Training women who guide women—through birthing and beyond

COMMUNITY-BASED DOULA PILOT

(Kate Pew Wolters, Julie Ridenour)

Women are increasingly turning to professional doulas for physical, emotional, and informational support in the birthing process. Yet for too many, high costs prevent or limit access to this expertise.

How can the Steelcase Foundation leverage doulas to improve health outcomes for women throughout the region? To find out, the Steelcase Foundation partnered with the Kress Foundation to launch the Steelcase Foundation Community-Based Doula Pilot. The pilot works to address the high costs of doulas by increasing their availability, ensuring they are capable of serving all communities—bringing social parity to low-income families and communities of color.

The pilots test innovative strategies that train and certify women to work as doulas in their own communities. The program provides grant funding to cover mentorship, training, and creating a scalable, sustainable path for women who are called to serve.

STEELCASE FOUNDATION ANNUAL REPORT 2015

Nurturing literacy-rich environments for toddlers

KENT DISTRICT LIBRARY/GRAND RAPIDS

PRE-READING EVALUATION PROJECT

Can librarians help parents and caregivers nurture early literacy development in children? A recent pilot project in Kent County, Michigan, demonstrated the power of libraries in doing just that.

In 2014, the Steelcase Foundation and Grand Rapids Public Library engaged in a unique initiative designed to support librarians as they worked with parents and caregivers to support the development of their infants and toddlers. The initiative focused on the key developmental area of pre-reading. Librarians received specialized training and worked with families in their communities. Librarians and parents worked together to improve reading readiness, songs, rhymes, and early literacy—singing, counting, finger play, etc.—by as much as 200%. Parents and caregivers who attended with their toddlers increased their use of strategies that nurture early literacy—singing, pointing, using finger play, etc.—by as much as 200%.

CAMP BLODGETT/SUMMER ACADEMY

Helping troubled families to flourish

BRIEF STRATEGIC FAMILY THERAPY PILOT PROGRAM / D.A. BLODGETT-ST. JOHN’S

Facing diminishing resources and growing pressures to cut costs, D.A. Blodgett-St. John’s launched a new pilot program that builds on its proven successful ten-year “Helping Hands” program.

The “Brief Strategic Family Therapy” is a 16-week program that provides two to four individual, family, and group sessions. The program helps families address the complexities of their lives and achieve meaningful change.

In this program, families work with trained family therapists to build the skills and knowledge they need to enhance family relationships and overcome challenging situations. By addressing the root causes of families’ issues, the program aims to provide families with the means to break the cycle of problems and build a stronger, more stable family unit.

Restoring programs that connect seniors with young people in need

SENIOR NEIGHBORS & GERONTOLOGY NETWORK / MERGER

At lokale, we do not just see a merger program for seniors as a successful program that prevents senior citizens from isolating socially. We also view an opportunity to improve our communities. This is particularly true when it comes to programs that connect seniors with young people.

The merger program was implemented in Spring 2016 and provides a unique opportunity to connect older adults with younger adults. The program brings together older adults and younger adults to create a new and vibrant community in which people can thrive.

Planting the seeds of play

GRAND RAPIDS CHILDREN’S MUSEUM / ACCESS

How can libraries, community centers, and parks encourage children to develop their full potential? By providing opportunities for physical and emotional growth.

For libraries, which traditionally measure their effectiveness solely by literacy, there is an opportunity to increase the use of pre-reading programs for 0- to 3-year-olds. Early results show that among infants and toddlers engaging in pre-reading activities, those who participated in pre-reading programs showed a significant increase in literacy—singing, counting, finger play, etc.—by as much as 200%.

Inspiring urban kids to bloom in nature

CAMP BLODGETT / SUMMER ACADEMY

Engaging urban teens in community problem solving

WEST MICHIGAN CENTER FOR ARTS & TECHNOLOGY (WMCAT) / TEEA ARTS & TECH PROGRAM

Many students have limited or limited access to traditional educational venues. TEEA’s after-school program engages students in hands-on opportunities to explore a variety of art forms and technologies. The program is designed to empower students to use their creativity and critical thinking skills in innovative ways to solve problems in their community. The program provides professional development workshops that help participants identify and implement creative strategies to address community needs.

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Establishing roots for homeless youth

YOUTH DATA COLLABORATIVE

The Youth Data Collaborative is a community of practice that brings together leaders from across the region to share best practices, discuss challenges, and work together to address issues affecting youth. The Collaborative is made up of representatives from a diverse range of organizations, including schools, hospitals, non-profits, and government agencies. By working together, the Collaborative is able to identify common challenges, share solutions, and develop strategies to address the needs of young people.

Guiding nonprofits toward fresh perspectives

DOROTHY JOHNSON CENTER FOR PHILANTHROPY AT GVSU & KENDALL COLLEGE OF ART AND DESIGN / DESIGN FOR THE GREATER GOOD INITIATIVE

The Dorothy Johnson Center for Philanthropy at GVSU and Kendall College of Art and Design have partnered to launch the Design for the Greater Good initiative. This initiative seeks to bring together community leaders, artists, designers, and educators to work collaboratively on finding solutions to challenges facing the region. By leveraging the expertise of these diverse groups, the initiative aims to develop innovative approaches to addressing social issues and improving the quality of life for all residents of the region.

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