



Community Project Guide

**New Mexico Rural Health
Interdisciplinary Program**

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Introduction

RHIP faculty enjoy an enviable position, able to inspire, motivate and facilitate student involvement in grass roots community service projects during the summer portion of our program. These off campus experiences are real life opportunities to partner with interdisciplinary students to benefit the community. Each RHIP student is an active force, poised to partner with the residents of our state, while gaining valuable life experience which can be carried forward in their professional lives. With a wealth of cultures, traditions, health circumstances, behavioral and population issues exclusive to our state, each RHIP site has its own unique service mission possibilities creating unlimited learning opportunities.

Benefits to Students and Community

The creation, implementation and evaluation of a community project play a vital role in the education and professional development of the student. Participation in an RHIP community project asks students to apply their respective discipline knowledge and perspective to a wide variety of community service missions. In the majority of professional curricula, an emphasis on identification of health related issues, formulation of a strategy and execution of a plan to address these issues is under represented. Collaboration with other health professionals during all phases creates a unique environment for each RHIP student to learn to approach health related issues through multiple interdisciplinary perspectives.

Additional Project Benefits

- ◆ Gets the students out of the classroom!
- ◆ Provides a way for students to connect to the community.
- ◆ Provides an awareness of rural community issues while developing planning and organizational skills.
- ◆ Allows students to feel a part of the community.
- ◆ Actively engages students while placing ownership of the project in the hands of the student.
- ◆ Exposes students to the unique health issues of diverse populations as perceived by community members.
- ◆ Creates leadership and advocacy learning opportunities.
- ◆ Promotes interdisciplinary teamwork while allowing each discipline to showcase their contribution to individual and community health.
- ◆ Facilitates development of creative synergistic, interdisciplinary health projects.

Service Learning

Service learning has been defined as a type of experiential education that involves people in both community service and education. (1) Service learning provides developmental opportunities that promote personal, social, and intellectual growth, as well as civic responsibility and career exploration. RHIP community projects are a unique form of service learning. Successful service learning projects involve the following key elements. (1)

- 1) **Active integrated learning** draws lessons from the experience of performing service work and enhances the knowledge, values and skills of the participants.
- 2) **Finding a voice** engages persons in as many aspects of the project planning as possible.
- 3) **Effective service** meets a real need in the community; is age appropriate, well organized and gets things done.
- 4) **Collaboration** involves all stakeholders in the planning, execution and evaluation of the service.
- 5) **Reciprocity** provides benefit to the recipient (RHIP communities) and the provider of the service (RHIP students).
- 6) **Reflection** allows time for contemplation before (to prepare), during (to troubleshoot) and after (to process and assess).

* See National Service learning Clearinghouse link on RHIP web site.

Project Implementation: Lessons Learned

- ◆ **Start the planning early.** Foster team spirit!
- ◆ Faculty must be organized and maintain continuous communication among themselves and RHIP students.
- ◆ Smaller projects work well (i.e. having students work with a small # of people or a small agency).
- ◆ Expect student “buy-in”. If you bring enthusiasm and expectation to the group, this makes it more important and increases the chances of completing a meaningful project!
- ◆ The community coordinator can be a vital component in planning a project.
- ◆ Hands-on activities work well to foster greater participation.
- ◆ Addressing a targeted group, researching the population, while studying the culture, the community, the geography, and the health concerns is invaluable.
- ◆ Seek to involve each discipline. The contribution of all is vital to success.

Previous RHIP Projects

- ◆ In the Taos group, students performed vision screenings, BP checks, dental exams and healthy behaviors counseling at the Holy Cross Hospital Health Fair.
- ◆ RHIP students published a monthly newsletter for the people of Isleta Pueblo, following monthly health care assessments.
- ◆ The Roswell group collaborated with community agencies to distribute free hygiene packets and “Vials of Life” to citizens at a well-attended Health Fair at the Chaves County Senior Center.
- ◆ Beyond ABQ, students created story-format articles promoting health behaviors, which were published in a local newsletter and distributed to Pueblo residents.

