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Housing Instability in the Lafayette Community and Beyond

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Housing Instability in the Lafayette Community and Beyond

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Student Author Bio Sketch

Aameneh Kermani is a freshman in the Honors College & College of Health and Human Sciences. She is majoring in Brain and Behavioral Sciences with minors in Psychology and Biology. She plans on going to medical school after graduation. In high school, she was part of Key Club, through which she volunteered at the Salvation Army once a month to help serve meals to elderly people. In this article, Kermani describes her experience volunteering at the Lafayette Habitat for Humanity ReStore (ReStore), and the methods used to fight housing instability in the Lafayette community and beyond.

Student Introduction

I was introduced to the option of volunteering at the Lafayette Habitat for Humanity ReStore through my service-learning English 108-S class. This class required us to connect and collaborate with a community partner of our choice, with the goal being to serve the community and become a better writer in the process. The ReStore was my first pick because I had volunteered



Figure 1. Raising awareness mindmap.

throughout high school with my local Key Club. I had worked with people at the Salvation Army, and seen what poverty looked like firsthand. After researching the ReStore’s mission and goals, I knew it was the right pick for me. I wanted to help reduce the rates of housing instability in my community, so I started volunteering every other Wednesday and Friday for two hours. This allowed me to get acquainted with the ReStore staff and know what my responsibilities were. I collaborated with the ReStore manager, Nancy Ingram, about what I could do each time I volunteered and interviewed her for a project I did on raising awareness of resources in the Lafayette community (Figure 1). With this experience in hand, I asked myself this question: How can my volunteering hours at the ReStore help improve the marketing/advertising of their resources and address the housing instability many people face in the Lafayette community and beyond?

Community Partner Description

The ReStore is a nonprofit organization working to “build affordable homes in the Greater Lafayette area to empower families with strength, stability, and self-reliance.” The ReStore is a donation center where every item sold has been donated by members of the community and all the proceeds go to building houses for low-income families around the world (“Restore,” n.d.). Some items they currently sell are flooring, plywood, kitchen appliances, furniture, lighting supplies; almost any items that can be used to remodel a house, they sell.

The work done to prep and clean the donated items is done solely by volunteers and delivered to homes by volunteers. The ReStore relies heavily on volunteers from the community to provide the work and knowledge it takes to run a donation center. Anyone is welcome to shop and donate items. They are inclusive of the entire community. This ReStore branch is located at 3815 Fortune Dr., Lafayette, IN 47905. The ReStore is one of the many volunteer opportunities at Habitat for Humanity. The link to the Lafayette branch is <https://lafayette.habitat.org/restore/>.

According to the National Low Income Housing Association, “there are more than 7.2 million more affordable housing units needed for very low-income families, and 75% of all extremely low income families pay more than half their income on rent” (“The Problem,” n.d.). This is the problem the ReStore is trying to solve. They currently advertise what goes on in the donation process and what they are selling through a Facebook website, radio broadcasting, and billboards throughout Lafayette. By connecting with Purdue University and English 108-S specifically, they are encouraging students to make a positive impact on the community and beyond. As the demand for volunteers is rising, this would be a great opportunity for Purdue students to get involved and become more aware of their mission to end housing instability.

Volunteer Opportunities and Impact

While the English 108-S course is a great way to get involved with the ReStore, students should reach out if they are interested in volunteering. There are many opportunities to get involved at the ReStore. Volunteer work can be done by helping clean the items that are donated and get them ready in the warehouse area of the store (Figure 2). Another job is loading trucks with furniture and shipping them to people’s houses, which is a free service the ReStore provides to customers. Working the register or walking around and interacting with customers is another option (Figure 3). A lot of freedom is given to volunteers, and they welcome individuals from all backgrounds. Starting with these smaller jobs can pave the way for more effective learning opportunities. These jobs are a great way to engage students in ways that promote reflection, awareness, and positive growth. Students will be able to realize the positive impact they are having on the community and reducing housing instability.

Another volunteer opportunity the ReStore provides is the option of helping build affordable houses for low-income families. This opportunity is true to their mission



Figure 2. Donation processing area.



Figure 3. Main shopping area.

and gives students the resources to help the community. Volunteers are able to go out to construction sites and, with instructions given, start building houses. By doing this, students can learn practical skills that can be used as they move on after college and buy their first house. Volunteers are able to better understand the building process and where the funds come from by starting out volunteering at the ReStore. This opportunity will more likely come after having some experience at the donation center and understanding that the items people buy are what supplies the funds for the houses.

