

Dear Rich Family:

I'm Lan Mi, a now-graduated Brandeis student and double major in Business and Psychology. In this project report, you will learn about my project and its outcome in the following four sections: project description, evaluation, final budget, and final thoughts.

### **Project description**

My project entailed planning and facilitating a Waltham Resource Fair to educate the Waltham community on the many resources they have access to and the rights they have whilst in unjust situations. Alongside this, I also developed an internship position for a high-schooler and oversaw the mentoring process. I conducted this with the host organization WATCH CDC, a Waltham-based nonprofit that aims to represent and assist marginalized members of the community, including low-income tenants and the immigrant community, through housing assistance, adult education, and community organizing. I have been volunteering at WATCH for the past few years as a housing advocate at the housing clinic staffed by Brandeis volunteers, and also interned there last summer.

The purpose for this project was to help alleviate the burden a bad situation (such as being evicted, being treated unfairly by the landlord or experiencing domestic violence) might bring and by educating community members about their rights and the many resources that can help them either prevent a bad situation from happening or endure it with as much support as possible.

There are three reasons why the internship was important and meaningful to this fair. First of all, since the high schooler, Karen Teo, is from Waltham, she is closely familiar with the area and could help us effectively spread out the word among the community. Second,

since most of the residents in Waltham who do not speak English speak Spanish, our high-school intern could help to translate by employing the skills she learned from a course she enrolled in led by Waltham Partnership for Youth (WPY) to become a professional translator. Third, as a longtime volunteer at WATCH, I have always noticed the need for inviting younger and new people to the organization. We are in a fast-paced world. Therefore, in order to be up-to-date, it is important to hear from the younger generation and see what they have to offer. Sometimes, it might just be a suggestion for the use of technology, but that might save other people lots of efforts. In addition, by serving as a bridge between adults and younger generations in the community, if we can get our high-school intern involved as an advocate for the community in the future through this experience of working with a non-profit organization and other students who are passionate about this kind of work, the seed of hope for a better community will grow faster.

The project was implemented on a timeline agreed both by my community partner and myself. Our plan was to finish booking the space by early February, finish the draft flyer and recruiting the high-school intern by late February, finish inviting agencies to attend the fair by mid-March, finish the final flyer design by late March, and start spreading out the words by early April. Everything was on-schedule besides the space booking and high-school intern recruiting. It took us an extra two weeks for space booking due to the slow response from the school principal and it took us another two weeks for high-school intern recruiting due to the unexpected hardship in creating a contract between the three parties (WPY, which was in charge of providing us the intern, WATCH, which was our community partner and was responsible to provide the intern a place to work at, and Brandeis University, which was in charge of paying the intern a one-time stipend). We had the discussion about whether we should pay the intern or not, and we decided to do so since this is not just about rewarding

our intern by seeing the positive results of all the amazing work she was able to do, but also about helping her family alleviate some financial burden knowing that herself is also coming from a lower income family.

In order to make sure our intern could develop a full understanding about why holding a resource fair is meaningful to the community, my volunteer, Evan, and I developed a internship schedule with some help from Cathy, who is a professional in youth education and had given us a brief presentation through one of our Rich/Collins fellows' training session. We provided our intern an opportunity to volunteer at the different sectors of WATCH, which includes the housing clinic, English classes, and community organizing (more specifically, canvassing). I would talk with our intern after each experience and ask her what she has learned to help her reflect on what does working with a non-profit organization meant for her. Every time she shared with me her experience and thoughts, her insight and passion always surprised me. She later shared with me how she had run into some of her family members or family friends at WATCH and how she was feeling grateful that she could be there to assist them.

At the end of her internship, she told me that she has decided to stay at WATCH as a volunteer and that there will never be such a thing as her last day volunteering at WATCH. This feedback really encouraged me since I was her mentor and supervisor throughout her internship. This experience has helped me understand the mindset of a recruiter and the heart of a mentor. Not only did my intern learn about areas she still needs to work on, but I also personally learned about areas I should work on/be careful of if I become a mentor again in the future.

