

Lucy Wingard

May 12th, 2019

## Rich Collins Fellowship Final Report

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### **Part 1: Narrative Report**

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Need:

When Waltham teens gathered for the first annual Youth Summit in 2016, they identified the issue of a safe weekend space as one of the most pressing problems in the city for youth. Unfortunately many of the safe night time activities that teens enjoy, such as going out to the movies, going out to eat, etc., are accompanied by a prohibitive cost, making them inaccessible to low income youth. In 2017, the Waltham Boys and Girls Club (WBGC) aimed to address this need through the creation of their *We Own Fridays* program, where the Club provides activities and remains open late one Friday a month. While this program has achieved great success, as evident through its sizable attendance (100+ teens per event) and positive youth feedback, the future sustainability of the program was in jeopardy due to a lack of volunteer infrastructure and dependence on donations for equipment. With this grant, myself and the Club aimed to secure permanent equipment for programming that the youth would find fun, increase attendance, and build volunteer connections between specific Brandeis groups and the Club to create lasting volunteer partnerships.

Process:

I focused 3 WOF events specifically: February, March, and May. I began reaching out to different groups on the Brandeis campus in January to see who might be interested in leading an activity at WOF, and received very strong interest from several groups! For February, we had a member from the Slam Poetry team, Poetic Justice, come to lead a slam poetry workshop. For March, volunteers from the Center of Eastern European and German Studies brought their Catan boards and held a Catan tournament. And in May, we had Ian Roy and staff from the MakerLab run workshops in 3D printing, scribblebots, and drone rides.

Purchasing equipment was a major component of this project. With the grant we were able to buy equipment for laser tag, pickleball, open mics/karaoke, a photobooth setup, along with some other smaller items that would make each event more fun. This equipment allowed us to introduce a wider range of activities at the event, and be able to offer them consistently in the future, which has already received a lot of positive feedback from the youth (who are especially excited about laser tag!)

Every month I had one on one meetings with staff at the Club to go over logistics of the event. This included figuring out what needed to be purchased when, what activities would be offered at the event, the date and time of the event, and what role volunteers would play. These meetings were really important in helping the actual events run smoothly, as we had to figure out how to adapt to changing schedules often.

In addition to these meetings, I also developed two surveys to gain more information about general knowledge of the program and feedback from each event.

Challenges:

Communication was probably the largest challenge throughout this project. At the beginning of the project, I didn't understand that I needed to communicate my goals and expectations for the event explicitly to the Boys and Girls Club staff- this led to the poetry workshop being scheduled for the same time as the open mic at the Feb WOF, which was not what I initially planned for the evening. Having effective communication was also a challenge just due to the hectic nature of non-profit staff and college student schedules - several times I was informed about a WOF time or date was change last minute, which made it hard to coordinate with volunteers- but thankfully our volunteers were all really excited about coming and were able to make the time changes work for them. However, these date changes did at times seem to be favoring the schedule of the Club over that of the teens, such as the change in date of the March event which ended up being the same date as Junior Prom- meaning low attendance for the event.

The last challenge I faced in this project was in advertising the events to youth outside the club. I initially planned on hanging up fliers at the high school to advertise each event, as well as distribute an awareness assessment to teens at the high school that would assess their knowledge of Boys and Girls Club programs and WOF specifically. This ended up being harder than I anticipated- I thought that a focus group the Club was running at the HS might be able to distribute the surveys but that didn't pan out, and I waited too long to call the HS myself, once I did call they didn't get back to me. A staff member at the Club was able to hang up fliers advertising our last event that is next Friday, but I would have liked to advertise for all 3. Despite those challenges, we still had some really great outcomes with this project, as discussed in the evaluation section.

Future:

WOF will continue to use the supplies purchased with R/C funds into the future, and will even be able to use them to expand programming for other club activities like their middle school We Own Fridays. Though I won't be able to devote the same level of involvement to WOF in the future, I plan on creating a guide for the Club detailing various groups and clubs at Brandeis that might want to collaborate on WOF, and provide contact information. Already, lasting collaborations between Brandeis and the Club are emerging from this project; at our final WOF on May 10th, Ian Roy discussed bringing the MakerLab to Watch City Camp (summer camp at the Club) with Club staff.

