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Assessment of "Community Stepping Stones,"

a Community-Based Youth Art Education Program

by

Jennifer E. A. Pedraza

A thesis submitted in partial fulfillment
of the requirements for the degree of
Master of Art
Department of Anthropology
College of Arts and Sciences
University of South Florida

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Dedication

I would like to dedicate this manuscript to my family. My husband, Matthew, who remained supportive to the very end. To my two children, Lilith and Xavier who loved me and distracted me when I most needed it. And to my mom, Lynn, and sister, Sarah, who listened to all my frustrations.

Acknowledgments

Thank you to all of the staff, volunteers, and students at Community Stepping Stones for being so open and supportive of me and my research.

Thank you to my thesis advisor, Dr. Nancy Romero-Daza, for guiding and supporting me through this process and for my committee members, Dr. Elizabeth Bird and Dr. Rebecca Zarger, who readily shared their wisdom and time.

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Without you, this manuscript would not be possible. Thank you.

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Abstract

Community Stepping Stones is an art education program whose objective is to "provide education, mentor children and adolescents, enhance the community economics, and enrich the quality of life in the community" (Community Steppping Stones [CSS], 2009a). Community art education programs, particularly for youth, have become increasingly popular as a way to address and prevent delinquent behavior. However, art education programs have proven challenging to evaluate and sustain.

The goal of my thesis was to explore how Community Stepping Stones implemented and evaluated a community-based youth arts education program compared to other, similar programs and how the organization could make the program more effective and more sustainable long-term. As part of an internship with Community Stepping Stones, I conducted participant observation, document review, and interviews with individuals affiliated with Community Stepping Stones and other art education programs in the community. Data was collected between February 2009 and September 2010.Community Stepping Stones has grown significantly during my involvement with the organization, expanding funding, programming, and staff. Current efforts to reinforce evaluation measures and secure additional funding sources will help make the program more sustainable in the future. Additional efforts towards collaboration with other community and government organizations, increased community involvement, and better program organization will also be beneficial towards sustainability efforts.

At this time, published evaluations of community-based youth art education programs and organizational impact on youth and community are limited. Although not a comprehensive assessment, I hope my research can help bolster the literature in this area.

Chapter 1: Introduction

This thesis discusses an assessment of Community Stepping Stones, a community-based youth art education program located in Sulphur Springs, Florida. The assessment was conducted during the summer of 2010 with the goal of exploring how Community Stepping Stones implemented and evaluated a community-based youth arts education program compared to other, similar programs. Based on ethnographic methods, including participant observation, interviews, and a document review, were used to inform the assessment. Data collected from the assessment as well as a literature review were used to explore how the organization could make the program more effective and more sustainable.

Internship Location

Sulphur Springs. Sulphur Springs is a neighborhood located in Tampa, Florida. Referred to as the Sulphur Springs Action League in most government documentation, the neighborhood covers approximately one square mile and is defined as being located between Busch Blvd. to the north, the Hillsborough River to the south, the railroad tracks to the east, and Nebraska Avenue to the west (Hillsborough Community Atlas [HCA], 2009; Planning Commission 2004).

History of Sulphur Springs. The name 'Sulphur Springs' is derived from the underground spring located off Nebraska Avenue. Originally developed in the early

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1900s, Sulphur Springs began as a thriving tourist area. Dr. John Mills originally began development of the area; building bath houses, a restaurant, a dock and pool, a fish pond, and walking trails near the underground spring. His intention was for people to enjoy the "healthfulness of nature" (Planning Commission 2004, p.2). By 1920, Mills had sold a large portion of his land to Josiah Richardson, a real estate developer (Planning Commission 2004; Armstrong & Jackson 2007). Richardson was largely responsible for developing Sulphur Springs into the well-known tourist destination of the 1920s. Adding to the tourist attractions Mills had built, Richardson built a gazebo, slide, alligator farm, and the well known Sulphur Springs Water Tower and Sulphur Springs pool. These attractions were followed by the building of the Sulphur Springs Hotel and Arcade, which was completed in 1927. A predecessor to today's shopping malls, the hotel and arcade soon became the heart of Sulphur Springs, even being recognized by *Ripley's Believe it or Not* as "a city under one roof" (Planning Commission 2004, Heritage Researcher 2007).

Although mostly known as a tourist attraction, the Sulphur Springs area also saw significant residential growth in the 1920s and 30s (Planning Commission 2004). In addition to the mostly middle-class, white development in the area, a small African American farming community known as Spring Hill was also thriving along the northwestern section of present day Sulphur Springs (Planning Commission 2004, Heritage Researcher 2007). Despite their contribution to the area, African American residents of Spring Hill were largely excluded from Sulphur Springs attractions due to racial segregation (Jackson 2009, Sulphur Springs Museum 2009). Segregation laws prohibited African American residents from entering the Sulphur Springs arcade or pool. This segregation is manifested today in the lack of historical documentation of African American residents in the Sulphur Springs area (Jackson 2009, Sulphur Springs

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Museum 2009). Although Spring Hill was originally considered a separate community, it is now generally recognized as part of Sulphur Springs.

Sulphur Springs and Spring Hill continued to thrive until the Great Depression crippled the local economy (Planning Commission 2004). A serious flood hit the Sulphur Springs area towards the end of the Great Depression, further hindering the area's economic recovery. As the economy continued to decline in the Sulphur Springs area, the North Tampa Chamber of Commerce and the City of Tampa took control of the hotel and arcade in an attempt to revitalize the area (Planning Commission 2004). By the 1970s, regardless of attempts by the city to combat deterioration, Sulphur Springs continued to see commercial and residential decline. The hotel and arcade were ultimately demolished in 1976 to make way for parking for the dog tracks (Planning Commission 2004) and the natural spring was closed in 1986 due to sink holes and storm runoff (Sulphur Springs Museum 2010). Sulphur Springs has continued to deteriorate economically, creating social burdens on the community.

Present day Sulphur Springs. As of 2000, Sulphur Springs had a population of 6,303, 41% of whom were under the age of 18 (United States Census 2000). Once a thriving tourist destination, Sulphur Springs now struggles with extreme poverty, high crime rates, and a shortage of public resources.

Sulphur Springs has one of the highest poverty rates in the county. With an estimated per capita income of only $10,592, Sulphur Springs lags behind Tampa ($22,010), Hillsborough County ($21,818), and the State of Florida ($21,557) and puts 43% of Sulphur Springs residents below poverty level (HCA 2009; United States Census 2000). Even more alarming is that 56% of residents below poverty level are under the age of 18 (HCA 2009). Another indicator of the high poverty level among children in Sulphur Springs is the high percentage of students at the Sulphur Springs Elementary

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school who receive free or reduced lunch; a full 96%. Although not a direct indicator of poverty, single-parent families are generally associated with poor economic condition (Annie E. Casey Foundation [AEC] 2010). With 31% of Sulphur Springs residents living in a single parent family, fully three times as many as the City of Tampa, Hillsborough County, or the State of Florida, it is evident that this is another risk factor for Sulphur Springs residents, particularly its youth (HCA 2009).

Housing arrangements in Sulphur Springs also indicate a community in need. The Sulphur Springs community is highly transient; nearly 57% of residents rent their home and 62% have lived in Sulphur Springs for less than five years (HCA 2009). Sulphur Springs also suffers from a high foreclosure rate. At 13.6% in 2009, foreclosure rates in Sulphur Springs were significantly higher than the City of Tampa (6.35%). These statistics suggests that Sulphur Springs does not offer a stable living environment for residents and is economically challenged.

Criminal activity in Sulphur Springs is also a concern. Domestic violence is an issue in the community, particularly for children. Sulphur Springs ranks eighth among approximately 100 Hillsborough county communities for reported cases of domestic violence in general and the community ranks sixth for domestic violence reports involving children (HCA 2009). There is also a high rate of involvement in the juvenile justice system in Sulphur Springs compared to the rest of Tampa (HCA 2009).

Sulphur Springs is further challenged by a lack of local resources. In June 2004, the Hillsborough County City-County Planning Commission published a report entitled "The Neighborhood Strategy: Our Pathway to a Better Tomorrow" (Planning Commission 2004). Born out of two neighborhood meetings held at the George Bartholomew North Tampa Community Center, which is located in Sulphur Springs; the report identifies resources, needs, and future goals of Sulphur Springs residents (Planning Commission

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2004). One of the main concerns identified at the meetings was a lack of resources available to the community, including safe places for children to play and available community services.

Sulphur Springs resources. Sulphur Springs covers a relatively small area of only one square mile and hosts one school, Sulphur Springs Elementary School, and one community center, the George Bartholomew North Tampa Community Center. Compared to the rest of Tampa, Sulphur Springs has a significant amount of recreational area proportionate to the community. In addition to a playground, the Community Center offers after school programming, basketball courts, a computer lab, weight room, and other indoor recreational activities (Tampa Department of Parks & Recreation [TDP&R] 2010). Although the Community Center is a prominent feature in Sulphur Springs, the center is no longer accessible to most Sulphur Springs residents. Previously open to the general public free of charge, fees were enacted in 2009; residents must now pay a $15 membership fee as well as additional fees for most activities (Steele & Wilkens 2010, TDP&R 2010). The cost of the after school program available through the community center was also dramatically increased during the same time period (Steele & Wilkens 2010). The institution of membership and activity fees and the increase in fees associated with the after school program is financially out of reach for many Sulphur Springs residents and has resulted in a significant drop in attendance at the community center (Steele & Wilkens 2010).

Community concerns over safe places for children to play was identified as an issue even prior to the rate increases and subsequent drop in attendance at the community center (Planning Commission 2004). However, according to the Planning Commission report, one of the most important resources identified and a major area the community wished to further develop was the community's youth. An overwhelming

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number of Sulphur Springs residents agreed that "if we can provide programs for kids, we can get them off the streets" (Planning Commission 2004, p7).

It is evident, though, that youth in Sulphur Springs are at a serious disadvantage. Youth are exposed to high poverty rates, high crime rates, family and residential instability, and a lack of community resources. Studies show that such risk factors put children at greater risk for behavioral, mental, and physical health issues (AEC 2009, Larson 2008), lower academic achievement; (AEC 2009, Snow, Burns, & Griffin 1998) and are more likely to skip a meal or not have enough to eat on a daily basis (National Center for Health Statistics [NCHS] 2010). Multiple risk factors are also linked to an increased likelihood of a child being involved in illegal activities such as alcohol and drug use, truancy, gang involvement, and violent crimes (Health of Children 2010). The Planning Commission Report "asserts that for youth to learn to be productive, connected, and able to navigate [these risks], they must experience a set of supports and opportunities that are the critical building blocks of development across all of the settings in which they spend their time" (Planning Commission 2004, p.11).

Community Stepping Stones. Community Stepping Stones is an art education program located in Sulphur Springs, Florida. Founded in 2004 by an adjunct art professor and several of his students from the University of South Florida, Community Stepping Stones claims to be "dedicated to providing education, mentoring children and adolescents, enhancing the community economics, and enriching the quality of life in the community" (CSS 2009a).

Community Stepping Stones background.. The Community Stepping Stones founder presented his idea of an art education program, then called the Good Community Alliance, to the Hillsborough County Arts Council in 2004. With the assistance of the Council, he was able to obtain 501(c)3 status for the Good Community

Alliance shortly thereafter. The Good Community Alliance has since served as the business name for Community Stepping Stones. The Hillsborough County Arts Council has continued its support of Community Stepping Stones through annual financial assistance for the organization since 2004. Match funds have also been received from the Children's Board of Hillsborough County on an annual basis since the forming of the Good Community Alliance/Community Stepping Stones. Around the same time the Good Community Alliance/Community Stepping Stones obtained 501(c)3 status, the University of South Florida, School of Art and Art History was awarded an endowment for community art and youth education. Given the organization's similar goals, the endowment was awarded to Community Stepping Stones in 2004. Additional grants have been awarded over the years, although most have been smaller, one-time grants. Once funding was secure, Community Stepping Stones began the process of program development.

The founder of Community Stepping Stones has resided in and has a history of community involvement in Sulphur Springs for over 20 years. Through his involvement, Community Stepping Stones was able to obtain support and guidance from the Sulphur Springs Neighborhood Association, Sulphur Springs Alliance, USF College of Visual and Performing Arts and the USF School of Art and Art History in developing a program format that was receptive to Sulphur Springs community needs and an effective art education program.

Goals and objectives. As part of program development, specific goals and objectives were identified. Community Stepping Stones' stated goals are:

- "to keep the youth of Sulphur Springs in school,
- to give our youth the tools to continue their education after high school,

- to fill our youth with hope and visions of their future,
- to be an agent for social change,
- to be a catalyst for community cohesiveness,
- to make a real impact on the lives of children,
- to develop art and educational programs that address social and environmental issues,
- to utilize art as a tool in teaching children about caring for their community, and
- to partner with local art and education organizations" (CSS 2009b).

Community Stepping Stone's objectives are:

- "to develop creative and critical thinking skills resulting in increased grades and social awareness and a desire to continue education after high school,
- to develop our youth's self esteem through their work being displayed,
- to engage in meaningful community service to strengthen Sulphur Springs, and
- to partner with the University of South Florida and Hillsborough Community College" (CSS 2009b).

These goals and objectives are explored as part of my assessment of Community Stepping Stones. In addition to an observational assessment, interview questions explored staff and volunteer perceptions of organizational goals and objectives.

      Community Stepping Stones art classes.. One of the main avenues Community Stepping Stones uses to accomplish these goals and objectives is through regular art education programs for area youth. Classes are offered to youth in elementary school through high school in an after school setting as well as through summer programs at the Mann Wagnon Memorial Park in Sulphur Springs. Classes are generally held every week day and cover a variety of art forms, such as photography, painting, ceramics, silk screening (t-shirt making), poetry, song writing, and many other creative mediums. Most classes independent of each other, but some lessons carry over on a daily or weekly basis. Community Stepping Stones frequently conducts special

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events on the weekend as well, such as taking students to museums, attending local cultural events, or hosting activities at Mann-Wagnon Memorial Park. Over 50 students attend classes on a weekly basis with another 50 youth served through outreach programs with other community organizations in Sulphur Springs and the larger Tampa area.

Community Stepping Stones outreach programs. Community Stepping Stones has collaborated with the City of Tampa Parks and Recreation Department and the Tampa Housing Authority to provide art classes at local after-school programs offered by the government agencies. Classes are currently offered at the George Bartholomew North Tampa Community Center in Sulphur Springs, which is run by the City of Tampa Parks and Recreation Department. Other than a membership fee for the Parks and Recreation Department, the after-school program is free to Tampa residents (Steele & Wilkens 2010). The program offers after school care for children ages five to twelve years of age and provides homework assistance, sports and fitness activities, and art programming (Steele & Wilkens 2010, TDP&R 2010).

Youth art classes are also offered at the Tampa Housing Authority's Neighborhood Network Center, River Oaks site (CSS 2009b). The Tampa Housing Authority's Neighborhood Network Centers offer personal development programs for adults and after school care for youth. After school programming focuses on academic support and job preparation, including computer literacy, life skills, job search, and ABE/GED classes (Tampa Housing Authority 2010). Art classes are provided by Community Stepping Stones staff on a weekly basis and cover a variety of art mediums depending on the individual programs' resources. Approximately 50 youth are served through these programs on a weekly basis. Staff have indicated that Community Stepping Stones does not currently have a financial agreement with either of these

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programs, although they are trying to negotiate something for the future. At this time it is unclear whether the government organizations will be able to pay Community Stepping Stones for its services.

In addition to ongoing negotiations with the City of Tampa Parks and Recreation Department and the Tampa Housing Authority, Community Stepping Stones has continued to pursue collaborative agreements with other government and community organizations. At this time, Community Stepping Stones is working with the Department of Juvenile Justice to accept mild and moderate juvenile offenders from the Sulphur Springs area as part of the youth's probation (CSS 2009b). The youth's participation in Community Stepping Stones programming will be a condition of the youth's probation. As part of this agreement, Community Stepping Stones has even offered space at the Mann-Wagnon Memorial Park for probation officers to meet juvenile offenders participating in Community Stepping Stones (CSS 2009b). Other youth art education programs have successfully made similar agreements with the Department of Juvenile Justice (Prodigy 2010).

Community Stepping Stones workforce. Community Stepping Stones recently increased the number of staff members from four full-time staff and two-part time art instructors to six full-time staff and four part-time staff and art instructors. Full-time staff include an Executive Director, AmeriCorps Program Director, a Community-Volunteer Coordinator, an After School Art Program Coordinator, a Community Alliance Coordinator, and a Programming Coordinator. Part-time staff include an Event Coordinator and three Youth Art Instructors. With the exception of the Executive Director and the AmeriCorps Program Director, staff are paid through an AmeriCorps grant initially awarded in August of 2009. The Executive Director and the AmeriCorps Program Director are match-based positions, meaning their salary must come from sources other

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than the AmeriCorps grant. Independent artists are also hired on occasion to assist with special projects or to teach specific art mediums. However, with over 8,000 volunteer hours logged in 2007 and again in 2008, Community Stepping Stones considers itself a volunteer-based organization (CSS 2009b).

The majority of Community Stepping Stones volunteers are students from local colleges and universities, including the University of South Florida (USF), Hillsborough Community College (HCC), and the University of Tampa (UT). The University of South Florida Center for Leadership and Civic Engagement has partnered with Community Stepping Stones on several occasions to provide volunteers for special projects, such as clean-up and fundraising events. In addition to the Center for Leadership and Civic Engagement, an average of 10 volunteers attend each semester as part of an art class exploring community art offered by the College of the Arts at the University of South Florida. Volunteers from this class are usually art students who attend regularly during their semester long class and assist Community Stepping Stones art instructors in the daily art classes. Community Stepping Stones leaders believe "the consistent contact with the area colleges and their students not only exposes our children and youth to the idea of higher education, it normalizes it" (CSS 2009a). Graduated Community Stepping Stones students often return to work as art instructors, reinforcing the importance of social responsibility.

Community Stepping Stones in action. In addition to art classes and the consistent presence of college and university students, Community Stepping Stones strives to help better its student participants and the Sulphur Springs Community. Students receive support and encouragement from Community Stepping Stones staff and volunteers in a variety of ways. Participating students are expected to maintain good grades, stay out of trouble, participate in community service, regularly attend art classes,

apply learned skills to a specific job at Community Stepping Stones, and work on the job (CSS 2009a). Students are taught to maintain good grades in order to get into college and obtain scholarships. Community Stepping Stones has even partnered with Hillsborough Community College to provide academic and financial assistance to Community Stepping Stones students who enroll in the college (CSS 2009a). Efforts are also made to acknowledge that the work and efforts of the students are important. Funding is obtained to pay students for attending art classes and working on their Community Stepping Stones "jobs." Student art work is also displayed annually at the University of South Florida Oliver Art Gallery and the Hillsborough Community College Art Gallery (CSS 2009a).

Community art. Although Community Stepping Stones' main focus is daily art classes, they have also completed several more permanent community art projects throughout the community. Community art installments are meant to engage and beautify the community. Community art installments include two large-scale murals at the Rowlett Park Recreation Center, a sculptural message center that replicates the Sulphur Springs Tower located at River Cover Park, and an art business run by participating adolescents. More recently, area youth were engaged in two projects during the summer of 2010. One was an art project completed in response to the Gulf oil spill of May 2010. Completed in several steps, the project depicted the student's feelings about the oil spill and the impact it might have on their community. In addition to being displayed in several locations throughout Tampa, the resulting art piece was photographed and sent to local and national politicians along with a letter. Activities such as this are designed to empower students by engaging them in larger social and political issues and by showing students that their involvement can have an impact on local, city, state, and national outcomes.

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A mural project was also completed over the summer. After extensive interviews with area residents, youth completed a mural on the north side of the historic Sulphur Springs Theater. The mural depicts images of individuals, including a man teaching a boy to ride a bike, and words representing community; student's interpretation of residents' feelings about Sulphur Springs' past and present. Students expressed a sense of ownership and community stewardship because they conducted the interviews, developed the mural design, and painted the mural themselves. In addition to engaging the youth in a positive activity, the mural project helped to empower the students while beautifying the local community; two important aspects of Community Stepping Stones.