- ◆ In Farmington, students capitalized on teamwork between the disciplines, interacting with at risk youth at a children's center.
- ◆ In Silver City, a group of students gathered to speak on a local radio station, promoting healthy behaviors and commenting on health related questions.
- ◆ In Gallup, RHIP students created a Bike Safety program for young kids, promoting safe riding skills and helmet use. In the same year, they organized a cookout at the juvenile Detention Center providing mentor opportunities for residents.
- ◆ Another Albuquerque group organized and implemented a health professions career fair for 79 minority high school youth.
- ◆ RHIP projects reached residents of Zia & Santo Domingo Pueblos, creating and implementing Health Screenings for elders.
- ◆ In Las Vegas, students created a peer-mentoring program addressing health concerns, career options, communication skills, and conflict resolution, which was presented to the local city council, and later at an International conference.

Recognize the Unintended Consequences of Business as Usual!"

David Mathews

Getting Started: Just Do It!

Start early! This can't be emphasized enough. Early in the spring semester, faculty facilitators should make contacts to obtain pertinent materials to facilitate a successful community project. Draw on the expertise of local community health councils and the knowledge of the rural coordinators to contact key persons locally to supply the documents you need.

Useful documents can include: Community demographic data and strategic plans, needs assessments and community health profiles.

Other **possible information sources** include: The RHIP web site; Physician offices/Public Health clinics; Local government agencies; Community web sites; State departments of education; Public Schools; Social service agencies; Local police and juvenile justice systems. (2)

Once you have the information you need, make copies and distribute these to your students as early as possible. Ask them to review the documents over the week, and in future sessions, see what shakes out. Save 15-20 minutes at the end of each spring PBL session, to evolve the discussion of your community project.

Look for broad consensus among the variety of ideas presented by your group. There's no bad idea! Early on output may be low, and discussions brief, however faculty focus more on planting a seed; motivating and stimulating students to take ownership, analyze and identify key issues or concerns within the community. We strive to create an expectation. Advance your community project via "check ins" at each session and move the process forward. (2)

Using the favored project plan, **refine** its focus by asking the following questions:

- ◆ Does the project address a community need?
- ◆ Is the project doable (i.e. can it be completed)?
- ◆ Is the timetable realistic to complete the idea?
- ◆ Has the group involved community members in the planning?
- ◆ Can the project be aligned with available community resources?
- ◆ Are the students excited and enthusiastic about it?

Project Template

Once focus is determined, consider the following (3) to solidify the plan:

- 1) Collect the names and numbers and e-mails of all involved.
- 2) Decide upon a timetable/schedule. Establish regular meeting dates.
- 3) Identify projects leaders/responsible parties.
- 4) Name the project.
- 5) Create a brief one-sentence description of the project (later to become an abstract).
- 6) Brainstorm curricular components and aspects of the project.
- 7) Identify and obtain available resources for use in the project (i.e. needs assessment or community health profile).
- 8) Identify the target audience for the project.
- 9) Identify project activities (i.e. what will you do)?
- 10) How will you finalize the project (i.e. a “capstone event”)?
- 11) Contemplate expected outcomes/products and ways to evaluate effectiveness.
- 12) Discuss aspects of subsequent years’ project (follow-up).

Visions of the Future

- ◆ Streamlined approach to RHIP community projects.
- ◆ Establishment of regional community service centers (RHIP sites) with RHIP student involvement poised to affect and implement health related missions.
- ◆ Coordination of RHIP projects with existing state agencies offering similar missions (i.e. ENLACE, New Mexico Forum for Youth in Community etc.)
- ◆ Discover common missions within the UNM Office of Cultural and Ethnic Programs, Educational Pipeline.
- ◆ Fostering continuity and longevity of project ideas within each RHIP site resulting in long lasting benefits to the community.
- ◆ Development of citizenship and promotion of democratic values.
- ◆ Presentations at local, state, regional and international conferences focusing on Interprofessional education.
- ◆ Generation of scholarly works by RHIP faculty.
- ◆ Reinforcement and generation of potential funding sources for continuity of the program.
- ◆ Expand mentoring/advisement opportunities for rural students considering application to the University or any of our health related professions (i.e. BA/MD program).



