

Ariella Levisohn
May 2019
Rich/Collins Community Leadership and Impact Fellowship
Final Grant Report

Part 1: Narrative Report

In collaboration with the Family Van, a mobile health clinic that provides free healthcare to the Boston area, the Rich/Collins funds were used to provide three free health screening events to individuals in the Waltham community. The first event involved bringing the Family Van to Waltham to provide their full range of services, including blood pressure, blood sugar and cholesterol testing, health counseling and education, and referral services. The second two events were run by trained Brandeis volunteers inside the Waltham Public Library without the Family Van staff.

The project officially began in January, when I first met with the Family Van staff to discuss timing for the first screening, optimal parking locations in Waltham, and other necessary logistics. In January, I also worked with the Waltham Group Hospital Helpers club to recruit volunteers. From a group of over forty applicants, the Hospital Helpers team was able to select eight passionate and competent volunteers to help with the screenings. During this time, I also worked on solidifying a location for our first screening with the Family Van. This was a very challenging process, as most Waltham organizations do not have enough space in their parking lots to accommodate a 40-foot van. Eventually, though, I was able to get in touch with the manager at the Waltham branch of Hannaford Supermarket, who graciously allowed the Family Van to park in the lot for the duration of the three-hour screening.

Once the location was solidified, I worked with the Hospital Helpers team to promote the screenings. We posted flyers in both Spanish and English throughout business in Waltham,

emailed local organizations and schools asking them to send out our flyer, and I spoke at the Waltham Family School, an English language school for adults, to let the adult students know about the upcoming screening.

In early March, prior to the first health screening, the Family Van staff ran a 3-hour long intensive training for these volunteers, where students learned how to take blood pressure and blood sugar, fill out a patient intake (service provider) form, and educate patients about high blood pressure and diabetes, if necessary. The first screening event was on March 23rd, and lasted for three hours. The second two screenings were held inside the Waltham Public Library on April 12th and April 28th, with each also lasting three hours. For these second two screenings, we bought our own medical supplies, however we used the Family Van's service provider forms and education pamphlets. Having our own medical supplies, rather than relying on the Family Van to provide blood pressure cuffs and glucometers, allowed us to hold open office hours at Brandeis for the volunteers to practice these skills prior to the official community screenings.

During the screenings themselves, we focused on screening for high blood pressure and high blood sugar, and providing education about diabetes and hypertension if necessary. The Hospital Helpers team also wrote up a list of healthcare resources in Waltham, which we distributed to any client who needed further services. Before leaving, clients were also asked to fill out a one-page feedback form about their experience either on the Family Van or being screened at the library.

In order to accommodate more volunteers, there were two shifts of volunteers at each screening, with each group having the opportunity to work for an hour and a half. Current Brandeis students who had previously volunteered on the Family Van in Boston also attended all of the screenings to help ensure things went smoothly. Following the final screening event,

volunteers attended a mandatory reflection, during which they filled out a program evaluation form.

From talking to people in Waltham and the individuals that came to get screened, it was clear that free screenings are not only something that people in Waltham wanted more of, but that there is little access to free healthcare in Waltham. This project addressed this need for more accessible and frequent opportunities to receive free healthcare. Additionally, many people sought our services because they knew they were having trouble controlling their blood pressure or blood sugar levels. While our screenings were not in place of appointments with physicians, they did provide an important opportunity for people to check in with trained providers to ensure their numbers were not too high and to learn about different ways of controlling blood sugar and blood pressure, such as which foods to eat, in a friendly and educational setting.

Additionally, at Brandeis, there are very few opportunities for groups to volunteer in local healthcare settings. When these opportunities do exist, they often lack the hands-on experience pre-health students are seeking. Therefore, the Rich/Collins grant gave eight passionate and talented students the chance to gain more experience with meaningful and impactful healthcare volunteering. Providing health screenings to the surrounding community is a unique opportunity that no other organization at Brandeis offers.

Given the success of the screenings for both Waltham residents and Brandeis students, in the future I will be working with the leadership of the Hospital Helpers team to make the Family Van health screenings in Waltham a regular volunteer opportunity. I have compiled a transition guide for the team, including all my contacts with Waltham organizations, the links to all medical supplies on Amazon, the budget, and check lists for things to do before each screening event. The volunteers returning to Brandeis in the fall are all also committed to continue

providing screenings next year, and the Hospital Helpers leadership team is excited to take over this project.

Part 2: Project Evaluation

The health screenings were evaluated in three ways. First, the numbers of clients that came to each health screening, and whether that number increased, decreased or stayed consistent. Second, every client was asked to fill out an evaluation form about their experience with the screenings, including whether they learned anything new about their health and if/how they are planning to make a change in their lifestyle. Finally, aside from the impact on the community, the project was also evaluated in terms of its ability to engage Brandeis students in meaningful healthcare volunteering and better connect Brandeis students with the Waltham community. To this effect, students were asked to evaluate whether they grew in their ability to provide blood pressure and blood sugar screenings and interact with patients, as well as reflect on what they learned from the experience.

