



REPORT ON ACTIVITIES

Academic Year 2017-2018

Boston University School of Public Health Activist Lab
Santander Urban Impact Micro-Grant Program



Boston University School of Public Health
Activist Lab



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Overview

The Santander Urban Impact Micro-Grant Program was developed to spark creativity, foster innovation, and provide Boston University students with seed funding to support their good work and new ideas. This year, the Activist Lab of the School of Public Health (BUSPH) has managed this important program made possible by the generosity and commitment of Santander Bank. The program provides micro-grants of up to \$3000 for BUSPH students to launch new projects to provide needed service to residents in the City of Boston, to enhance care and services to people across the life span, or to address public health policy issues. The Activist Lab is the ideal home for this program, as it is the Lab's mission to serve as a catalyst between the BUSPH and the community. Through existing partnerships with neighboring organizations, including the Boston Housing Authority, Barkley Housing Development, Blackstone Community Center, Boston Healthcare for the Homeless, and Boston Public Health Commission, the Activist Lab already has strong community connections and history. The Activist Lab routinely engages in programming that supports these and other organizations, while offering students opportunities to participate in activities that promote the health of the public. Such strong relationships provide fertile ground for student engagement in new and existing areas of community engagement and activism.

In 2017-2018, the Activist Lab awarded Santander-sponsored micro-grants to 11 student groups who provided direct service to populations in need, supported community-based activities, coordinated conferences to address public health concerns among marginalized residents of Boston, and contributed to public awareness to promote meaningful public health policies. These awards, dubbed "Activist Bucks," were made through a competitive process open to all graduate students at the School of Public Health.

In addition to the Activist Bucks awards that supported student conducted activities, the Activist Lab also used Santander Micro-Grant funds to support activities that address public health concerns in the school community and surrounding neighborhood. Those funds were primarily provided directly to support the work of our community partners. BUSPH students, staff, and faculty participated in much of that work, thus strengthening the relationships with these important organizations.

“Activist Bucks” proposals

Project requirements:

1. Projects must aim to provide services and/or community improvements in at least one of the following areas: Youth Engagement (e.g. mentorship opportunities, educational programing, nutrition, etc.), the enhancement of care and services to people across the life span, and/or public health policy issues. In addition, we considered project applications that address areas specific to the work of the Activist Lab such as housing/homelessness, substance use disorders, and violence.
2. Projects must either take place off the BU Campus (i.e. within the City of Boston), invite Boston residents to participate in an activity or event on the BU Campus, or demonstrate specific relevance to the City of Boston by addressing community-identified challenges and opportunities (such as a project involving analysis of data regarding the City of Boston).
3. Students must submit a summary of results after completion of the project to be shared with the participants of the project, the Activist Lab, and Santander. Summaries may be written (no longer than one page) or prepared in a multi-media format, including but not limited to video, Power Point, photography, a poster presentation, public presentation, documentary, website, or blog.
4. Grant funds must be used to directly support the project, which may include: events, supplies, transportation, etc. Funds may not be used to support student or BU staff time on the project.
5. The projects, selected in February 2018, must spend all funds by August 31, 2018.

Selection process

All graduate students enrolled at BUSPH were eligible to apply. Students from across BU were allowed to join with SPH students in an application, thus encouraging inter-disciplinary collaboration. The Activist Lab marketed the program extensively through email to all students, posting on SPH This Week, and other school-wide announcements. In addition, Dr. Anne Fidler, Asst. Dean for Public Health Practice, visited each section of a core course required of all first-semester students, soliciting participation. Interested students completed an on-line application, addressing the following: population served; community partners involved; project goals, activities, and projected impact; project duration and proposed budget.

The Activist Lab received approximately 15 proposals, submitted by individuals or student groups. Dr. Fidler conducted an initial screen of the proposals, assessing whether they met the criteria listed above. She contacted most of the student applicants to clarify the objectives and activities and to assure that the relevant community partner were consulted and that the project met the needs of the partner agency and the population. Dr. Fidler and Associate Dean Harold Cox then reviewed all proposals; they selected 11 proposals for funding (see Table below).

Most projects started in February 2018 and all were completed by the end of August 2018. All participating students met with community partners who represent the populations the students aim to serve. At the beginning of the project, all students met with Ms. Heather Mitch, the Activist Lab Administrator, who provided guidance to students about how to request reimbursement of allowable expenses. They also worked with Ms. Emily Barbo, the Activist Lab Communications Manager, who discussed how to brand their project, supplying appropriate attribution language and logos. Throughout the course of their projects, students met periodically individually and in small groups with Dean Cox and Dr. Fidler to discuss their work, receive feedback, and problem-solve.