Appendix

Project Ideas (4)

- ◆ Expand youth input into school and district issues.
- ◆ Create a list of community assets, and help people find out about services for adults and teens.
- ◆ Create a community web site focusing on teens, young adults or community elders. Invite high school students and adults to maintain it.
- ◆ Meet with community leaders to present ideas to positively affect the health of the community.
- ◆ Create leadership and or mentoring programs for local teens.
- ◆ Organize a community-school arts project – such as a photo exhibit, mural, cultural festival, musical event, or theatrical production.
- ◆ Create a healthy behaviors newsletter or contact the local newspaper to start a youth column.
- ◆ Create a service-learning project that will bring young people and senior citizens together.
- ◆ Create collaborative discussion forums incorporating a diverse group of community members (i.e. bus driver, teacher, police officer, homemaker etc.) to address community concerns.
- ◆ Contact Habitat for Humanity and identify ways to get involved in a local project.
- ◆ Focus on promoting health access at the local community level.

Recruitment

Recruiting **diverse participants** is the central task in organizing any community project. RHIP students and faculty should decide, early in the spring semester, who will be involved from the local community. Community projects, which focus on youth related health issues, are a natural choice as RHIP students easily relate to this group. This is not to say that adult and geriatric populations should be excluded as a number of previous projects have focused on the later cohorts to great success.

Start by making a list of the different kinds of participants or groups you hope to involve. Think about the available organizations, existing community ties and general consensus of the group when considering your focus. Beside each group, list the key contact, organization name, e-mail address, or other contact information.

Next, arrange to meet with local community persons. Listen to their ideas and recognize their contributions. Offer the outline created above to guide your discussion and outline your group effort. The discussion should be brief and highlight the focus of the project, your specific personnel needs and timeline for implementation. If your contact list is long, this is an ideal time to distribute this work among RHIP students. Use check-in at the end of each session to communicate progress. Each person could be expected to recruit a given number of participants.

Recruitment can be boosted by offering an incentive (i.e. T-shirts, hats, buttons, pens and notebooks, movie passes or stipends). As RHIP funding is limited at each site, spend some time discussing efforts to secure these items via community donations. (4)



Recruitment Tips

- ◆ Solicit RHIP students for ideas and facilitate their involvement in recruitment efforts.
- ◆ Ask early recruits their advice about the best way to reach other recruits.
- ◆ Go to places where your target audience meets (i.e. after school programs, libraries, shopping centers or malls, Boys and Girls Clubs, senior centers, parenting groups, YMCA, 4H and other community centers, places of worship etc).
- ◆ Think about creative ways to partner with schools, senior centers, community clubs, or other service organizations (i.e. maybe a RHIP student presentation?).
- ◆ Plan recruitment meetings and follow-ups at times when everyone is available.

Ideas for Successful Facilitation

1. Know your hot buttons and have strategies for dealing with them--do NOT use the dialogue for your own processing. Process your hot buttons before and/or after, but never during, a dialogue you're facilitating. If you work with a team of facilitators, plan meetings to process the issues that are difficult for you.
2. Be clear and honest about the purpose of the dialogue or experience you're facilitating. Participants should never have to inquire about the purpose of the dialogue during or after the experience.
3. Provide airtime. You should never talk more than your participants. In fact, the more airtime taken by participants, the better you've performed as a facilitator. Don't feel like you must respond to every comment. Work to ensure that you are not the central aspect of the dialogue.
4. Reject the first-hand-up, first-called-on approach to facilitation. Allow several seconds to pass before you call on someone so that quieter folks who reflect as the dialogue goes on can catch up and participate.
5. Make ground rules clear at the beginning and call people on them early and often. If you don't address breaches of ground rules early, you will not be able to enforce them when you most desperately need to do so.
6. Provide everyone an equitable opportunity to participate. Equitable participation does not mean that everyone speaks the same amount of time--it means everyone, regardless of participation style, has an equal opportunity to be heard. You can't be afraid to challenge people who dominate the conversation no matter how uncomfortable that can be.
7. Never ask participants to share something that you are unwilling to share. Make yourself vulnerable and model self-critique and self-examination by sharing first on activities whenever possible.
8. Do not pretend to have the answer to every question. When possible, bounce questions back to the whole group before you answer them yourself, even if they're directed to you from a participant.