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## **Part 2: The Evaluation**

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Outcomes:

- The exact count of youth in attendance is still being finalized, but overall attendance was fairly high, with about 90 youth in attendance at the first event, about 40 youth at the second, (which was fairly high despite junior prom), and about 60 youth in attendance at the third
- Over 1/4 of youth had not attended WOF before, indicating growing engagement from

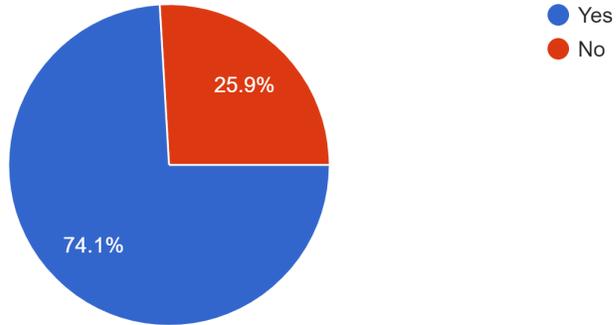
youth unfamiliar with the Club

- And teens had a fun time! A solid 90% of youth in attendance said they would attend WOF again
- My impact assessment was able to collect useful data on what the teens want to do more of at WOF, with basketball, challenge games such as Catan, and open mics three popular suggestions
- With the grant we were able to invest over \$2000 in equipment, which can now be permanently used for WOF programming- and this equipment was even able to be used at the middle school WOF hosted by the Club

Administering the assessment surveys were more difficult than anticipated. All but one response were collected at the first event- attendance at the second event was too low to provide accurate data, and too few volunteers at the third event made it not feasible to have an extra hand devoted to collecting surveys. Furthermore, though I attempted to do a pre and post assessment in a single survey, unclear question labelling made it confusing for teens to fill out, so questions assessing feels before/after the event don't reflect accurate data. That said, useful information was still gleaned from the responses that were collected. Here is a [link to the full survey](#). A sample of questions and responses are included below:

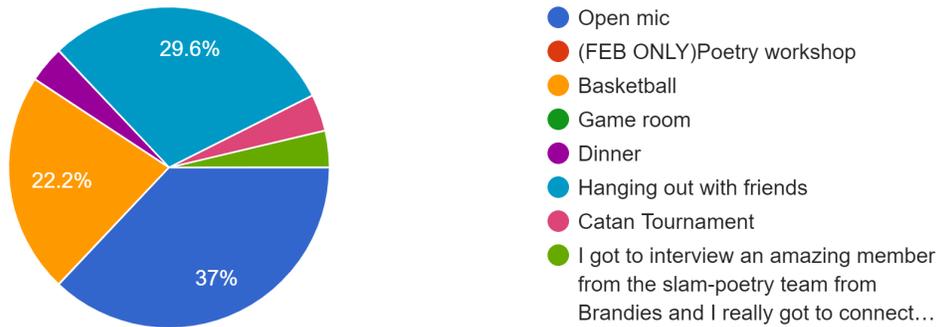
## Have you attend We Own Fridays before?

27 responses



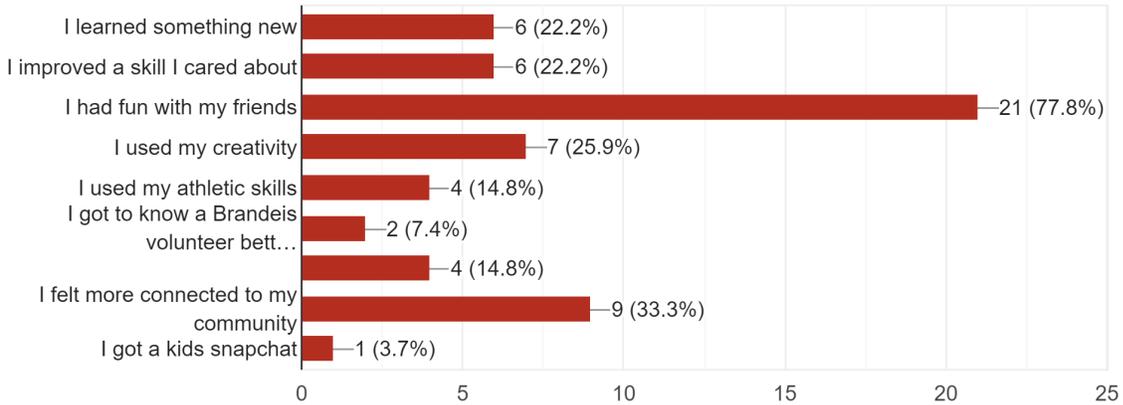
## What was your favorite activity of the night?