One challenge this site poses to Purdue students is distance. Being 15 minutes away from campus could limit the ability of students to have the means to reach the site. Carpooling with upperclassmen is one way to save money and provide more support to the ReStore. A challenge internal to the ReStore is their ability to maintain proper advertising to the community. The ReStore is

already a lesser known part of Habitat for Humanity, so advertising is key as volunteers are an essential part of their mission and make up the majority of their workers.

Supporting this organization helps students realize how lucky they are to have a dorm room or house when many families in our community struggle with housing as their children go to school. By having more student volunteers at the ReStore, they are able to better achieve their mission of empowering families with strength and stability. The stability comes from the support of everyone in the community. The Activity Theory diagram (Figure 4) was created for a research profile I completed on the ReStore (Kain & Wardle, 2005). All these factors combine for service work to make an effective impact on the community. For example, the community surrounding the ReStore connects to the division of labor as the community is what helps them run and gives them business. Volunteers come from the surrounding community. The motives for service work are to improve the well-being of the community and people need rules to know how to do this. All these components work together to produce stability by engaging all parts of the

community surrounding the ReStore. As the community becomes more engaged with service work, more awareness is raised and more people will be informed of this instability. A large part of this theory is one's need to be aware of the social and cultural networks surrounding the activity. The Activity Theory diagram helps one visualize the interconnectedness of the community and my service work at the ReStore.

Reflective Conclusion

The Lafayette Habitat for Humanity ReStore is an organization working to solve housing instability in the Lafayette community and beyond. Volunteers are an essential part of their mission to serve low-income families and the work couldn't be done without them. Obtaining affordable housing can change a person's life. With the help the ReStore provides to families in need, they will be able to worry less about having a place to stay, and focus on maintaining their jobs, educating their children, and staying healthy. In addition to providing the framework to build a healthy life, the ReStore has volunteers to deliver furniture to these low-income