Community stewardship. Community stewardship is another strong focus of Community Stepping Stones. In addition to beautification efforts such as the mural projects, past endeavors have also focused on cleaning up the local environment. Efforts have included clean-up events at the Hillsborough River, local parks, and several empty lots in Sulphur Springs. Community Stepping Stones' aim is to create positive spaces for Sulphur Springs residents to live and play (CSS 2009a, CSS 2009b). These efforts are often completed in collaboration with other community organizations, primarily the University of South Florida Center for Leadership and Civic Engagement, which provides a steady stream of volunteers for Community Stepping Stones.

My Role

My original contact with Community Stepping Stones was initiated with fellow University of South Florida Anthropology student, Doug Reeser, as part of a Visual Anthropology course. We approached Community Stepping Stones about completing a visual project that would be mutually beneficial. After several meetings with the Executive Director and interactions with students at Community Stepping Stones, we

learned that a group of older students were involved in a photography class at another Community Stepping Stones location. After approaching the photography instructor, we began working with the group of older students on a visual project. Initially, we suggested using photography to show the Sulphur Springs neighborhood and Community Stepping Stones program through the view of the students. However, students expressed concerns about the safety of taking photographs in the area. We ultimately agreed on a film project organized, directed, and edited by the youth.

Youth developed a series of questions about Community Stepping Stones, which they then used to interview Community Stepping Stones students and staff. In addition to basic questions about how the individual became involved in Community Stepping Stones and how long they had been involved, interview questions explored what Community Stepping Stones meant to each individual and how it had impacted their lives. Interviews were recorded and edited on site at Community Stepping Stones. Although Community Stepping Stones staff, Doug, and I were available during the process of interview development, recording, and editing, the students took the main lead while we offered technical support and feedback throughout the process.

The Visual Anthropology project was a success; students learned about developing and conducting interviews as well as how to record and edit digital film while Doug and I completed a successful class project. However, during our work with Community Stepping Stones, we found the organization had challenges obtaining regular funding, maintaining staff and volunteers, and retaining students. During the time of our class project, Community Stepping Stones only employed three individuals; one Executive Director and two part-time instructors/program coordinators. Staff indicated that Community Stepping Stones was understaffed and staff did not always possess the appropriate skills or knowledge for running a non-profit organization. Staff also pointed

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out challenges with funding; according to staff, payment was inconsistent and often did not cover the actual number of hours they worked. Funds were not always available for regular maintenance or materials either. We saw staff and volunteers lend or donate items on several occasions. Due to these circumstances, two of the three staff were employed elsewhere in order to receive a steady income. Although staff remained dedicated to the organization, the multiple roles they had to take on to keep it running and meet their own, personal needs, was taxing. Although all three staff claimed to have been involved with Community Stepping Stones for several years, concerns about continued involvement were raised due to the lack of consistent payment and the work burden.

The remaining workers we observed at Community Stepping Stones were volunteers. Volunteers appeared to take on two roles. Some attended Community Stepping Stones as part of an art class at the University of South Florida and/or were involved with Community Stepping Stones as part of their Master's thesis or dissertation work. In general, these volunteers remained involved in Community Stepping Stones for the duration of the semester and attended classes and other events on a regular basis. In contrast, there were also large numbers of volunteers who attended Community Stepping Stones once or twice, usually as part of larger Community Stepping Stones events. Most of these volunteers identified themselves as being part of the University of South Florida Center for Leadership and Civic Engagement, although we also met several who were involved through other community and school organizations. Overall, Community Stepping Stones had a high volunteer turnover rate. Staff and students expressed concerns and regrets over the high turnover rate. Staff felt they were constantly retraining new volunteers and students expressed feelings of loss as volunteers left the organization.

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Student retention was another area staff expressed concern. Students were interested in the organization and Community Stepping Stones hosted a regular group of students. However, staff pointed out that most Community Stepping Stones students were reliant on staff and volunteers to transport them to and from Community Stepping Stones and students were often forced to drop out of the program if transportation wasn't available to them, particularly if the student moved out of the Sulphur Springs area. Retaining students at the middle and high school level was also challenging as other obligations, such as after school activities and income earning jobs required their time and attention.

In an attempt to meet some of the funding needs, a grant writer was obtained around the same time we began working with Community Stepping Stones. Through conversations with the Grant Writer and Community Stepping Stones staff, it appeared Community Stepping Stones had challenges obtaining grants, often because the program did not have sufficient documentation of community involvement or impact. It was evident that the lack of funding caused significant challenges for maintaining and developing Community Stepping Stones and its goals of creating a positive community impact.

During this time, I was employed with the University of South Florida to oversee several mini-grants. My previous work at the university also included work as both a program evaluator and a program coordinator. With knowledge gained from these experiences, I thought Community Stepping Stones might benefit from a comprehensive and ongoing program evaluation. Namely, I sought to explore how Community Stepping Stones could implement more appropriate record keeping without compromising programming given the lack of staff and staff resources. My initial focus was on recording student, staff, and volunteer attendance; written and visual records of

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community events; and records of academic, behavioral, and social impact of the program on students. However, the breadth of my assessment and suggestions for implementation continued to change as I worked with Community Stepping Stones and I as was able to identify more program specific challenges and needs and potential resources the organization could access during my assessment.

At the end of the Spring 2009 semester, I approached the Executive Director with my observations and he agreed that a comprehensive program evaluation might help further program development and potentially, the procurement of future funding. After further discussion, we agreed I would conduct an assessment of Community Stepping Stones in which I would review normal program activities and explore funding, evaluation measures, and efforts towards program sustainability. The expectation was that I would work with Community Stepping Stones to develop measures for more sustainable programming and administration and an effective program evaluation. Community Stepping Stones staff were primarily concerned with implementing changes that would allow for organizational growth without overwhelming staff or distract from program goals and objectives. Thus, I continued my involvement with Community Stepping Stones.

Over the next year, I continued to attend Community Stepping Stones activities, expanding my involvement to include attendance in after school and summer programs, special events, staff meetings, and Board of Director meetings. Most of my involvement included participant observation. I assisted students and staff during and participated in art classes, participated in community and onsite clean-up events, helped staff set up and clean up during after-school and summer programming, and shared my knowledge of research and evaluation as Community Stepping Stones began to explore and implement evaluation tools. I also spoke extensively with students, staff, and volunteers as well as others involved in Community Stepping Stones and other art education

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programs in the area. Most of these conversations were informal, but I also completed 19 formal interviews with various individuals. I also reviewed documents, such as news and press releases, reports, published papers, and other documents related to Community Stepping Stones and other local art education programs as part of the my assessment.

As Community Stepping Stones has changed in the year since I first proposed my research project, I have continued to talk to program staff about their needs and expectations of the assessment. The expectation is that this assessment will help Community Stepping Stones use a critical eye to explore areas to expand, organize, and better evaluate the current program.

Chapter 2: Literature Review

A review of the literature was an important step before conducting an assessment of Community Stepping Stones. An understanding of research approaches and evaluation methods utilized with children and youth was important in establishing a framework for my assessment. As well, previous research informed areas in which I could focus my assessment both in relation to youth participation and methods utilized as part of the assessment.

Childhood in Anthropology

The early years. Children and research have a complicated history within Anthropology. During the 19th and early 20th centuries, observations of children were primarily obtained from world travelers and clergymen (Levine 2007, Montgomery 2009). Documentation often focused on child rearing practices that were considered strange or unusual to the Western male and were often ethnocentric and fragmentary (Levine 2007). Anthropological research focused on children during this time was limited and often secondary to ethnographic research being conducted on a population as a whole. Anthropological research on children in the early 1900s was led by Edward Tylor, John Lubbock, and C. Staniland Wake. These Anthropologists perceived children as "a direct link between savagery and civilization" (Montgomery 2009, p.18). Child development was thought to progress on a continuum, which modeled the stages of human evolution;

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babies were considered primitive, adults were complex, with European, male adults considered the most complex (Montgomery 2009). Psychologists and psychiatrists utilized the basis of this theory through most of the 20th and 21st centuries, often claiming that child cognitive development was universal (LeVine 2007).

Jean Piaget conducted psychological tests designed to determine children's intellectual capabilities. His research suggested that children could not grasp certain concepts until certain ages (Kellett & Ding 2004). This research has had implications on how and when researchers choose to obtain consent from children and how researchers interact with children as research subjects (Alderson 2004, France 2004). Sigmund Freud was also influential in child psychology (Thurschwell 2000). Freud identified stages of development, which indicated sources of pleasure for children. These stages, oral, anal, and phallic, were associated with a child's development from nursing, potty training, and then, according to Freud, fixating on the mother as a sexual object.

Although famous psychologists Sigmund Frued and Jean Piaget used the idea of universal child development as the basis for their theories (Kellett, Robinson, & Burr 2004), Anthropologists worked to prove otherwise. As early as 1915, Franz Boas's work among American immigrants showed significant phenotypical variations between immigrants and their children, suggesting that environmental factors were significant in emotional, mental, and even physical development (Montgomery 2009). Boas charted physical characteristic of immigrants and their children, noting differences not just between parents born in Europe and children born in the United States, but also between siblings born in different countries. This, Boas claimed, showed that physical development was most influenced by environmental factors and not necessarily biological characteristics. These findings were further pursued by the "culture and personality school" of thought, which was largely populated by Boas's students.

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The Culture and Personality School. Individuals who are considered part of the the "culture and personality school" of thought were concerned with "how an infant became a cultural being and what impact early childhood experiences had on adult personality, as well as on the collective culture of society. [The] school envisaged an interdisciplinary anthropology that drew upon, but also challenged, the universalist premises of developmental psychology" (Montgomery 2009, p.24-25). According to LeVine (2007), Anthropologists relied on other disciplines, such as psychology, psychiatry, and psychoanalysis, for developing age-appropriate theories and research expectations during this time.

At the same time, Bronislaw Malinowski and his students conducted extensive fieldwork among different cultures in an attempt to show the wide variation in child development. Malinoski's work with Trobiand Islanders led him to propose that Freud's Oedipus complex did not work in matrilineal societies without significant modification (Malinowski 1927). Margaret Mead's work among Samoan youth is perhaps one of the most influential early studies on childhood. According to Mead (1928), Samoan youth did not experience the turbulent adolescent described by psychologists (1928). Mead's work was unique in that she utilized feedback directly from her youth participants rather than through secondary sources.

Later, members of the "culture and personality school" attempted to combine theories from anthropology and psychology. Cora Du Bois was influential in combining theories from anthropology and psychology (Montgomery 2009). Drawing from psychologist Abram Kardiner and anthropologist Ralph Linton's theory that different cultures had different personalities, Du Bois considered children "blank slates" whose personality was strongly influenced by cultural experiences. Because children would have culture specific experiences, individuals in certain cultures were more likely to

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develop certain personalities. Specifically, Du Bois carried out research on the Indonesian Island Alor (1944). Based on her research, which was largely develop from Freudian psychology and utilized Rorschach blot tests, children's drawings, and participant observations; Du Bois concluded the Alores were "insecure and fearful, had low self-esteem, and suffered from greed, dislike of the parental role, and negative feelings about human relationships" (Montgomery 2009, p.25).

Six Cultures Studies. Despite criticisms of the "culture and personality school," theories developed by this group have been influential in changing how anthropology and other disciplines have approached research with and about children. Although anthropologists moved away from the school's approach, efforts to incorporate theories from psychology and anthropology continued into the 1950s. John Whiting, along with two psychologists, Irvin L. Child and William Lambert, conducted the Six Cultures Studies in the 1950s (Whiting 1963). Although his previous work focused on Freudian theory of a child's psychosexual experiences, Whiting found that the stages of oral, anal, and phallic development identified by Freud were not always significant in other cultures. Instead, the Six Cultures Study sent a male and female anthropologist to observe all aspects of child-rearing and socialization in six different cultures located in Japan, the Philippines, Northern India, Mexico, Kenya, and New England (LeVine 2007, Mongtomery 2009, Whiting, Whiting, & Longabaugh 1975). Each anthropologist pair was provided with the same detailed field manual which they used to guide their observations (Whiting et al.,1975). Although subject to significant criticisms, the Six Cultures Studies did "introduce [the idea] of systematic naturalistic observations of children" to the field of child research (LeVine 2007).

New directions in "child-centered" research. The study of children and childhood has since taken a variety of directions, including new foci on infants, children's

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social relationships, children's play, the acquisition of language, and other specific areas that influence child development and the role of children in society (LeVine 2007, McKechnie & Hobbs 2004, Mongtomery 2009). As mentioned previously, Mead was one of the first researchers and anthropologists to take children's accounts and perspectives seriously (Montgomery 2009).

British anthropologist Charlotte Hardman first began writing about this approach in the 1970s. Hardman claimed that children should be considered the best informants about their own lives. She identified with feminist theory, suggested that children could be considered their own subculture, just as women or other cultural groups were and thus, should be studied in their own right rather than in relation to the larger society or in their development towards adulthood (Hardman 2001).

Hardman's influence on the development of child-centered anthropology is unmistakable. Taken up by Allison James, Alan Prout, and others, proponents of child-centered anthropology

> "argue that childhood must be understood as a culturally constructed, social phenomenon which changes over time and place that children should be studied as worthy subjects in their own right. . .it supported the notion that a child's perspectives and understandings should be taken seriously. . .challenged the perception that children did not know what is happening . . .[and] it reflected a recognition that children possessed agency and that they could, and did, influence their own lives, the lives of their peers, and that of the wider community" (Montgomery 2009, p.43-45; Darbyshire, MacDougall, & Schiller 2005; Strack, Magill & McDonagh 2004).

Child-centered anthropology encourages researchers to consider children as trustworthy informants and suggests that children should take a lead role in developing and conducting research on and about children.

Children and research. Research efforts that include children in the research process and "investigates children's own perspectives, their ways of making meaning,

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their priorities in social relationships, their contributions to the social lives of their communities and their forms of resistance and accommodation to location national and global forces" (Mitchell 2006, p.60). are becoming more common (Darbyshire, MacDougall, & Schiller 2005). Based in feminist theory and Freirian principles, child-centered research posits that children are the best sources of knowledge about themselves and that the research process is empowering (Strack, Magill, & McDonagh 2004).

A variety of "alternative" research methods have been developed in recent years with the goal of creating meaningful research interactions with children. Many of these alternative methods are derived from research methods used with non-literate adults where visual rather than verbal expression, such as photography, videography, and drawings are utilized (Mitchell 2006). Wagner (1999, p.4) suggests that by "placing images in the foreground of our talk with children, [we] can increase opportunities for getting a clearer sense of what kids think." The assumption is that even children who may have trouble verbalizing can communicate through visual media. Unlike most traditional research methods such as interviews or observations, most children are familiar and comfortable with visual media; finding and using them in their daily life. In addition, visual images can often be created without any or with only minimal influence from the researcher or other adults, thus allowing for greater autonomy by the child. Research methods, such as photovoice (Strack, Magill, & McDonagh 2004) and Participatory Action Research (Nieuwenhuys 2004) allow children influence and/or complete control over the research process.

Ethical Challenges of Childhood Research

Although child-centered research has begun to take hold within anthropology, it has not come without challenges. Ethical issues are the first hurdle for most researchers. In addition to the usual power discrepancy between researcher and subject, researchers working with children must address the power difference between adult and child (Alderson 2004, Kellett & Ding 2004, Kellett, Robinson, & Burr 2004). In some situations, the child may not be fully honest or may show off to the researcher. Or children may feel obligated to act or respond in a certain way because of the researcher's position. False or exaggerated responses can potentially compromise the data. Researchers are also faced with an inability to fully integrate themselves into the "culture" of childhood, potentially hindering participatory ethnography or other more intimate forms of research. Of course, similar issues can be identified with almost any subject population. Such claims should not deter a researcher from working with children.

Gatekeepers. Often, because the researcher is no longer part of the "culture" of childhood, they may not have direct access to children and must rely on gatekeepers for this access. Gatekeepers are individuals, including parents, teachers, and others, who control actual, physical contact with children (Alderson 2004). Gatekeepers often play a dual role in protecting children. A gatekeeper's consent is often legally required before the researcher can interact with children in anyway. Gatekeepers may also play a key role in accessing child trust. Gatekeepers are often parents, teachers, or other adults in positions that hold significant emotional sway with a child. Approval on the part of this adult figure may be influential in a child's willingness to participate in research.

Cognitive development and consent. Meeting children at their cognitive level may also be challenging for researchers. Children have, historically, been considered inadequate as research informants due to their perceived lower cognitive levels

(Alderson 2004). This ideology was largely based on psychoanalysis research such as that carried out by Freud and Piaget.

However, according to Alan France (2004, p.181-182), "competence is variable and very much determined by processes of social interaction and negotiation. . . .[researchers] should be careful about accepting professional's definitions of incompetence as a reason for excluding a young person from research." However, this creates ethical challenges in regards to obtaining consent of research participants as most Internal Review Boards have clear definitions of who can and who cannot provide consent. These definitions are largely based on psychological testing and age and vary depending on the organization, type of research, and research board.

Anthropological research with children has begun to shift directions, though. Researchers acknowledge that "children possess agency and that they . . . influence their own lives, the lives of their peers, and that of the wider community" (Montgomery 2009, p.45). Although Margaret Mead raised this claim in the early part of the 20th century, it did not really begin to take hold until much later. Research by Margaret Donaldson (1978) was influential in this shift. Donaldson suggests that Piaget's tests were not relevant to the children in his studies. Instead, more recent studies indicate that children's intellectual abilities were more closely linked to their lives and that children did significantly better on intellectual tests if the test were relevant to their daily life (Donaldson 1978, France 2004, Fraser 2004).

Although Donaldson (Fraser 2004) and others (France 2004, Fraser 2004) question the idea that children developed competencies on a specific continuum, it is still important to take children's individual competencies into account when conducting research with children. As an ethical compromise, some researchers request that children provide assent to participate. Although assent does not generally have legal

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standing; it does provide the youth with some level of autonomy regarding participation in the research (Alderson 2004). However, the age at which researchers choose to obtain assent varies from researcher to researcher.

Representation, translation, and power. Mitchell also raises concerns about "representation, translation, and power" (Mitchell 2006, p.65). She points out that not only are adult researchers still asking and instructing the child subject to create visual images, but they are telling them what to look at and are interpreting the results. By selecting certain quotes or images, the research still has the power to direct the focus of research findings. Again, though, this problem is not unique to working with children. However, children may lack the power, knowledge, or access to advocate for themselves in cases of misrepresentation (Robinson & Kellett 2004).

Youth Programs

Youth development and youth empowerment programs grew out of prevention programs designed to address juvenile delinquent and problem behaviors (Catalano, Berglund, Ryan, Lonczak & Hawkins 2004). Research suggests that a positive intervention approach that addresses multiple risk factors for delinquent and problem behaviors is more effective than intervention programs that address single issues, such as drug abuse or dropping out of school. According to Catalano and colleagues, (2004) youth development and empowerment programs generally address at least one of the following objectives: promote bonding, foster resilience, self-determination, spirituality, self-efficacy, clear and positive identity, and/or a belief in the future, promote social, emotional, cognitive, behavioral, and/or moral competence, provide recognition for positive behaviors and opportunities for pro-social involvement, and foster pro-social norms. By focusing on these positive skills, behaviors, and interactions; youth

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development and empowerment programs help youth visualize their potential and help youth develop appropriate coping skills to avoid problem behaviors.

Youth development and youth empowerment programs are increasingly common as the positive outcomes of such programs are becoming more evident. In addition to lowering "dangerous" activities, such as smoking, drinking, drug use, and teenage sexual activity; youth development and empowerment programs have also been shown to increase overall health and interest in higher education (Epstein & Dauber 1991, Heath 1998, Nicholson, Collins & Holmer 2004), enhance self-awareness and social achievement; improve mental health and academic performance, reduce rates of delinquency and school dropout rates; reduce health disparities; and reduce violence (Catalano, Berglund, Ryan, Lonczak, & Hawkins 2004, Epstein & Dauber 1991, Ezell & Levy 2003, Pearrow 2008). Other studies show youth development and empowerment programs provide a positive support system and increase a sense of belonging, help youth develop a positive identity and skills for making positive decisions, and encourage a sense of responsibility for oneself and others (Catalano et. al, 2004, Epstein & Dauber 1991, Nicholson et. al, 2004).

