Partnerships in the Community

Contributions from
Navajo Nation Division of Health, Southeast Arizona Area Health Education Center, Eastern Arizona Area Health Education Center and University of Arizona
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Building and Sustaining the Partnership

- Partnership: Navajo Nation Community Health Representative (CHR) Program and University of Arizona, College of Public Health
- Service Learning (SL) partnership grew out of relationships built from previous Tribe-University service and research activities
- Partnership is sustained as the SL activity fills a real need for each partner
Navajo Nation is the size of West Virginia
The Nation is quite rural; many of the > 300,000 tribal members are connected by two lane unmaintained dirt roads
The 110 CHRs travel this area providing health education and health care services to home bound residents
Initial Steps of SL activities

- CHRs and students enjoyed lunch together
- Volunteer CHRs and students participated in a panel in which panelist described their experience in public health
Navajo Nation CHRS took MPH students on home visits to

- Observe CHR-client interaction
- Help with clients’ domestic needs, e.g. washed dishes, checked for and taught home safety (throw rugs, appliance cords, toys, etc.), and even fed livestock

Students taught CHRs computer skills:

- Locating credible health information on the net
- Developing power point presentations for the community addressing a specific health issue chosen by the CHR
Effective reflection

- Students and CHRs then made a joint presentation using the newly developed power point skills
- Each are asked to share at least one new piece of information learned in their collaborative activity
Challenges for the Partners

- **Community**
  - Identifying valuable short-term activities
  - Gaining “buy-in” from staff
  - Supervisors’ valuing the SL partnership and approving staffs’ time “off-task”
  - Programs may lack facility or equipment to accommodate SL activity and staff may lack technological skills

- **University**
  - Resources to transport students to off campus site
  - Time investment > recognition and reward within the university system
  - Inclement weather – impediment to allowing field visits
Real Experiences for Students
Benefits for the Partners

- **Community**
  - Opportunity to learn new skills on site
  - Opportunity to show case CHR skills to enthusiastic students
  - Remind CHR of their immense experience and value

- **University**
  - Opportunity for students to gain real world experience to understand the influence that culture, lifestyles and local institutions can have on health behaviors
  - Faculty gain new insight to incorporate into classroom instruction