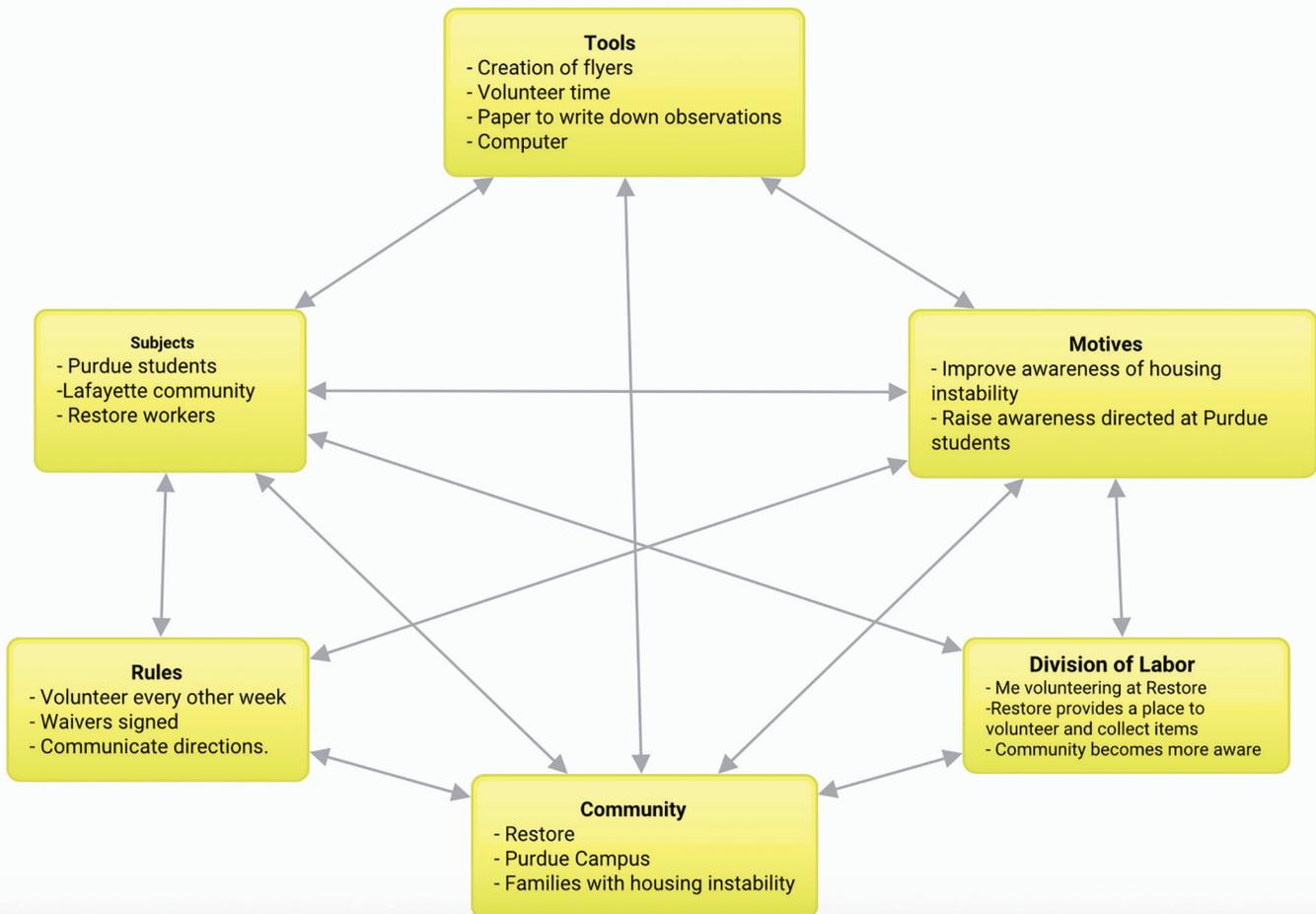


Figure 4. Activity Theory diagram.

families. The benefit of serving at the ReStore is both to one's own learning and service to the community. You have the ability to see firsthand how a donation center runs and know that you are playing a role in reducing housing instability. Before volunteering at the ReStore, I would advise students to research housing instability and what it means for the people involved. I would know the ReStore's mission before volunteering, as it will help direct your service.

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In the Pursuit of Assistance: A Team's Desire to Not Let a Congenital Amputation Get in a Young Boy's Way

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Gavin Loucks (*First-Year Engineering*), and
Kirsten Wozniak (*Biomedical Engineering*)

Student Author Bio Sketches

Carl Russell III is a second-year student at Purdue University studying Biomedical Engineering with a concentration in premedical studies and a minor in chemistry. He is currently participating in a co-op education experience at Zimmer Biomet. He has participated on the Biomedical Engineering EPICS team for two semesters.

Gavin Loucks is a first-year student who began his work with project partner William Sevick on the BME EPICS team in the fall of 2019. Currently, he is completing the first-year Engineering program at Purdue, but he will soon be transitioning to a major in Civil Engineering. He is passionate about the environment, and eventually hopes to work on improving hydroelectric power systems across the United States.

Kirsten Wozniak is finishing her second year of undergraduate studies in Biomedical Engineering. She is also active in programs such as Timmy Global Health and Purdue University Dance Marathon. Her career goals for the future include cross-cultural engineering in the global health field to assist in needed areas of the world.

In this article, they discuss the team's collaboration and impact with their project partner, William Sevick. The article also mentions other opportunities with the EPICS team and projects that are currently ongoing.

Introduction

The Biomedical Engineering (BME) team in EPICS is a service design team dedicated to assisting community partners through addressing medical problems and providing biomedical education. They are a small portion of the over 500 students in EPICS at Purdue University (Teams, n.d.). EPICS is a program run through the Purdue College of Engineering to foster design and teamwork skills while also providing for those in the community. There are currently 22 students on the Biomedical Engineering team (EPICS: BME, n.d.).

The BME EPICS team started at Purdue in the spring of 2017. One of the groups in the BME team is dedicated to designing assistive devices for a six-year-old boy named William. The partnership started with the help of his neighbor, Karen Hubbard, a Purdue Biomedical Engineering student, who approached the BME department with an interest in having a project dedicated to helping William with his disability. The BME EPICS team was a good fit for the project. The group has currently designed two devices for William with the hope of improving his life: a playing card holder (Figure 1) and an assistive bike device (Figure 2).

Students of various levels of education, from freshman to seniors, with various experiences and academic disciplines make up the team. They work with William to develop these assistive devices and make everyday activities easier.