Art education programs. Art education programs for youth have been identified as one form of youth development or youth empowerment programming with excellent benefits to both participating youth and the general community. In addition to the numerous benefits indentified in youth development and empowerment programs in general, art education programs have been found to be an ideal medium for teaching social, vocational, and emotional skills and increasing social awareness and social responsibility (Ersing 2009, John, Wright, Rowe, & Duku 2009, Miller & Rowe 2009, Rapp-Paglicci et al 2008, Stinson 2009, Wright et al 2006). Researchers have suggested that these additional benefits may be in part because "art provides a means through

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which to express the self and communicate feelings and ideas" (Ezell & Levy 2003). Given these findings, "[y]outh arts programming seems well suited to the integration of community engagement within a positive youth development framework. An array of creative outlets offers an empowering opportunity for young people to connect with their social environment and neighborhood institutions through artistic expression" (Ersing 2009, p.35).

Art education program framework. Hillman (2009, p.8) notes that "skills-based arts programs that utilize community artists to investigate community culture with youth and then create murals, books, videos, and plays based on interviews with community members are becoming more and more common." However, findings suggest that art education programs often lack clearly defined structures to determine how the implemented activities foster desired skills (Wright 2007). Although studies indicate that program staff were generally aware of best practices, they were unable to implement them due to poor funding and a lack of resources (Wright 2007). Several recent studies have examined conceptual and methodological frameworks for designing, implementing, and evaluating youth art education programs (Miller & Rowe 2009, Wright et. al. 2006, Wright 2007). According to Wright (2007, p.127), "for an organization to be goal-seeking and future-oriented, a systematic information system is necessary in order to implement and manage programs." With this in mind, the studies have identified several key areas that ought to be implemented and monitored as part of the development of successful and sustainable arts education programming. For further discussion, I have divided these findings into the areas of program staff, program participants, and programming resources and collaborations.

Art education program staff. Program staff "carry" any program. A strong, committed leader and caring staff were two of the key factors identified in successful

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programs (Miller & Rowe 2009). Miller & Rowe (2009) suggested that staff, particularly those in a leadership role, should not have other responsibilities vying for their time. Program management, teaching, or whatever the staff's role is should be their full-time responsibility. Given the focus of most art education programs on delinquent and at-risk youth, caring staff are important for their patience and empathy. Similar ethnic and cultural backgrounds between staff and students may be helpful in student retention and success as staff may be better able to relate to students (Wright 2007). Efforts to obtain staff who reside in the community in which services are being provided may also help with retention and rates of success. By providing role models students see in the community and who students can relate to, students may feel more empowered and see their potential as more attainable. These factors – caring staff from similar backgrounds – were found to be related to another key factor; the development of positive mentoring relationships between staff and students (Wright et. al. 2006). Regardless of whether the mentoring relationship was formal or informal, the sustained, one-on-one attention of a caring adult, had positive effects on students across the board.

Training. Relevant training for program staff was also identified as being very important to successful program implementation (Miller & Rowe 2009, Wright et. al. 2006, Wright 2007). Identified training included basic program management such as clearly defining roles and responsibilities of staff; communication and collaboration techniques to be used among staff, students, parents, and the community; data collection procedures and techniques; program recruitment strategies, such as community mapping and canvassing, and program organization, including, but not limited to timing of program activities, snacks, and transportation (Farnum & Schagger 1998, Wright et. al. 2006). Training about youth, such as age appropriate behaviors and expectations, teaching and discipline techniques, and general social and behavioral

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challenges youth face today were identified as important. Information about risks, needs, and working with high risk and delinquent youth was identified as being particularly important so that staff felt they could help address behavioral problems and personal issues. Because many youth art education programs attract high-risk youth either due to previous incarceration, residence, or family history, staff training on how to work with youth, particularly high-risk youths, has been identified as being important (Farnum & Schagger 1998, Wright 2007, Wright et. al. 2006). This type of training may include information on the implications of social, economic, and cultural differences among youth, symptoms of emotional and behavioral problems, signs of child abuse, and behavior management techniques (Wright et. al. 2006). A basic understanding of youth development may also be important so staff can develop curriculum and structure relevant to student participants (Wright 2007).

Training on program implementation, including curriculum design, was also highlighted as being important (Farnum & Schagger 1998, Wright 2007). Wright (2007, p.128) pointed out that "it is crucial for arts educators to define the artistic and social objectives of their activities." By teaching staff how to effectively link art instruction to concrete goals, staff are able to develop appropriate curriculum and become more effective teachers.

Although training should be offered to all incoming staff, it is important, too, to offer ongoing training to program staff and volunteers (Farnum & Schagger 1998). Ongoing training should be designed to meet new needs and challenges identified by staff and volunteers and should be offered by a variety of expertise, including peers (Farnum & Schagger 1998). Training sessions should also include opportunities for staff and volunteers to share successes and failures (Farnum & Schagger 1998).

Student participation. Student participation was another area identified as being crucial to successful program implementation (Miller & Rowe 2009, Wright et al. 2006, Wright 2007). Most grant agencies require a set number of students to award and continue funding. Thus, programs need to make efforts to attract students. It is also important to take into account the unique situation of program participants. Generally, programs "should be physically and psychologically safe, accessible by providing transportation and food, encourage parental involvement, and collaborate with local community organizations" (Wright 2007, p.126; Farnum & Schagger 1998, Miller & Rowe 2009). Because many youth who are at risk lack stable home environments and are exposed to a limited number of positive adult role models, it is also important for art education programs to provide continuity of services and an opportunity to engage with positive, caring adults (Wright et. al. 2006).

Miller & Rowe (2009) found that youth were more engaged and programs were more effective when youth were able to take an active role in program development. Involvement included deciding when to begin and end program participation in the development of classroom activities, and the opportunity to showcase work to family, friends, and the general public. Involvement in scheduling and program development ensures programming is accessible to youth and that youth are interested in available programming. The opportunity to showcase work helps to build students' self-esteem and recognizes student achievements (Farnum & Schagger 1998). The use of peer mentoring as well as involvement from students' families have also been identified as important aspects of successful programs (Farnum & Schagger 1998). Incentive and rewards programs were also found to be effective tools in obtaining and retaining student participants.

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Lastly, specific program designs were found to be more effective. Outreach efforts to both potential and existing students and their parents were identified as being important (Farnum & Schagger 1998, , Miller & Rowe 2009, Wright et. al. 2006, Wright 2007). Outreach activities can be implemented in several ways, including through recruitment activities, such as community mapping and recruitment events, and parental outreach through follow-up phone calls and family nights (Miller & Rowe 2009, Wright et. al. 2006). Community mapping efforts may also include identification of other community resources that either the program or program participants might utilize. Collaborative relationships with other community organizations has been identified as another tool for effective program implementation (Miller & Rowe 2009, Wright et. al. 2006). Collaboration with other community organizations important for both obtaining referrals to the art education program, but also for referring program participants and their families to needed services (Miller & Rowe 2009, Wright 2007). Research shows that being responsive to the needs of program participants and their families is important for effective program implementation (Farnum & Schagger 1998, Miller & Rowe 2009, Wright et. al. 2006).

In addition to concerns related to access to food and transportation, students' age, culture, and ethnicity may also be important areas in which art education programs can be responsive to students' needs. As mentioned previously, staff and volunteers with similar backgrounds are important. Knowledge of school schedules, major holidays, and potential dietary or other restrictions may all be areas in which programs can be responsive to student's needs, particularly if they share similar backgrounds.

Art education programs were also found to be more effective when made available to students long-term (Miller & Rowe 2009, Wright et. al. 2006). Even if specific classes were short-term, the continuity of the program availability appeared to be key.

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Similarly, programs did better with long-term funding from a variety of sources; one-time grants were found to be unsustainable and ineffective (Wright 2007).

Finally, pre-planned, structured programming was found to be influential in long-term sustainability of art education programs (Farnum & Schagger 1998, Wright et. al. 2006). Although Wright et. al. (2006) noted resistance to this suggestion in their research, even resistors found structured programming to be more effective once implemented. Areas of program organization may include many of the areas already discussed; developing relationships among team members, methods for youth involvement in planning, curriculum design, transportation, safety, student incentives, and behavioral expectations (Farnum & Schagger 1998). In addition, the development of program goals, plans for program growth, a balance between art program and other program objectives, and a balance of process and product must also be sought (Farnum & Schagger 1998). Most importantly, though, successful and sustainable programs had a strong evaluative component to their program (Farnum & Schagger 1998, Miller & Rowe 2009, Wright 2007).

Art education program evaluation. Although evaluation of art education programs has been found to be a key indicator of sustainable programs, effective evaluation of art education programs, particularly in community settings, remains elusive (Ezell & Levy 2003, Farnum & Schagger 1998, Miller & Rowe 2009, Newman, Curtis & Stephens 2003, Wright 2007). The lack of effective evaluation tools ultimately compromises individual programs' abilities to obtain adequate and sustainable funding. Even with an increasing number of art education programs, comprehensive evaluations are not often conducted and peer reviewed evaluations are even more infrequent (Miller & Rowe 2009). Based on the literature, the reason for these failures are two-fold. First there appears to be insufficient knowledge and resources to design and implement

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effective programming and evaluation for art education programs, especially in community settings (Hamilton et al 2003, Wright et al. 2006, Wright 2007). Most art education staff have backgrounds in teaching and/or art, usually with little to no experience with data collection or program management. Evaluation of art education programs is easier in clinical rather than community settings due to the accessibility of an existing organizational structure for obtaining evaluation measures, implementing data collection, storing and processing data, and access to individuals participating in the art education program (Ezell & Levy 2003). In contrast, community-based art education programs are often strapped for resources and retain a very limited and already overworked staff. Thus most of the research on art education programs has been located in or otherwise linked to institutional settings, such as schools or correctional facilities (Hamilton 2003). However, there is an increasing recognition of the need for comprehensive and effective evaluation in community settings as well (Ezell & Levy 2003, Hamilton 2003).

Newman and colleagues (2003, p.312) also suggest that challenges to effective evaluation may be due to "the extreme dissonance that often exists between demands for numerical accuracy and artistic temperaments." Some have gone so far as to say that evaluation of art programming is impossible, in part due to the conflicting nature between artists and scientists (Hamilton 2003). Essentially, the rigid guidelines and qualitative data collection needed to conduct a comprehensive program evaluation are not well-suited to the more creative, relaxed attitude of many artists who make up art education program staff. This type of resistance was evident in research by Wright and colleagues (2006); in their research with a youth art education program, staff were initially resistant to the development of structured curriculum.

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Effective program evaluation begins with clearly defined program goals and intended outcomes (Farnum & Schagger 1998, Miller & Rowe 2009). According to Miller and Rowe (2009, p.3), "Identification of core components and establishment of performance standards and criteria ensure appropriate program implementation and avoid misallocation of resources and attention." A logic model may be an effective tool to identify and communicate goals and outcomes to staff, volunteers, and potential collaborators (Farnum & Schagger 1998). Essentially, logic models allow the user to visually express how program, student, or community needs drives program activities, what outcomes are expected from these activities, and ultimately, the anticipated impact on students and the community. A logic model can address both short and long term goals and can be modified as the needs, activities, and outcomes of the program change.

Once program goals and anticipated outcomes are clearly defined, the next step in the evaluation process is effective monitoring and documentation of program implementation. A variety of sources can impact program outcomes, thus multiple factors must be taken into account when measuring program effectiveness (Farnum & Schagger 1998).

Process evaluation. Regardless of the areas focused on in the actual evaluation, two types of evaluation should be used in youth art education programs, process evaluation and outcomes evaluation (Farnum & Schagger 1998, Wright 2007). Process evaluation examines program implementation and service delivery and is an effective method for describing how a program works and for tracking outcomes over time (Farnum & Schagger 1998, Wright 2007). Process evaluation data collection usually includes basic program records, such as, but not limited to, staff ratios, hours and duration of contact (Farnum & Schagger 1998), student attendance and retention,

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student demographics, including age, gender, ethnicity, living status, school status, and grade level (Wright 2007). This type of data can help program staff better assess the needs and challenges program participants face. Data can also be tracked over time to show program impact on students.

Process evaluation can also use data from outside of the program, such as school attendance, academic grades, or involvement in the Juvenile Justice system to track student progress over time. Process evaluations are a common type of program evaluation and are generally easy to implement while still being an effective way to monitor and refine programming (Farnum & Schagger 1998). Art programs, for example, can infer associations between attendance in the program and improved academic performance.

Outcome evaluation. However, process evaluations do not directly address program outcomes. An outcome evaluation, which focuses on the social and emotional outcomes of programming, ought to be completed in conjunction with a process evaluation for a truly comprehensive program evaluation (Farnum & Schagger 1998 Wright 2007). Data for outcome evaluations should be collected from a variety of sources such as observational data; students' development of art and social skills; school record forms; semi-structured interviews with student participants, students' parents, site directors, art instructors, and program coordinators; and standardized assessment tools (Ezell & Levey, 2003, Rapp-Paglicci, Stewart, & Rowe 2009, Wright et.al. 2006). This type of data collection can help an organization link program activities with youth behaviors and community development.

Some forms of data collection can be embedded within the art program (Farnum & Schagger 1998). Observational data can easily be obtained during regular programming; staff can document disciplinary action, student engagement during

lessons, task completion, and social interactions with other students and staff. These notes can be systematically recorded in a folder to track social and behavioral changes over time. In addition to observational data obtained by staff, journals and portfolios completed by the student participants can also be used as part of an outcome evaluation (Farnum & Schagger 1998). Journals and portfolios are commonly created in art programs and can provide good examples of an individual student's artistic growth over time.

Interviews and surveys with a variety of individuals can also be a good source of information for outcome evaluations. In these instances, community members, program staff, program participants, and participants' parents can all be involved in the evaluation process. Programs can develop their own interview protocol or select from a variety of standardized assessments. Although most methods of an outcome evaluation can be incorporated directly into an art program, standardized assessments may need to be more formally administered due to their design and length. Standardized assessments, such as the *Home & Community Social-Behavioral Scales* (Brookes 2010),*Child & Adolescent Needs & Strengths* (Pread Foundation 2010),the *Child Behavior Checklist* (Achenbach System of Empirically Based Assessments [ASEBA] 2010), and the *Future Aspirations Scale* (Cosden, Morrison, Albanese, & Macias 2001, East 1996) are commonly used to assess the social and emotional well being of youth. Generally, these types of youth assessments utilize a series of scaled responses, called a Likert scale, that explores a youth's social, behavioral, emotional, and cognitive abilities. Depending on the type of evaluation and the abilities of the youth being assessed, evaluations are either completed by the youth being evaluated, program staff or teachers, or the youth's guardians. Most commonly seen in clinical settings, these types of standardized assessments can also be used in schools or youth programs, such as art education

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programs. Some assessment tools are designed to collect data from multiple sources and in multiple locations. For example, the *Home & Community Social-Behavior Scales* is usually completed in conjunction with the *School Social-Behavior Scales* in order to obtain a more complete picture of the youth being assessed. Other assessments, such as the *Child & Adolescent Needs Survey* include questions about both the youth's home and school environment and general life experiences as well.

It is important to note that only a handful of assessment tools have been identified here. The number of available assessment tools with the purpose of assessing youth social and behavioral well-being is enormous and a comprehensive discussion would not be appropriate in this context. Even among the assessment tools identified here, the focus and target population of the tool varies widely.

Specifically, the *Home & Community Social-Behavior Scales* has a strong focus on academic needs and success and has only been validated for children of school age, between five and 18 years old. Although the *Home & Community Social-Behavior Scale* can be used as a stand-alone test, when completed in conjunction with the *School Social-Behavior Scales*, the publisher claims the assessment tool can help "identify children with problem behaviors, target classroom interventions, measure the effectiveness of interventions over time, remove barriers to learning and help children reach their goals, bring families into the process, and screens for both positive and negative behaviors" (Brooks 2010).

The *Child & Adolescent Needs & Strengths* (Praed Foundation 2010) assessment "can be used reliably to assess the type and severity of problem presentation, risk behaviors, functioning, care intensity and organization, [and] caregiver capacity and strengths" (Anderson, Lyons, Giles, Price, & Estle 2003, p.1) "intended to support case planning and evaluation service systems," (California Evidence-Based

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Clearinghouse for Child Welfare [CEBCCW] 2010) the *Child & Adolescent Needs & Strengths* is organized into several categories; life domain functioning, caregiver strengths & needs, youth strengths, youth behavioral/emotional needs, youth risk behaviors, acculturation, developmental needs, substance use, trauma, sexually aggressive behavior, runaway, juvenile justice, fire setting, and violence (Praed Foundation 2010). The *Child & Adolescent Needs & Strengths* is unique in that each of these categories can be assessed independently or in combinations as it is relevant to the program. So if a program does not wish to address issues related to fire setting, this category does not need to be included in the assessment. Similarly, if the program only focuses on issues of trauma, only the trauma category needs to be completed. The *Child & Adolescent Needs & Strengths* also rates both needs and strengths on a scale of most to least severe, indicating no evidence, identified – strength must be built/need must be watched, usable strength/actionable need, and centerpiece strength/immediate action necessary need. This breakdown may help organizations determine what needs and strengths should be targeted in treatment planning. The *Child & Adolescent Needs & Strengths* assessment has been validated for children aged six and older and is generally used until age 20 (Pread Foundation 2010).

The *Child Behavior Checklist* is designed to assess maladaptive behavioral and emotional problems and can also be used to diagnose Attention Deficit and Hyperactivity disorder. The assessment addresses both internalizing and externalizing behaviors in home and social settings (Achenbach & Ruffle 2000, ASEBA 2010, University of Medicine & Dentistry New Jersey 2010). The *Child Behavior Checklist* is specifically designed to be administered repeatedly over a period of time in order to measure a child's change in behavior, particularly after an intervention or treatment. There are actually two *Child Behavior Checklist* assessments; one designed for children ages one

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and a half to five years old and another for children ages six to 18 years old. Differences in the test are related to age appropriate behaviors and activities, such as bed wetting and school attendance, as well as the length and reading level of the test (ASEBA 2010). Data can be completed by service providers, caregivers, or for the assessment designed for children ages six to eighteen, the child being assessed can complete the survey themselves (ASEBA 2010).

The *Future Aspirations Scale* was derived from a series of aspiration-related questions developed by in a research study published by Patricia L. East in 1996 (Cosden, Morrison, Albanese & Macias 2001, East 1996). The seven-item scale is designed to measure attitude and commitment of middle school age youth toward the future. The assessment explores youth feelings about completing high school, going to college, and succeeding in a career. Responses are rated on a scale from "very much" to "not at all" as well as some "yes" and "no" responses.

Given the variability in focus and style in different assessment tools, it is important for an organization to be discriminating when selecting an appropriate assessment tool for their particular needs. Selection of an appropriate assessment tool should be based on a number of factors and may include purpose of the assessment, ease of administration, who can complete the assessment, length of the assessment, and program resources. Although the overall purpose of most assessment tools in this category are similar, there are minor differences in focus and goal that should be taken into consideration and compared to the program's purpose and goals. Some assessment tools focus more on mental well-being while others focus on social skills or future aspirations. Equally important, who can complete the assessment tool, and how, should be considered. Some assessment tools can be difficult to administer and require higher education and/or extensive training to prepare individuals to administer and

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evaluate the assessment. In contrast, other assessment tools are designed to be completed by the youth being assessed. The length of the assessment tool should also be considered; staff generally have limited time to complete assessments and youth being assessed generally have limited attention spans. Given these factors, consideration of staff time, skills, and education and expected youth and parental involvement in the assessment process should be considered when selecting an appropriate assessment tool.

Finally, program resources must be considered when selecting an appropriate assessment tool. Assessment tools that require high levels of education and/or training to complete, may not be appropriate for an organization like Community Stepping Stones, which is largely volunteer based. In addition to time and skill resources, financial resources may be a factor in selection of an appropriate assessment. Most assessment tools are copyrighted and require payment by the user for materials, evaluation tools, and training. These associated costs can be quite expensive in some situations.

However, studies suggest that standardized assessment tools may be an effective instrument in tracking the emotional and behavioral impact of an arts education program and should be considered as a useful tool in program evaluation (Rapp-Paglicci et al. 2009, Wright et al. 2006).