2018 “Activist Bucks” Projects

Student Name	Population	Project	Partners
Marlee Quinn, Sarah Page	Low income/homeless people in South End	Distribute hygiene kits at South End Salvation Army	South End Salvation Army
Reann Gibson	Mattapan Woolson St. Community Garden	Provide tools; student stipends	Woolson Street Community Gardeners, etc.
Staige Davis, Betsy Katz	Survivors of sexual assault in Boston	Purchase and provide supplies for care kits to deliver to EDs for survivors of sexual assault	Boston-Area Rape Crisis Center; BUSPH Sexual Trauma Outreach and Prevention
Jayda Fleishman, Iris Delgado, et al	Clients of Men’s and Women’s Homeless shelters	Provide resource bags with necessities; donation drive	Boston Public Health Commission
Annette Curbow, Jane Kim, et al	Homeless injection drug users	Update/improve educational material about Hep C testing and drug use	BPHC/AHOPE
Zev Braun	Victims of gun violence in Boston	Develop website with names/faces of GV victims in Boston	MA Coalition to Reduce Gun Violence
Mack Bullard, Weronika Grabowska	Homeless clients of Boston’s Engagement Center	Summer reading program	BPHC, Engagement Center
Anastasia Gurinovich, Meghan Short, et al	High school students in Blackstone Comm Center	Teach high school students basics of data analysis, coding	BCYF-BCC Board
Abby Kim	Persons experiencing substance abuse disorder	Addictions Case Conference for Boston-area medical, dental, PH students – 4/25/2018	Student Coalition on Addiction, Project Assert, Boston Medical Center
Jess Saenz, Jayda Fleishman, et al	Transgender persons in MA	Support BUSPH phone bank to promote “vote no” on Nov ballot initiative	Freedom for All MA
Rebecca Bilodeau, Ana Villegas Pelaez	Marginalized individuals	Support conference on “Intersectionality and Health: Breaking Down Barriers” – 4/21/2018	BUSSW Center for Innovation in Social Work and Health

Summary

The Activist Bucks Program, supported by Santander Urban Action Micro-Grant Program, enabled more than 30 graduate students in public health the opportunity to learn about the real problems encountered by vulnerable people in the city of Boston and engage in activities to help try to address them. This process allowed them to learn about the depth and breadth of problems experienced by individuals and the complexity of finding solutions to those problems faced by public health agencies and organizations.

The 2018 “Activist Bucks” project was a great success. All parties – BUSPH students, community partners organizations, and, most importantly, vulnerable residents of Boston – benefited from the activities and programs. The project also contributed to the Activist Lab’s mission and provided an opportunity to enhance already strong community partnerships and to develop new ones. The experience reinforced several underlying concepts that will result in improvements to the project going forth.

- **Community partners:** A primary lesson is that input and feedback from relevant community partners is critical. Several students initially proposed activities that were not feasible, had already been tried and rejected, or were not a high priority for the community partner. In several instances, conversations with the partners resulted in a change of plans, which resulted in a much improved proposal, and a much improved outcome. Therefore, to optimize the usefulness and acceptability of the student projects, all applicants will be required to meet with community organizations who serve or represent the population of interest, *prior to* submitting the application. The community organization shall submit a letter (or email) of support with the application. If requested or as deemed warranted, the Activist Lab will provide guidance to potential applicants to help identify the appropriate community organization.

Other refinements in the process include:

- **Student organizations:** BUSPH is home to 14 [student organizations](#), representing students with a special interest or public health focus. This year, some Activist Bucks projects were enhanced by collaboration with, for example, BUSPH’s Students of Color and the Queer Alliance. Going forth, each applicant will be encouraged to identify a student organization that may be interested in collaborating or providing collaborative resources (in terms of student labor or additional funding (student organizations are allotted modest operational funding from the School). (A question will be included in the application as to whether the applicant has identified a student organization which may be interested in collaborating.)
- **Input from SPH faculty and staff:** Student applicants will also be encouraged to seek input from faculty and staff from across SPH and other schools across the University. Several projects this year were enhanced by consultation and involvement with other members of the school community with a shared interest or experience. (Though encouraged, students will not be required to identify faculty or staff who may wish to be involved.)
- **Budget management:** Many students came into the project with little or no knowledge or experience in developing a budget. Through the process of meeting with each group, Heather Mitch, the Activist Lab Administrator, developed a budget template, to help guide the students. Going forward, the template will be included as part of the application package.