9. Thoughtfully planned and executed activities can lead to fruitful dialogue, but don't fill so much time with activities that no time remains for dialogue.
10. Identify your strengths as a facilitator and build your plans around them. If you fill the dialogue with topics and activities with which you're uncomfortable, participants will notice your lack of confidence and take advantage of it.
11. Even if you want to be "objective" you cannot allow the dialogue to become yet another place where underrepresented groups are oppressed. Be an advocate for all participants, but particularly for those who have, until now, been silenced.
12. Too often, participants feel that dialogues end too suddenly without a clear progression to closure. Develop strategies for dialogue closure so that you can facilitate this progression effectively. This does not mean that you should wrap up the conversation for everyone but instead that you should have some strategy in mind for drawing the dialogue to a close through a final question, short activity, or commitment to action.



"I expect you all to be independent, innovative, critical thinkers who will do exactly as I say!"

Useful Websites

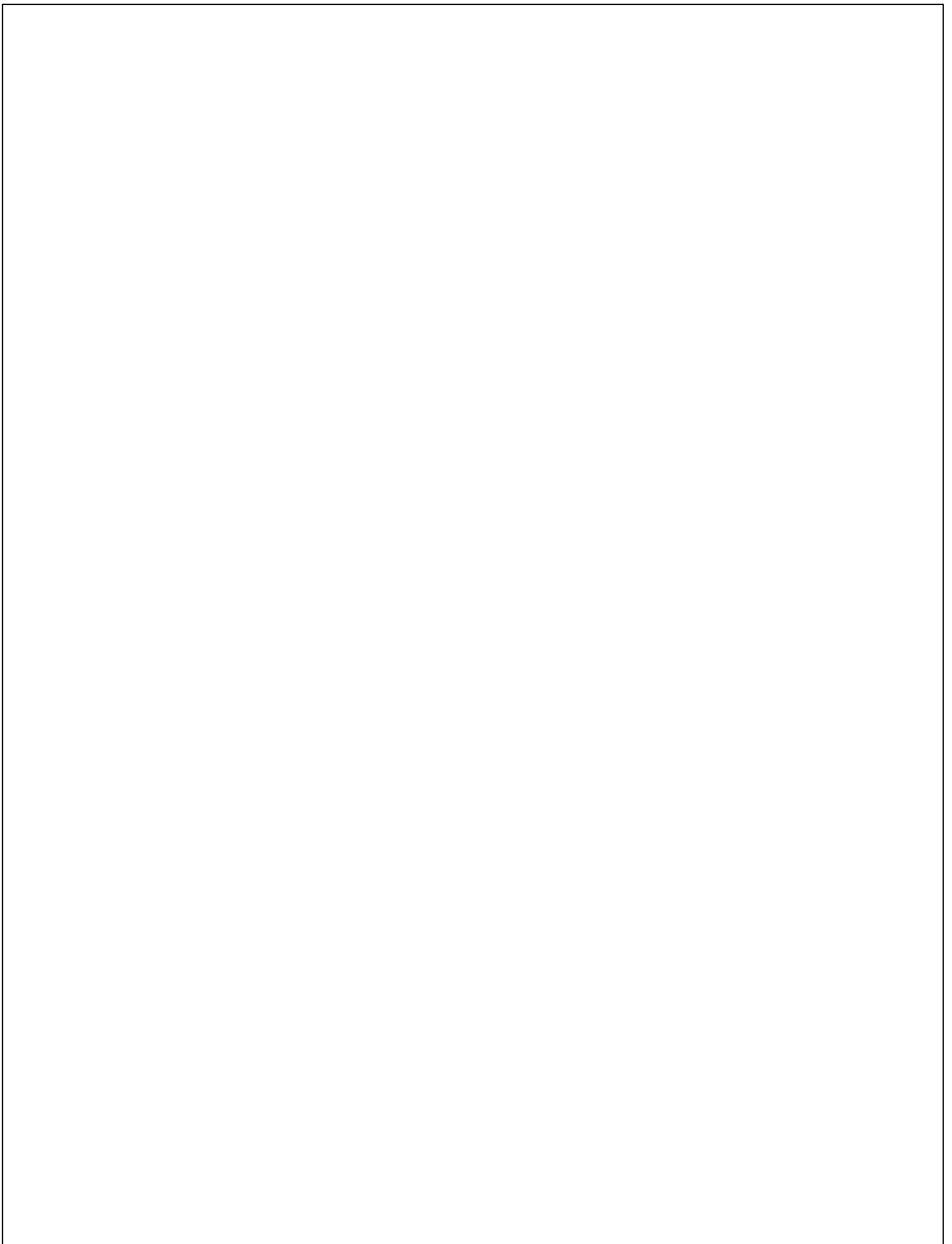
- 1) <http://nmruralhealth.org> Link to: UNM Quentin N. Burdick Rural Health Interdisciplinary Program home page.
- 2) Home page for The New Mexico Forum for Youth in Community. Available @ <http://www.nmforumforyouth.org/>
- 3) Community Connections. School and Community: Partners for Learning. Available @ http://ali.apple.com/ali_sites/glefli/exhibits/1000976/