It is also important to remember that program evaluations can be multipurpose. Although most evaluations are conducted to demonstrate program impact on youth participants, evaluations can also help youth arts education programs evaluate program services to the community and implement and monitor improvements to the overall program (Farnum & Schagger 1998, Newman et al 2003). In these instances, qualitative evaluations through community and participant satisfaction surveys may be useful.

What does this mean?

It is evident that research on and with children has been growing within the field of anthropology. Anthropologists and others have recognized the need to further explore children and youth lives and their role within the larger society. Part of this research has included assessments of youth empowerment programs. So far, studies indicate that youth involvement in all aspects of youth empowerment programming is most beneficial for both youth and program sustainability and that the positive, inclusive approach taken by most youth empowerment programs is more beneficial, long-term, than other, more traditional approaches to youth services. However, research on youth empowerment programs has primarily focused on institutional-based programs, usually offered through schools or correctional facilities. The program structure and resources of institutional-based youth empowerment programs are vastly different from community-based organizations. Although research on the positive benefit of youth empowerment programs implemented through institutional organizations has been instrumental in establishing funding revenues for community-based organizations, it is important to conduct research on community-based organizations in their own right. As indicated, published evaluations of community-based youth empowerment programs, particularly art education programs, are rare. This is even more true when considering peer reviewed publications and it means that research on effective tools for program development, evaluation, or sustainability of community-based youth art education programs are not readily available for developing programs. It is important to obtain better information on how effective community-based youth art education programs are organized, managed, and evaluated and it is imperative that this information is shared so that organizations do not spend time and resources pursuing ineffective options or redeveloping established ones.

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Chapter 3: Methodology

Through negotiations with Community Stepping Stones, it was agreed that I would conduct an assessment of Community Stepping Stones. The expectation is that this assessment will help Community Stepping Stones use a critical eye to explore areas to expand, organize, and better evaluate the current program. The goal of my research was to inform the development of a continuous program evaluation which Community Stepping Stones could integrate into normal program activities. Although data collection and my formal interview are now complete, I am still working with Community Stepping Stones to effectively apply my research to an ongoing program evaluation.

Data collection was completed during the summer of 2010. The assessment of Community Stepping Stones consisted of participant observation, interviews with staff, volunteers, and other community members, as well as document reviews. These methods were selected in an attempt to obtain information about and stakeholders' feelings towards Community Stepping Stones from a variety of perspectives.

Participant Observation

One of the primary forms of data collection consisted of participant observation. I attended Community Stepping Stones twice a week for approximately four to six hours each time. Observations were conducted during youth art classes, planning for the mural

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project, staff meetings, board of director meetings, and "down time" between activities. I was given the opportunity to move around Community Stepping Stones freely during my observation period. This allowed me to choose where, when, and what to observe with few restrictions. During this time, my role fluctuated between that of a volunteer, student, and researcher, depending on the activities going on at Community Stepping Stones, the student, staff, and volunteer needs, and my knowledge of the materials being covered.

During participant observation, I used a small notepad to take brief notes while in the field. I expanded on these field notes after leaving Community Stepping Stones, including general observations and my "take" on the situation. Notes were reviewed and themes were identified by hand for analysis.

Art education class. Most of my observation time was spent observing, helping, and participating in student classes. During the summer, teen students had classes related to the mural project in the morning and younger students had classes that covered a range of art projects in the afternoon. In both instances, classes were divided into one to three classrooms based on student abilities and available staff and volunteers. I usually rotated through the classrooms depending on space, level of student engagement, and when I had last observed a certain instructor and/or students.

When observing lower skill level classes, I was often able to help students with questions or concerns regarding the art lesson or help staff and volunteers keep students on task and engaged in the activity. Because classes were usually beyond my personal skill level in the advanced classes, I usually participated as a student in these classes. However, both types of interaction allowed me to mingle with and build rapport with the students. When enough staff and volunteers were present or when students were engaged in the art project, I usually sat in the back of the class and observed student-staff-volunteer interactions.

I also helped set up for art classes and helped supervise students while staff picked up other students and/or set up for the class. Before and after classes, I usually talked to students, staff, and/or volunteers who were at Community Stepping Stones in an informal setting. I also used the time before and after classes to interact with staff and volunteers in the staff office. This also allowed me to have more interaction with Community Stepping Stones administrative staff, who usually did not participate in class activities.

Although rare, there were times I chose to leave a classroom or chose not to observe a classroom because there was literally not enough space for me to enter. There were also students, staff, and volunteers who were not as comfortable with my presence. I tried to be mindful of comfort levels and in some instances, I chose not to observe or left certain classes due to the apparent discomfort of students, staff, or volunteers. I later made an effort to talk to the individual showing signs of discomfort in another setting in order to build a better rapport. I was also mindful of observing each of the instructors with different students and volunteers. Because some instructors worked on different days or different projects, I attempted to coordinate my observations in such a way that I had the opportunity to observe different staff in different situations.

National Endowment for the Arts mural project. During the summer, older students remained at Community Stepping Stones from 9:00 am to approximately 5:00 pm working on the mural project. I was able to observe these students as well as staff and volunteers who worked with them during this time. In addition to observing classes held in the morning, I also observed students during "down time" in between classes or other assignments or during lunch. I also observed students working on their individual art projects in the afternoon. This time allowed me to get a sense of how students, staff, and volunteers interacted and helped me build rapport with students and staff. However,

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at times the students were involved in their art work or gossip and it was apparent my presence was inappropriate. Thus, depending on the level of engagement of the students, I also used this time to interact more with Community Stepping Stones staff and volunteers.

I commonly attended offsite work on the mural project with students and staff as well. The mural was completed just a couple blocks from Community Stepping Stones' location at the Mann Wagnon Memorial Park. Due to the close proximity, students took several "field trips" to determine the exact location to paint the mural and to take measurements. I was invited to attend several of these field trips and continued to attend the mural site once students and staff began painting. During these outings, I had the opportunity to talk to students and staff in smaller groups and one-on-one as we walked back and forth between the mural site and Community Stepping Stones. While at the mural site, I chose not participate in the painting for several reasons, but I did use the time to continue conversations with the students when they were not occupied and conducted several interviews with staff.

Other observations. There were also several occasions where staff asked me to attend a specific activity or event. On these occasions, I usually agreed as I felt these invitations offered an opportunity to develop my relationship with the individual, as well as an opportunity to learn more about Community Stepping Stones. Several of these invitations involved meeting individuals working on special projects with Community Stepping Stones. Most of these individuals were students from the University of South Florida working on class or thesis projects. There were also a few occasions when I had the opportunity to meet local artists working with Community Stepping Stones in this manner. On these occasions, I primarily listened to the discussion between Community Stepping Stones staff and the individual completing the special project. I was also invited

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to run errands with staff on a few occasions and participated in community canvassing activities in the few blocks immediately around Community Stepping Stones.

Benefits of participation. Due to my previous involvement with Community Stepping Stones, I had already established a good rapport with most of the students, staff, and long-term volunteers. This made it easier to establish a relationship with new students and volunteers. Participant observation allowed me to get a better idea of the overall dynamics of Community Stepping Stones and the ways in which Community Stepping Stones staff, volunteers, and students interact within the program as well as with other programs and within the community. Participant observation also helped me identify individuals for interviews and helped me establish a positive rapport with these individuals prior to conducting interviews.

Interviews

Nineteen interviews were conducted with Community Stepping Stones staff and volunteers, Board of Director members, and other relevant community members. In most cases, subjects were identified and approached during the participant observation period. Exceptions include community or topical interview subjects who were not affiliated with Community Stepping Stones. These individuals were identified in other interviews and/or during the research process. Adult interview subjects, including Community Stepping Stones staff, volunteers, Board of Director members, and other community members, were given the option of conducting the interview face-to-face, over the phone, or over e-mail. On several occasions interviews were started face-to-face with follow-up information being provided over the phone or e-mail or vice versa. Written consent was obtained when possible. Otherwise, subjects were asked to provide verbal consent.

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Interviews with adults consisted of a semi-open ended, informal interview. Individual interview questions were developed based on the subject's unique role within Community Stepping Stones (i.e., Executive Director, staff, Board of Director member) or related to their role within the community. However, the same basic areas were explored with all of the adult interviewees. Specifically, I asked how the individual became involved in CSS and what that involvement entailed; the individual's interpretation of Community Stepping Stone's goals and impact on the students, staff, volunteers, and community; perceived strengths and weaknesses of the organization; and changes they would like to see. Although specific questions were asked, additional questions or topics were often explored based on subjects' response and comfort level. A total of 19 adult interviews were conducted. Interviews with participants from other community organizations, focused on involvement with their related organization rather than Community Stepping Stones.

Interviews were conducted with eight (8) staff from Community Stepping Stones. The majority of the staff interviews were conducted face-to-face, although some included e-mail and/or phone correspondence as well. Interviews with Community Stepping Stones staff were conducted onsite at Community Stepping Stones, at the mural site, and at local restaurants depending on the individual's preference and availability. Follow-up questions were completed by phone and e-mail on several occasions.

Volunteer interviews were conducted with both long and short term volunteers and in some in cases, volunteers who had worked with Community Stepping Stones in the past. A total of four volunteer interviews were completed. Interviews were conducted at Community Stepping Stones and at local restaurants depending on the individual's preference and availability.

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Interviews were also conducted with two Board of Director members and five individuals affiliated with other art education and after school programs. Interviews with the Board of Director members and individuals from other art education and after school programs were all conducted at the individual's place of work. In some instances, follow-up questions were clarified over the phone or over e-mail.

Students were divided into two groups; youth over and youth younger than 12 years old. Younger youth were identified by Community Stepping Stones staff and legal guardian consent was obtained by Community Stepping Stones staff and volunteers. Older youth were identified and recruited during the participant observation period. Because legal guardians were not usually present at Community Stepping Stones functions, consent was sent home with students with a request to bring it back signed by a legal guardian.

Unfortunately, I was unable to complete interviews with any Community Stepping Stones students. Based on my Internship Proposal and IRB approval, younger youth were going to participate in a drawing exercise designed to elicit their feelings about Community Stepping Stones. The drawing interview was supposed to be integrated into an afternoon class at Community Stepping Stones. However, Community Stepping Stones staff were unable to integrate the drawing interview into the curriculum as planned. This was, in part, due to significant changes in staff during the time I expected to conduct the drawing interviews.

Interviews with older students were not completed due to challenges obtaining parental consent. Although consents for younger students was obtained with assistance from Community Stepping Stones staff, staff did not regularly see guardians for the older students and were unable to help to the same degree. Although we sent consents home

with older students on several occasions, consents were not obtained. Thus I was unable to complete interviews with the older students either.

Document Review

Community Stepping Stones has been involved in a number of short-term grants, including the USF Collaborative grant and a National Endowment for the Arts grant, and has been the subject of other class-based research projects. In addition, the organization has received media attention at various points throughout its history. This variety of documentation was utilized in the form of a document review. Documents were obtained through internet searches and correspondence with other participants and Community Stepping Stones staff. In addition, I reviewed current program documents, including staff, volunteer, and student logs, budget sheets, current grant requirements, job descriptions, e-mail correspondences, Board of Director meeting minutes, website content, and previous grant applications. Notes from observations conducted during my previous work with Community Stepping Stones over the last year was also utilized as part of the document review.

Chapter 4: Findings & Discussion

Location

  Research suggests that location can be an important factor in program success. Issues pertaining to accessibility and sufficient space to meet program needs as well as feelings of safety and perceptions of ownership by program participants are important factors that need to be taken into consideration when selecting an adequate program location The Community Stepping Stones location has had a significant impact on all other aspects of the organization. When I first began working with Community Stepping Stones in February 2009, the organization was divided into two locations; the Art House and the Business. They have since moved into a new, more spacious location at the Mann-Wagnon Memorial Park.

  The Art House and the Business. The Art House was the main location for Community Stepping Stones programming until November 2009. Located on a residential street in Sulphur Springs, the Art House consisted of a one bedroom, one bathroom block house. The house included a large back yard with a shed and a partially finished, attached garage. The kitchen area was converted into an office and the refrigerator relocated outside the house. There was no stove or sink in the renovated kitchen area. Most of the building was in poor repair and emergency maintenance stopped regular programming on several occasions. Two major maintenance issues occurred while I was working with Community Stepping Stones. In one instance, the

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roots from the large oak tree in the backyard, grew into the plumbing, causing serious damage. In another instance, part of the roof in the garage area collapsed after a heavy storm. Staff and volunteers had to complete repairs and appropriate equipment had to be bought or borrowed. In addition to the building being unusable on these occasions, repairs also meant staff and volunteers were busy working on repairs rather than with youth. To make matters worse, staff and volunteers were often inexperienced in completing necessary repairs, meaning repairs often took longer than necessary, sometimes put staff and volunteers in danger, and were not always adequate to last long term.

While spacious, the backyard was littered with broken glass, old appliances, and other "junk." Due to a severe shortage of space and the poor condition of the backyard, activities were often conducted outside in an adjacent empty lot or across the street in a small park.

Figure 1: Community Stepping Stones Art House (Pedraza 2009)

Community Stepping Stones hosted several large volunteer events to help clean up the Art House, particularly the backyard. These events focused on cleaning out the shed, which had been used for storage of various art supplies, and removing the trash and glass from the backyard. Although still in disrepair, I saw significant improvements throughout the Art House during my work with Community Stepping Stones. The interior of the art house was better organized and unused and broken items were removed from the premises. The backyard was cleaned up enough to establish a small green house, compost area, and open space for art activities.

The residential community around Community Stepping Stones was a mix of older and newer homes in different states of maintenance. A row of townhouses across the street blocked a view of the Hillsborough River. River Cove Park, a small park consisting of about a quarter acre split in two by erosion is next door to the townhomes and does offer a good view of the river. Community Stepping Stones informally adopted the park, hosting a clean-up event at the park shortly after moving into the Art House. Students and staff still recount the clean-up day; they found a variety of odds and ends while cleaning the park, including a shopping cart which has since been cleaned up and used for hauling trash and making parade floats. Shortly after cleaning up the park, Community Stepping Stones built the Sulphur Spring Message Center, a replication of the Sulphur Springs tower, in River Cover Park. Community Stepping Stones also used the park as an additional classroom and for additional parking. The street is narrow and the Art House offered limited parking space. Additional parking was often necessary, especially when large community and clean-up events were being hosted.

Figure 2: Community Stepping Stones neighborhood (Pedraza 2009)

Adjacent to the Art House was a vacant lot, which the organization also cleaned up shortly after moving in. A bench was constructed in the vacant lot to invite residents to enjoy the vegetation Community Stepping Stones planted. Although not often used by Community Stepping Stones, I often observed area residents playing in and walking through the lot.

Most of the surrounding community was supportive and friendly towards Community Stepping Stones; however, there were some neighbors who objected to the number of cars and people Community Stepping Stones attracted and, according to staff, these residents called the police on Community Stepping Stones on several occasions for noise and parking violations. However, staff reported that police were supportive of Community Stepping Stones and were often lenient when they came to check on complaints.

A bus line runs by the Art House location, although local stops are several blocks away from the Art House. As mentioned previously, the road is narrow and there are often traffic jams as there is also high foot and bike traffic on the road. Even though foot and bike traffic was common in the area, cars drove significantly above the speed limit.

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Community Stepping Stones staff often identified this as a concern given the number of students walking to the Art House as well as the foot traffic generated by the organization using the River Cove Park across the street.

The Business. The "Business" was located about a mile away from the Art House and was primarily used by the teens. In addition to running a t-shirt business, hence the name, it also included a modified dark room, kiln, printing press, and silk screening materials. During my work with Community Stepping Stones, the teens participated in silk screening activities and learned how to manipulate photos in the dark room. Staff used the kiln to fire pieces made by the younger students at the Art House.

Figure 3: Community Stepping Stones "The Business" (Pedraza 2009)

The Business was located in a block of commercial buildings between the residential area of Sulphur Springs and Nebraska Avenue. The unit Community Stepping Stones used appeared to be the only unit in use. This may have been a good thing as parking was even more limited at this location; there was no parking associated with the building. Staff and volunteers had to park in an alley along one side of the building. The

unit itself consisted of one large, open room with one door entrance and one garage-style entrance. A kiln was located in the back corner and a modified dark room had been erected in the other back corner. A silk screening machine and printing press took up the rest of the space on one side. The other side of the building held two computers and merchandise for the teen's business.

Due to its location, there was little interaction with community members in the area around the Business, although foot traffic was high as residents traveled between the commercial area along Nebraska Avenue and the residential area on the other side of the building.

Mann-Wagnon Memorial Park. In the fall of 2009, Community Stepping Stones was gifted space at the Mann-Wagnon Memorial park in Sulphur Springs. According to news reports and interview accounts, the site had previously housed staff from the Hillsborough County Parks and Recreation Department, but after park buildings began to fall into disrepair, they vacated the premises. Community Stepping Stones now shares the site with Moses House and the Sulphur Springs Museum.

Figure 4: Mann Wagnon Memorial Park (O'Rourke 2010)

The Moses House is also a youth art education program serving Sulphur Springs residents. Founded in 1984 by Harold and Taft Richardson, the Moses House identifies itself as "a community-based not-for-profit organization that uses art-based learning and creative expression, social and cultural activism, social justice education, and participatory action research to improve the quality of life for children and youth living in situations of risk" (Moses 2010). Although the organization served youth in East Tampa for several years, it moved back to Sulphur Springs after many of the youth they served moved to the area when the College Hill and Ponce de Leon Housing Projects were closed in 1999-2000. Classes were initially offered at Taft Richardson's home until he fell ill in 2007 and passed away in November of 2008. Moses House has continued to develop, however, offering a variety of classes at the George Bartholomew North Tampa Recreation Center and other areas in the Sulphur Springs community.

The Sulphur Springs Museum was founded by Sulphur Springs activists Norma and Joseph Robinson (Sulphur Springs Museum 2009; Steele 2009). The Robinsons have worked with Antoinette Jackson of the University of South Florida Anthropology Department and local historian, Linda Hope, to acquire a variety of artifacts, memorabilia, and oral histories about the Sulphur Springs and Spring Hill communities. The Museums' goals are "to revitalize Sulphur Springs in such a way that the historic integrity and importance of the neighborhood is maintained and accentuated, to encourage economic growth and expansion that benefits the neighborhood and the city of Tampa, to respect and preserve the natural features located in the Sulphur Springs area, and to promote a safe, clean environment for the neighborhood children and all who live in Sulphur Springs" (Sulphur Springs Museum 2009).

Community Stepping Stones moved to the new site at Mann-Wagnon Memorial Park in November of 2009 and was followed shortly by Moses House and the Sulphur

Springs Museum. The three organizations have continued to work together with future plans to collaborate on special projects and share expertise (CSS 2009a).

Mann-Wagnon Memorial Park is home to a half dozen buildings, four of which are being used by Community Stepping Stones. Community Stepping Stones has organized its space into an office, a computer lab and studio, multiple classrooms, and plenty of storage space. Community Stepping Stones staff pointed out several code issues that had been identified when the space was first gifted, but the buildings were repaired by the county in anticipation of Community Stepping Stones using the site. The county ownership has been very helpful for Community Stepping Stones. Because the property is still owned by the county, repairs are completed promptly and can be scheduled so they do not interfere with regular programming. In fact, during my observation period, the buildings at Mann-Wagnon Memorial were tented for termites over the weekend so as not to disrupt normal programming and several windows, and a bathroom were repaired. Community Stepping Stones staff also requested a water fountain be installed on the premises, which is being scheduled by the county.

The new location is situated on the river, covering approximately two acres. There are several large oaks, a small bridge spanning a runoff creek, covered picnic tables, and plenty of open areas to play and create art outdoors. There is also ample parking available at the Mann-Wagnon Memorial Park, including handicapped parking. The area is also fenced and gated to deter criminal activity, which has been identified as a concern given the expensive equipment Community Stepping Stones maintains as an art program.

According to Community Stepping Stones staff, one of the best aspects of the new location is the reduced cost. As owners of the property, the county has continued to maintain the property, including cutting the grass and trimming other vegetation.

