaffer and Erika Massy
Abstract

This project is a comprehensive booklet that contains detailed information on organizations where people can go if they are in need of food, shelter, childcare or monetary assistance. It has been distributed throughout Muncie and Delaware County in public locations. It serves as a quick reference guide for those in need of assistance and allows them to find the help they are looking for quickly and without having to make countless, if not repetitive, phone calls.
Acknowledgements

We would like to thank all of the contributing organizations that gave us their time, patience and information. If our booklet helps even one person receive help from them, we will know the efforts of everyone involved will be worth it.

We would like to thank Dr. Laurie Lindberg for her patience, insight and inspiration over the course of this project. She committed to us from the very start and, without her, this project would never have been a success.

We would like to thank the Ball State University Honors College for providing us with the classes, instruction and support over the last four years, that without, we never would have been capable of completing this project.

We would like to thank our parents for their support, emotionally and financially, throughout this project. This project is just one example of how their love has led to our success.

We would like to thank FedEx-Kinkos for their generous support (and generous discount) during the printing process. Their commitment to the community and Ball State University students is clear and was a valuable asset to our project.

And finally, we would like to thank each other.
Rationale

- **Purpose**
  This project was born out of a desire to create an Honors Thesis that served a purpose further than completing university requirements. We wanted our final project to do more than collect dust on the Bracken Library shelves. Our goal was to create a project that would give back to the community that housed us during our education. In discussion with Dr. Lindberg, the idea of a comprehensive help guide was born. This project differs from typical Honors College Senior Thesis' in that it is not a showcase of the students' talents or work through college. Instead, it is a project where we chose to give back to the community that has given its resources to us for four years. This project aligns with city and university initiatives to bridge the gap between "student" and "citizen".

  This project also benefits the community by empowering its citizens with the greatest possible tool—information that allows them to help themselves. Instead of calling agency after agency, searching for the right one, people will be able to quickly and easily to find where they need to go for assistance.

- **Process**
  After deciding on the format that our end result would be, we made a list of relevant organizations and agencies in Muncie and Delaware County. After we had compiled this long list, we began removing organizations that
were government related or were widely known, to help our booklet highlight those organizations that people may not know exist to help them.

In the final product, there is a mix of known and lesser-known organizations to balance the information we were providing. After choosing the final list of organizations, along with a short list of "back-up" or "extra" organizations, we began compiling information. Through phone and face-to-face interviews, along with information that we gathered from literature and organization websites, we collected information on all of the organizations.

After this, we started the monumental task of organizing our information and deciding what to include. We agreed upon what should be included — contact information, services provided, requirements and, if necessary, any other important information — and designed a computer template for the booklet. We set upon the task of imputing all of the information into the computer and editing it for clarity, conciseness and to fit in booklet form. Once this task was complete, we sent each organization a proof copy and made the requested changes.

Now that the hardest part was over, we set about finding the right printer. We visited three printing stores in Muncie and decided on FedEx-Kinkos. This was not a hard decision as Senior Customer Service Officer
Judith Haynes, went above and beyond give us a good deal. We were able to get the maximum number we ever dreamed of getting printed, printed and bound on fabulous new paper for less money than any of the other stores. She gave us a discount of over $350.00 (which was more money than the final printing cost). Her generosity floored us and we realized how committed some of the citizens of Muncie are to Ball State students.

The printing was done in two days and we were able to distribute the booklets quickly. The booklets were placed in a variety of places such as: doctors offices, Ball State University, several locations in the City County Building and libraries (to name a few). Our biggest surprise in the distribution process was how amazing the libraries were. Librarians wanted as many copies as we could give them. At the Carnegie Library, a volunteer helped us display them in the entrance, as well as insisting on having some at her spot in the café. She assured us that anyone needing help would be told given a booklet. Other librarians offered to distribute them to the other libraries so we wouldn’t have to travel so much. They set aside copies for reference desks and inquired as to where to get more when they run out. The feeling that we had truly accomplished something useful and great was
overpowering. For the first time, we were able to see just how necessary this project was to the community.

Another great experience in the distribution was at the City County Building. Directed upstairs by a sweet guard who didn't think twice of letting two girls loaded down with booklets through the security checkpoint, we went first to the City Commissioners office to receive distribution permission. Surrounded by the administrative assistants, copies began to fly from our hands. They wanted to display them, as well as keep copies on their desks for reference. They brainstormed other offices in the building that we should visit and thanked us for creating the booklet. We experienced a similar situation in both the Health Department and Family Services offices.

While we distributed the booklets many places, the libraries and City County Building were the locations that made us feel like our project was going to make a big impact. Our fears that the people truly in need would not get the booklet were banished, as we felt assured that these people truly cared enough to make sure the booklets found people who needed them.

• Accomplishments

As we move closer to graduation, we have time to reflect upon what this project has meant to us. As the booklets' creators, it impacts us, as it educated us
about Muncie and Delaware County. Throughout the project, we learned just how vast the resources are in the community. It also forced us to step outside the safety of Ball State University and interact with citizens of all natures. The personal development this project gave us will leave a long-lasting impression that will shape the way we interact with future communities upon graduation.

Individually, the creators of this booklet as had personal accomplishments. For Erika, this project forced her to learn better time management skills. As throughout most of this project she was student teaching, it took a lot of effort to learn how to balance all of the aspects of her life. She also considers is a personal accomplishment to have bettered her design skills and has gained valuable experience in designing a product so it is readable at every level. As a teacher, this will be valuable knowledge, as she must become an effective communicator on many levels.

For Jessica, this project helped her deal with a fear that she has struggled with for as long as she can remember: dealing with strangers. In order to compile all of the information and distribute it, it was necessary for her to deal with strangers in a professional manner. Becoming more comfortable in this manner has helped her considerably with the job search that she previously found to be too overwhelming to think about. She considers it a personal accomplishment to have bettered her people skills and gained the important knowledge that it isn’t
that hard to deal with strangers, you just have to know how to do it professionally.

While saying the community will have accomplished something because of this booklet might sound a bit far-fetched, we believe it to be true. Our booklet may not create a huge sensation in the community, but it brings people in need one step closer to organizations where they can receive help. It also brings Ball State University students and the community one-step closer to working together to help people. The booklet empowers people in need to find the assistance that is right for them without having to spend their time holding on the phone for information that may or may not be right for them. It gives them some control in their lives and enables them to take that first step towards having a better life. We think this is quite the accomplishment for any person and any community that they reside in.