The fact that my intern decided to stay as a volunteer is already great news to me. An even more exciting piece of news I've learned through one of WATCH's board meetings

is that because of this relationship I was able to establish with the executive director of WPY (by hiring my high-school intern), WPY is interested in establishing a long-term partnership with WATCH by sending more bilingual high-school volunteers to WATCH throughout the year. Establishing a partnership with the youth organization is one of WATCH's long-term goals, but WATCH has not yet found an opportunity to do so. However, because of this Rich/Collins project, the two organizations were able to establish a long-term relationship that can benefit one another.

Not everything went smoothly along the process. For example, in the beginning, I was expecting more volunteers to help me with facilitate the planning process. However, when I invited them, most of them did not think creating the fair or establishing an internship for the high schoolers would really happen. In addition, because of their lack of understanding towards the community, most of them did not see the value in doing all of this although I had tried to explain to them what I had seen and experienced as a tenant advocate at WATCH for the past a year and a half. Only one volunteer decided to stay and help out, but he later left this project because he firmly believed in his own vision for this project and would not compromise with either me or the executive director of WATCH. The fact that he decided to leave the group created a huge burden on me, but I'm really glad that WATCH is my community partner and the staff there was a great support throughout the entire process. I want to thank Daria, the executive director of WATCH, and Genoveva, the community organizer of WATCH, for being so understanding and patient with me along the process. None of this could be possible if they were not there teaching and supporting me with everything I need. Both of them have been working extra hours on this project, and they have really wholeheartedly shown me the meaning of community work and how to go about implementing it.

Whether the fair itself will be replicated in future years is undecided. However, as I have mentioned before, as far as the high-school internship program goes, we will have high-schoolers from WPY involved as volunteers in the future. The updated contact information I have attained through the fair will also be shared among WATCH and other agencies who have attended the fair. I'm currently in my final stage to submit to Daria a thorough evaluation of the project, and Daria will have the final call on whether WATCH will hold this kind of fair again in the future.

### **Evaluation**

Overall, we invited 38 organizations with 27 of them confirmed to come and 24 of them actually showing up on the day of fair. The organizations provided services that spanned six main categories: housing, food, jobs, legal assistance, family services, and adult education. [A complete list of organizations along with more specifics on the services they provide can be found on the flyers we distributed here.](#) 6,000 flyers were printed; 5,630 were distributed to kids' backpacks, 200 were distributed at WATCH City Market, 100 were distributed through canvassing, and 70 were distributed at Waltham Public Library. Social media like Facebook, e-newsletter, subscription email and organizations' websites were also used to help spread out the word. The outcome was that we had around 90 participants during our 2-hour event. We also had 10 wonderful volunteers helping out throughout the process with 4 of them coming from Brandeis and 6 of them from the community.

Two evaluation questionnaires were created. One is designed for the community while the other is designed for the participating agencies (Exhibit 1). The first question asked the participants to evaluate the overall experience during the fair. In the 24 evaluations, the average ratings for the usefulness of the fair was 4.4 out of 5. For the participating agencies, I

was able to collect from 18 evaluations, and the average rating was 4.2 (Exhibit 2). There are three major beneficiaries of a resource fair: the community, the participating organizations and individual professionals in the field.

Within the community, there are generally two types of people who attended the fair: those who were searching for a specific type of help and those who simply wanted to learn more about the existing resources in Waltham. For the first type of people, the most popular services they searched for were related to housing or adult education, which were all well-covered by the participating organizations. For the second type of people, although they came to the fair without knowing the kind of services they need, they actually ended up attending WATCH's housing clinic and referring some services to their family members or close friends.

The second beneficiaries are the participating organizations. Before the fair, I only saw their place as interacting directly with the community to inform those in need about the resources that they offer. However, after going through all the evaluations I was able to receive, most of them actually stated that they were also able to benefit from the fair itself since it provided them a chance to network with each other and learn about the kind of services others provided. Of course, the ultimate beneficiary for such connections is the community since the organization will be able to better refer their clients to another organization if the kind of services their clients are searching for are beyond the organization's abilities.

