In each issue of Linkages we write articles that highlight outreach activities and models fostered by the office of the vice provost for university outreach as well as those outreach initiatives across the university that illustrate faculty engagement within communities. This issue adds a new feature — students involved in outreach.

We would like to tell your outreach story. If you are developing curriculum for a particular off-campus population; assisting a community organization, government agency, or business; conducting applied research in collaboration with others; involving students in service-learning projects; or participating in other forms of outreach programs — and you would like to have your work highlighted in an issue of Linkages— please contact the editor, Patricia Miller, at miu121@msu.edu.

A hearty welcome to new faculty to Michigan State University! Linkages produced each term to demonstrate the different ways MSU engages with individuals, communities, and organizations in using our scholarly resources to address pressing issues.

Robert L. Church, Acting Vice Provost for University Outreach

Assets Approach Develops Young Peer Health Educators

by Patricia Miller

MSU Outreach Partnership faculty are collaborating with local organizations in Battle Creek and Albion to train groups of African-American males as peer educators on health issues that affect the choices, lives, and personal development of young males.

Based on a strategy of building collaborative relationships among community-based organizations, schools, and churches in Calhoun County, Project HELP (Health Empowerment through Local Partnerships) is designed to identify the internal and external assets necessary for youth to make good health-conscious decisions. The project is supported by the state of Michigan Office of Minority Health (the primary funder), AIDS (Applied Developmental Science) graduate programs and Outreach Partnerships at Michigan State University, S.P.G.B. Services of Battle Creek, the Battle Creek Community Foundation, Partnerships for Drug Free Communities, the United Way of Battle Creek, and with support from the W.K. Kellogg Foundation (primarily in-kind services with funding for project dissemination).

Taking an assets approach, the project supports positive youth development and emphasizes strengths and potential. This approach represents a shift in emphasis from diagnosing and treating problems to developing and nurturing the individual. “Assets” are defined in this context as resources that help youth make good decisions about such issues as high self-esteem, support from family and community, and positive peer influences.

Hiram Fitzgerald, Ph.D., University Distinguished Professor, Department of Psychology and Director, Applied Developmental Science Graduate Programs, says, “Project HELP provides an example of true empowerment. Youths are learning skills that will enable them to focus on assets and community change at the peer group level. If Project HELP works to impact youth development, it will be because youth made it happen.”

The project involves three phases. Phase One, the planning phase, was completed in May 1998. Project HELP staff targeted a group of 40 African-American males aged 9 to 16 with high to moderate academic achievement who completed two survey instruments. These young men were known to live healthy lifestyles and to abstain from the use of alcohol, tobacco, and other drugs. They were recommended by their school or community as being role model youth.

The surveys were part of a strategy developed by William A. Donohue, Ph.D., MSU Department of Communication, called the Community Asset Development for Youth (CADDY) Strategy. The Youth Attitudes and Behaviors questionnaire provided information regarding assets and deficits as recognized by the youth. A sample external youth asset might be “my parents would be mad if I got into a physical fight.” A sample deficit-measuring item might be “partners aren’t much fun unless people are drinking.”

The top five assets revealed by this sample were caring attitudes toward others, parental rejection of substance abuse, personal attitude against substance abuse, parents setting limits for youth, and strong self-esteem. There were some differences in the rankings of youth assets based on the age groupings, but one asset was strong across the sample: parental rejection of substance abuse.

In Phase Two, the implementation phase, a new type of sample group was recruited by the youth of Phase One. Sixty-five youth were recruited in Albion and 56 in Battle Creek from churches, schools, and other organizations, and sports clubs. This sample was a more general group of males without the limitations of age and sex groupings, but one asset was strong across the sample: parental rejection of substance abuse.