We saw twenty clients combined across the three screenings. Seven were screened on the Family Van itself, six came to the April 12th screening, and seven came to the April 28th screening. Eighteen of these twenty clients filled out the evaluation survey. Of these eighteen, one hundred percent said their experience with the screenings was either good or great. 82.4 percent said they learned something new, including 12 who said they learned whether they are in a healthy range for blood pressure, 14 who learned whether they were in a healthy range for blood sugar and 8 who learned about ways to improve their health (Figure 1). Two thirds of clients planned to make a change in their lifestyle after visiting the Family Van, including 11

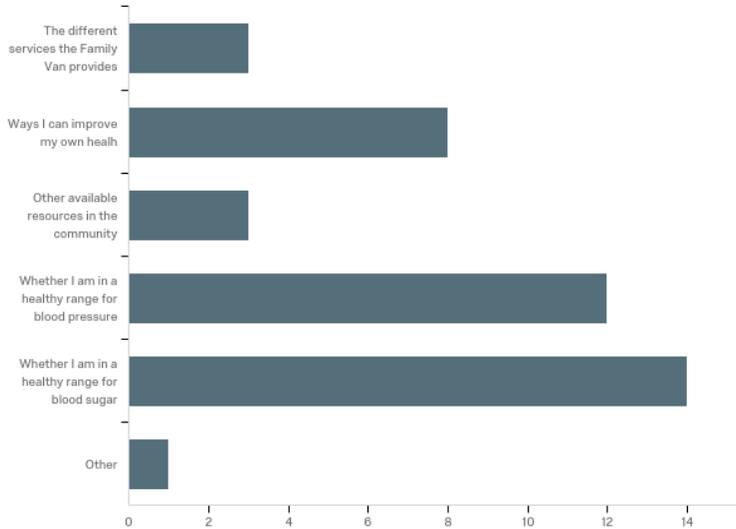


Figure 1: A breakdown of what clients learned from visiting the Family Van.

The Brandeis students also learned a lot from the experience. Overall, students became more comfortable and confident providing blood pressure and blood sugar screenings and interacting with patients (Figure 2). Students also elaborated on what they learned in the open-ended section of the feedback form and during volunteer reflection. Explains one student, “The most important thing I learned while volunteering with Family Van is how to speak to patients and make them feel comfortable when receiving a health screening.” Adds another student, “I’ve thought a lot more about the trust relationship between a patient and someone taking their vitals.” A third student wrote, “I learned that it does not take a lot of advanced medical care to make a difference in someone's health.” Another student really valued the opportunity to interact with the Waltham community, writing, “Beyond some of the physical skills of taking blood pressure and blood

who plan to eat healthier foods and 12 who plan to get more exercise. 94 percent of clients are likely or very likely to recommend the Family Van to a friend. Overall, the clients were incredibly friendly and very appreciative of the services.

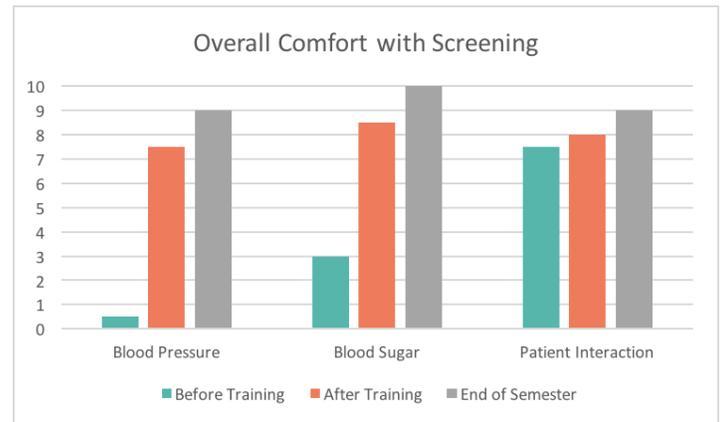


Figure 2: Brandeis student volunteers’ comfort with screenings and patient interaction before training, after training and at the end of the semester.

sugar levels, I saw first-hand some of the healthcare disparities in Waltham alone – I always knew about it but I feel like it was different being able to see it first-hand.”

Volunteering with the Family Van and Hospital Helpers was also helpful for students in confirming their desire to practice medicine. One student wrote, “I have always been interested in medicine, and volunteering for hospital helpers has made me realize that pursuing a career as a PA is definitely what I want to do.” Another student wrote, “I am more inclined to pursue a job in the medical field now. I feel like this experience gave me a lot of insight and also gave me a different kind of hands-on experience.” It is clear that all of the student volunteers were not only able to clarify their professional goals and improve their own technical skills, but also grew in their understanding of patient care and the importance of culturally competent medical care.

Family Van Client Experience Form

Did you learn anything new at your visit today?

- Yes No

What did you learn?