Student Conducted Projects & Events

Hygiene kits at Salvation Army

Marlee Quinn, Sarah Page

Two MPH students, Marlee Quinn and Sarah Page, have worked closely with the Salvation Army in the South End of Boston. Through this work, they found that the population in this area desperately needed hygiene products such as toothbrushes, deodorant, and soap. Activist Bucks allowed the purchase of 300 hygiene kits containing these items, as well as toothpaste, a comb, shampoo, and socks. Most of the kits were distributed to people experiencing homelessness who visit the Salvation Army. Additional kits were included in Boston's Lovin' Spoonfuls Food Rescue food bag giveaways. The kits provided access to hygiene products, which most citizens take for granted, to individuals who might not have been able to afford or obtain basic products that promote a healthy life.

The students found great satisfaction in this experience. It taught them about the variables that are present in humanitarian projects, from assessing needs to efficient budgeting. Additionally, it gave them hands-on experience – giving back to the community in which they live and attend school. As they stated, *“Our coursework at the Boston University School of Public Health emphasizes using the knowledge we obtain to help others at the population level, and we feel this project has given us that opportunity.”* The pictures provided display the shipment of hygiene kits and the items that make up each kit.



Items in the hygiene kits distributed to homeless individuals who visit the South End Salvation Army.

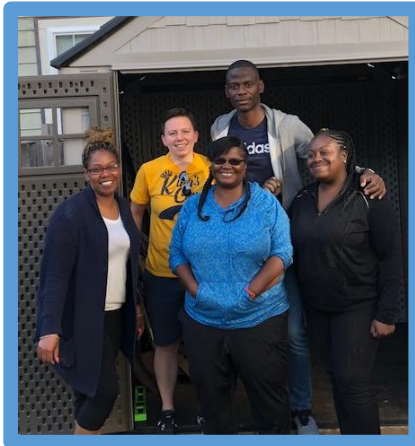
Community Garden in Mattapan

Reann Gibson

The Woolson Street community garden is a garden located in Mattapan, a historically disadvantaged neighborhood in Boston with low access to healthy fruits and vegetables. The garden was developed in 2014 as a space for residents in the neighborhood to grow their own food, connect with one another, and hold community events. The garden has ten plots but services many more through its programming and events.

Reann Gibson, a BUSPH MPH student, received funding from Activist Bucks to purchase a tool shed and tools for a tool “library” and to train youth ambassadors (local youth with an interest in gardening and community development) in gardening and using the tools and to support community outreach about events in the neighborhood.

Five young people were able to participate in activities with the project throughout the summer. They assisted in building the shed, weeding and maintenance of the community spaces, and supported gardeners in caring for their plots. They also attended a workshop on keeping garden plots tidy and on identifying plants. Overall, this project was particularly valuable because now more residents are aware of the garden and the youth are excited to continue volunteering in the garden and two of them will be managing a portion of their own plot through the fall. The tools were essential in helping with weeding and planting, as many residents are excited about gardening but intimidated by the upfront costs. The tools were open to all who used the garden.



Care kits to survivors of sexual assault

Staige Davis, Elizabeth Katz

The Boston Area Rape Crisis Center (BARCC) provides free support and services to survivors of sexual assault ages 12 and older and to their families and friends. Through the Medical Advocacy program, BARCC volunteers meet survivors at the hospital and offer any needed support and information as well as hygiene kits. Recently medical advocates have found that offering mindfulness items such as stones and coloring books can ease tension during the difficult hospital visit, especially for young survivors. BARCC has not had the resources to procure these items in all response kits, so many advocates were purchasing these items out of their own pocket.

The Kits for Survivors project, funded by Activist Bucks, partnered with BARCC to supply these coping items, such as grounding stones, coloring books and crayons, Play-Doh, and fidgets. Two MPH students who have worked with BARCC, Staige Davis and Betsy Katz, directed the project, which culminated in a kit assembly event at BUSPH. At the event, two representatives from BARCC presented the work of the organization and the meaning of the kits. About 15 student volunteers then assisted in the assembly of 300 kits. Following the event, a BARCC representative sent the following email to the Kits for Survivors student organizers:

"I know I already said thank you – but I wanted to say it again! We had multiple tough cases this week where the fidget packages were super helpful in connecting with a survivor, giving the survivor something to focus on (that wasn't sexual violence) and bringing something fun into a tough situation. Both survivors and their families made good use of everything! I know dough, coloring and rocks may seem like an odd way to help with sexual violence, but these small things are making a big impact in our hospital visits."