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The Outcomes-Assets Impact Model

by Robert Brown and Celeste Sturdevant Reed

The Drive to Demonstrate Impact and Effectiveness

The Outreach Partnerships division of University Outreach is committed to linking community-based research and development efforts, in partnership with broad-based collaborators, to link university knowledge, faculty, and expertise to resource people within the community who are working on societal improvements. Robert Brown, Coordinator, Outreach Partnerships, and Celeste Sturdevant Reed, M.S.W., M.L.R, building on existing research and with input from partnership faculty and staff, have developed a new program planning and evaluation model that clearly links individual and community assets, program outcomes, and community-wide impacts.

Robert Brown says, "This new Model provides a way to understand complex and interrelated situations while focusing on the contributions that individual, family, agency, service system, and community all make toward achieving larger desired community impacts. Its strength comes from the synergy between outcomes and assets."

Project funders, elected officials, and citizens are demanding accountability from education, health, and human service organizations (Wholey, Hattery, Newcomer, 1994). In the age of accountability, professional judgment and opinion no longer have wide-spread acceptance as a means to confirm program effectiveness. Public and private funders are demanding evidence of program outcomes in terms of the human benefits that result from intervention strategies (Horsch, 1996). The Outcomes-Assets Impact Model for evaluation of human services combines the benefits of outcome evaluation with the use of logic models in training provides a way to help participants whose consumers were other agencies, or citizens in general, had difficulty working with these models. Neither do the models clarify how outcomes on one level influence outcomes on another level. Finally, neither model helps to clarify our understanding of how outcomes produce long-term impact.

As we work within the CHECK POINTS training program and with agencies in several communities, it has become apparent that outcomes for individuals might be contingent on interventions and outcomes at other than the individual level. In addition, some interventions are directed at changing agencies or the interagency system or the community, with the intent to change situations for individuals. Others have also recognized that outcomes can occur at many levels, not just for the individual. Young and her colleagues, in their work to develop better service integration, identified five levels at which outcomes could occur (1994):

- individual
- family system or group
- agency or organization
- interagency system
- community

We use this multiple-level outcomes approach to assist participants whose organizations focused on agency, system, or community change. We view the five levels of outcomes as a hierarchy unto itself.

The Outcomes Trail

Building evaluative capacity within organizations is a key to demonstrating effectiveness (Plantz, Greenway, Hendricks, 1997). Launched in 1997, CHECK POINTS — a joint training program of University Outreach Partnerships and United Way of Michigan — is designed to increase the capacity of health and human service organizations to evaluate their program outcomes. All partners are committed to defining outcomes in client-centered terms. The use of logic models in training provides a way to help participants move from thinking of their activities with consumers to thinking about how their clients might change as a result of those activities. The logic model approach is particularly helpful in distinguishing among short-term outcomes (i.e., changes in an individual's knowledge, skill, attitudes, or organization structures and changes in behavior or practice), and long-term outcomes (change condition or status).

Two different approaches for developing logic models are presented in the training: The Outcomes-Assets Impact Model (see Model) and Targeting Outcomes of Programs (TOP, 1995). UWA has introduced member agencies across the country to outcomes using a simple format that links program resources step-by-step to program outcomes. The TOP model, developed by and for Extension educators, uses a visual presentation that links program design and program evaluation decisions and, in the process, clarifies the distinction between process and outcome evaluation efforts.

Both the UWA and TOP models proved valuable in CHECK POINTS training. They helped us clarify assumptions about how programs work and increased our understanding of the difference between outputs and outcomes. Both models clarify differences between short-term, intermediate, and long-term outcomes. They also demonstrate how short-term outcomes lead to intermediate outcomes, which in turn lead to long-term outcomes. In addition, the models helped us think about individual and family outcomes. Lastly, with some practice, they are easy to use.

Outcomes — Assets Impact Model

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Outcomes</th>
<th>Assets</th>
</tr>
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</table>
| Individual | Individual strength
| Group/Family | Group/Family strength
| Agency | Agency strength
| System/Neighborhood | System/Neighborhood strength
| Community | Community strength

The Assets Trail

Other Outreach Partnerships colleagues have simultaneously developed training materials to help community agency staff understand positive human development approaches and apply those concepts to their work with clients and within their own organizations. They have adapted a broad array of asset- or strength-based work (Benson, 1997; Keith & Perkins, 1996; Kretzmann & McNight, 1993) as they design training programs that focus on human development, organizational development, and community development in asset-oriented terms. We have worked with them to design evaluation techniques for their training programs and, in the process, became conversant with the philosophy or language of the internal (within the person) and external (outside the person) characteristics of assets.