- The different services the Family Van provides
- Ways I can improve my own health
- Other available resources in the community
- Whether I am in a healthy range for blood pressure
- Whether I am in a healthy range for blood sugar
- Other (please explain):

On a scale of 1-5, how likely are you to recommend the Family Van to a friend?

1 = I will not recommend the Family Van, 5 = I will definitely recommend the Family Van

- 1 2 3 4 5

After visiting the Family Van, do you plan to make a change in your lifestyle?

- Yes No

If yes, how:

- Talk to my doctors
- Eat healthier foods
- Get more exercise
- Other (please explain):

Overall, how was your experience with the Family Van

- Great Good Okay Bad Terrible

Is the timing good for you? If not, when would work better?

How can we improve?

How did you find out about the Family Van?

Part 3: Budget

Starting Budget	\$3,300.00				
Medical supplies for Health Screening Events	\$443.15	3/14/2019	Amazon	coupa	these were 20 plus supply things she ordered for her overall supplies for her three health screenings in Waltham with Family Van and then at Healthy Waltham
printing cost for family van flyers, English	\$22	3/18/19	Brandeis printing center	chargeline	flyers for her first FV event
printing cost for family van flyers, Spanish	\$11	3/18/19	Brandeis printing center	chargeline	flyers for her first FV event
Ariella printing charge for library health screening	\$35	4/8/19	Brandeis printing center	chargeline	Ariella ordered 150 color fliers to distribute for her 2nd free health screening event at the Waltham Public Library
Family Van Training	\$600				Training of Brandeis students to provide direct service on The Family Van to the Waltham Community on March 11, 2019
Family Van Screening Services	\$1,750				1 day of van service at 55 Russell Street in Waltham, MA on March 22, 2019, including staff time, medical supplies, and van operations
Family Van Service Provider Forms	\$250				Data, SPF record keeping and evaluation for van visit day and additional tabling events

Total Spent: 3,111.15

Most of the expenses were similar to the ones budgeted for in the initial proposal. The only significant difference was that the library graciously let us use their space for free, so no funds were used for renting an event space. Additionally, there were some differences in pricing of medical supplies due to Amazon suppliers routinely changing their prices, and the final supplies costs were ultimately about \$100 under budget. The three expenses from the Family Van office (the training costs, the screening costs and the service provider form costs) remain unchanged from the original proposal.

Part 4: Project Reflection

Participating in the Rich/Collins Fellowship helped me grow both personally and professionally. I was able to see a community impact project through from start to finish and learn important skills, including event planning, community outreach, budgeting and project evaluation. Additionally, because I was working with the Hospital Helpers team to implement the projects, I became better at delegating tasks to other people. I hope to use these skills as a future doctor and public health professional to continue to help make an impact on improving access to healthcare for underserved populations.

I also grew in my ability to lead and be an engaged citizen. While I had worked on the Family Van before, independently leading a team of volunteers and guiding them as they learned new medical techniques and patient interaction skills was one of the most meaningful parts of this project. I loved watching the volunteers grow from not really knowing where to start with a patient intake form to successfully completing all parts of the screening independently. The students were so excited to be able to use their new skills to help Waltham residents, and loved seeing how excited the clients were to learn more about their health.

Additionally, through the fellowship I developed a better understanding of and relationship with the Waltham community. By reaching out to different Waltham organizations to help promote the event, I became connected to a variety of service organizations and learned more about all the resources Waltham has to offer. Additionally, by visiting different stores to put up flyers, I was able to see more of the local businesses in Waltham. Finally, during the screenings themselves we saw a wide range of individuals, and I was really able to appreciate how diverse the Waltham community is. It was also interesting to see the differences in who came to the screening at Hannaford, versus who attended the screenings at the library. However,

while I definitely value how many service-oriented organizations Waltham has, providing these health screenings also confirmed the lack of free healthcare resources in Waltham. Although we tried to refer people to other clinics or healthcare facilities if they needed to follow up with a doctor, we had trouble finding any local clinics that offered free or low-cost services for uninsured or underinsured individuals.

One of the biggest challenges for me was finding ways to successfully advertise the screenings. It was extremely difficult to get the word out to the community about the dates and times for the services, which was frustrating because all the feedback we received from the community reinforced the communal need for free health screenings. Even though we emailed many different organizations, we had trouble getting a response. In the future, when the Hospital Helpers team continues these screenings, improving outreach will definitely be a priority.

Throughout the process of finding a location, advertising the screenings and implementing the screenings, I also thought a lot about what it means to provide service to the community. I tried to prioritize talking to Waltham residents about the best places and times that work for them, instead of only thinking about what works for the volunteers and the Family Van itself. It was important to me to preserve the agency of the people we saw and ensure that our potential clients were active participants throughout the entire process. Therefore, I tried to get as much feedback from the community as often as possible and make sure we were meeting the community's needs. I am grateful for the opportunity to be able to provide these screenings for the community and to learn more about the people living in Waltham. I am excited to see how the Hospital Helpers team is able to continue and improve the health screenings and engage more Brandeis students and Waltham community members in the future.