The third beneficiaries are also a group of people I did not think of when I first started the fair – the individual professionals in the field (eg. social workers, president of the tenant associations, etc). I was able to learn from their evaluations that through this fair, they also got a chance to learn more about the type of resources they were searching for, including

resources for elderly people and resources related to tenant rights.

I have received lots of valuable suggestions on what to improve upon if we end up holding another fair in the coming year. For example, agencies have suggested to host the fair in tandem with another community event so that more people would be in attendance. Volunteers have suggested to start keeping contact information for all the participating agencies so that I can share the contacts with them after the fair and help them be in contact with each other for making future referrals. I also got a few suggestions from community members that adding live music programming would draw more people to the event. This advice was really valuable to me.

### **Final Budget**

Please see Exhibit 3 for the detailed final budget. Overall, I have spent \$240.33 over the amount I was allocated because of my failure to foresee the cost of the custodial fee and rental fee. I did not end up spending money on purchasing WATCH water bottles since this was not an item that the community desperately needed. Instead, I was able to use this money to spread out the word by printing out 5,630 colorful flyers and putting them into kids' backpacks.

I also used funding to purchase hotel vouchers, which are the items that received the most opposition when I initially applied for the funding. Some people didn't think these were related enough to the fair. However, this is not true. Hotel vouchers were presented to all the participating agencies as a resource/an emergency account to help those who seek their services and desperately need a place to stay for a night but cannot afford to do so.

Throughout my two years of experience as a tenant advocate at WATCH's housing clinic, I have run into a couple of situations where the family desperately need a temporary place to

stay but sadly, I could not do anything to help them. The hotel vouchers will serve as emergency resources for all the agencies who attended the fair. This was a concrete and tangible service this fair was able to provide.

By decreasing the total amount I spent on the intern stipend and food, I was able to use the extra money to purchase folders to provide the participants a convenient way to collect all the resources they obtained during the fair. A location map and an evaluation form were also included in the folder in the hope to reduce volunteers' workloads. The gift cards we bought turned out to be a huge incentive in getting the community to join the fair and allowed them to all walk away having received real tangible help. There were actually a couple of people who came to the fair who just wanted to get a gift card, but they ended up walking away with some resources that can really help either them or their family members solve some current needs, for example, ESL and immigration assistance service.

### **Final Thoughts**

Overall, this experience has made me feel much more connected to the Waltham community; it has not only helped me deepen my relationship with the community but also invigorated my passion to work for the community. It also has helped me to see in a clearer way how the word "community" does not just include the people who need help but also the people who offer help. The fact that this fair was able to benefit three groups of people has deepened my understanding of the functionality of the nonprofit world. I feel that I have left this experience with a clearer vision of how different parties work together to accomplish things and how to organize and coordinate large scale events such as these, which I believe is very useful knowledge to have.

Throughout this process, although I faced many challenges, including lack of support

from people who I previously believed were also committed to the project, I learned a lot about how to mobilize people to assist with voluntary projects such as these and how important support of multiple parties is for their sustainability. I was constantly inspired by the people around me who did volunteer their time and efforts to ensure that everything ran smoothly. I am very grateful for all of the support I received from community members as well as WATCH's staff throughout the long hours and late nights we spent preparing everything in the days preceding the fair. I also feel that I grew a lot in my capacity as a leader, as I was able to guide and oversee the high school intern's work. They say that the best way to learn something is to teach it to someone else and I believe this is definitely true as throughout this process I have realized the extent of the knowledge I have accumulated from volunteering at WATCH throughout the years and felt lucky that I could be there to teach it to someone else, as it reaffirmed my belief in what I was doing and also made me ensure I was up to date on all of the information I was giving her, as programs related to housing and other social services are constantly changing and shifting.