Resource bags (“Sani Sacs”) to men’s and women’s homeless shelters

Ashiye Aator, Shalaya Asal, Sydney Cooper, Iris Delgado, Jayda Fleishman, and Sharon Khama

The “Sani Sacs” Activist Bucks project began with a visit to the Southampton Street Shelter on January 17, 2018 when students met shelter manager, Liz Henderson, who provided a tour of the Southampton Street Shelter and described needs of the individuals there and at the Woods Mullen Shelter for women a short distance away. In consultation with Ms. Henderson, students chose to assemble 300 backpacks filled with a number of items, including hygiene products, socks, snack bars, reusable water bottles, and journals and pens. They also included a letter from students, which included a list of relevant resources and services thought to be of use to the Boston homeless population who stay at the shelters. In order to supplement the grant by Santander Bank, students organized a donation drive on the Boston University Medical Campus and contacted several organizations seeking additional donations.

The donation drive was held during the month of March, and donations were received from individual students, family, the Boston University Dental School, Boston University faculty and staff, and the Tufts University Dental School. The Sani-Sacs team wrote the letter to be included in the bags and other students signed it at a school-wide event. Assembly of the bags took place on campus for 4 days and resulted in 309 bags. Bag delivery was coordinated with staff of the Boston Public Health Commission; distribution took place on May 21, 2018.



Educational material about Hepatitis C and drug use


Annette Curbow, Ali Lapidus, Jane Kim, Eric Lam, Rory Moore, Candice Bangham

Activist Bucks funding supported a team of MPH students worked with Access, Harm Reduction, Overdose Prevention and Education (AHOPE), a Boston area needle-exchange program, which is part of the Boston Public Health Commission. As a team, they updated AHOPE's Hepatitis C (HCV) education pamphlet to reflect recent changes in testing science and harm reduction strategies. The updated brochure presented the information in a way that was clear, concise, and factual. Throughout the brochure design process, team members were careful to ensure that the information was easy to understand for injection drug users. Each team member was assigned a specific topic to incorporate into the brochure, allowing complete and accurate information on a variety of aspects of HCV risk factors, prevention, and treatment. Once each section was complete, they combined the information into a cohesive and appealing design. The team considered the impact the document would have on the Boston community, taking care to ensure that the information was understandable, made no assumptions, and worked to reduce bias and stigma.




In the process of identifying and implementing the specific activity and outcome product, the team learned a variety of key lessons. They learned that community partners should be first at the table when developing intervention strategies. However, it takes time and persistence. It took several weeks to navigate AHOPE before the team identified the right contact. Then people's busy schedules made setting up a meeting difficult. As a student group working to address an issue as pressing as the opioid epidemic, the team acknowledged that they were not the first priority of AHOPE and needed to respect its needs and capacity. Once a meeting took place, the team presented several possible intervention strategies they had developed independently as part of a class project. However, AHOPE was unable to accommodate a large-scale intervention like the ones proposed due to limited resources and capacity. Other organizations around the Boston area had the same limitations. The team learned that developing intervention strategies alongside the community partners would have culminated in an end-result that would have better served the organization and its clients.

What is Hepatitis?

Hepatitis is the **swelling of the liver**. It can be caused by a virus, like Hepatitis A, B, or C, and sometimes by alcohol and drug use. Chronic hepatitis infection can lead to scarring of the liver (fibrosis), cirrhosis, and even liver cancer.



How Do I Get Hepatitis

-  **Hep C** is a virus spread through **blood-to-blood contact**.
-  **Sharing needles or injecting equipment** that might have blood on it is the **#1 cause** for new Hep C infection.
-  **Unsanitary tattoo or piercing equipment, razors, toothbrushes, crack pipes and sharing straws while snorting drugs can also spread Hep C**

Hep C can also be transmitted through **unprotected sexual** contact. Bleeding can occur during **anal sex, rough sex, or sex** when you or your partner has an STD, spreading the virus.


Reduce your Risk

- ✓ **Practice Safer Drug Use**
 - Use a rubber tip (available at AHOPE) when smoking crack
 - Let your pipe cool between hits
 - Use your own straw or tube when snorting drugs
- ✓ **Remember**
 - Rinsing syringes, spoons, and cookers in bleach **DOES NOT** kill the Hep C virus
- ✓ **Practice Safer Sex**
 - Use male and female condoms during oral, vaginal, and anal sex
 - Use a new condom during each sexual act
 - Use a dental dam during oral sex
 - Use lube to reduce friction during each sexual act
 - Access PReP to reduce your risk of HIV/AIDS
- X **Do NOT share**
 - Drugs, blood, syringes, cookers, spoons, cotton balls, cotton swabs, or water.
- X **Do NOT reuse needles**
 - Old, dull, and used needles increase your risk of getting Hep C. Access new needles through AHOPE needle exchange


Visit our walk-in center at **774 Albany St** for access to syringes, splitter kits, and testing. **Practice safer injection to reduce your risk.**

HEPATITIS C

A manual for persons who use drugs



Inside this brochure, learn what Hepatitis C is, how you get it, and how to protect yourself.

