

2002-2003 Project List

Matthew Whaley Early Childhood Resource Center & Civic Education Project -
Andy Jacobs, Principal

Sharpe Fellows: Rachel Fitzgerald & James Long

Sharpe Scholars: Joseph-Barrie Schwartz, Ryan Davidson, Jorge Ibarra, Meghan Gilliland, Ariana Hawkes, Jessica Johnson, Lucy Mears, Akel Grantham, Richard Turner, Emily Meredith, Jessica Miller, Catherine Schwenkler, and Elizabeth Wilck.

The Matthew Whaley Early Childhood Resource Center (MWERC) was developed in 2001 through a federal grant to provide educational materials for the preschool aged children of Williamsburg and James City County who would otherwise not have access to such resources. The Williamsburg Area Social Services Department works in collaboration with Matthew Whaley Elementary School to provide funding, planning, and a location for the Center. Because the Center is an entirely new entity in this community, effectively disseminating information about its resources to child care providers and parents in Williamsburg and James City County community is essential to insuring that these resources are effectively utilized. In other words, our challenge is one of connecting the Center's resources to families in ways that can truly benefit them. This year, our goal is to strengthen the operation of the Center, to develop and implement marketing and outreach strategies to make parents and childcare providers more aware of the Center, and to find ways of making the Center more accessible to the Williamsburg community.

The first few years of childhood have proven to be some of the most critical years in a child's development. Hence, we resolve to connect MWERC to children from low-income families in order to give them the same opportunities from which more privileged children benefit. To address this issue, we are identifying the precise location of child-care providers as part of a strategy to promote the Resource Center within targeted areas. Extending the resources of the Center in this way will help to build stronger ties between students, parents, school faculty and staff in the community. Additionally, with demographic information about the community we can collaborate in a more general sense with our community partner to examine the problems of demographic isolation and access to resources and to consider the most efficient and effective strategies for the use of available funds for the Center.

Colonial CASA – Robin Bledsoe, Executive Director

Sharpe Fellow: Suzanne Berman

Sharpe Scholars: Kelly Tenny, and Devan Donaldson.

Our goal is to raise awareness about child abuse in order to prevent future abuse and to empower current victims to speak out about their condition. We plan to accomplish this two-fold objective by developing an educational video and curriculum geared toward high school upperclassmen. We will pilot and evaluate these materials with students from local high schools.

Historic Triangle Senior Center – Jane Masten, Executive Director

Sharpe Fellow: Suzanne Berman

Sharpe Scholars: Alice Krips and Bethany Buchanan.

In 2001, national data revealed that 26.4 million senior volunteers gave 5.6 billion hours of their time, providing a value of 77.2 billion dollars for nonprofit organizations. Seniors are four times more likely to volunteer if asked than those under age 55. Studies show that the more connected a person feels to his or her community, the more likely the person is to be a volunteer. With the resources of the Historic Triangle Senior Center (HTSC) at our fingertips, we hope to maximize the dual benefits of senior volunteerism: utilizing the talent of seniors in our community and strengthening the social fabric of our community. Our project is to work with both the local Retired Senior Volunteer Program (RSVP) and the HTSC to develop an efficient system of linking senior volunteers with volunteer opportunities. This involves compiling a complete list of organizations requiring volunteers and thorough descriptions of specific volunteer placements; creating a database of senior volunteers and an outreach strategy to recruit new volunteers; and serving as bridge between various groups. Our goal is to make the vision of RSVP through HTSC a reality.

Eastern State Hospital – Marty Kline, Vice President

Sharpe Fellow: Sarah Hastedt

Sharpe Scholars: Trevor Dreyfus, Marrison Hamed, David Prestosa, and James Todd.

Eastern State Hospital (ESH) is a state-funded public mental health facility whose mission is to “assist patients and their families in efficiently utilizing resources that facilitate living within a community at the highest possible level of personal

independence.” Over the past decade, rapid inflation in both fuel and pharmaceutical drug costs has placed a growing strain on the hospital’s budget. The problem of rising input costs has been exacerbated by the fact that the non-personnel section of the hospital budget, of which pharmaceuticals and fuel are a part, has not been adjusted to compensate for the effects of inflation. As pharmaceutical and fuel costs consume a larger proportion of Eastern State’s budget, the hospital has fewer resources to devote to patient care. The goal of our project is to use the Consumer Price Index (CPI) to assess how pharmaceutical and energy cost inflation has affected the real value of the ESH budget during the period 1996-2002 and the implications of this for the quality of patient care.

The People’s Place – Pat Healy, Executive Director

Sharpe Fellow: Brendan Williamson

Sharpe Scholars: Emily Andre, Matthew Price, Yuichi Matsuyama.

The People's Place is an agency that helps people with serious mental illnesses to re-assimilate into the community. Our project focuses on helping young adults at the People's Place develop new skills and relationships as they transition back into work and social networks. Because many of the existing activities at the People’s Place were designed with older people in mind, the goal of our project is to assess community needs interests of the young adult population there and use this information to develop new programs. Such programs will help the People’s Place address the needs of members of all ages. Additionally, these programs will be designed to be self-sustaining and to empower the People’s Place members to develop new programming themselves.

Williamsburg Regional Library – Project I, Patrick Golden

Sharpe Fellow: Corae Briscoe

Sharpe Scholars: Theresa Falcon, Roy Lenn, Kristina Scholz, and Victoria Young.

The Williamsburg Regional Library (WRL) provides local citizens with access to information through media ranging from books to Internet-ready computers. It also acts as a community center by offering numerous activities to the general public. In its continuing quest to better serve the surrounding community, WRL has partnered with the Sharpe Program to develop and administer an updated User Survey. Through this new survey, the library hopes to improve programs and services that educate, enrich, entertain, and insure community access to vital public information. While state aid to public libraries continues to decline, recent population projections predict a 20% increase in the number of prospective library users within the next 8 years. We hope data gathered and analyzed through the User Survey will assist the library in defining areas of need, developing strategies

to meet anticipated funding challenges, and envisioning programs, services and activities for the future.

Williamsburg Regional Library – Project II, Noreen Bernstein

Sharpe Fellow: Brendan Williamson

Sharpe Scholars: Maria Koumas, Jennifer Dandridge, Katie Hannifan.

The Williamsburg Regional Library provides literary resources through programs that "educate, enrich, entertain and inform every member" of their community. The foremost purpose of our project with the Williamsburg Regional Library is to expand literacy programming, and to identify resources to support this expanded programming. In addition to searching for new funding sources, we are investigating approaches to promoting early childhood, adult and family literacy; evaluating participation in the library's current literacy programming; and regularly volunteering at library literacy programs.

Williamsburg Planning Department, Reed Nester, Director of Planning

Sharpe Fellow: Frannie Ames

Sharpe Scholars: Wess Garner, Susanne Klosko, Joseph Locke, Diana Sherban, and Tim Slattery.

Last year a group of Sharpe Scholars confirmed that many students lack information about living off-campus and finding off-campus housing. Our Sharpe Group is working with Reed Nester to construct a website to provide information on rental housing in the Williamsburg/James City County area. Our goal is to educate the potential renters on (1) rental opportunities available within the community and (2) the rights and responsibilities both students and members of the community have as renters.