

Week 4

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7003- Community

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“Education is for improving the lives of others and for leaving your community and world better than you found it” Marian Wright Edelman (n.a.71 Powerful Quotes About Being Part of a Community). Communities are defined as a social and or cultural group that is interrelated with a place or setting. This is formed by people who with shared purpose want to participate in joint action to achieve mutual objectives. (Hyett, N.; Kenny, A.; Dickson-Swift, V. (2019).

Community based programs are a valuable opportunity for occupational therapy practitioners to enhance community well-being by offering a more holistic and inclusive approach to care. Services are provided by the community, which aims to enable them to achieve important goals. The community project proposed seeks to bridge this gap by providing structured interventions designed to enhance life skills, social interaction, and provide employment opportunities to adults with disabilities.

Both Healthy People 2030 and The World Federation of Occupational Therapists (WFOT) emphasize the importance of promoting health, well-being, and inclusive participation highlights the critical role that occupational therapists play in global and community health disparities.

Healthy People 2030- states that “the health and well-being of all people and communities is essential to a thriving, equitable society, and promoting health and well-being and preventing disease are linked efforts that encompass physical, mental, and social health dimensions.” (Healthy People 2030, Framework).

Practice within communities is supported by the WFOT of occupational therapists stating that “Occupational therapists work with individuals, groups and communities in their own

environment to strengthen active engagement, inclusion and participation (Hyett, N.; Kenny, A.; Dickson-Swift, V. (2019).

Our community has a yearly festival titled: The Potato Festival which is held annually on the second weekend of September in Summersville, West Virginia. This event runs Thursday through Saturday, with multiple events including amusement rides, craft vendors, tractor show, pet pageant, parades, potato decorating, sack races, displays, food vendors, entertainment, car show, corn hole tournament, queens' reception, 5K walk and run, potato auction, spud hunt, potato idol contest and fireworks (<https://nicholascountypotatofestival.com>). The festival has been a special part of the town's history for over fifty-five years.

The goal of the program is to create an accessible and inclusive festival environment by implementing environmental adaptations that ensure individuals of all abilities can fully participate, engage, and enjoy festival activities. The festival committee members, a specialist from the Department of Rehabilitation and the mayor's assistant are stakeholders for the project. The following needs have identified by the committee and the team has determined in the first year of implementation we will focus on the following environmental adaptations:

- Covered canopy areas for people who are sensitive to heat on the parade route.
- Designated areas for people who require the use of wheelchairs or walkers at different areas within the parade route.
- Handicap bathrooms that are appropriate for caregivers and children.
- Sensory kits to be available at the information booths- containing noise-canceling headphones and fidget tools.

The equipment needed for the focus areas are two or three canopies, sign placement for handicap accessible restrooms, fidgets and noise cancelling headphones for the parade. The city

accountant is determining if we can provide a stipend for the three individuals who will apply for the positions that will be made available during the parade. The job description of the hires is in the process of being developed by the community stakeholders. Feedback from family members attending the Potato Festival with children or adults with unique will be surveyed after the adaptations have been implemented. This will provide valuable insights into the useability of the adaptations. Questions will be added as to what other accommodation they would like to see included in the event to create a welcoming, safe, and equitable experience for their entire family. The Potato Festival Committees will also be encouraged to take the survey and determine their perceptions of the initiatives and any changes that they believe to be beneficial for the subsequent festivals. This data can then be shared with the stakeholders to determine if the next phase of adaptations is required to meet our program goal, and brainstorm the success and barriers that occurred during the first year of implementation.

Evidence-based practice in group projects and community interventions is essential for ensuring meaningful participation and positive outcomes which align with the Person Environmental Occupation (PEO) Framework. This initiative provides a sustainable, replicable solution to enhance community integration and overall quality of life for its participants. It addresses a crucial societal need by fostering independence, social participation, and vocational skills for adults with disabilities. By incorporating the PEO framework, this approach emphasizes the dynamic interaction between individuals, their environments, and the occupations they engage in, ultimately promoting long-term success and well-being Edgelow, Harrison, Miceli & Cramm, H. (2020).

The target population will include individuals from 0-99 and their families who wish to attend the festival in an accessible and barrier free environment. The program will take place

during the to three days of the festival. The sustainability of the program will depend on various factors, including the willingness of volunteers, city officials and employees to appreciate the value of the program. Additionally, growth of the program and long-term success depends on the number of volunteers working as coaches and funding for the employment.

The barriers that may occur in my group community setting project include the potential impact of the new diversity, equity and inclusion (DEI) mandates becoming obsolete at the federal level (www.whitehouse.gov) which may cause a regression in the progress made toward inclusivity. I am concerned that the programs I hope to create will not only lose funding and support at a federal level, but state and local municipalities may fear that offering these services could cost them federal dollars and legal ramifications. Other barriers to consider include a lack of support from families and stakeholders due to limited awareness of the programs, resources and funding to hire employees. Opportunities that can arise from this program could include partnering with local businesses to hire clients who have been vetted by the Department of Rehabilitation. As modifications to the festival continue to expand, families and community members may be inspired to volunteer their time, donate supplies, or contribute financially to support the cause.

Budget constraints, particularly in the absence of dedicated funding, could limit program growth. Gaining community buy-ins may be challenging, especially given the recent rollback of federal DEI initiatives, making it harder to recognize the value of events that offer equity and inclusion for all. Additionally, volunteers may not appreciate the program's benefits and may be reluctant to offer their time.

This project encompasses the vision of a dynamic system approach Scaffa & Reitz (2020). Though in its infancy this program has the potential to provide services needed in our

community to individuals and their families with unique needs. It is my hope that we can develop and plan a sustainable model (Hyett, Kenny & Dickson-Swift, 2019). To ensure a sustainable model is developed systems for data collection, users' perceptions and stakeholder feedback is imperative to collect and evaluate. The use of data can play an important role in developing population-based interventions to support the complex occupation of health management to support health, well-being, and participation for families, caretakers and community members. Magasi et al. (2021).

This community project proposed is designed to make a meaningful and positive impact in the community by fostering inclusivity and engagement. It is intended to highlight the importance of occupational therapists to be seen as an integral part of community events to ensure inclusiveness. It incorporates the knowledge of the different populations that may attend the event, critical reasoning of problems that may arise, it allows opportunities to create and build relationships with families and stakeholders, and ethical reasoning (Scaffa & Reitz (2020).

It is my sincere hope that our community can showcase the success of the community events that have been created (Sensory Santa and Easter Bunny) and the addition to the adaptability to the festival can be replicated to other festivals and communities. It is my vision that we create a video representation of the program so that it will be viewed by other communities to incorporate similar plans into their festivals and community events. By sharing our successes and innovative adaptations, we can inspire broader inclusivity and accessibility, ensuring that community events are welcoming and enjoyable for everyone.

References

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