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Community Stepping Stones is only expected to cover utilities at Mann-Wagnon Memorial Park; they do not have to pay the county rent or maintenance feeds. Despite the county's ownership, Community Stepping Stones has still been allowed to personalize the space. As part of this, Community Stepping Stones staff have taken it upon themselves to paint some of the classrooms and plans are underway to install more appropriate flooring.

It is apparent that the new location is much nicer, both inside and out and has had a positive impact on the students, staff, volunteers, and the overall program. The new location has allowed Community Stepping Stones to expand the organization's staff and the classes offered. The previous location was literally too small for further expansion, but the Mann-Wagnon Memorial Park has provided the space so that Community Stepping Stones could hire additional staff and increase the number of classes available at any given time. Without this new location, Community Stepping Stones would not have had the opportunity to increase its enrollment numbers or obtain additional space, such as the portable.

Staff, student, and volunteer feelings about location. The location change has also had a positive impact on the attitude of students, staff, and volunteers. Although not specifically addressed in interviews, several interview participants mentioned the positive impact the move has had on Community Stepping Stones staff and students, the positive image it portrays to the community, volunteers, and potential funders, and the opportunities it has afforded the organization due to the increase space and reduced requirements on organization funds. Several students and staff mentioned the feeling that Community Stepping Stones offered them a "safe haven." Students noted that Community Stepping Stones allowed them to get away from the crime and poverty they were surrounded by in the neighborhood and at home. Many students indicated that

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Community Stepping Stones was one of the few places they were able to get positive support and help for their interest in art. As one former student put it, "I can just be myself at Community Stepping Stones. There isn't the pressure or the expectations. There is just me."

Funding

When I first began working with Community Stepping Stones in February of 2009, funding was a serious issue. According to interviews and financial documents, most of the organizations funds were obtained through an endowment for the arts grant awarded through the University of South Florida School of Art and Art History. Additional grants, including annual funds from the Hillsborough County Arts Council and the Children's Board of Hillsborough County, helped to further offset costs. However, the majority of grants received were smaller, one-time grants which were usually project specific. For example, Community Stepping Stones received funds from the Mayor's Beautification Program, the City of Tampa Public Art Program and the City of Tampa Parks and Recreation Department for the completion of two large-scale murals completed at the Rowlett Park Community Center in 2006 and 2007.

More recently, staff indicated Community Stepping Stones had received funding to implement a healthy snack program for student participants. Awarded through the Allegany Franciscan Foundation, the grant is based on financial needs of Community Stepping Stones student participants and allocates funds for healthy snacks and drinks to be offered during program hours.

Although Community Stepping Stones was making an effort to utilize multiple resources, interviews and document reviews suggested that these funding sources were not adequate to cover building and maintenance costs, supplies, or to pay staff regularly.

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Interviews revealed that staff were paid sporadically and often only part of what was owed. Additional issues identified in interviews and during observations were challenges keeping up with the mortgage and rent. In order to make ends meet, staff often purchased supplies with their own money.

As mentioned previously, research suggests that one-time and short-term grants are not a sustainable funding option for organizations (Wright 2007). This is particularly true in the current grant environment where funding cuts and a lack of available funding has become common place. Instead, long-term and multiple funding sources ought to be sought. In this way, an organization can ensure funding comes from a variety of sources and is not reliant on just one source. Financial damage can then be kept to a minimum if a single source is not obtainable in the future.

Community Stepping Stones staff recognized the organization's precarious financial situation and sought the help of a grant writer. In the spring of 2009, a volunteer grant writer joined Community Stepping Stones and has proven to be a huge asset for the organization. In addition to several smaller grants, she has helped Community Stepping Stones obtain an AmeriCorps grant and a National Endowment for the Arts grant. Total operating budget for Community Stepping Stones went from less than $50,000 annually in 2007-2008 to approximately $132,000 in 2009-2010 (CSSa 2009).

AmeriCorps. The AmeriCorps grant has been transformational for Community Stepping Stones. Awarded in August 2009, the grant provided funding for two full-time administrative staff and two part-time art instructors. The AmeriCorps grant was match-based, meaning Community Stepping Stones was expected to come up with funding to match the AmeriCorps grant. As part of its match funds, Community Stepping Stones was expected to pay the Executive Director and AmeriCorps Program Director. AmeriCorps also required Community Stepping Stones to serve 100 unique individuals

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each week. Additional requirements included staff serving a set number of hours by the end of the grant, staff attending a set number of training hours, and evaluation measures showing community and youth impact of the program.

Initially, the funding through AmeriCorps allowed Community Stepping Stones to hire new people. Two part-time instructors were hired to help teach classes and two full-time administrative staff were hired to manage the administrative aspects of the organization. This allowed staff – new and old – to focus their energies in the area of their individual expertise. The original Community Stepping Stones staff was made up of artists with very little experience running a non-profit. With the new AmeriCorps staff focusing on budgets, volunteer recruitment, and other administrative tasks, the original staff and new part-time instructors could better focus their attention on the youth and developing art activities.

Community Stepping Stones reapplied and was awarded an AmeriCorps grant for a second year. The renewal grant includes funds for four additional staff, bringing the total number of staff funded by AmeriCorps to eight. Staff funded under the AmeriCorps grant now include a full-time Community Volunteer Coordinator, After School Art Program Coordinator, Community Alliance Coordinator, and Programming Coordinator. Four part-time positions are also covered under the grant, including an Event Coordinator and three Youth Art Instructors. The Executive Director and AmeriCorps Program Director remained part of the match agreement. Based on discussions with previous staff and observations of staff responsibilities, the increase in personnel was necessary, particularly given the expansion of the program over the last year.

On the surface, the AmeriCorps grant provided consistent financial resources and dedicated, paid staff; two resources that were severely lacking for Community Stepping Stones. In addition, and perhaps more importantly, the AmeriCorps grant

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provided Community Stepping Stones with clear guidelines and expectations for running a community-based youth art education program. Prior to the AmeriCorps grant, Community Stepping Stones did not portray itself as an organized or goal-driven agency. Although the organization had the structure of a good program, a Board of Directors, 501(c)3 status, location, committed staff and volunteers, and regular students, the pieces were not well coordinated. The AmeriCorps grant required the organization to maintain better financial, attendance, and activity records, ensure expectations were clear for staff and student participants, and held the program accountable.

Although the AmeriCorps grant provided a number of opportunities for Community Stepping Stones, it also created several challenges. The expectations of the AmeriCorps grant were not always practical in application. The original grant agreement indicated that Community Stepping Stones needed to serve 100 individual students on a weekly basis. However, when the grant was originally awarded, services were being provided to no more than 50 youth on a weekly basis. Community Stepping Stones had to be creative in its service provision. Ultimately, they offered art education classes to youth in other programs, such as the Tampa Housing Authority's Neighborhood Network summer and after-school programs. These additional classes allowed Community Stepping Stones to meet the organization's required student numbers according to the AmeriCorps grant. The number of students served has again increased with the expansion of the AmeriCorps grant. In addition to the agreement with the Housing Authority, Community Stepping Stones is pursuing collaborations with local recreation centers, after school programs, area elementary schools, and the Department of Juvenile Justice. Concerns have been raised, though, about the lack of funding available from these organizations. For example, according to Community Stepping Stones staff, the initial agreement with the Housing Authority was that Community Stepping Stones

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would provide program services for free for one year and then the Housing Authority would pay to continue programming in subsequent years. However, it does not appear that the Housing Authority will be able to meet this arrangement due to budget cuts. Negotiations with the recreation center seems to be a similar situation.

Expectations of staff hired through the AmeriCorps grant also became a challenge. Staff were required to complete certain trainings, attend meetings, develop curriculum, and participate in events outside of normal program hours. However, staff were also committed to a set number of hours each week and were not permitted to go over or under those hours on a regular basis. This created a challenge as the hours needed to meet all staff requirements often exceeded the number of hours staff had committed to AmeriCorps. Staff ended up "volunteering" additional hours in order to meet grant requirements. However, this arrangement was not approved by AmeriCorps and other arrangement had to be made to meet all granting requirements and restrictions; namely an increase in regular volunteers to cover classes when staff were over their hours.

The AmeriCorps grant also created incentive for Community Stepping Stones to obtain other funding sources. The AmeriCorps grant was match-based, meaning AmeriCorps would pay a certain amount provided Community Stepping Stones matched the funds. In order to full-fill this agreement, Community Stepping Stones obtained several other grants and hosted fundraising events throughout the year.

National Endowment for the Arts mural grant. Community Stepping Stones applied for and was awarded a $10,000 National Endowment for the Arts grant in 2010. The National Endowment for the Arts grant was awarded for the completion of a mural project in Sulphur Springs focusing on the history of the community. Arrangements were made to paint the mural on the side of the historic Sulphur Springs Theater off Nebraska

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Avenue and Sitka Street in Tampa. The mural project was expected to involve local teens during the summer and included funds to hire staff to teach the youth painting techniques and pay the youth for their participation. Teens were recruited from the neighborhood for the summer project. At the beginning of the summer, 16 youth expressed interest, but about half as many youth were actually hired to complete the mural project.

The mural project was the main focus of most staff during the summer months. The Executive Director initially led the project, teaching students different painting techniques and supervising the two youth staff hired as part of the mural project. The youth staff, were both older students who had been working with Community Stepping Stones for several years. They had both mastered most painting techniques and were the primary instructors for the students. In July, a private artist who had previously worked with Community Stepping Stones was hired to complete work on the mural project while the Executive Director was out of state. Since the new artist had been involved with Community Stepping Stones in the past, including leading the mural projects at Rowlett Park, he was familiar with Community Stepping Stones, comfortable working with youth, and had previous experience working with the community. In fact, because of his previous involvement, he already knew several of the students and community members involved in the National Endowment for the Arts mural project.

Although the end goal of the National Endowment for the Arts grant was the mural project, another aim of the grant was to teach participating youth job skills. Students were expected to act in a professional manner. Classes began and ended at certain times, with time allotted for lunch and other breaks. Students were also assigned certain tasks that had to be completed in a set timeframe. On a regular day, students arrived at 9:00 am and were expected to stay, either working on art projects or mural

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related tasks until 5:00 pm. For the first month of the project, the two youth staff taught students in formal classes in the morning. In the afternoon, students worked on applying the techniques they learned by painting a self-portrait or other painting projects. The youth staff and other Community Stepping Stones staff were available to help students during this time; although they were often in other rooms working on their own projects, staff stopped in on the youth occasionally to offer assistance and suggestions.

After staff felt the youth were well versed in the necessary painting techniques, students interviewed area residents about their memories related to Sulphur Springs. Findings from these interviews, which included a focus on education and community support, were incorporated into the mural. The location of the mural and the painting style were determined by Community Stepping Stones staff, but students were actively involved in deciding where on the building to paint the mural and what images and words should be included in the mural.

By mid-July, students began working on the actual mural. Students would walk down to the mural site with staff first thing in the morning, usually working until it began raining in the afternoon or, if they were lucky, until the end of the work day. Progress was slow with the students as they often had to check in with the supervising staff regarding which colors to use, appropriate color mixtures, etc. In order to meet their deadline, staff began working on the mural without students one day a week.

The mural was completed by the end of August. Unfortunately, the dedication day was rained out and had to be postponed. However, Community Stepping Stones still hosted public officials, news reporters, and drew new community members and social leaders to the event despite the rain. The dedication event has been tentatively rescheduled for October 2010.

The National Endowment for the Arts grant is a highly prestigious award within the art community and is expected to help Community Stepping Stones obtain additional art-based grants in the future. The grant also served its purpose for the organization, offering Community Stepping Stones students a valuable summer experience learning job skills, exploring their community's history, and empowering them to give back to the community. The mural project was also a step forward in a larger goal for Community Stepping Stones. The organization has recently revealed that they plan to create "an avenue of the arts" along River Cove Street. The National Endowment for the Arts mural is the fourth art installation along River Cove Street, the other two being the murals located at the Rowlett Park Recreation Center and the *United Drops Make Waves* installment at River Cove Park. The media attention generated by the grant and subsequent mural project are also expected to positively impact Community Stepping Stones. Local and State politicians were involved in the scheduled dedication and the event drew a large amount of interest from the community and local community organizations. Staff have revealed the hope that these new connections will help generate new participants and community partners.

Figure 5: National Endowment for the Arts Mural project (O'Rourke 2010)

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Non-grant funding sources. Although the AmeriCorps grant and subsequent match grants has helped expand Community Stepping Stones, reliance on these grants leaves the organization financially vulnerable if the grants are not renewed. Thus, Community Stepping Stones has also made efforts to secure funding from non-grant sources.

Teen's Social Entrepreneurship Program. Community Stepping Stones has developed an income generating "business," which it refers to as the Teen's Social Entrepreneurship Program. The program is part of Community Stepping Stones and is primarily operated by the teen students with staff guidance. The program is based on a Social Entrepreneur Model and the primary function of the Entrepreneurship Program is to teach older students job skills. The mural projects completed by Community Stepping Stones have been organized under the Entrepreneurship Program; student participants were expected to act in a professional manner and were paid for their time. The Entrepreneurship Program also sells t-shirts designed and printed by the students, students have been working on increasing inventory to include ceramics, paintings, and photographs as well. The Entrepreneurship Program was originally operated out of "The Business" location prior to Community Stepping Stones' move to Mann-Wagnon Memorial Park. Based on observations and discussions with Community Stepping Stones staff and students, until recently, it appeared that most merchandise was sold by word of mouth and during special events either hosted or attended by Community Stepping Stones. However, last year, Community Stepping Stones was given a booth at the Ybor City Saturday Market free of charge. The Market is held each Saturday from 9:00 am to approximately 3:00 pm. Art items created by the youth are sold at the Market in addition to other fundraising items, such as pie coupons from a local restaurant.

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It has proven challenging to staff the Ybor City Market, though. If Community Stepping Stones staff supervise the booth, they do not have sufficient hours to meet their job requirements during the week. Volunteers have been reluctant to commit time citing the time and heat – the market is held from 9:00 am to 3:00 pm on Saturday and with supplies needing to be picked up and dropped off at Community Stepping Stones before and after the event, the actual time commitment was approximately between 8:00 am to 4:00 pm in the middle of the summer. Community Stepping Stones hopes to better utilize the Ybor City Market booth as new volunteers become available with the fall semester. The organization also anticipates better support from volunteers from other civic engagement organizations it is working to partner with.

Fundraising. Community Stepping Stones also hosted a fundraising event in the summer of 2010. Rain barrels were donated to the organization and painted by local artists, including some Community Stepping Stones students. The rain barrels were then sold at the fundraising event and through the Community Stepping Stones website. The rain barrel fundraising event was suggested by Board of Director members who helped obtain the rain barrels and artists. Board members initially expected Community Stepping Stones to host a fundraising event on a monthly or bi-monthly basis, but Community Stepping Stones staff expressed concerns regarding the effort and resources needed to host such an event. Given the already scarce amount of time and resources Community Stepping Stones staff had for program implementation, they did not feel they were prepared to coordinate such a large event on a regular basis. The new Events Coordinator, hired through the expanded AmeriCorps grant, is expected to have the time and resources to begin hosting regular fundraising events.

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Figure 6: Rain Barrels (Community Stepping Stones 2009a)

Through this mix of funding sources, Community Stepping Stones has grown significantly in the last couple of years. Documents show that Community Stepping Stones had an operating budget of less than $50,000 in 2007-2008. With the addition of the AmeriCorps grant, the match grants, and other funding sources, the operating budget grew to over $132,000 in 2009-2010. This increase has allowed Community Stepping Stones to dramatically increase the number of organization staff and allowed for easier budgeting of resources and maintenance costs. At the same time, it has also been challenging for Community Stepping Stones to meet the increase demands of financial documentation. After struggling with new documentation requirements and increased financial responsibility, Community Stepping Stones has successfully implemented and organized an operating budget, which they can use to project future financial needs.

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Staff and Volunteers

Staff and volunteers also changed significantly between the time I initiated contact with Community Stepping Stones to the present. When I first started working with Community Stepping Stones, the organization had three individuals who ran the program. Although technically staff, these individuals were not paid regularly and did not have clearly defined roles or titles. However, these staff members had been with Community Stepping Stones since its inception and were highly dedicated to both the organization and the youth served.

Executive Director. Among these three staff, the Executive Director of Community Stepping Stones was identified as the organization's greatest asset by several people. His vision and passion have carried Community Stepping Stones over the years and has allowed him to be resourceful and creative in obtaining financial, community, academic, and even political support. He has worked to develop relationships within the community, with staff and students at the University of South Florida, and with individuals and organizations in the community. These relationships have served Community Stepping Stones well in obtaining funds and other resources as well as gaining the trust and interest of the community. The Executive Director's passion for engaging and beautifying the community of Sulphur Springs has spread to the staff, volunteers, Board of Directors, and others engaged in Community Stepping Stones.

At the same time, the Executive Director has also been identified as one of Community Stepping Stones' greatest challenges. Although his openness to community collaboration has been instrumental in establishing Community Stepping Stones, it has also left the organization prone to what some described as a lack of direction and disorganization. Being pulled in so many different directions, the organization has not had the opportunity to truly develop itself and its purpose. Staff are sometimes

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overwhelmed trying to pursue activities that may help build relationships, but that may not further the development of Community Stepping Stones.

This "distractibility" was most evident among collaborations with University of South Florida students. Community Stepping Stone staff and volunteers put in a lot of effort working with USF students to design and implement art projects. Most of these art projects met Community Stepping Stones goals, including focusing on community needs and actively involving Community Stepping Stones students. However the number of projects sometimes took away from regular Community Stepping Stones programming. There were several times I felt there was more focus on individual USF student projects than Community Stepping Stones classes or organizational development. Miller and Rowe (2009) claim that programs with the best outcomes had "leaders who spent most of their time in the program and whose attention was not diverted to many different programs (p.58)." The Executive Director was definitely dedicated to Community Stepping Stones and was highly visible within the organization, but his attention to projects outside of Community Stepping Stones may have impacted the organization's ability to focus on organizational development. In many ways, this issue was addressed by the staff increases implemented through the AmeriCorps grant. The increase in staff allowed the organization to better assign specific staff to areas of need within the organization, including collaboration with other organizations, community members, and students.

AmeriCorps impact on staff. Shortly after I began my work with Community Stepping Stones, the organization obtained a grant writer who was instrumental in obtaining an AmeriCorps grant for the organization. The AmeriCorps grant has proven to be vital in further developing Community Stepping Stones over the last year and a half. In addition to providing measurable funds for resources, materials. maintenance, and

other needs, the grant awarded funds to hire a full-time Program Coordinator and Volunteer Coordinator and two-part time Art Instructors. The grant also called for match funds to retain the Executive Director and to hire an AmeriCorps Program Director. The grant has since been renewed and expanded to include double the initial staff. There is now a full-time Community Volunteer Coordinator, After School Art Program Coordinator, Community Alliance Coordinator, and Programming Coordinator. There is also a part-time Events Coordinator and three part-time Art Instructors.

All of the staff prior to the AmeriCorps grant participated in the creation of Community Stepping Stones or, at the very least, had been with Community Stepping Stones for several years and had known each other prior to Community Stepping Stones. After knowing each other and working together for so long, staff reported having a good relationship with one another and claimed to utilize similar teaching and discipline methods. In order to better incorporate the new AmeriCorps staff, Community Stepping Stones utilized team building trainings offered through AmeriCorps. As part of this training, staff reported participating in a personality test using the Myer-Briggs Personality Test and learning about other personality information. In addition to the Myer-Briggs Personality types, Community Stepping Stones staff also discussed differences between "right" and "left" brained staff on several occasions. Specifically, they acknowledged – and discussed making efforts to embrace and capitalize on – the differences between artistic minded staff and more business minded staff. According to staff, left brained people are more artistic, creative, and disorganized. Staff felt most of the art instructors and other staff with strong art backgrounds fit this description. In contrast, staff identified right brained individuals as being organized and believed the new administrative staff fit this descriptions. Staff went so far as to suggest that this difference was part of the reason why Community Stepping Stones struggled with

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program organization in the past; according to staff, prior to the AmeriCorps grant, there was a lack of right brained individuals on staff and the left brained staff were unable to maintain the necessary organizational records. Research on art education programs has also acknowledged the significance of the artistic personality on developing and implementing effect programs (Hamilton 2003, Newman et al. 2003). In short, findings indicate that artists are, in fact, more free and creative and that this personality type may be in direct conflict with the necessary organization and structure for running a successful art education program.

