



Center for
Community Engagement

The ZoNE: Using Collective Action to Address Community Needs in Northeast Spokane

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Gonzaga University's Center for Community Engagement: Civic/Wolff Fellowship



Project & Goals

- Strengthen connections between Northeast residents and resources for food security, educational and career opportunities, and community within one's neighborhood and culture
- Improve data collection and organization for The ZoNE using Hubspot (CRM software)
- Understand how The ZoNE leads through collective action to create lasting change for Northeast residents



My Contributions

- Data organization
 - 2022 Partner Organizations, family surveys on food security + overall well-being, Family Newsletter subscribers
- Communications outreach
 - Monthly and Family newsletters, website organization and updates, survey creation, blog posts containing holiday resources
- Connections with Northeast leaders and community members
 - Stories of Impact

Civic Perspective

I have such an appreciation for The ZoNE and its dedication to using collective impact as its overarching tool for effectively addressing community needs related to food insecurity, barriers to learning opportunities, and obstacles to building community. In community-focused efforts, direct dialogue and collaboration with community members is not optional, nor is valuing and respecting their leadership. Longterm generational impact requires collaboration among multiple sectors of society and participation from all who pose to benefit from that impact.

Background

Wolff Fellows are placed with a local community-based organization in order to help build community capacity and strengthen partnerships between Gonzaga and the host agency. Through their unique projects, Fellows explore the connection between their disciplinary/career interests and public service, learn about community needs and assets, and partner with community organizations to build community capacity.

Takeaways

- Expanded understanding of what is considered public health
- Increased awareness of how social determinants of health contribute so significantly to our overall health and well-being despite being largely out of our control
- Greater appreciation for and understanding of Northeast Spokane
- Understanding of the importance of including, centering, and valuing community voices and data in determining efficient solutions for specific community issues
- "It takes a village" is absolutely true when we aspire for collective success and well-being

Academic Perspective

I plan to pursue a master's degree in global public health and work as a policy advisor or policy analyst. I was really interested in learning more about the ways in which social determinants of health are at work in Northeast Spokane, as public health is so much more than physical ailments or disease. Access to education, food, housing, and community resources are vital to a person's overall health and well-being, so the values and work of The ZoNE have been a perfect fit for seeing how social determinants of health are at work in Spokane. Additionally, being at The ZoNE and the Northeast Community Center has illustrated how various nonprofits and community initiatives are organized and operate at the local level. I have really appreciated learning that it is possible to have the most incredible ideas and plans at a macro-level, but they must be realistic at the micro-level to bring about any tangible change in a community.

Partner Organization + Critical Issue

The ZoNE is a community initiative and partnership of Northeast residents, schools, and partner organizations. It was created by and for residents of Northeast Spokane (which we call The ZoNE) to improve overall well-being through four key initiatives of: increasing social connections, connecting residents with employment pathways, improving access to healthy food, and expanding learning opportunities for both youth and adults. At the center of all projects of The ZoNE are the values of equity, data driven and people-focused solutions, collaboration, holistic change, and a focus on trauma and cultural sensitivity. My work largely focused on the overall functioning of The ZoNE and its outreach to and connections with residents, especially through its programs that increase access to food and opportunities for educational and career advancement.

Personal Perspective

I am not from Spokane originally, so my initial introduction to and understanding of Northeast Spokane came from generalizations and stereotypes shared with me by those of the Gonzaga community. In recognizing that what I was hearing was misinformed at best and deeply harmful at worst, it was crucial that I avoid internalizing those misconceptions and developing negative associations with the area, specifically that it is exclusively socioeconomically disadvantaged and even dangerous. My time with The ZoNE and working directly in the Northeast Community Center has been so enlightening and confirmed that Northeast Spokane is a strong and resilient community with so much potential. I am honored to have become more involved in the Northeast community and to have learned directly from those living and working in The ZoNE.

Future Plans

I will be finishing up with my official work as a Wolff Fellow at The ZoNE in the next few weeks. I am currently working on a final Story of Impact, additional data organization, blog posts and newsletters about summer programming for residents, and ensuring that all 2022 Partners are represented on The ZoNE's website! Though my time with The ZoNE is coming to an end, I will undoubtedly carry with me the wisdom of The ZoNE's staff and the inspiring leaders of the Northeast community into the rest of my undergraduate career, graduate school, and my future work.