

Spirit of Service Scholars

Betty Fairfax High School SOSS Team

End-of-Year Report

ASU Scholars: Auriane Koster, Sharlissa Moore, Bryan Tom

Betty Fairfax Scholars: Raquel Barraza, Kohl Butteweg, Korah Ellis, Gregory Hernandez, Alex Peeler, Shibly Uddin

Six scholars from Betty Fairfax High School and their three Arizona State University mentors (Auriane Koster, Sharlissa Moore and Bryan Tom) held a 5-K run/walk to end violence on May 7th, 2011 at 7:00am. The event took place at the Betty Fairfax High School track in Laveen, Arizona. Thirty people showed up early in the morning on an unseasonably hot spring day. Notwithstanding the limited attendance, the overall impact of the run was significant. The event generated \$427.50 to purchase curriculum materials on violence prevention for the school.

In our first meeting in September of 2010, our mentees identified two major goals they wished to achieve through the implementation of a service project: (1) helping others and (2) creating a change in their school and local community. When we met in person again in early December, several of the students had taken personal initiative to identify a problem at their school they felt passionately about solving. They explained that there were significant issues with various kinds of violence at their school - physical fights, domestic violence, and abusive relationships. This had generated negative publicity for their school, which they wanted to counteract.

One of the students, Korah Ellis, had already taken the initiative to contact the Executive Director of the Hands and Words are Not for Hurting Project®, a national nonprofit organization located in Salem, Oregon, which educates people about their moral and legal right to live free of abuse and violence. Korah very convincingly 'pitched' a collaboration with this organization, infecting her fellow students with excitement. With much enthusiasm, the team agreed to organize a 5-K run/walk to raise the \$350 required to purchase the organization's educational curriculum for their school. This was the beginning of a successful partnership with this organization.

"We wanted to make a positive impact in our local environment, by showing our peers that conflicts can be resolved through dialogue rather than fighting" said Shibly Uddin, one of the high school students whose impressive organizing skills and dedication to this event embodied the spirit of the Spirit of Service Scholars program throughout the year.

In February, the students hosted us at the community barbecue in Laveen, where we began to reach out to local businesses, seeking corporate sponsors. We sat down with the students and helped them develop a list of things to do, so they could begin to understand how to break up a complicated and large event into achievable tasks. They split up these task areas - advertising, partnerships, media contacts - amongst themselves. The senior scholars gave them a lot of support in two areas they found to be overwhelming: distributing a press release and setting up an online registration page through Active.com. With our help, the high school students worked very hard with the school district to set a date and secure the high school track. The event occurred later in the year than we wished because the track was not available sooner.

The team worked to build community support for the event. With the support of the national organization and the ASU scholars, the students contacted local businesses for support. We contacted other community groups, like the Lion's Club and Girl Scouts, and businesses that previously had supported Hands & Words at other schools, like Sundt Construction. As a result of these connections, the local ice cream store, Scooptacular, donated paper cups and sold ice cream at the event. Additionally, Fry's grocery store in Laveen generously donated eight dozen donuts. Dozens of other businesses welcomed us to hang posters advertising the 5-K in their stores. A nearby HOA promised to inform their entire association about the run. While there was no media coverage of the event, the ASU School of Sustainability graciously circulated a press release about the event. We also spread through Facebook.

The high school students also built support at their school by speaking with their counselors, principal, teachers, and extracurricular activity leaders. The students also plastered their high school with posters advertising the run, and, in the week of the run, they had a booth at lunch hour advertising the run. The students established strong relationships with the drama, band, and dance departments, school administration, and military staff on campus. Their perseverance in pursuing these relationships led to several partnership opportunities and many agreed to participate in various manners during the run. The drama club offered to organize activities for children attending the run, the dance club agreed to do a performance, and a local DJ group, ABC Boyz, offered to provide music. The students also coordinated with the school district to secure sound equipment, tables, and chairs and to ensure a facility maintenance person would be there to unlock the facilities and help us with clean up. They also secured the participation of a local fireman, who was on hand in case of medical or other emergency.

The event was held on an unseasonably hot, spring day. The scholars arrived at 5:45am to begin setting up. The overall implementation of the run was flawless. The bathrooms and other facilities were opened on time, ice cold water was provided for the runners, and the sound system boomed upbeat music across the field. Craig Ross, a professional photographer, elementary school teacher, and Hands and Words project supporter, volunteered to take photos at the event. The Hands and Words are Not for Hurting organization donated purple t-shirts for all nine of the organizers to wear on the day of the run. They also graciously advanced us the materials we purchased with the proceeds of the run. Therefore, we had a banner, stickers, fliers, and posters at the event. After the runners completed the 5-K, one of the scholars, Kohl Butteweg, read the Hands and Words pledge over the loudspeaker: "I Will Not Use My Hands Or My Words For Hurting Myself Or Others."® We left the Hands and Words project curriculum and other materials in the guidance counselor's office at the end of the run.

Ann Kelly, Executive Director of the Hands and Words project stated "I am so proud of these students who are leading the way with such courage, compassion and commitment to stand together to stop the pain and suffering that hurtful words and actions cause. They are a powerful force for positive change in their school and community. I am very grateful for all of their hard work and I am honored and excited to be working with them!"

The greatest challenge we faced was a lack of buy-in from the broader community at the high school and the local community of Laveen. We were under the impression that the Laveen community and students at Betty Fairfax outside of the SOSS program would strongly support

such an event, but in reality this was a challenge. Three of the student groups that promised to show up backed out on the day of the event. Social media channels were effective in spreading awareness of the event and cause; however, getting students to register and commit to showing up was difficult. Registration fees were \$10 for students/faculty/staff and \$25 for general registration, which is very low for a 5-K but might have deterred some people. We also were competing with several other similar events: Relay for Life was held at the track several weeks prior and Pat's Run was in Tempe on April 16th. The students did the best they could given the lack of community support they received.

The students' table and posters at the school and their meetings with teachers and local businesses garnered impressive attention to the issue of violence prevention at the high school and represented the community spirit of SOSS students. We hope future SOSS scholars at Betty Fairfax High School will continue the partnership with the Hands and Words project. 5-K runs typically take several years to be successful. In future years, a higher attendance rate could be expected.

We will be having lunch with our mentees this week to ensure they reflect upon the lessons they have learned throughout this process. Our relationship with some of the students has flourished, and we will remain in contact in years to come.



Mentor/ Mentee Bonding. Credit: Craig Ross Photography

All of our young scholars have exciting college and military service post-graduation plans. Kohl Butteweg will be attending South Mountain Community College for a year and will then enlist in the Marine Corps or reapply for the Naval Academy. Korah Ellis will be attending Miami University in Ohio in the fall. Shibby Uddin is going to Yavapai Community College for a year and then will proceed to Embry-Riddle Aeronautical University the following year. Gregory Hernandez will be attending Northern Arizona University. Raquel Barraza will be enlisting in the Marine Corps. Alex Peeler will be going through Basic Training and AIT for the military and then will be attending Northern Arizona University.



Spirit of Service Scholars, Betty Fairfax High School Team. *Credit: Craig Ross Photography*