 **Harm Reduction Services**
774 Albany St, 1st Floor
(617) 534-3976

Visit us today for:

- Overdose Prevention & Narcan Training
- Free and confidential HIV, STD, and Hep C testing
- Referrals and linkages to care

Risk Reduction supplies:
sterile syringes & injection equipment

Visit our drop-in Monday - Friday from **7:30 am - 3:00 pm!**
(Closed for lunch 12-1 pm)

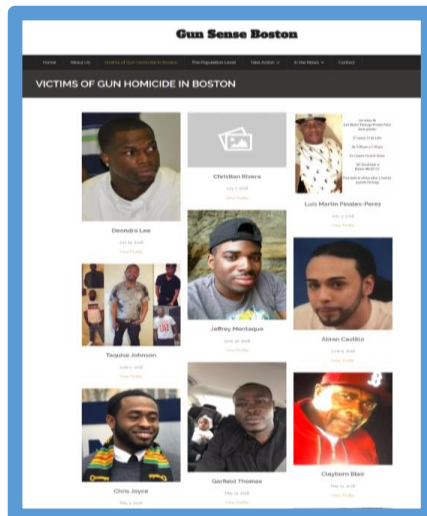
For the AHOPE van location and more information call (617) 534-3976.

Victims of gun violence in Boston website

Zev Braun

“[Gun Sense Boston](#)” grew out of two realizations: 1) many people living in Boston do not perceive the chronic problem of gun violence in the city, and 2) without a collective understanding of this crisis, we cannot hope to end it. Zev Braun, a BUSPH MPH student, decided to meld a narrative storytelling approach with an evidence-based public health lens in a website designed to galvanize action. The

project has two goals: 1) empower Boston communities that face this crisis by ensuring that their voices are heard, and 2) evoke a more compassionate response from residents who are not directly impacted by the epidemic of gun homicide. These goals are accomplished by memorializing Boston’s victims of gun homicide and building a platform for residents who have lost a loved one to share their stories.



Zev attended community meetings by Legacy Lives On (a gun violence survivor’s group based in Dorchester) and the Roxbury Presbyterian Church. There, he met various people who had experienced gun violence whom he later interviewed for several hours. He distilled the interviews into 3-7 minute sessions for website visitors to experience. The Victims Page is a collection point for police reports, local news stories, and biographical information from several sources which serves as an illuminating dataset on gun homicide in Boston. These data are also represented by thought-provoking visuals and a map of gun homicides on the Population Level page. Legislative information and investigative news stories are available through the Massachusetts Legislature website and various journalistic sources. The final site will also explore the root causes of gun violence, including but not limited to the widespread

availability of guns, the under-regulation of gun ownership, the lack of community trust in the police, the lack of economic and educational opportunities in communities, and several policies in the criminal justice system.

The Take Action page features “Action of the Week” items that visitors are encouraged to complete regularly, along with a gallery of other action steps sorted by difficulty for the more eager visitor. In this way, “Gun Sense Boston” strives to channel emotional energy associated with gun violence toward a highly productive end: flexing our democratic rights as citizens and city residents to bring about positive change.

In the ongoing creation of content for “Gun Sense Boston,” Zev was allowed the opportunity of developing new skills to complement and enhance those he learned in a BUSPH course on Global Health Storytelling. He also developed a deeper understanding of family, community, inequality, and violence in the Boston communities of Roxbury and Dorchester. Though Zev plans to continue developing and updating his website, it is currently available at <https://gunsenseboston.org/>.