- 4) iEARN Projects home site. Excellent site providing a brief list and description of community projects. Available @ http://www.iearn.org/projects/project_list.html
- 5) The Gateway <http://www.thegateway.org/> Too many ideas/topics to list!
- 6) Study Circles resource center. Helping people work together for creative community change. Available @ www.studycircles.org
- 7) http://dmoz.org/Society/Issues/Health/Health_Policy/ Very complete site with Societal and Health policy issues organized by key words.
- 8) America Speaks! Available @ <http://www.americaspeaks.org/> . A wealth of information on engaging citizens in governance.
- 9) <http://www.cpn.org/tools/manuals/index.html> Born of the movement for a "new citizenship" and "civic revitalization," CPN is a collaborative and nonpartisan project dedicated to bringing practical tools for public problem solving into community and institutional settings across America.
- 10) National Issues Forums. Available @ <http://www.nifi.org/>. These forums, organized by a variety of organizations, groups, and individuals, offer citizens the opportunity to join together to deliberate, to make choices with others about ways to approach difficult issues and to work toward creating reasoned public judgment.
- 11) <http://www.kettering.org/> The Kettering Foundation's research focuses on finding ways to make democracy work better.
- 12) The Harwood Institute for Public Innovation seeks to help people imagine and act for the public good. Available @ <http://www.theharwoodgroup.com/>