The test, personality information, and related team building activities made a big impact on the staffs' understanding of and relationship with each other. On several occasions, staff mentioned how the personality information helped them work with each other more effectively and even helped to diffuse sensitive situations because it allowed them to better understand each other's point of view.

In addition to the personality training completed as part of team building activities, staff attended other trainings in order to fulfill AmeriCorps requirements. Some of the trainings were required, such as CPR and first aid trainings, but others were selected by Community Stepping Stones staff and were related to program needs. Most of the trainings selected by Community Stepping Stones staff focused on curriculum development and teaching. They were also in the process of setting up training on how to conduct evaluation measures with Community Stepping Stones students. Staff reported that these trainings were very helpful. However, trainings were also challenging to attend given the limited amount of time staff were allotted each week through the AmeriCorps program. If staff attended training, it often took away from their time fulfilling regular obligations at Community Stepping Stones. In order to meet both needs, staff

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"volunteered" the difference on several occasions before being instructed to find another alternative by AmeriCorps.

Staff roles and perceptions of Community Stepping Stones. Community Stepping Stones means a lot to staff members. As one put it "[Community Stepping Stones] means community and friendship and relationships and communication. It means a lot of laughing a lot of hard work and working together and teamwork and partnerships." Staff made it clear that employment with Community Stepping Stones was not financially viable, but that they felt Community Stepping Stones had a lot to offer the students and Sulphur Springs community. Several staff noted that they liked watching students grow emotionally, socially, and artistically. Staff readily offered support to students and each other.

Volunteers. Community Stepping Stones also has several volunteers who were involved to varying degrees. Most of these volunteers were involved with Community Stepping Stones through the community art class at the University of South Florida. These volunteers assisted during art classes and with other maintenance issues around the Art House and Business. Some of these regular volunteers were also USF students working with Community Stepping Stones on a class project or thesis. University of South Florida students often expected to have concrete evidence of their involvement at the end of the semester and a significant portion of their time was focused on developing their special project. Although the youth were often involved in these projects, their involvement usually seemed secondary to the end product. In short, staff and volunteer time was spent on USF student projects, which were often incorporated into regular programming.

During special events, large numbers of volunteers, mostly from the University of South Florida Center for Leadership & Civic Engagement also helped. These were

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primarily one time volunteers who assisted in goal oriented projects, such as site clean-up, community enrichment projects, or event coordination. These volunteers did not usually interact with Community Stepping Stones students, primarily because students were not often present at these events. On a few occasions, these one-time, event volunteers chose to continue to volunteer at Community Stepping Stones. However, the volunteers did not generally stay for more than one semester, if that.

Recently, Community Stepping Stones has been working to better manage their volunteers. As part of the AmeriCorps grant, Community Stepping Stones hired a Volunteer Coordinator whose responsibility is to find and manage volunteers. Several new volunteer related goals have also been established in conjunction with the new position. First, Community Stepping Stones is making efforts to find and retain more long-term volunteers. As mentioned previously, most volunteers were short-term; volunteering either one-time or for one semester. Although the new Volunteer Coordinator is expected to maintain Community Stepping Stones' relationship with the USF Center for Leadership and Civic Engagement, the source of most one-time volunteers; she will also work to develop new relationships with other organizations and individuals who are more likely to volunteer on a long-term basis. Community Stepping Stones plans to begin partnerships with community organizations, such as the Rotary Club and the Jr. Women's League. These organizations tend to have a more stable membership and Community Stepping Stones anticipates they will be able to draw more consistent volunteers from these types of organizations. In addition to consistency, volunteers from community civic organizations tend to be current or retired professionals and may also have skills Community Stepping Stones can capitalize on that most college students cannot offer. For instance, one of the community civic organizations Community Stepping Stones spoke to mentioned that they have helped other

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organizations with fundraising events in the past. Dedicated and skilled volunteers would be a huge asset for Community Stepping Stones.

Community Stepping Stones is also working to match volunteer skills with Community Stepping Stones needs. Previously, volunteers came and were assigned random tasks as needs arose. More recently, Community Stepping Stones has been making efforts to ask volunteers to select from a list of specific tasks that need to be completed. Community Stepping Stones has also been more pro-active about identifying and advertising needed skill sets, such as gardening knowledge, in advance. In this way, Community Stepping Stones has also been making better use of its one-time or semester-long volunteers.

Lastly, Community Stepping Stones has recognized the need to find more culturally appropriate staff and volunteers. Staff and volunteers have proven to be dedicated, resourceful, and compassionate, but they are not representative of Community Stepping Stones students. I did not collect demographic data for staff and volunteers or for students, but general observations suggest that most staff and volunteers are upper-middle class, well educated, and White. In contrast, Sulphur Springs US Census (2000) data and observations indicate that most students are from lower socio-economic backgrounds and are more culturally and ethnically diverse. Although several students claimed ethnic and racial make-up was irrelevant to them, other students felt it was important and empowering for them to see staff and volunteers with a similar socio-economic, cultural, and ethnic background. Studies (Murray et al. 2004, Spoth & Redmond 2002, Wright et al. 2007) suggest that students show more positive gains and are more likely to develop positive relationships with staff and volunteers when they are from similar cultural and ethnic backgrounds, particularly when they reside in the same community. Thus this concern raised by Community Stepping

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Stone staff is valid and worth exploring further. Current efforts are underway to recruit more community-based volunteers.

USF community art class volunteers. Approximately 10 regular volunteers attend Community Stepping Stones each school semester as part of an art class taught at the University of South Florida through the College of the Arts. The class explores grassroots and community art. As part of the class, students are expected to volunteer at Community Stepping Stones, including developing curriculum for Community Stepping Stones classes. Most weekday volunteers I observed were from this class. Overall, the class seems to be a great asset for both the students and Community Stepping Stones. USF student volunteers reported that the teacher was generally charismatic, knowledgeable, and skilled and that the class was informative. However, Community Stepping Stones staff reported a disconnect between the class curriculum and expectations about USF student involvement at Community Stepping Stones. Staff reported that USF student volunteers often seemed overwhelmed by Community Stepping Stones and were usually unclear about expectations regarding their involvement with Community Stepping Stones students and programming. University of South Florida art student volunteers relayed similar concerns; they indicated that they were not given information about how to interact with Community Stepping Stones students or what they were supposed to do at Community Stepping Stones. Most USF student volunteers reported being overwhelmed and under prepared when they began attending Community Stepping Stones.

Part of the issue with the USF student volunteers was that their role *was* unclear for both Community Stepping Stones staff and USF student volunteers, particularly during my earlier observations. USF student volunteers were treated like other volunteers and asked to assist in all aspects of Community Stepping Stones

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programming, sometimes with little to no guidance. Some USF student volunteers I observed were given a classroom of students and asked to coordinate an art project. Other USF student volunteers had little to no involvement with Community Stepping Stones students, instead working on maintenance and other projects around the Community Stepping Stones buildings.

By the end of the semester, though, most USF student volunteers appeared to have a better understanding of their role at Community Stepping Stones – whatever it was - and some were proactive about working with Community Stepping Stones staff to enact protocol that made volunteering easier and more productive. Specifically, one group of volunteers suggested taking photos of the children and staff and placing them on a board so the student volunteers could learn the children's names easier. Another group of student volunteers reported that they had suggested curriculum be maintained in a book that would be available to volunteers and staff. The idea was that incoming student volunteers would have an example of expected curriculum and volunteers could pull short lessons from the book when waiting for formal classes to start or in the event a lesson was finished earlier than expected.

Community Engagement

Although Community Stepping Stones is focused on community art, its community involvement is limited. This is primarily due to the neighborhood where the organization is located. With a high crime rate, Sulphur Springs is not a very safe neighborhood and residents are often wary of people they do not know. However, Community Stepping Stones has remained committed to engaging the community and has made efforts to do so. According to one staff member, "Everything we do is to make the community a better place."

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Several art projects the organization has undertaken have had the intention of actively engaging the local community and several of these projects have made Community Stepping Stones more noticeable within Sulphur Springs and within Tampa. For example, most Sulphur Springs residents I spoke with recognize the two large murals Community Stepping Stones painted on the side of the Rowlett Park Recreation Center; even if they did not know the name of the organization, they were familiar with Community Stepping Stones' activities in the community.

Although the organization is currently known by only a handful of residents, mostly people who have had direct contact with staff, volunteers, or programming, Community Stepping Stones is actively making inroads to the rest of the community. One of the main ways Community Stepping Stones has attempted to reach out to the community is through art installations aimed at community beautification. As mentioned previously, Community Stepping Stones staff recently began discussing plans to create "an avenue of the arts" along River Cove Street in Sulphur Springs. Along with the Rowlett Park murals, the *United Drops Make Waves* project at River Cove Park and the more recent National Endowment for the Arts mural are the beginning of a series of art projects Community Stepping Stones hopes to complete along River Cove Street. According to staff, the intent is to show residents that they can take pride in their community.

Rowlett Park murals. The first and probably most recognized community art installations by Community Stepping Stones were the murals at the Rowlett Park racquetball court. Youth were recruited to assist with the mural project through the community center at Rowlett Park. Community Stepping Stones staff led the mural project; teaching participating youth photography, drawing, computer programs, and other art techniques in the process. Although Community Stepping Stones staff provided

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guidance, students were instrumental in the design and implementation of the murals. The first mural, "*You + Me = Community*" includes images of community members and Sulphur Springs landmarks, such as the Sulphur Springs tower, Rowlet Park racquetball court, and the Sulphur Springs Theater. The design was presented to the Sulphur Springs Neighborhood Association for approval and the mural was completed in 2006.

Figure 7: Rowlett Park Mural: "You+Me=Community" (Community Stepping Stones 2009a)

Shortly afterwards, Community Stepping Stones started work on a second mural, also located on the racquetball court. This mural, titled "*Exactly,*" shows images of women in different stages of caretaking and is representative of the role women play in the neighborhood and the lack of adult male role models. Community Stepping Stones staff often relate the story behind the title. As Community Stepping Stones was painting the mural, residents pointed out that there weren't any men in the mural, to which Community Stepping Stones staff and students responded, "exactly."

The Rowlett Park murals are highly visible and recognized in the neighborhood. Despite wariness from some community members, residents often became receptive

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when told you are with Community Stepping Stones; the group who painted the Rowlett Park murals.

Figure 8: Rowlett Park Murals: "Exactly" (Community Stepping Stones 2009a)

Sulphur Springs Message Center. Another relatively well known art installation by Community Stepping Stones is the *Sulphur Springs Message Center*. The *Message Center* was part of a class project initiated by students in the USF community art class. Designed and constructed by students in the class over the course of several semesters, the *Message Center* was completed at the end of 2007.

The *Message Center* was installed at River Cove Park, a small piece of land owned and maintained by the city near the old Art House. It was designed to look like a miniature replica of the Sulphur Springs water tower and included a mailbox for messages from the community to Community Stepping Stones. The purpose of the *Message Center* was to provide community members with a way to communicate their needs and desires to Community Stepping Stones. In turn, Community Stepping Stones planned to act on these messages through different art projects, community service

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projects, and community advocacy. Sadly, I noticed that the *Message Center* was removed from the park premises shortly after Community Stepping Stones vacated the nearby Art House in the summer of 2010.

Figure 9: "Sulphur Springs Message Center" (Community Stepping Stones 2009a)

Community parades. As part of its response to feedback from the *Sulphur Springs Message Center* and further efforts to engage the community, Community Stepping Stones has hosted community parades. In collaboration with USF art students, Community Stepping Stones students built a float and designed costumes. On at least two occasions, they used these items to host a parade in Sulphur Springs. They sang songs and made music, encouraging residents to come out and join them.

Community Collaborations and Partnerships

In addition to community art installments, Community Stepping Stones has made great efforts to enrich the community in other ways. As the *United Drops Make Waves* project indicates, Community Stepping Stones also worked to address environmental

issues as well as community beatification. To this end, Community Stepping Stones has also organized several events focused on clean-up and restoration of the community. During one event, they worked to clean up the vacant lot adjacent to the old Art House, as well as River Cover Park located across the street from the old Art House. Although this event did not occur during my observation period, it was very important to Community Stepping Stones and their relationship with the community. Clean-up efforts provided Community Stepping Stones with an opportunity to show neighborhood youth the impact they had on the environment. The clean-up efforts also helped make Community Stepping Stones both visible in the community and placed them as role models within the community. According to staff, their efforts to enhance the community provided the community with incentive and inspiration to keep the community clean. Community Stepping Stones was also able to utilize the adjacent lot and the park for activities after the clean-up efforts. This was important given the small space available at the old Art House.

United Drops Make Waves. *United Drops Make Waves* was another art installation completed by students from the USF community art class in the fall of 2009. Exhibited at the same park as the *Message Center*, River Cove Park, the art project consisted of a large, painted fabric hung in the trees. According to USF students leading the project, the fabric was supposed to be representative of the erosion plaguing the park; severe erosion has literally split the park in two. Along with the art installment, plans are underway to install sculptures and gardening to help fix the erosion issue and restore the park.

Seeds in the Spring. In addition to these clean-up efforts and the *United Drops Make Waves* collaboration, Community Stepping Stones collaborated with an organization called Seeds in the Springs. Unlike many of the other projects Community

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Stepping Stones has collaborated on, Seeds in the Spring was not initiated by the art students. Rather, Seeds in the Spring was begun by a group of friends from the University of South Florida who wanted to make a difference. Originally called United Students for Change, members began working with Community Stepping Stones in late 2008. Seeds in the Spring broke off from their parent organization to focus on environmental sustainability in the Sulphur Springs area in the fall of 2009.

Figure 10: Community Stepping Stones youth participants (Pedraza 2009)

The organization began by helping Community Stepping Stones clean out the backyard of the old Art House. In this area and the adjacent vacant lot, they began building a community garden. The backyard of the Art House was used to create compost areas and build a small green house for seedlings. Flowering and vegetable plants were planted in the adjacent lot. The intent was for community members to enjoy both the aesthetics of the garden and the food the garden provided. Community Stepping Stones and Seeds in the Spring collaborated to maintain the plants in the adjacent lot.

After the garden project was well underway at the old Art House, Seeds in the Spring began reaching out to the community. Although initially plans had included building a large, centrally located community garden, after talking with community members, Seeds in the Spring helped develop small-scale gardens in homes throughout the community. Through collaborations with Community Stepping Stones, Seeds in the Spring was able to help individual families plant small gardens in their own yard and taught families how to maintain and harvest the plants from these gardens.

Although Community Stepping Stones was very helpful in the beginning stages of the organization's development, Seeds in the Spring is now an independent organization and has little affiliation with Community Stepping Stones. Members confirmed that they are still involved in planting and maintaining community gardens at residents' homes in Sulphur Springs and are now working to expand their efforts into area schools as well.

Other collaborative efforts. One of the clean-up events I observed, Green the Block, was held in September of 2009 in honor of the Ghandi Day of Service. During this event, Community Stepping Stones had about one hundred volunteers working on various projects throughout Sulphur Springs. Projects included general clean-up of neighborhood parks, empty lots, and residences; removal of invasive plant species identified at different residences, planting of residential gardens with Seeds in the Spring; clean-up and painting of several residences in Sulphur Springs; and painting rain barrels and other environmentally conscious projects with local youth.   Although Green the Block was one of the larger, coordinated projects hosted by Community Stepping Stones, the organization remained involved and active in the community in similar ways throughout the year.

More recently, Community Stepping Stones has also begun to partner with organizations in Sulphur Springs in order to provide community youth with art programming. These efforts are, in part, to meet AmeriCorps grant requirements, but they have also served to better establish Community Stepping Stones in the community. Community Stepping Stones staff and volunteers provide art classes to children attending after school programs through the Tampa Housing Authority and Parks and Recreation programs at local community centers. More recently, they have begun negotiations with the Department of Juvenile Justice to host incarcerated youth seeking to complete community service hours. The Prodigy Program, located at the University Area Community Center has a similar program with the Department of Juvenile Justice, which has proven effective in both maintaining their enrollment numbers and serving incarcerated youth.

These collaborations are important for Community Stepping Stones and the youth they serve for several reasons. Community Stepping Stones initiated several of these collaborations in part to meet recruitment numbers required by the AmeriCorps grant. The additional youth served through these outreach classes allowed Community Stepping Stones to meet the minimum 100 students served per week. It has also opened up the opportunity for financial collaborations. Although no financial agreements have been made to date, negotiations have been initiated between Community Stepping Stones and some of the organizations they have collaborated with. In addition, collaboration with government and service agencies may put Community Stepping Stones in the position to refer students to needed resources. Miller & Rowe (2009) identified this type of collaboration as particularly useful for students and their families who may be in need of services, but unable to access them for various reasons. Some even suggest that the collaborating agency can have a presence on-site at the

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organization, similar to what Community Stepping Stones and the Department of Juvenile Justice are currently negotiating (Clawson & Coolbaugh 2001, Miller & Rowe 2009).

Students

Community Stepping Stones provides art education classes to youth from elementary school through high school, with a focus on youth in middle and high school. Students are primarily recruited by word of mouth; other students who have participated in the past often bring friends and family. Community Stepping Stones community events and community canvassing efforts also attract students. Although most students live within a few miles radius, Community Stepping Stones is open to anyone who is interested in participating. Youth from Sulphur Springs are given a scholarship to attend free of charge, while students from outside Sulphur Springs are expected to pay on a sliding scale. To my knowledge, no student currently pays for classes at Community Stepping Stones.

Although Community Stepping Stones is making an effort to focus on middle school students, elementary aged children still attend afternoon classes. Many of the elementary students are students who have been attending Community Stepping Stones for several months or even years. Others are younger siblings of middle or high school students who would not be able to attend unless their siblings attended, too. Some younger siblings are not even school aged. Thus, staff and volunteers often work with kids ranging in age from two years old to high school age.

Students who participate in Community Stepping Stones programming also exhibit a wide range of emotional, behavioral, and intellectual abilities. There are several students who attended regularly with mental delays, including Downs Syndrome, and

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some students were diagnosed with varying levels of Autism or other conditions that impacted their socialization and behavioral interactions.

I chose not to collect demographic data as part of my research. I did not feel it was appropriate to assign individuals ethnic categories without discussing it with them and due to the nature of my observational relationship, it was not always possible or appropriate to ask for this information of participants outright. These concerns did not apply to my interview participants; however, I was concerned about collecting demographic data on only a portion of total research participants. In hindsight, ethnic make-up may have been a good area to explore, despite my concerns.

Currently, all student attendance is voluntary. There is a core set of students who attend regularly and a smaller group who attend more infrequently. Frequency of attendance is often related to access to transportation and coordination of other obligations. Many of the high school students have after school activities or jobs. During the course of my work, several students also moved out of the area, putting them out of walking distance and/or making it harder to obtain regular transportation. Community Stepping Stones staff made an effort to keep in touch with these students and often went out of their way to provide transportation, but such arrangements were not always sustainable and these students usually attended less frequently.

Most students seemed to really enjoy attending Community Stepping Stones classes and events. I saw students at Community Stepping Stones on several occasions even when classes were not in session. During these times, students often worked on art projects privately or helped Community Stepping Stones staff and volunteers with other activities. Several of the older youth expressed that in addition to learning different forms of art, which they enjoyed, Community Stepping Stones gave them the opportunity to stay off the streets and away from trouble and provided them with the opportunity and

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encouragement to further themselves. According to one former student, "[Community Stepping Stones] shows the community that there is a safe haven. Somewhere for people to come when they need a friend or somewhere to express themselves. . .a way to release themselves. . .They've basically helped me grow in life itself."

Behavior problems did occur, but they were infrequent and quickly addressed by Community Stepping Stones staff. Behavior issues usually took the form of rough housing, trouble listening and following directions, and name calling. Community Stepping Stones staff do not tolerate physical violence. Anyone who is physically aggressive is immediately told to leave the premises and is not allowed to participate for the remainder of the day. They are also expected to write a letter of apology to the individual they were aggressive towards and to Community Stepping Stones staff and students who witnessed the event. The few times I saw this occur, the student was distraught by his banishment and apologized profusely. However, most students remained attentive and respectful of each other, equipment, and staff and volunteers.

