

2017 Belmont Undergraduate Research Symposium

Honors LEAD Track

Moderator: Catherine Clark Graham, Ph.D., N.C.C.

April 20, 2017, 3:30-5:00 p.m.
IHSB 240

3:30 p.m. - 4:00 p.m.

Tails of the Trail: Humans Hiking Homeless Hounds and How We Helped

Maddy Eissler, Hannah Murray, & Joanna Wakefield

Faculty Advisor: Catherine Graham, Ph.D., N.C.C.

Tails of the Trail is a 501(c)(3) organization dedicated to providing exercise and socialization for shelter dogs and to promoting adoptions. For dogs that would otherwise spend most days in cages surrounded by fear, loud noises, and unpleasant smells, regular socialization prevents the development of aggressive personalities and greatly increases the chance of finding a forever home. Tails of the Trail attracts volunteers to hike and socialize with shelter dogs on a regular basis. Tails of the Trail is a unique organization with untapped potential to develop through addressing communication and awareness challenges.

Lisa Thomas, the organization's founder, noted that the website is difficult to update due to the staff's lack of technical training and to the robust Wordpress platform, which was designed by a former staff member who had advanced web development skills. Our LEAD team assisted in the design of a new website that is more user-friendly and that is scalable as the organization grows. Tails of the Trail thrives on donations and volunteers, but Mrs. Thomas lacks the time and human capital to invest in raising awareness among the most receptive audiences--college students and socially-minded fitness buffs. Our team arranged and assisted with a convocation to engage Belmont students in the Tails of the Trails mission and to increase participation from the student population.

4:00 p.m. – 4:30 p.m.

Adaptation and Facilitation of Domestic Violence Children's Programming

Sydney Finchum, Megan Klumpe, & Elise Nye

Faculty Advisor: Catherine Graham, Ph.D., N.C.C.

Children's growth into successful adults necessitates the presence of empathy and resilience. However, children brought up in families that experience domestic violence often witness situations that prohibit the development of such characteristics. Through resource intensive programming developed by Dr. Sandra A. Graham-Bermann, children at the Domestic Violence Center attended sessions that provided them with a safe space. This allotted time helped children identify and explore emotions related to their domestic violence experience and build the empathy and resilience that was previously absent.

Upon the termination of a grant, the Center no longer had the funds necessary for the implementation of such a program. However, because of its significance, the Center wished to continue providing this experience for children. Our LEAD team was tasked with adapting the program used under the grant to one the Center could actualize on its own with minimal funds. Additionally, we discovered that it was necessary to expand the intern and volunteer programs and subsequent training of these individuals in order to have enough support for the fulfillment of the program.

The goal of this project is to provide a sustainable program that is supported by volunteers who are passionate about the lives they are impacting. With the help of both adapted program materials and newly dedicated volunteers, the professionals at the Center will be able to effectively provide a stable and educational environment for the children staying at the Center.

4:30 p.m. – 5:00 p.m.

The Logistical Beauty of Retreat Planning

Dean Adams, Nathan Arnold, & Christopher Grose
Faculty Advisor: Catherine Graham, Ph.D., N.C.C.

In collaboration with Preston Taylor Ministries, a local non-profit organization, and in fulfillment of the capstone requirements for Project LEAD of Belmont University's Honors Program, our team planned a retreat for 75 youth from the 3rd to 12th grades. Moreover, our team will attend and assist with the retreat activities on April 21-23. In addition to planning the logistics of the retreat, we developed graphics, booklets, schedules, leaders' packets, nighttime games, and events. These deliverables have been collected into a guide, which will serve as a structural template and process resource for future retreats at Preston Taylor Ministries and other organizations.

Throughout the project, we learned invaluable leadership skills, such as communicating effectively, setting attainable goals, meeting deadlines, and demonstrating resourcefulness. Retreat planning can be an intimidating and meticulous burden to the organization's staff, who have a challenging workload. Our team alleviated part of that burden by creating sustainable deliverables that will be useful to Preston Taylor Ministries for years to come. By presenting our project experiences and deliverables, our team will reveal the logistical beauty of retreat planning through both process and product.