A Synthesis of Outcomes and Assets

As we continue to work with people to frame the ultimate impact of their outcomes, a new picture has emerged. We began to realize that a powerful picture could be drawn if we thought of impacts as people-centered. This allowed us to describe the characteristics of those impacts in internal and external terms. In other words, we could use the language of outcomes at the individual level may contribute to short-term outcomes at the neighborhood level. In addition, interrelationships across two or more levels may occur: a short-term outcome at the individual level may make possible an intermediate outcome at the neighborhood level.

- Most situations are so complex that, in order to achieve impact, outcomes at all five levels must be realized.
- The impacts of our outcomes can be phrased in terms of changed individual characteristics. The assets language provides a way to describe those characteristics.

How the Model Advanced Our Understanding

The Model highlights the necessity of simultaneously achieving outcomes at multiple levels. Good short-term program outcomes — changes in participation, knowledge and skills — be blocked from achieving intermediate outcomes — behavior change — because no opportunity exists to apply the skills. For example, women trained for work cannot use their skills if no jobs are available. A youth leadership program may develop new skills in...
by Patricia Miller

A primary role of a university is to educate students in a chosen discipline, to inspire a love of learning that will last throughout their lifetime, and to provide opportunities for service delivery and possible outcomes for community settings. Students report that service experience increases their motivation to learn, to succeed in pursuit of their dreams, and to engage in civic endeavors.

The Service-Learning Writing Project (SLWP) is a joint endeavor of MSU's College of Arts and Letters, the Department of American Thought and Language, the Service-Learning Center, and the Writing Center. The course unites challenging intellectual content centered on public culture studies, effective writing instruction, and community-based service-learning assignments into an innovative and humanistic educational experience. The project was developed with the assistance of a Federal Title B2 Higher Education Generation Grant, a national initiative to promote public and community service sponsored by the Commission on National and Community Service. The Corporation for National Service provides continuation funding through its Serve and Learn Program.

The Liberty Hyde Bailey Scholars Program is a 23-credit specialization in connected learning for undergraduates in MSU's College of Agriculture and Natural Resources. Focusing on whole-person development, the program encourages moral, ethical, cognitive, and social development of faculty and student scholars. A key feature of the program is faculty and student scholar participation in outreach activities in the college, the university, professional associations, and local and national communities.

Best Practice Briefs: The Service-Learning Center (SLC) was established as the Office of Volunteer Programs in 1967 and renamed the SLC in 1987 to reflect the change of human service organizations to a range of human service organizations. More than 5,000 students applied for 1,000 local area service projects, to the mutual benefit of both students and community. The SLC informs and supports both the "Active Learning" and the "Advance Community within Diversity." MSU Guiding Principles by strengthening connections between classrooms and student life and promoting involvement with diverse populations in community settings. Students report that service experience increases their motivation to learn, to succeed in pursuit of their dreams, and to engage in civic endeavors.

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Fostering Success: Girl Scout Partnership Goes National

A collaborative partnership among organizations brought together by their shared interest in the positive development of girls at risk has blossomed and grown into a successful long-term partnership. Girl Scouts of the U.S.A., 14 Michigan Girl Scout Councils, the United Way of Michigan, the Family Independence Agency of Michigan, and Outreach Partnerships/ Michigan State University have participated in a complex alignment of sectors -- public and private child welfare, charitable, nonprofit, youth-serving organizations, and higher education -- to develop a demonstration project to deliver services to girls in foster care.