27 responses



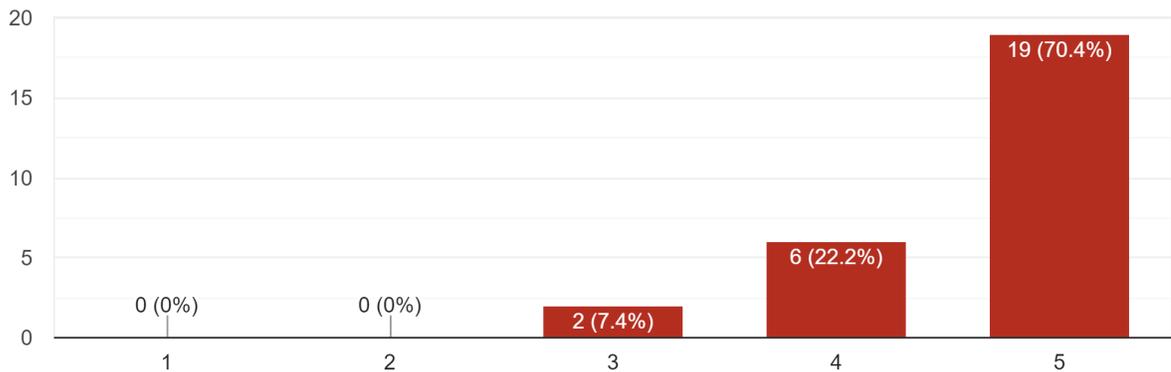
## How would you describe your experience at tonight's event? Please check all the apply

27 responses



## Based on your experience tonight, likely are you to attend WOF again in the future?

27 responses



(1- Will not attend, 5- Definitely will go again)

Below is a SWOT analysis of the project.

#### Strengths:

- Volunteer enthusiasm
- Teens had positive experience with different programming
- Secured equipment for future events

#### Weaknesses:

- Poor communication between WBGC staff and outside groups
- Over reliance on sports at WOF
- Outreach to general Waltham youth not already involved in Club is minimal

#### Opportunities

- Higher attendance possible with better outreach
- Collaboration with more groups at Brandeis
- Youth could help plan/request specific programs from Brandeis they want

#### Threats

- Confusion about how to achieve the goal of the program/what the goal ultimately is  
(fewer WOFs for higher attendance vs more frequent with lower attendance)
- Understaffing at the Club might prevent event from happening

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### **Part 3: Final Budget**

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Lucy Wingard Budget Tracking

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A	B	C	D	E	F	G	H
Item	Amount	Date	Vendor	Method	Notes	Total	Contingencies
Starting Budget	\$2,700.00					\$666.25	The committee did not offer funding for the grill, gift cards/raffles, or food. The grill in particular seemed excessive and a safety issue.
Amazon purchases (big speaker, one set of laser tag guns, and one popcorn red kettle machine)	\$519.27	1/17/2019	Amazon	online/coupa	supplies shipped to DCS/give to lucy		The committee encourages you to contact local businesses for donations of the things they did not fund (businesses to donate food for the evening, prizes for the raffle, and potentially a grill could be donated from a place like Home Depot).
photobooth props, 5 laser tag gun sets, 2 packs of batteries	\$478.91	2/7/2019	amazon	online/coupa	supplies shipped to DCS/give to lucy		The committee wants you to focus on doing 2-3 programs really well versus trying to pull off 5 programs in just one semester. The committee really wants you to take leadership on these and make sure the evenings are student-and-staff led and not 100% designed and run by staff. Choose the 2-3 topics you want to focus on the most and let the staff design/lead the others.
inflatable obstacle course	\$657.06	2/7/2019	inflatable zone	online/coupa	paid via guest paypal to wholesale airattacks		The committee wants you to focus on ensuring sustainability and long-term partnership between Brandeis volunteers and the Boys and Girls Club for these programs. Get clubs who would come back future programming next year as well.
conversion fee	\$6.57	02/07/2019	inflatable zone; w	online/coupa	an unexpected conversion fee charged us the same day we bought the air inflatable bags from wholesale air attach,		The committee thinks you can save money by cutting back on things like paint, tape, etc. These are just suggestions, but it's up to you where you want to focus your \$2700 in terms of approved supplies.
Amazon purchase of pickleball equipment	\$371.94	03/07/2019	Amazon	online/coupa			
					\$ spent =	\$2,033.75	