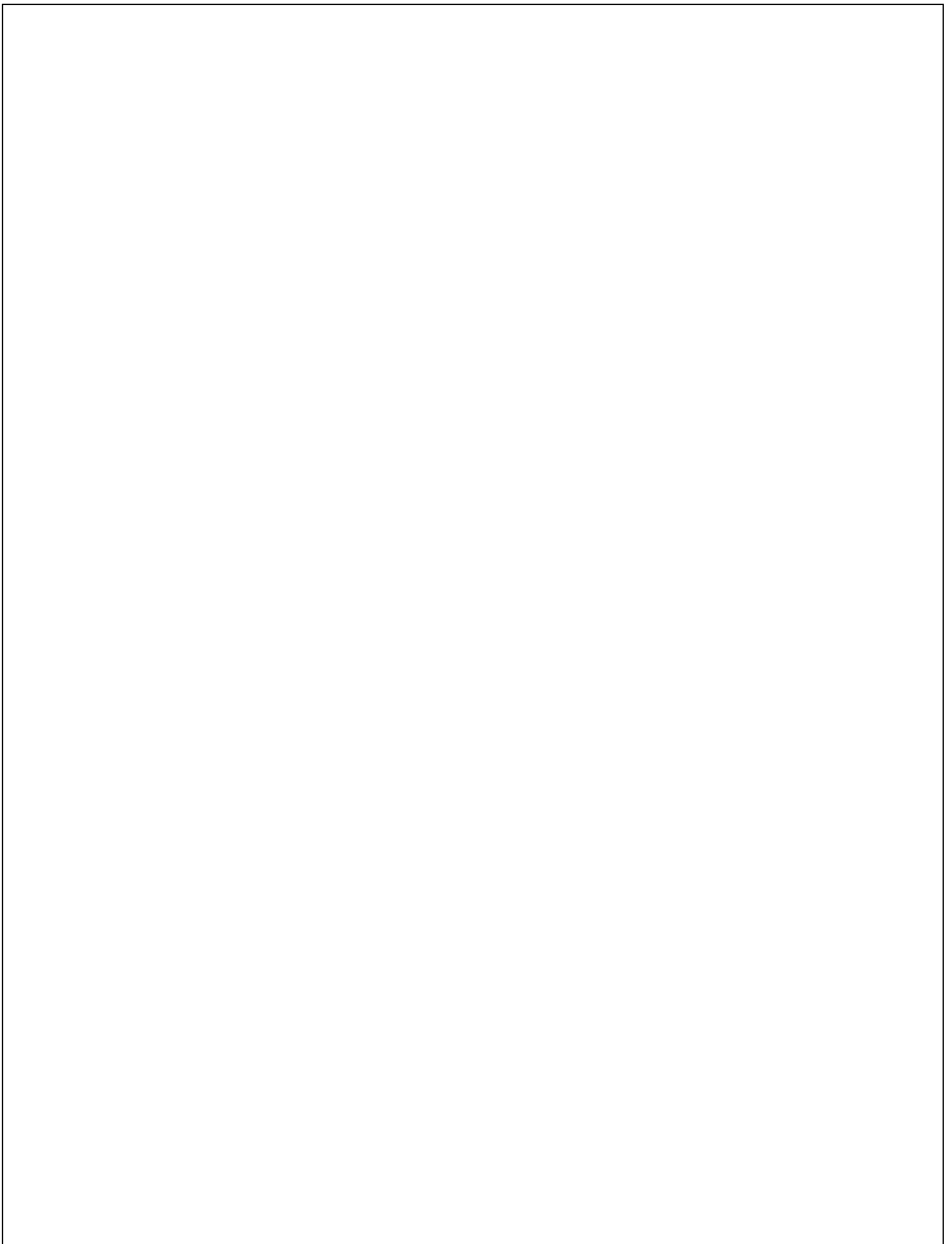
End Notes

We would like to acknowledge the Study Circles Resource Center for allowing us to utilize their creative material in compiling this guide. Additionally, the following publications were accessed in the compilation of this document.

- 1) Citizenship Education. ECS Education Policy Issue Site: Accessed from: <http://www.ecs.org/html/issue.asp?issueID=19&iSite+1> on Jan 11, 2006.
- 2) Pittman, Pittman Reflections on the road not (yet) taken: How a centralized public strategy can help youth work focus on youth. New Dir Youth Dev, 2004, issue 104, p 87, ISSN 1533-8916.
- 3) Study Circles Resource Center. A Community for All Generations – Teens and adults working Together. A guide for public dialogue and problem solving. Version 1.0. Available at: www.studycircles.org
- 4) Meaningful Chaos. How People Form Relationships with Public Concerns. A Report Prepared for the Kettering Foundation. The Harwood Group. 1993 The Kettering Foundation.







Rural Health Interdisciplinary Program (RHIP)

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