

Global Health Scholars: 2016-2017 Resettlement Initiative

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PURPOSE

The resettlement initiative aims to integrate a refugee population into a new society. This year, in particular, Hser Ner Moo and Global Health Scholars (GHS) are focusing on improving the reading skill of the high school students at Hser Ner Moo by establishing a dynamic reading program. In turn, we hope that mentees will be able to increase their medical literacy as well as that of their families'.

EVOLUTION OF PROGRAM

Phase 1: The Global Health Resettlement Initiative (GHS RI) began as a partnership between GHS and the Utah Refugee Services Office (RSO). Global Health Scholars served as mentors for resettling families.

Barrier:

- Challenging to mentor an entire family filled with people of a variety of ages.

Solution: GHS and RSO decided that it would be better for Scholars to mentor high school students, not entire families, who were closer to their age group. University of Utah students would be able to better mentor this age group, and they found this goal more achievable.

Phase 2: GHS continued to partner with RSO, and social activities were organized where resettling high school students could meet with GHS students, become familiar with the University of Utah campus.

Barrier:

- Difficult to find resettling high school students who would consistently come to GHS events
- GHS determined that the RI was not creating the necessary sustainability.
- A strong partnership between the two groups was not being formed; events were not leaving a significant impact on either group
- Challenging for the resettling students to commute to the University of Utah for events

Solution: GHS was collaborating with too broad of a population, and advertising events to the entire resettling community proved very challenging. Thus, GHS started a partnership with one community organization in order to improve the impact, feasibility, and sustainability of the RI.

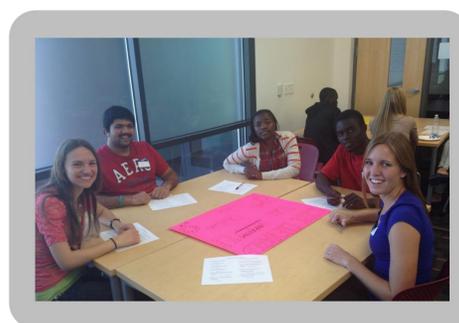
Phase 3: GHS partnered with the Hser Ner Moo Community and Welcome Center and joined their mentoring program. Two Global Health Scholars were paired with one high school student mentee. Once relationships were formed and developed between the mentors/mentees, Hser Ner Moo students were invited to social events on the University of Utah campus. This allowed an opportunity for everyone to interact in a social setting.

Barrier:

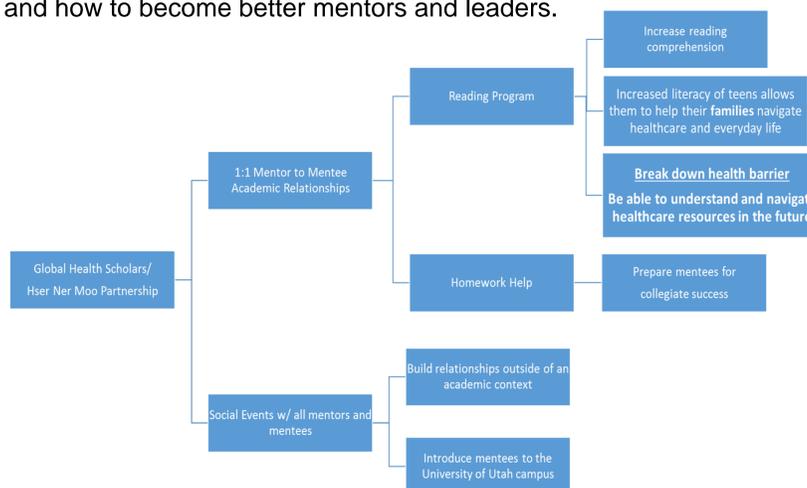
- When there were two mentors paired with one mentee it was difficult at times to determine which mentor would be attending each week, and this affected attendance.
- GHS mentors noticed that their mentees were very bright students and were able to grasp complicated educational concepts, but their difficulty in reading English was preventing many of the mentees from progressing ahead.

Solution: Currently, the GHS and Hser Ner Moo partnership has continued, but only one (instead of two) mentor is paired with each mentee. GHS also launched the new reading program at Hser Ner Moo to focus on important reading skills. It is our hope that these skills not only help mentees in their secondary education, but also in the future as they navigate and comprehend the realm of healthcare.

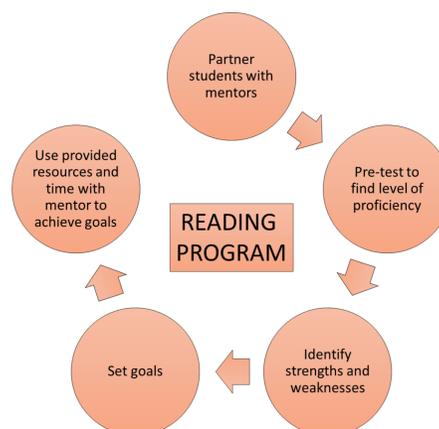
THE COLLABORATION



- Volunteers both from the Global Health Scholars and the community meet at Hser Ner Moo in order to tutor the middle and high school students with their homework. Meanwhile, GHS students learn about different cultures and how to become better mentors and leaders.



- The reading program will serve as supplemental material for the students to improve their critical reading skills on top of the school curriculum and any ESL classes they have taken or are taking.



DISCUSSION

It has become a prevailing notion that healthcare is inextricably linked to health literacy, a factor heavily dependent on the ability of a person to read. Improvement in reading skills (as expected from this program) are projected to enable the students to actively engage in their personal and community health [1]. Information about healthcare resources are often presented in the form of articles, brochures, pamphlets, and/or books - developed reading skills therefore are very critical. [1] Increased access and opportunity to read about healthcare resources also promote development in decision-making skills, allowing for these students to make autonomous decisions about their health care.

Improved reading skills may also contribute directly to health of the students at the center. University of Sussex (UK) conducted a study in 2009 finding that reading can reduce associated stress levels. [2] Similarly, the 2014 study published in the journal Child Development found that reading skills may contribute to improving intelligence and social skills. [2] It is the hope that this program will achieve, and go beyond, the mentioned benefits.

MOVING FORWARD

As we move forward and continue to build our relationship with the Hser Ner Moo Community & Welcome Center, we hope to:

- Establish a stronger foundation that can withstand the types of challenges that we have faced over the years
- Continue and build upon our participation in their mentoring program
- Work to ensure that the Global Health Scholars will be able to continue to engage with students from resettling families to achieve consistent and meaningful mentorship

In mentoring and building relationships with the refugee community, we have gained insights into global health unachievable in any other way. Finally, we would like to have more Saturday activities in the future, which will allow for richer social interactions between mentors and mentees.

REFERENCES

[1] Egbert, N., Nanna, K., (Sept. 30, 2009) "Health Literacy: Challenges and Strategies" OJIN: The Online Journal of Issues in Nursing Vol. 14, No. 3, Manuscript 1.
[2] Whiteman, H. (2016, October 12). Five Ways Reading Can Improve Health and Well-Being. Retrieved from http://www.huffingtonpost.com/healthline-/five-ways-reading-can-imp_b_12456962.html

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

- University of Utah Honors College
- Hser Ner Moo Community and Welcome Center
- Department of Family and Preventive Medicine
- Dr. Ray Price, Department of Surgery