Community Stepping Stones has worked hard to encourage academic achievement among its students. College students are actively involved in an effort to normalize secondary education and collaborations with area colleges have resulted in scholarships for Community Stepping Stones students. For many Community Stepping Stones students, the organization provided them with the interest and ability to attend college. As one former student participant said, "I never thought I would be able to go to college when I finished high school. . . [Community Stepping Stones] helped me get into college and to pick out my career." Another former student echoed the same thought; "I never thought I could go to college. . .Community Stepping Stones has given me the motivation, direction, and means to go to college. Before Community Stepping Stones, I never had the confidence in myself."

Programming

Programming at Community Stepping Stones underwent a dramatic change during my research at the center. When I initially began working with Community Stepping Stones in 2009, classes were offered to elementary through high school aged students from about 2:30 pm until 6:30 pm Monday through Friday and from about 9:00 am to 4:00 pm on Saturdays. The number of students could range from zero to about ten children depending on the day. Elementary and middle school children participated in activities at the Art House while high school aged kids usually worked at the "Business," which was located in another building several blocks away. The majority of students either walked to the Art House or were picked up by Community Stepping Stones staff or volunteers.

A variety of art mediums were explored during daily classes. Classes included different painting and drawing techniques, clay work, poetry and rap, silk screening for t-shirts, photography, and a variety of others. Activities were usually based on available staff and volunteers, but there was little apparent structure or consistency. Most of the activities I observed were related to larger projects being conducted by University of South Florida students. Art activities were also spontaneously developed on several occasions when students arrived unexpectedly, after clean-up projects, after USF student projects were completed, or at the request of Community Stepping Stones students. Regular programming was also delayed on several occasions due to maintenance problems. Overall, programming was creative and attracted youth, but it was often unorganized and did not adhere to much of a schedule. One volunteer claimed that "the lack of organization is [Community Stepping Stones'] biggest threat."

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In contrast, programming is now well organized and structured. During the summer, teen classes (middle and high school aged students) occurred every day from 9:00 am to 5:00 pm, with an hour lunch break. Elementary aged children attended from 3:30 pm to 6:00 pm. During the school year, classes occur every weekday from 3:30 pm to 6:00 pm.

Instructors and volunteers generally arrive around 2:30 or 3:00 pm to set up and organize materials for the day. Around 3:00 pm, students begin arriving and staff begin picking up students who do not have transportation and live too far to walk. Volunteers stay in the classrooms to supervise the kids and start them on transitional projects; usually free drawing, follow-up from previous classes, or prep work for the upcoming lessons. Classes still cover a wide variety of art mediums and staff are creative in their use of different materials.

Larger projects are sometimes broken into multiple lessons over the course of several days or weeks. For example, one of the large summer projects completed in 2010 was a large group painting in response to the Gulf of Mexico oil spill. The painting was broken up into several lessons completed over the course of approximately one month. The first lesson included prints of dried fish; students painted dried fish and pressed the painted fish onto blank sheets of paper, resulting in a print of the fish. The lesson was smelly, but fun. Students seemed to enjoy using such an unconventional art tool and they found the different textures of different fish fascinating. Students were also taught a painting technique using salt as part of this project. Students painted different sea animals using watercolors and sprinkled salt on the image while it was wet. This technique gave the image texture as the salt soaked up some of the color and dried onto the image. These projects were followed by a word art project. Students identified words that expressed how they felt about the Gulf oil spill and stylized the words with colors,

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different art mediums (e.g., painting, colored pencils, crayons, markers), different fonts, and incorporated related images into the words. After these projects were completed, youth "flung" paint onto a large board to represent the oil spill and the art projects they had previously created were cut out and glued to the board. The resulting project looked like different sea animals and words filling an ocean. A photograph along with a letter was sent to several political representatives, including President Barack Obama. The actual board will be installed as art in different Tampa venues over the next few months.

Approximately a dozen students regularly attend classes and students, staff, and volunteers sign in and out. Students are separated into different rooms based on skill level and staff and volunteers are divided among the rooms based on knowledge and the children's needs. There is usually enough staff and volunteers to accommodate one adult for every three students. However, actual ratios vary depending on the student's skill level; one-on-one ratios are often seen in lower skilled classrooms and one-to-five or six may be seen in higher skill level classrooms. Staff design and organize curriculum in advance and are developing a notebook of activities that can be used in the future. Curriculum is developed with a theme and identifiable goals for each lesson. Lessons are also divided into short segments in order to maintain the children's attention; usually two to three lessons are introduced each day with bathroom and snack breaks in between. Other than special events, programming is no longer conducted on the weekends.

Plans are also in the works to develop short, art-specific classes for adults and older teens. Classes are expected to be taught by Community Stepping Stones staff and guest teachers and may include pottery, water colors, web design, Photoshop, and other art classes as interest arises and knowledgeable teachers can be obtained. Staff have also indicated that Community Stepping Stones has been asked to provide day-time

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classes on financial literacy, resume writing, and computer literacy to low-income adults in the Sulphur Springs community, particularly to senior and disabled residents. Community Stepping Stone staff have indicated that they hope this outreach effort will also encourage community members to volunteer with Community Stepping Stones

Student involvement. One of the important aspects of program development for Community Stepping Stones is student involvement. Although some interview participants expressed concerns that staff were paternalistic, most staff, students and volunteers felt students were active participants in Community Stepping Stones. Staff showed respect for student art work and time by hosting an annual gallery event. Students were also paid for their participation when financially possible. Staff used these aspects of programming to teach students about work expectations, such as arriving on time, completing tasks in a timely manner, and listening to supervisors. For example, students who have developed their artistic skills are encouraged to help other students during art classes. Students are usually paid to provide this help. This type of involvement by youth in program development and implementation has been shown to support more effective programs (Farnum & Schagger 1998, Miller & Rowe 2009). . Research suggests that involvement in program development encourages program retention. Students are more likely to remain interested in programming for longer periods of time when they are involved in identifying areas of interest. Student involvement in program development also helps to empower students; further validating the youth's opinions and impact (Miller & Rowe 2009). Community Stepping Stones staff also reported that this arrangement helps students learn communication and collaboration skills, which they could apply later in life.

Part of the youth involvement is solicitation of interests for new art classes. This year, in addition to the more traditional art techniques usually taught, students requested

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classes on auto painting, composting and gardening, cooking, and Photoshop. Students also asked for homework help during class time. In response Community Stepping Stones has been searching for volunteers willing to help in these areas

Organic growth. One of the challenges Community Stepping Stones has experienced is balancing what staff describe as its "organic progression" and program growth. When asked what made Community Stepping Stones unique, staff and Board members repeatedly noted that Community Stepping Stones was created from the ground up; organization founders worked closely with community members and youth to develop programming that addressed community and youth needs. For the most part, research was not used to inform program development and evaluation measures were implemented out of necessity much later in the organization's history. Staff prided themselves on directing classes towards youth interest. This meant classes were sometimes spontaneously conceived and developed. For example, one afternoon after a large clean-up event, staff organized a short class on clay to help bring the staff, student, and volunteers together. Instruction focused not only on how to work the clay, but incorporated materials from the park participants had been cleaning. Staff talked about the importance of working to together to maintain the environment. This class was not planned, but was a nice conclusion to the clean-up activities. The class provided staff, students, and volunteers an opportunity to relate their work to art and Community Stepping Stones and allowed time for participants to interact more informally.

As Community Stepping Stones grew and began implementing more structured programming, staff expressed concern that these sorts of spontaneous, but relevant, classes would no longer be implemented. Similar concerns have been noted in other research (Wright et al. 2006). To ensure Community Stepping Stones remained "organic," staff talked about being open to changing class curriculum based on student

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interest and creating curriculum around relevant events, such as the Gulf oil spill art project.

Goals and Objectives

Community Stepping Stones has done a good job of keeping programming and other activities in line with the stated goals and objectives of the organization. Although outwardly Community Stepping Stones is a youth art education program, the staff and volunteers I interviewed unanimously identified Community Stepping Stones' main purpose as "building" the student participants. In addition to a focus on education, staff and volunteers identified the importance of teaching students appropriate social skills, anger management techniques, and overall life skills. Staff and volunteers also discussed the importance of evaluating individual student's progress in these areas, but acknowledged a lack of tools to do so.

Evaluation

Community Stepping Stones did not have any assessment measures in place when I initiated contact with the organization in early 2009. In fact, Community Stepping Stones did not consistently record staff, student, or volunteer attendance; document community activities or collaboration; or any other tracking efforts that are generally considered standard among non-profit organizations. According to interviews, this deficiency was largely due to a lack of knowledge regarding the running of a non-profit and a lack of staff to effectively implement tracking or evaluation measures. During my initial contact with Community Stepping Stones, staff recognized that this lack of

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documentation was hurting the organization's ability to obtain sufficient grants and was one of the main reasons why I began my research.

The AmeriCorps grant has been instrumental in changing evaluation measures at Community Stepping Stones. The AmeriCorps grant required Community Stepping Stones to track several programmatic outcomes including staff, student, and volunteer attendance; student and community impact; and financial tracking. Community Stepping Stones has implemented several measures to begin tracking this information and are in the process of implementing several more in the near future. Program evaluation measures are anticipated to cover both process and outcome evaluation measures.

Current measures. One of the first a changes made included documentation of student, staff, and volunteer attendance. This data was previously collected inconsistently if at all, thus tracking changes over time was not possible. However, given AmeriCorps requirements regarding the number of students served each week and the expected number of staff hours worked each week, Community Stepping Stones needed to put something in place to track this information. Simple sign in/out sheets are now used by students, staff, and volunteers. Sign in/out sheets include the participant's name, date, and time in and out. Although it took, staff some time to get used to the new procedure and ensure students and volunteers signed in and out regularly, the documentation has been helpful in keeping track of AmeriCorps requirements and maintaining information for additional funding from other grant agencies.

In addition to tracking student and staff attendance for granting requirements, documentation of volunteers and volunteer hours has also been helpful. Based on documentation begun in September 2009, Community Stepping Stones hosted over 300 volunteers who donated more than 2000 volunteer hours in a six month period. These

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numbers are impressive and have been used to demonstrate community involvement and commitment in recent grant applications.

Community Stepping Stones has also worked diligently to ensure accurate documentation of finances. A Certified Public Accountant was hired to help organize old financial documents and establish a management system for future financial tracking. Staff have reported that this new system, including the use of a computer-based financial management system and forms for tracking staff purchases, staff and student paychecks, and other spending, has been helpful in keeping track of finances on a regular basis and projecting future financial needs and resources.

These process evaluation measures have proven helpful in organizing Community Stepping Stones and documenting program outcomes for both program development and grant requirements. The implementation of a process evaluation has also proven helpful in providing accurate staff, student, and volunteer numbers for new grant applications. By tracking this information over time, Community Stepping Stones will be able to demonstrate program growth as well.

In addition to process evaluation measures, Community Stepping Stones also implemented some outcome evaluation measures. A community survey was conducted during the summer of 2010 as part of the National Endowment for the Arts grant. It is anticipated that this survey will be repeated annually. Originally focusing on resident's feelings about Sulphur Springs in the past, Community Stepping Stones has been working to modify the survey to explore community needs and brainstorm ways in which Community Stepping Stones can positively impact Sulphur Springs in the future.

Community Stepping Stones also attempted to implement a youth survey during the summer of 2010. The survey was a modification of the Future Aspiration Scale (East 1996; Cosden, Morrison, Albanese & Macias 2001; HFRP 2005). As discussed

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previously, the Futures Aspiration Scale explores youth aspirations related to academic and employment success. Staff reported that they selected this survey because of its focus on youth perceptions of the future rather than behavioral or social issues. They also felt the positive focus of the survey was more appropriate to Community Stepping Stones goals. However, staff reported challenges conducting the survey. Staff felt it was time consuming and youth did not always understand the questions. Staff also reported that granting agencies did not consider the survey a sufficient evaluation measure and requested the organization find another validated youth survey to administer instead.

Future measures. In response to concerns raised by granting agencies, Community Stepping Stones sought an alternative youth survey to the Future Aspirations Scale, which the organization had originally intended on using. After a significant amount of research, Community Stepping Stones staff, decided to use the *Home & Community Social-Behavioral Scales* (Brookes 2010). According to staff, this evaluation tool tracks both positive and negative behaviors and is relatively easy to complete and score. The evaluation is expected to help document the social and emotional impact of Community Stepping Stones programming on student participants. Regardless of the ease of use, staff have still expressed hesitancy regarding the implementation of the survey. Specific concerns include the time commitment and staff inexperience in scoring evaluation tools. Community Stepping Stones staff have discussed the possibility of completing a training on conducting and scoring evaluation tools. However, the survey has not been implemented yet nor has the training been scheduled or completed to date. It is, however, anticipated that the increase in Community Stepping Stones staff will help alleviate some of the time concerns; more staff will be available to complete the evaluation without taking away from regular programming.

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Although Community Stepping Stones has come a long way in implementing documentation and program evaluation measures, program evaluation is still an area the organization can further develop. Research suggests that program evaluation is important for long-term program sustainability (Farnum & Schagger 1998, Miller & Rowe 2009, Wright 2007). However, it is important to match program evaluation with clearly defined program goals and intended outcomes (Farnum & Schagger 1998, Miller & Rowe 2009). As noted earlier, Community Stepping Stones has program goals, but they have not been effectively matched with program outcomes nor linked to evaluation measures. This next step may help Community Stepping Stones ensure evaluation efforts are used appropriately and effectively. It is anticipated that the additional AmeriCorps staff hired in August 2010 will help to further develop evaluation measures and will help alleviate some of the burden related to tracking and program evaluation.

Chapter Five: Conclusion and Recommendations

The American Anthropological Associations suggests that Applied Anthropologists have a responsibility to ensure their research is utilized in an appropriate and effective manner. In this way, Anthropologists, especially Applied Anthropologists may become advocates just as much as researchers. According to Wulff and Fiske (1987, p.116) "In the communication system the anthropologist serves initially as researcher of agency and grassroots belief systems, then presenter of the research for the development of translation, and finally mediator of action between agencies and grassroots methods." Community participation and empowerment in this process is important in developing effective and sustainable community programs (Chrisman, Strickland, Powel, Squeochs, & Yallup 1999). I attempted to implement my assessment of Community Stepping Stones with these concepts in mind. I involved Community Stepping Stone staff in the development of the assessment, meeting with them to discuss concerns, issues, and needs related to Community Stepping Stones and discussing what they hoped to get out of the assessment on an ongoing basis. These discussions informed the assessment process, guiding the focus of my research and the development of interview questions and areas for exploration.

The expectation is that this assessment will help Community Stepping Stones use a critical eye to explore areas to expand, organize, and better evaluate the current program. Findings are expected to inform the development of a continuous program

evaluation which Community Stepping Stones can integrate into normal program activities. This chapter will provide a discussion of my findings as well as suggestions for future research and program implementation. I anticipate that this portion of my thesis will act as a translation of my findings.

In addition to involvement of organization participants in developing and implementing my assessment, I believe the ethnographic approach I took allowed for a more comprehensive assessment. By including multiple research methods and involving a variety of organizational members in the assessment, I was able to explore a wealth of information from a variety of viewpoints. My findings indicate that Community Stepping Stones is a distinctive community-based youth art education program. Staff and Board members pride themselves on what they describe as the "organic" nature of the organization. The bottom-up approach definitely sets Community Stepping Stones apart from most other youth art education programs and firmly embeds the organization as an agent for the community. Community Stepping Stones has grown tremendously in the last two years. Not only has staff and student participation doubled, but the organization budget has nearly tripled. Several opportunities, including the AmeriCorps and the National Endowment for the Arts grants and the relocation to the Mann-Wagnon Memorial Park have been instrumental in the organization's positive development. These opportunities has placed Community Stepping Stones in a position to further expand its program and has created the potential for the organization to inform other community-based art education programs in the future. Thus, it is very important for Community Stepping Stones to move forward with a clear understanding of the organization's strengths and weaknesses; student, staff, volunteer, and community needs; and potential avenues for further development.

Funding

The initial purpose of my assessment was to provide Community Stepping Stones with base information for grant applications. However, with the assistance of a grant writer, the organization has successfully obtained a number of grants that have helped the organization grow. However, research suggests that grants are not a sustainable funding source. Although Community Stepping Stones has successfully maintained annual funding from some of the same organizations over the course of several years, this situation is not common. Community Stepping Stones has begun to focus funding efforts into developing income producing activities, such as developing the Teen's Entrepreneur Program and charging for art classes offered to adults and older youth as well as students who reside outside Sulphur Springs. These are positive steps toward development of a consistent funding stream. However, if students are going to be drawn from outside of Sulphur Springs, Community Stepping Stones will need to implement an effective marketing strategy. These are important avenues of pursuit and should be further explored.

Fundraising activities should also be further developed. Staff expressed concerns over the challenge associated with fundraising events, however if events can be streamlined and fundraising capabilities capitalized on, fundraising events can be an effective long-term solution for funding needs. Annual events, such as golf tournaments or concerts have a proven track record in the non-profit community. Community collaboration for fundraising events may also be helpful; there are numerous volunteer and community stewardship organizations that have fundraising experience and resources that can be an excellent source for Community Stepping Stones.

Staff

Increases in Community Stepping Stones staff was designed to meet the growing needs of the organization. Staff positions were redesigned and new positions added in order to better serve the organization and better allocate staff responsibilities. Initially hosting a staff of three part-time individuals, Community Stepping Stones may experience new staff related challenges with the recent increase to eight staff members. At this juncture, clearly defined roles and responsibilities will be necessary to ensure all aspects of the program are addressed. Structural and programmatic processes can also be implemented to ensure smooth functioning. Specifically, regular staff meetings, open communication, and clear allocation of responsibilities may help mediate challenges related to a larger staff.

The artistic personality type, which many Community Stepping Stones staff were identified as having, has been acknowledged as a potential challenge to implementing effective programming (Hamilton 2003, Newman et al. 2003). Community Stepping Stones recognizes this unique challenge and has begun to address it through organizational training and hiring of more "right-brained" staff. However, visual-based communication methods may be helpful in meeting the needs of more artistic minded staff. One option may be the use of an online community forum or Wiki-type program in which staff can share documents, links, post important information, and share a group calendar in an organized fashion. Another option may be the use of a white board and large, group calendar to keep all staff up-to-date. The use of color coordination and photographs in either venue may help to further enhance the usefulness of the shared communication space.

Staff trainings were helpful in bringing staff together and providing staff with the necessary skills to complete their jobs effectively. Ongoing training should be continued

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as required by the AmeriCorps grant and trainings relevant to staff at Community Stepping Stones should be pursued. Training on evaluation measures, techniques, and implementation as well as youth behavioral issues and discipline techniques may be helpful as Community Stepping Stones moves forward.

Volunteers

Community Stepping Stones has continued to attract an impressive number of volunteers. Not only have volunteers provided much needed support to a previously small staff, but volunteers have shown to be good role models for program participants. Volunteers have also helped to develop and implement community art projects over the years and helped further develop Community Stepping Stones' art programming. However, volunteers have been historically short-term, usually staying for no more than a semester. The high turnover rate is often disappointing for students and retraining new staff is time consuming for Community Stepping Stones staff. Recent efforts to obtain and sustain long-term volunteers should continue to be pursued with a focus on volunteers from within Sulphur Springs. This focus may help create a more diverse volunteer base with whom more of the Community Stepping Stones program participants can relate.

USF community art class

The community art class offered by the University of South Florida through College of the Arts provides Community Stepping Stones with a steady source of knowledgeable and committed art volunteers. However, there was a distinct disconnect identified between what was taught in the classroom and what was expected of volunteers at Community Stepping Stones. Better coordination of the class curriculum

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with Community Stepping Stones needs, including specific training on relevant curriculum and realistic challenges of conducting community art education may be beneficial for both the art students and Community Stepping Stones staff and students. In addition, clearly defined needs and volunteer roles will be helpful in quickly and easily integrating new volunteers into Community Stepping Stones art program. Efforts to do so may include ways in which volunteers can familiarize themselves with current students, such as student folders and/or photographs. Access to curriculum used by Community Stepping Stones staff may also help students better grasp curriculum development and the implementation of art education programs.