This experience was definitely perspective altering. Throughout all the challenges that I encountered, I never lost the feeling that this was a very worthwhile way to spend my time, and I felt very happy to see the direct effects of the work we did together. In the future, I'm definitely planning to commit at least part-time to social service work so that I can continue to help communities I really care about.

I would like to thank you again very much for the support to see this project through; none of it would have happened without the financial and organizational support. I feel very lucky to have been able to carry this out this vision and grateful that many more in the Waltham community know have knowledge of and access to critical resources and that

organizations with similar aims will now have closer relationships with each other and will be able to assist their clients better.

## Appendix

### **Exhibit 1**

#### Evaluation Form (for community)

1. Do you find this Fair helpful?  
1 \_\_\_\_\_ 2. \_\_\_\_\_ 3 \_\_\_\_\_ 4 \_\_\_\_\_ 5 \_\_\_\_\_  
not at all rarely helpful somewhat helpful helpful very helpful  
helpful
2. How many of these agencies do you think that will be of your benefit?
3. What made you come to this Fair?
4. Is there any information that you will like to see in the next Fair?

#### Formulario de Evaluación (para la comunidad)

1. ¿Cree que esta Feria es de beneficio para Ud y/o la comunidad?  
1 \_\_\_\_\_ 2. \_\_\_\_\_ 3 \_\_\_\_\_ 4 \_\_\_\_\_ 5 \_\_\_\_\_  
nada muy poco útil algo útil útil útil muy útil
2. Cuantas de estas agencias cree Ud que serán de su beneficio en el futuro?
3. ¿Por qué te intereso venir a este evento?
4. ¿Hay alguna información que esté buscando pero que no esté incluida en la feria?

Evaluation Form (for agencies)

1). Do you think this Fair is useful to the community?

1 \_\_\_\_\_ 2 \_\_\_\_\_ 3 \_\_\_\_\_ 4 \_\_\_\_\_ 5 \_\_\_\_\_  
not at all useful rarely useful somewhat useful useful very useful

Why?

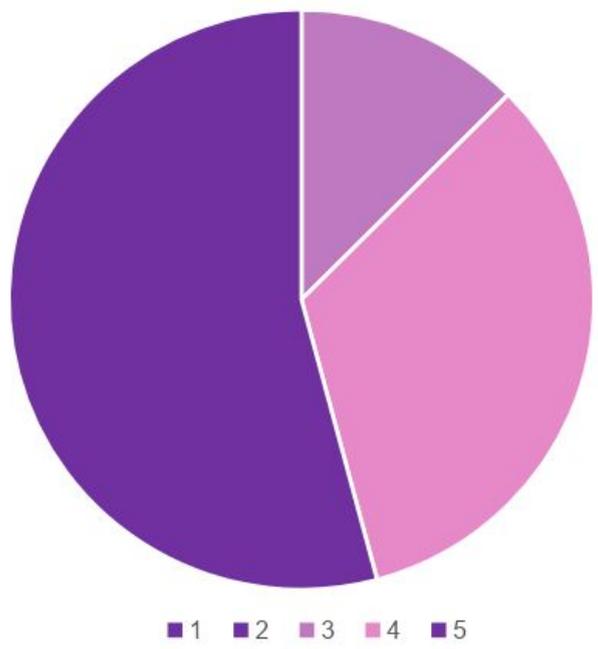
2). How many people you have been able to help / offer your resources (estimate)?

3). What made you want to join this Fair?