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Institute Develops Pesticide Information Network

by Michael Kamrin and Patricia Miller

Mention environmental impacts and toxicity in the same question and MSU’s Institute of Environmental Toxicology (IET) can help with the answers. This partnership was established in 1978, under the name EXTOXNET (Extension Toxicology Network) and to devote their energies to educating and informing the public about these hazards. One important impact of the frequency of questions from the public about pesticides; the other was a small grant from the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) to fund development of pesticide information materials written in layman’s language.

Michael Kamrin, Ph. D., coordinator of Education and Outreach Programs, IET, leads the MSU, effort in toxicology. Kamrin says, “As citizens are given more and more responsibility for managing risks from pesticides and other potential hazards, it becomes increasingly important to provide them with credible, easily understandable information about these hazards.”

Within three years, EXTOXNET members, using EPA funding and support from their respective universities, developed profiles of 100 pesticides – profiles that brought together widely dispersed regulatory, human toxicology, fish and avian toxicology, and environmental fate information and organizations in an accessible format. To complement these profiles, brief summaries were developed of important concepts addressed in the profiles such as carcinogenicity. The profiles and briefs were published in as many as 10 languages. As an example of this distribution effort, each county Extension office in Michigan received copies.

With additional funding through the USDA, EXTOXNET has published almost 200 profiles and 250 fact sheets that are available in hard copy and in a searchable, Web friendly format. About five years ago, EXTOXNET expanded to include a faculty member at the University of Idaho with expertise in food toxicology. With this additional expertise, the EXTOXNET Web site grew to include a large section of answers to “Frequently Asked Questions” about food safety, pesticides, risk assessment, and water quality. Currently, EXTOXNET receives more than 70,000 hits a month, and the site is a primary pesticide link on many other Web sites ranging from the EPA to the Society of Environmental Journalism.

The written materials are used by a variety of groups for educating their members. Here in Michigan, for example, the Southeastern Oakland Counties Mosquito Control Commission that uses copies of the profiles and briefs and put them in public libraries and made subsets of profiles of pesticide for use in educational workshops such as those for gardeners. From correspondence and phone calls, it is clear that, in addition to citizens, a wide range of governments use these profiles to make pesticide use/registration decisions. Those range from cities’ deciding what pesticides to use for parks and roadsides to developing countries’ deciding which pesticides to register for use. A good example is the Saginaw County Mosquito Control Commission that uses the pesticide profiles for information and for their educational programming.

EXTOXNET faculty initially focused on pesticides because of the frequency of public inquiries. It was evidenced by the calls logged at IET, public interest and concern about pesticides continue to grow. One to one-half of the 200 calls, letters, and e-mails received each year reflect public concern about adverse effects of pesticides and their use and/or misuse. The EXTOXNET profiles and briefs provide an invaluable source of information that can be conveyed to callers to supplement responses to their questions. In addition, the continual exchange of information among consortium members provides a mechanism for ensuring that responses reflect the most up-to-date knowledge about all aspects of pesticides.

Kamrin says, “At a time when university resources have become increasingly limited, EXTOXNET serves as a model for utilizing these resources most effectively to provide outreach to a variety of audiences. It provides Michigan citizens, as well as those across the nation and the world, access to a broad range of university expertise. In addition, it provides government agencies with a place to turn for unbiased, scientifically accurate advice when faced with difficult decisions about environmental contaminants. For example, most recently, EXTOXNET members have provided USDA with extensive comments on implementation of the Food Quality Protection Act — legislation critical to a safe, nutritious, and abundant food supply for the public.”

The Outcomes-Assets Impact Model (continued from page 2)

Celeste Sturdevant Reed says, “This model resonates with all types of people. Agency-based participants suddenly see the connections between outcomes they want for their consumers and program or policy actions that have to be taken by others. Our training participants have successfully used the Model with diverse groups from parents to other agency staff to county commissioners.”

The Model was developed as an evaluation tool. It has become essential for evaluating complex efforts of agencies. For single programs or agencies, it identifies and highlights the other community supports or interventions that must be available to accomplish success. For system-wide efforts, it provides a means to view the comprehensiveness of, and coordination among, intervention strategies.