The need for more long-term volunteers is evident. Community Stepping Stones needs to continue to pursue avenues for obtaining and retaining long-term volunteers in order to provide consistency for program participants. In addition, efforts to obtain volunteers from similar ethnic and socio-economic backgrounds are anticipated to help develop more meaningful relationships between volunteers and program participants.

Community Engagement

It is evident that Community Stepping stones has been making an effort to engage the local community. However, despite recognition of community art projects in the area, Community Stepping Stones is not well known as a resource in the community. Events targeted at increasing community involvement may be effective in eliciting community interest. Outreach activities, such as community mapping and recruitment events, and parental outreach through follow-up phone calls and family nights may help further community engagement (Miller & Rowe 2009, Wright et. al. 2006).

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Community Collaboration and Partnerships

One of Community Stepping Stones' greatest assets has been its ongoing commitment to and efforts towards community collaborations and the development of community partnerships. In addition to partnering with well known academic and government agencies in Tampa, Community Stepping Stones has developed relationships with several smaller organizations. Community Stepping Stones should continue to pursue these relationships as they often provide an opportunity for funding, resource building, and/or ways to reach granting requirements (e.g., number of students served). In addition to helping Community Stepping Stones grow, community collaborations also open up the opportunity for Community Stepping Stones to provide referrals for students and their families to needed services (Miller & Rowe 2009, Wright 2007). Collaborations, such as the collaboration with the Department of Juvenile Justice, will allow Community Stepping Stones address the needs of its participants without draining organizational resources. Research shows that being responsive to the needs of program participants and their families is important for effective program implementation (Farnum & Schagger 1998, Miller & Rowe 2009, Wright et. al. 2006).

It may also be beneficial for Community Stepping Stones to collaborate more closely with the Sulphur Springs Museum and Moses House given the space they share at Mann Wagnon Park. For example, Community Stepping Stones staff and students may be able to help research, develop, and install exhibits at the Sulphur Springs Museum. A relationship with the Museum may also be helpful as Community Stepping Stones continues to develop community art installments in the Sulphur Springs community. Use of Museum resources in researching history or tapping into community memories may be educational for students and applicable to the art installments.

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A relationship with Moses House may be more complicated since the organization provides similar services as Community Stepping Stones. Collaborations on community art installments, sharing of resources, and coordination of community or program events may prove beneficial, though. This is particularly true since both organizations are still smaller and in many ways, still struggling to develop themselves. By pooling resources, Community Stepping Stones and Moses House may have a larger impact on student participants and the Sulphur Springs community.

However, Community Stepping Stones needs to be careful not to get too ambitious or stretched too thin in their partnerships and ensure that partnerships serve to enrich Community Stepping Stones.

Students

In the last year, the number of student participants at Community Stepping Stones has roughly doubled. Community Stepping Stones has a strong commitment to its students and efforts are in place to empower youth. Student participants are actively involved in identifying artistic mediums to pursue and are encouraged to take a lead role in community art projects. Ongoing academic support has allowed several youth to apply to and attend area colleges. This focus on youth empowerment and participation is a key factor in program success and should be continued (Miller & Rowe 2009, Wright et al. 2006, Wright 2007).

Programming

Community Stepping Stones programming has become more organized over the last year. Staff are responsive to student interest and skill level, implementing art classes

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based on student feedback. Another way to enhance Community Stepping Stones programming may be to offer services outside of art education. Youth have expressed interest in homework assistance and classes on computer literacy. Community adults have also expressed interest in classes that would address budget balancing and computer literacy among other topics.

Evaluation

Community Stepping Stones is now in the process of identifying and implementing process and outcome measures to track student and community impact. I would encourage Community Stepping Stones to integrate evaluation measures into daily programming so that evaluation of the program does not detract from implementation of the program. In addition to documentation of staff, student, and volunteer attendance, which is now being conducted, integrated evaluation methods may include drawing interviews with students, regular evaluation of student's artistic skill mastery, and observation of social-behavioral interactions, which can be noted in individual student files.

Given Community Stepping Stones' strong commitment to community enrichment, community involvement in the evaluation would be beneficial in ensuring community needs are being met. Community Stepping Stones already has plans to implement an annual community survey. An open forum or focus group may be another way to solicit more active feedback from community members.

Mostly importantly, however, I would strongly recommend that Community Stepping Stones link evaluation measures with program goals. The organization has, so far, done an excellent job ensuring programming addresses goals and objectives. However, this may become more challenging as the organization continues to grow and

has more opportunities. Linking organizational goals and objectives to programming will serve to both ensure the organization keeps its goals and objectives in mind as the organization expands, but also ensure that these goals and objectives are effectively communicated to staff, volunteers, and potential partners (Farnum & Schagger 1998, Miller & Rowe 2009).

The use of a logic model or other similar tool may be helpful in linking goals and objectives to programming and in identifying ways to evaluate and implement evaluation measures that address program goals (Farnum & Schagger 1998). Given the consideration Community Stepping Stones took in selecting evaluation tools for the youth survey, it is evident that Community Stepping Stones has considered the importance of linking organizational goals and evaluation measures. A more formal coordination will help to ensure that evaluation efforts are effective and appropriate given Community Stepping Stones' program goals.

Looking to the Future

Given the lack of published assessments on community-based youth art education programs, it is difficult to determine what changes Community Stepping Stones can make to improve programming, evaluation measures, and sustainability goals that will prove effective long-term. I have made several recommendations based on current research and my previous experience working with grants. Community Stepping Stones has already begun to implement many of the changes I have suggested here, primarily due to granting requirements by AmeriCorps and out of necessity as the organization has grown. However, I anticipate that my assessment and subsequent suggestions will serve to inform Community Stepping Stones and other community-based art education programs. I have tried to translate findings from my

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assessment into practical, real world application that will be both salient for Community Stepping Stones and effective in meeting granting requirements. I expect to continue my involvement with Community Stepping Stones to discuss and potentially implement portions of my assessment suggestions as well as brainstorm additional changes in collaboration with Community Stepping Stones staff, volunteers, and youth.

Chapter Six: Challenges & Limitations

Although the assessment was successful, I experienced a variety of challenges during my research with Community Stepping Stones. First and foremost, my research site, Community Stepping Stones, was in transition during most of my assessment period. This transition began when the organization was awarded a grant through AmeriCorps in August 2009. Beginning in August, Community Stepping Stones received funds for additional staff and resources, but was also required to begin additional documentation. Shortly after this change, Community Stepping Stones was given an opportunity to move to a larger, more suitable location. Thus significant amounts of time and energy were focused on new program requirements and transitioning to a new location for several months. It also made it challenging to keep in touch with Community Stepping Stone staff and volunteers for periods of time due to changes in contact information and site location. This was further compounded by changes in some of the staff and volunteer's personal contact information during the transition. Due to these changes, there were times when I was unable to contact anyone at Community Stepping Stones and had to go out to both the new and old sites several times before bumping into someone by chance.

My access to Community Stepping Stones and my knowledge of activities and people was also limited by the information my contacts provided me. Although everyone I spoke with was very open and honest, I often found out about activities or parts of the

organization through casual conversation rather than direct information. Despite my best efforts to express interest in the *entire* organization, the assumption that I was interested in only certain aspects persisted. Thus, I did not find out about certain activities until I was well into my internship and in some cases, not until after I had completed my internship.

As part of the changes implemented in connection with AmeriCorps grant, Community Stepping Stones has also been working to better organize and clarify roles and responsibilities of individuals, including chain of command and Board of Director involvement. Along the way, there was some conflict around new roles, responsibilities, expectations, and chain of command. Because I was at the will of my contacts at Community Stepping Stones, there were individuals I was not able to contact until these issues were resolved. Thus, my contact with these individuals, including the Board of Directors and some staff, occurred much later than I had anticipated, ultimately limiting the number of people I was able to interview.

Other circumstances further challenged my ability to conduct interviews. The Executive Director left for vacation for a month during my internship and the Volunteer Coordinator was transitioning to a new position out of state and was severely overwhelmed during most of my internship. However, one of my biggest disappointments is the lack of youth interviews. Although I interacted with the youth extensively and talked to them more informally, I was not able to conduct interviews with any of the youth during my internship. Despite being given consents on several occasions, none of the older youth brought back their parent's signed consent. And although consents were obtained for most of the younger youth, Community Stepping Stones was not in a position to incorporate my drawing interview into curriculum during my internship.

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Another limitation to my research was the lack of interviews conducted with individuals outside of Community Stepping Stones. I attempted to speak with individuals who worked with other organizations in the community and other youth art education programs in the area. However, concerns regarding proprietary information and time were raised by several of the organizations and individuals were reluctant to participate in an interview.

I also experienced challenges obtaining IRB approval. Although the research project was relatively straightforward, USF IRB began using a new review system right before I submitted my application. Due to some program glitches and misunderstandings in the new submission process, approval of my research project was significantly delayed. Although I tried to stay in touch with Community Stepping Stones during this time, I limited my involvement since the majority of my research consisted of participant observation. I was not comfortable with the ethical dilemma of potentially conducting research while waiting for IRB approval. Thus my contact with Community Stepping Stones was limited to phone and e-mail conversations with a few brief face-to-face interactions for several months prior to my actual IRB approval. I was greatly disappointed to lose these months of observation and rapport development, although it does not appear to have hindered my relationship with Community Stepping Stones staff or students.

On a more personal note, I was pregnant and gave birth to my second child during my work with Community Stepping Stones. Although my actual observation period did not begin until after he was born, it did impact my involvement with Community Stepping Stones. Part of my struggles included maintaining adequate childcare. My original childcare plans fell through and I had to find alternative childcare for my two children before I could actively begin parts of my assessment. Luckily this

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coincided with my IRB issues, so I did not lose time solely because of childcare issues. Once childcare was established, I was still constrained by hours and days the children were enrolled. Although I was still able to attend Community Stepping Stones activities regularly, I was not able to regularly attend activities that occurred later in the day or on days I did not have childcare. In addition, because my son was nursing during the observation period, I had to excuse myself regularly to pump. Staff and students were understanding, but it did mean I missed portions of activities on a regular basis.

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Appendices

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Appendix A:Community Stepping Stones Letter of Support

Ed Ross
Executive Director, Community Stepping Stones
Tampa, FL

Dear Ms. Pedraza
:

This letter expresses Community Stepping Stones' support of your internship activities for your Master's thesis at the University of South Florida, Department of Anthropology. Community Stepping Stones provides art education to youth in the Sulfur Springs Community. We understand that you would like to conduct an ethnographic evaluation, which may include observation of classes, meetings, and other activities, review of previous Community Stepping Stones documentation, and talking to youth participants, staff, volunteers, and board of director members about their involvement in CSS. We understand that the goal is to use findings from this research to develop a program evaluation. We anticipate that a program evaluation will help Community Stepping Stones provide documentation of our successes to potential grant funders and community partners and aid in securing future funding. With this in mind, we fully support a research internship with Community Stepping Stones and look forward to working with you. Because Community Stepping Stones does not regularly participate in research activities, we do not have our own IRB and will rely on the University of South Florida IRB for this research project.

Sincerely,

Ed Ross, Executive Director

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Appendix B:Interview Protocols

Staff Interview [Executive Director]

1.   Can you tell me how Community Stepping Stones got started? [What were your goals? Who was involved? What is the purpose, in your mind?]

2.   How has Community Stepping Stones changed over the years? [Have the services provided changed? Have the people involved changed? Has the management changed, such as Board of Directors or procedures?]

3.   What/how do you think Community Stepping Stones can be improved? What, if anything, is being done to make these improvements? What are your future goals for CSS?

4.   How has Community Stepping Stones partnered with the community and/or other local agencies?'

5.   Where/how do you get your funding, resources, etc.?

6.   How has Community Stepping Stones partnered with the community and/or other local agencies?'

7.   Can you tell me about the staff and volunteers? [Where do they come from? How are they recruited? How long do they usually stay with CSS? What is their role while they are with CSS? What do they get out of their involvement – volunteer hours, school credits, payment?]

8.   Can you tell me about the youth involved? [Where do they come from? How are they recruited? How long do they usually stay with CSS? What do you think some of the reasons are for youth who stay? For youth who leave? What are the expectations for their involvement?]

Appendix B:Interview Protocols (continued)

Volunteer Interview [Long-term volunteers]

1.   Can you tell me how you became involved in Community Stepping Stones?

2.   In your opinion, what are the goals of CSS? What is its purpose for the youth participants? For the community?

3.   How has Community Stepping Stones changed over the years? [Have the services provided changed? Have the people involved changed? Has the management changed, such as Board of Directors or procedures?]

4.   Can you tell me about the staff and volunteers? [Where do they come from? How are they recruited? How long do they usually stay with CSS? What is their role while they are with CSS? What do they get out of their involvement – volunteer hours, school credits, payment?]

5.   Can you tell me about the youth involved? [Where do they come from? How are they recruited? How long do they usually stay with CSS? What do you think some of the reasons are for youth who stay? For youth who leave? What are the expectations for their involvement?]

6.   How has Community Stepping Stones partnered with the community and/or other local agencies?'

7.   What do you like about CSS? What do you dislike about CSS? What/how do you think Community Stepping Stones can be improved? What, if anything, is being done to make these improvements?

Appendix B:Interview Protocols (continued)

Staff Interview [VISTA staff]

1.   Can you tell me how you became involved in Community Stepping Stones?

2.   In your opinion, what are the goals of CSS? What is its purpose for the youth participants? For the community?

3.   Can you tell me about the staff and volunteers? [Where do they come from? How are they recruited? How long do they usually stay with CSS? What is their role while they are with CSS? What do they get out of their involvement – volunteer hours, school credits, payment?]

4.   Can you tell me about the youth involved? [Where do they come from? How are they recruited? How long do they usually stay with CSS? What do you think some of the reasons are for youth who stay? For youth who leave? What are the expectations for their involvement?]

5.   How has Community Stepping Stones partnered with the community and/or other local agencies?

6.   What do you like about CSS? What do you dislike about CSS? What/how do you think Community Stepping Stones can be improved? What, if anything, is being done to make these improvements

Staff Interview [Grant writer]

1.   Can you tell me how you became involved in Community Stepping Stones?

2.   In your opinion, what are the goals of CSS? What is its purpose for the youth participants? For the community?

3.   What are the strengths and weaknesses of Community Stepping Stones?

4.   What/how do you think Community Stepping Stones can be improved? What, if anything, is being done to make these improvements?

Appendix B:Interview Protocols (continued)

Board of Director Interview

1. Can you tell me how you became involved in Community Stepping Stones?

2. What is your role in CSS?

3. In your opinion, what are the goals of CSS? What is its purpose for the youth participants? For the community?

4. How has Community Stepping Stones changed over the years? [Have the services provided changed? Have the people involved changed? Has the management changed, such as Board of Directors or procedures?]

5. How has Community Stepping Stones partnered with the community and/or other local agencies?

6. What are the strengths and weaknesses of Community Stepping Stones?

7. What do you like about CSS? What do you dislike about CSS? What/how do you think Community Stepping Stones can be improved? What, if anything, is being done to make these improvements?

Drawing Interviews [Student participants]

I and/or Community Stepping Stones staff/volunteers will work with individual students to write down an explanation of the drawing & answers to the sub-questions.

1.   Please draw a picture of your favorite activity/activities at CSS. This can be a specific event you've participated in or something you do every time you come.

a.   Why do you like this activity?

b.   If you couldn't do this anymore, would you still come to CSS?

c.   Do you tell your friends about this or other activities you do at CSS?

2.   Draw a picture of something you would like to do at CSS. This can be something you've already done that you really enjoyed or something that you would like to try (like a new form of art)

a.   Is this something you think you'll be able to do (again)?

Appendix B:Interview Protocols (continued)

Adolescent Interview [Student participants]

1.   How did you hear about CSS/Why did you start coming?

2.   How long have you been attending CSS?

3.   How do you get to CSS?

4.   *On a scale of 1 to 5, with 1 being the least and 5 being the most, can you rate the*
following?

    i)   Overall, I like going to CSS

    ii)   I like the other students at CSS

    iii)   I like the staff and volunteers at CSS

    iv)   I like the activities we do at CSS

    v)   I feel comfortable and safe at CSS

    vi)   I think Community Stepping Stones has helped me become a better person

    vii)   I would tell my friends or family about CSS

    viii)   I think Community Stepping Stones is good for the community/neighborhood

    ix)   I think Community Stepping Stones is good for the students who attend

5.   What is your favorite part of CSS?

6.   What is your least favorite part of CSS?

7.   If you could, what would you change about CSS?

Appendix C:Letters to Study Participants

June 16, 2010

Dear Parent or Guardian,

My name is Jennifer Pedraza. I am a Master's student in the Department of Anthropology at USF. I have been working with Community Stepping Stones to learn about their art program. I hope the information I learn will help Community Stepping Stones. I have been asking people questions about Community Stepping Stones as part of my work. Because your child attends Community Stepping Stones, I would like to ask your child questions, too. With your consent, I will ask your child questions about the program. Participation will not affect whether your child can go to Community Stepping Stones and your child's name will not be used in any reports. If you allow your child to participate, it may help Community Stepping Stones. Included with this letter is a consent form for each of your children. If you are willing to let them participate, please read and sign the consent form and send it back with your child.

If you have any questions, concerns, or complaints or if your child experiences an adverse event or unanticipated problem related to this study, please call Jennifer Pedraza at 813-263-0693.

If you have questions about your child's rights, general questions, complaints, or issues as a person taking part in this study, call the Division of Research Integrity and Compliance of the University of South Florida at (813) 974-9343.

Thank you,
~Jennifer Pedraza
  813-263-0693

Study Description Summary
For Community Stepping Stones board members

My name is Jennifer Pedraza. I am a Master's student in the Department of Anthropology at USF. I have been working with Community Stepping Stones on and off for different classes over the last couple of years. As part of my MA thesis, I would like to continue my research with Community Stepping Stones. In addition to participating in Community Stepping Stones activities, I plan to conduct interviews with students, staff, and volunteers. I would appreciate it if you were willing to talk to me as well. As a board member, you have a different perspective than the staff and volunteers who work directly with the youth. I am very interested in your perceptions of Community Stepping Stones and where you would like the program to go in the future. The attached interview can be completed at your convenience and returned to me by mail or e-mail. I would also be happy to talk to you more over the phone or in person, if you are interested.

The information I gather from these interviews will help me develop materials for Community Stepping Stones to better monitor itself. If you have any questions, concerns, or complaints, please call me, Jennifer Pedraza, at 813-263-0693.

If you have questions about your rights, general questions, complaints, or issues as a person taking part in this study, please call the Division of Research Integrity and Compliance of the University of South Florida at (813) 974-9343.

Thank you,
~Jennifer Pedraza
   813-263-0693
   jpedraza@mail.usf.edu
   8643 Hunters Key Circle
   Tampa, FL

Study Description Summary
For Community Stepping Stones staff & volunteers

My name is Jennifer Pedraza. I am a Master's student in the Department of Anthropology at USF. As part of my MA thesis, I would like to continue my research with Community Stepping Stones. In addition to participating in Community Stepping Stones activities, I plan to conduct interviews with students, staff, and volunteers. I would appreciate it if you were willing to talk to me. In addition, I would appreciate help working with the children who attend Community Stepping Stones. Rather than a traditional interview, I will be asking children 11 years old and younger to draw pictures in response to a series of questions about Community Stepping Stones. I will then follow-up with them if I have specific questions about the drawing. Youth 12 and older will be asked to participate in a brief survey, which will include scaled responses and open-ended questions. Participation will not affect whether children can attend Community Stepping Stones and names will not be used in any reports. If children are interested, please give them a letter and consent form for their parents. Children cannot participate if their parent does not sign the consent form.

The information I gather from these interviews will help me develop materials for Community Stepping Stones to better monitor itself. If you have any questions, concerns, or complaints, please call me, Jennifer Pedraza, at 813-263-0693.

If you have questions about your rights, general questions, complaints, or issues as a person taking part in this study, call the Division of Research Integrity and Compliance of the University of South Florida at (813) 974-9343.

Thank you,
~Jennifer Pedraza
  813-263-0693