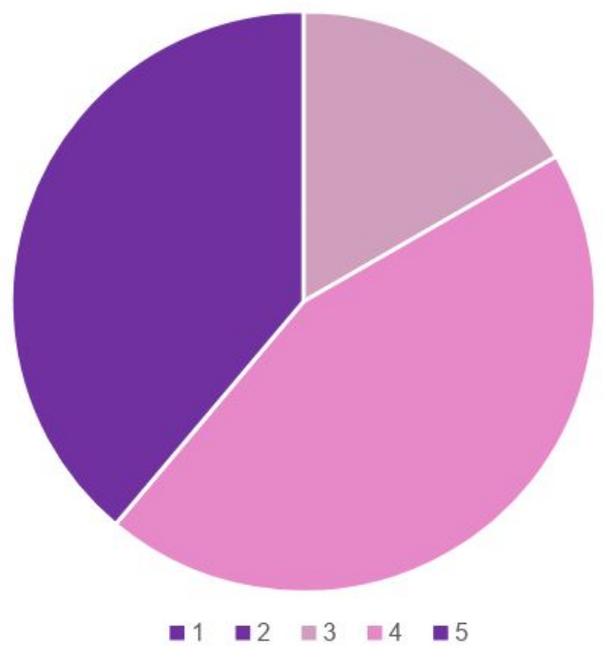
4). Are there any improvements you would like to see in future Fair?

**Exhibit 2**

sample size 24, waltham community,  
avg=4.4



sample size 18, organizations, avg=4.2



**Exhibit 3**

Department of Community Service				
<b>Name of Program:</b>	<b>Rich/Collins Fellowship</b>			
<b>Expenses</b>				
Item	Purpose	Total # Needed	Cost Per Item	Estimated Cost
Intern stipend	a one time stipend to compensate our high school interns	1	\$500	\$500
MBTA Prepaid Charlie Cards	to be distributed at resource fair	5	\$25.00	\$125.00
Grocery Store Gift Cards	to be distributed at resource fair	55	\$25.00	\$1,313.75
Folder	Help participants collect all the resources they obtained	2	\$20.87	\$41.74
Printing	for marketing purposes (flyers)	5650	\$0.03	\$169.50
hotel voucher (waltham walker center)	provide instant help to those who desperate need a place to stay (an account open to all participating agencies. Referrals needed. )	1	\$560.00	\$560.00
Food	will be provided on the day of event. Since we will also be asking for donation from local business, \$410 should be enough for our event	1	\$114.34	\$114.34
<b>Total</b>				<b>\$2,824.33</b>
<b>Amount left</b>				<b>\$175.67</b>
<b>Contingency fund:</b>				
Rental fees		4	\$60.00	\$240.00
custodial charges		4	\$44.00	\$176.00
<b>total</b>				<b>\$416.00</b>
<b>Amount exceed (total)</b>				<b>-\$240.33</b>

Department of Community Service



<b>Name of Program:</b>	Rich/Collins Fellowship
-------------------------	-------------------------

<b>Expenses</b>				
Item	Purpose	Total # Needed	Cost Per Item	Estimated Cost
Intern stipend	a one time stipend to compensate our high school interns	1	\$500	\$500
MBTA Prepaid Charlie Cards	to be distributed at resouce fair	5	\$25.00	\$125.00
Grocery Store Gift Cards	to be distributed at resouce fair	55	\$25.00	\$1,313.75
Folder	Help participants collect all the resources they obtained	2	\$20.87	\$41.74
Folders Re-do	the event on time; DCS staff's fault for not ordering the others quicker so they	1	\$32.00	\$32.00
Printing	for marketing purposes (flyers)	5650	\$0.03	\$169.50
hotel voucher (waltham walker center)	provide instant help to those who desperate need a place to stay (an account open to all participating agencies. Referrals needed. )	1	\$560.00	\$560.00
Food	will be provided on the day of event. Since we will also be asking for donation from local business, \$410 should be enough for our event	1	\$114.34	\$114.34
Rental fees		4	\$60.00	\$240.00
custodial charges		4	\$44.00	\$176.00
McDevitt Middle School Title IX Grant	McDevitt Middle covered the cost of the rental and custodial charges; thus, the contingency funds Lan pre-applied for were not needed to cover the total cost; and McDevit voided her rental and custodial charges of \$240 and \$176. The -\$416 is put in to reflect that action.			-\$416.00
Total Spent				\$2,856.33
Total Initial Allocated				\$3,000.00
Contigency Funds Granted by Lucas and Will (\$416 for McDevitt and \$32 for folder mistake)				\$448.00
<b>Total Leftover</b>				<b>\$591.67</b>