Summer reading program at Boston Engagement Center

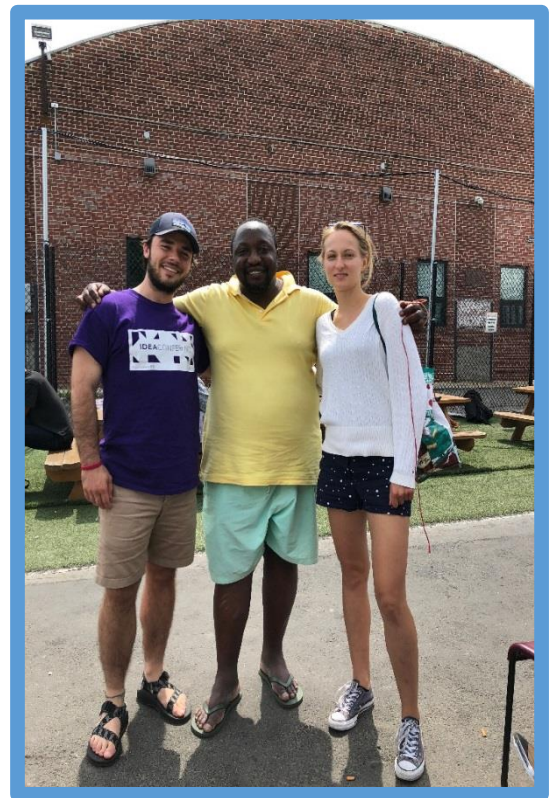
Mackenzie Bullard, Weronika Grabowska

The Boston Public Health Commission's Engagement Center is located adjacent to two of Boston's homeless shelters. It provides a welcoming space for individuals in need of a space to spend time during the day, as well as to get connected to housing and recovery services offered by the city. Two BUSPH students, Mackenzie Bullard and Weronika Grabowska, developed a reading club, "Snacks and Short Stories," which was held at the Engagement Center every Sunday morning from June 3 – August 5, 2018. The goal of the reading club was to provide an opportunity for homeless individuals on Albany Street to read, think, and discuss ideas with others. In doing so, the students fostered new relationships, served, and learned the stories of people who were homeless in the BUSPH neighborhood.

Each gathering consisted of reading several short stories or poems, discussions, and Dunkin Donuts. A typical session lasted for 1-2 hours and consisted of 5-12 pages of reading. During and after readings, the group would break into a roundtable discussion or side conversations about the topic of the day. The students attempted to guide and facilitate roundtable discussions, but ultimately the talks were dependent on the group, and the controversy found within the text. The flow of communication within the group was never stagnant and facilitated deep thought, political flare, and most importantly, laughter. This was the most fruitful part of the project for the students because they were able to personally connect with the readers through a trust-building activity together. They felt that they had succeeded at using reading to help develop new relationships with individuals who are homeless and fresh perspectives on health and housing stability.

In addition to the reading sessions, the students provided additional reading resources for the Engagement Center to keep and make available to its clients. Overall, they collected more than 120 books to restock the scant bookshelves. They ordered new ones for people with a specific request and, for the general community, they purchased bags of used books from Good Will.

The feedback from the participants was overwhelmingly positive. Many individuals noted that the most significant impact was helping them start their Sunday with a breath of fresh air. Several noted that the reading group changed their entire outlook for the rest of the day. They explained that they woke up not knowing what the day had in store for them, but this was a pleasant and fun surprise. Reading short stories and eating donuts together was a great way for them to learn about each other. The readers found it to be inspiring, engaging, and helped provide temporary respite from their current situation.



Mackenzie Bullard and Weronika Grabowska with Pierre (center), Summer Reading Group Member.

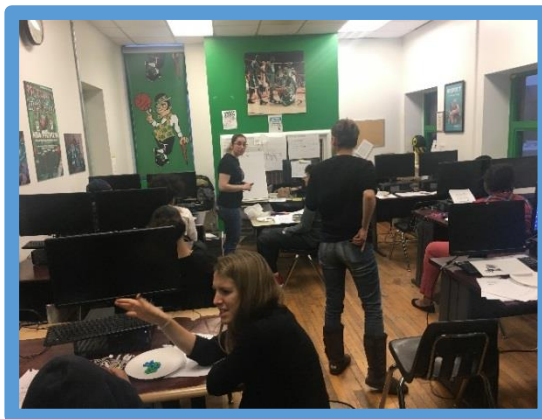
Teaching basics of data analysis to high school students at Blackstone Community Center

Anastasia Gurinovich, Tanya Karagiannis, Samantha Lent, Adrienne O'Donnell, Meghan Short, Isabelle Weir

A group of BUSPH MPH students taught high school students from Blackstone Community Center (BCC) the basics of data analysis and coding in R programming language through four weekly sessions in March-April 2018. They recruited students to attend through a poster and Eventbrite page, and through contacts at the BCC after-school program. In the first session, they introduced basic data analysis concepts such as data collection, data exploration, and mean/standard deviation. Students used these tools in a hands-on activity by plotting the color distribution in bags of M&M's. They introduced students to basic programming in the R language, explaining basic programming concepts such as variables and assignment statements through interactive activities. They applied the programming tools to real-world data sets, including brain and body weights of land animals, hurricane fatalities, and number of "likes" and comments in exchanges on Twitter.