We ended up spending \$2,033.75 out of my allocated \$2,700. The major area of savings was due to the fact that we didn't end up ordering supplies for glow in the dark dodgeball, as it was the one item on the list that the Club already had some supplies for so it was a low priority in ordering. We also saved money on transportation for students- the Club allowed me to use their vans for free to pick up volunteers from Brandeis. We ended up spending slightly more on inflatables for the obstacle course than we had originally budgeted for, as we realized inflatables would be better than gymnastic mats for this purpose.

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## Part 4: Personal Growth/Reflection and Final Thoughts

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I have grown a lot over the course of this project, both professionally and personally. Hanging out with teens at this event and seeing volunteers have fun and get really excited about being involved was probably my favorite part of this entire project. Before I worked with the Summer Foods Program at the Boys and Girls Club last summer, I didn't have much knowledge about the Waltham community outside of Brandeis, despite living off campus. Once I got to know teens at the Club, I felt like I really belonged to the Waltham community and was doing my part to actively shape it into a welcoming space for everyone. Getting to see other Brandeisians share this same sense of community by developing relationships with Waltham youth was really incredible. I feel immense gratitude for the Rich/Collins family for giving me the opportunity to share some of the amazing resources available at Brandeis with the youth of Waltham.

This project has been the thing to contribute most to my professional growth while here at Brandeis. With Will's guidance, I learned how to have uncomfortable conversations with project partners when I needed more from them. I feel much more confident in my ability to navigate challenges in the non-profit setting, and more confident in my ability to orally communicate with others in general. Already having some experience with event and budget planning from my club involvement, I found the 1 on 1 meetings with Will to be the most helpful part of the R/C fellowship. This was the first project I worked on where I felt like I could be frank about my feelings with the person I was held accountable to; I've never felt like I could tell a professor that I hadn't started a paper yet because I was feeling very anxious that week, but as Will emphasized throughout the R/C process, I really felt like a person first, student second, and R/C fellow third. Knowing that I had a support system that was genuinely more concerned with

my well being than a specific project outcome made this a really positive experience for me, and definitely helped my project in the long run. Instead of putting tasks off that I felt too anxious to complete, I felt okay talking to Will about my anxieties and developing a plan to get things done that worked for both me and the project. I hope to model Will's leadership as I go forward working in non-profit and activism spaces, as I believe it recognizes that everyone has something of value to contribute to these spaces, and it's up to leaders to develop a culture and practice that allows them to do so.

As I mentioned to Will in our final 1 on 1, I think expanding to a year long fellowship could benefit the Rich/Collins fellows. After hearing from Dr. Cathy Burak about how to develop meaningful community assessments, it was clear that the key to any good assessment and program is to work with the community being served from the beginning of the process. I think that having an application process in the early fall, where students could apply with a less concrete plan, would allow a greater collaboration between fellows and the community in developing projects together, and give fellows a greater sense of ownerships over their projects. I think a recurring point of confusion during the R/C fellowship was a question on behalf of the fellows: who am I developing the project for, my community partner or the community I aim to serve? Obviously each fellow applied for R/C with hopes to serve a certain community, but I feel that during the course of the fellowship we all had to alter our projects at times to fit the needs of our community partners without as clear a benefit to the community we aimed to serve. That's why I think it would be helpful for students to have longer to develop a plan with community partners, and hopefully have enough time to actually meet and work with some people from the community they want to serve, to get both inputs on what the project should be. That being said, I know that project ownership was not a struggle for every fellow, so perhaps keeping some

fellowship spots designated for the 1 semester model would still be appropriate.