The project's goal was to spark interest in computer programming and data analysis, and to let young students explore how they can use numbers to describe phenomena they see in the world. The teaching team talked about their work, and described how statisticians use tools to tackle real-world problems every day. To evaluate the impact of the lessons, the team collected students' feedback through evaluation forms on the final day. In addition, after each session, they provided pizza over informal conversations with students. From the evaluations, students said they enjoyed learning to code and liked learning about hurricanes (the topic on the day of the evaluation). They did not like the amount of typing, which points to the potential for online documents they can copy code from rather than the printouts used.

A challenge of the course was inconsistent attendance, given the structure of afterschool programs at Blackstone. This made it difficult to build on material from previous sessions. There were also some students who were less interested and some difficulties with classroom management. Finally, there was a fairly wide range of ages, from 9 to 15, which made it challenging to tailor material to our audience. Future offerings of such a course would benefit from working with either the community center and/or local schools to identify a group of students within a narrower age range, who would commit to attending all of the sessions.



Addictions Case Conference - April 25, 2018

Abigail Kim

On April 25, 2018, more than fifty people attended the Addiction Advocacy and Clinical Case Conference, representing medical, public health, physician's assistants, and dental students from Boston University, Tufts, Harvard, and MA College of Pharmacy and Health Science. At the event, participants discussed the clinical management of a prison-involved individual with an opioid use disorder. In addition to the clinical case, there was also a facilitated discussion of the socioeconomic and systemic barriers preventing individuals from accessing substance use care. Finally, interested participants learned of multiple opportunities to engage in advocacy efforts, including advocating for medication for addiction treatment in prisons/jails and calling representatives. The conference featured two Boston Medical Center addiction medicine fellows, Payel Roy and Sim Kimmel, on hand to present the case, information, and add their own experiences from working on the Addiction Consult Service at BMC.



Transgender Rights in Massachusetts

Jess Saenz, Jayda Fleishman, Iris Olson

In November 2018, Massachusetts voters face the first-ever statewide popular vote on protections for transgender people from discrimination. The referendum would repeal the current state law that protects transgender people from discrimination in public places, including restaurants, stores, and doctors' offices. A "yes" vote on Question 3 keeps the current law as it is.

Freedom for All Massachusetts is a bipartisan coalition of families, safety advocates, faith leaders, and businesses whose mission is to advocate to keep the current law intact. The BUSPH Queer Alliance joined forces with BUSPH Activist Fellow, Iris Olson, to contribute to the effort by holding a phone bank for transgender equality.

On Friday, April 13th, 2018, Queer Alliance e-board members, students, staff, and allies got on their phones and talked with voters about the about the importance of voting Yes on 3 his November. Assembled participants called residents of Worcester, MA, making 462 calls and 28 contacts. This event would not have been possible without the generous support of the Santander Bank and the Activist Bucks award.



Intersectionality and Health: Breaking Down Barriers - April 21, 2018

Rebecca Bilodeau, Ana Villegas

On April 21, 2018, students from the Boston University (BU) Schools of Social Work, Public Health, Medicine, Dentistry, and Sargent College, and health practitioners across a wide range of disciplines gathered for the Intersectionality and Health: Breaking Down Barriers to Quality Care conference. The event was made possible with the support of the Center for Innovation in Social Work and Health, by the generosity of Santander Bank, and the support of the BUSPH Activist Lab. The goal of the conference was to explore how current and future health practitioners could deepen their understanding of intersectionality and health to provide better care and eliminate health inequities for people with multiple marginalized and intersecting identities. The student-led conference was the brainchild of Jackson Rodriguez, who had experienced multiple frustrating encounters in their attempt to access health care that met their needs. These experiences led them to become a student at BU School of Social Work and inspired the vision for the conference.

“My hope in co-organizing [the conference] is to provide intentional space where we center the lives and stories of the people we will encounter not just in the doctor’s office or therapist’s room, but ... the people we interact with anywhere on a daily basis,” explained Jackson. *“I believe that by opening up ourselves to fully listen and engage with people who are consistently absent in mainstream media, we can move toward seeing and talking about these barriers in an effort to break them down over time.”*

Conference participants heard from speakers with lived experience facing ableism, racism, homophobia, transphobia, and economic barriers in their daily lives and in accessing health and mental health care. Break-out sessions introduced participants to concrete skills that will better serve clients with multiple marginalized identities. An afternoon panel included professionals with experience in social work, nursing, and the law who reflected on the role of their own identities in their professional work, and how they seek to bring cultural humility to the services they offer.



Activist Lab sponsored events

Bystander Intervention Training

Particularly in the current political climate, there has been concern about the apparent increase in lack of tolerance and outright hostility towards groups of people of differing religion, race, ethnicity, gender identity, and sexual orientation. Even if we do not find ourselves the target of such hostility, the question is - how should we respond/react when we see this happening to others? The Activist Lab has worked with Dr. Yvette Cozier, Assistant Dean for Diversity and Inclusion to try to address this concern. In October 2017, we engaged [Hollaback](#) in New York, an organization with a history of conducting such trainings, to conduct a “train-the-trainer” session at BUSPH. Debjani Roy, Deputy Director of Hollaback, conducted a 3-hour program, in which she provided training to 20 members of the BUSPH community, to enable us to moderate the 1-2 hour program ourselves.

On March 22, 2018, we held a “dry run” session attended by approximately 12 of those members of the SPH community who had been trained to hone their skills in effective delivery of the training. Funding from the Santander micro-grant program supported this follow-up training. Beginning in fall 2018, a session on Bystander Intervention is included in the Leadership and Management core course, required of all entering MPH students. Staff and faculty who participated in the October 2017 and March 2018 sessions have volunteered to facilitate by those sessions.



BUSPH staff members Elizabeth Henehan Mahogany Price facilitate March 2018 training session for SPH faculty, staff, and students.

Life on Albany Committee

Lunch for Staff of Southamptton and Woods Mullen Shelters

The Life on Albany Committee, coordinated by the Activist Lab, includes staff, faculty, and students representing BU Medical Campus (School of Public Health, School of Medicine, and School of Dental Medicine). The committee works with members of the community, including representatives from Boston Healthcare for the Homeless Program and Boston Public Health Commission. The Committee identifies and implements programs to educate faculty, staff, and students on the Medical Campus about homelessness, substance use disorder, and mental health concerns affecting populations surrounding the campus. Among the important services and programs administered by the Boston Public Health Commission in this neighborhood are the homeless shelters – Southamptton Street (for men) and Woods Mullen (for women). Members of the Life on Albany Committee work with and rely on the staff of the shelters to help identify and facilitate programs for their clients.

In recognition and gratitude for the hard work, compassion, and perseverance of the shelter staff, the Activist Lab and Life on Albany Committee, using funds from Activist Bucks, provided lunch to these dedicated individuals. In April 2018, we served approximately 60 staff and volunteers at each shelter.



Salsa In The Park

A free and popular outdoor summer series for all ages, backgrounds, and abilities, Salsa In The Park is an innovative community engagement project that transforms public space for public benefit through music, dance and education. A public health initiative, featuring movement as a key to wellness, it draws over 500 people from all walks of life every Monday evening from 6 pm to 9 pm for salsa instruction (dance and percussion), high-quality performances showcasing a variety of cultures and genres, social dancing, and health and wellness promotion. Sponsored by MetaMovements Latin Dance Company, Salsa In The Park is held weekly in the Blackstone Community Center courtyard every summer. The Activist Lab, with funds from Santander, helps support the important community activity.



One Hood Youth Peace Basketball League

Since 2007, the One Hood Youth Peace Basketball League has recruited players from rival Boston neighborhoods that share a history of conflict. In 2009, league organizers began using a new strategy to defuse the tension: placing teens from different neighborhoods on the same team. This innovative basketball league has proved to have the power of bringing people together and fighting harmful stereotypes. As one of the league participants stated, *“When we come together it’s not just for basketball, it’s also to communicate and for entertainment. If there is ever any tension, it’s always left on the court, rather than with guns, knives, or even physical altercations.”* The BUSPH Activist Lab has worked with the Blackstone Community Center to provide support for this important activity.



Image from <http://www.ibaboston.org/blog/one-hood-uniting-youth-basketball/>



Louis D. Brown Institute: Mother's Day March for Peace

The Louis D. Brown Peace Institute is a center of healing, teaching, and learning for families and communities impacted by murder, trauma, grief, and loss. Louis was a young man committed to making his community a more peaceful and just place through Teens Against Gang Violence. Tragically, he was killed in a cross-fire of a shootout in 1993. Louis's parents founded the Institute in 1994, to carry out the work that Louis started through services and programs for families impacted by murder on both sides, and for the community and society through tools, training, and technical assistance. Each year, the Louis D. Brown Institute hosts the Mother's Day Walk in Boston, to demand dignity and compassion for all families affected by murder. The Activist Lab coordinates participation by students, staff, and faculty of BUSPH, and this year, used funds from Santander Bank to help sponsor the event.

