Reducing Disparities in Unmet Mental Health Need for Latino Youths

By Omar Gudino, Assistant Professor, Psychology

Only 20% of children and adolescents with mental health needs in the U.S. receive services, and Latino youths are three times more likely to have unmet mental health needs than their non-Hispanic white peers (Kataoka, Zhang, & Wells, 2002). While racial/ethnic disparities in unmet mental health need for children and adolescents are widely documented, less is known about how disparities develop or how to eliminate them. Given that disparities in youth mental health care likely result from a complex interplay of practical, attitudinal, cultural, and systemic factors, research aimed at furthering our understanding of mental health disparities must consider multiple determinants at multiple levels.

Reducing Disparities in Unmet Mental Health Need for Latino Youths was a community-engaged, mixed-methods study conducted in partnership with the Colorado Department of Human Services (CDHS) and community mental health centers in four counties in Colorado. The primary aim of the project was to capitalize on the knowledge of relevant stakeholders to identify factors that influence disparities in unmet mental health need for Latino children and adolescents. This study sought to advance the literature on minority health disparities by moving from simply documenting disparities to investigating the complex interplay of factors that influence patterns of mental health service use for Latino children and adolescents.

(continued on page 2)
Stakeholders participating in this study included clinical providers (n=44), families of Latino youth currently receiving services (n=16), and families of Latino youth that had never received services (n=24) recruited from Denver, Arapahoe, Weld, and El Paso counties. Additionally, agency directors/managers (n=7) from across Colorado were also recruited. All participants completed a survey assessing their perceptions of possible barriers to accessing mental health services. Additionally, all participants were presented with two experimental vignettes describing a child with mental health symptoms and were asked to provide ratings of the severity of the problem and need for various types of services. After completing these measures, participants took part in a semi-structured focus group where they discussed perceptions of the mental health system, barriers and facilitators for mental health services, explanations for disparities, experiences with services, and recommendations for eliminating disparities. Qualitative data obtained from focus groups coupled with survey research data provide a rich description of processes ranging from the identification of mental health needs by families, to the unique experiences of Latino families interacting with community agencies, to system-level factors faced by agency directors seeking to serve the needs of Latino families.

Final results and products from this study are currently pending. Analyses underway focus on (a) identifying points of convergence and divergence across the various stakeholder groups and (b) synthesizing these rich data to provide a comprehensive view of causes for disparities that considers the perspectives of all stakeholders and across multiple levels of influence. To date, community partners have received initial tangible benefits as a result of this study. For example, this study facilitated a coordinated effort to examine service provision to Latino families across the state. This coalition of agencies, who were willing to reflect on their ability to engage and retain Latino families, is eager to apply the results of this study to their daily practices. This broader goal of improving services will be facilitated by the dissemination of research results in formats accessible to clients, staff, and agency directors.

Agency directors also benefited from participating in a targeted focus group where they shared challenges and innovative approaches for working with Latino families. CDHS, our primary community partner, has been able to showcase this collaboration as an example of their commitment to addressing disparities through science and practice. This specific project, along with new projects and activities that have emerged as a result of this project, is showcased in CDHS’s larger portfolio of efforts to improve access to and quality of care for diverse children and families. These efforts have been highlighted in CDHS’s communications with existing and potential funders as an example of their commitment to providing effective care to diverse communities and as a way to secure additional funds to continue improving services across the state.

LAUNCHING THE COMMUNITY-ENGAGED STUDENT FELLOWS PROGRAM

CCESL is excited to announce the new Community-Engaged Student Fellows program. The program was created to advance aspects of the Collaboration for the Public Good strategic initiative of the IMPACT 2025 plan. Fellows are assigned to an interdisciplinary issue area and charged with co-developing a plan to advance community-engaged work in this area in consultation with community and campus stakeholders as well as CCESL staff. The program provides opportunities for students to gain valuable experience and contribute to the University’s vision of being "a great private institution dedicated to the public good" while simultaneously advancing aspects of IMPACT 2025. We welcome the following eight graduate students to the program:

Sara Abdullah, Environmental Policy & Management Masters – Metro Denver Nature Alliance
Russell Anderson, Counseling Psychology PhD – Criminal Justice
Jordan Grapentine, Higher Education Masters – West Denver Project
Shay’la Liller, International Studies Masters – Immigrant and Refugee Populations
Samantha Markovitz, Social Work Masters – Youth Voice
Michael Oyakojo, Economics Masters – Transportation
Dana Polley, Social Work Masters – Social Entrepreneurship
Amy Wang, Higher Education Masters – Education Access
FINDING ACADEMIC & PERSONAL CONNECTIONS THROUGH SERVICE LEARNING

By Dr. Beth Suter, Associate Professor, Communication Studies

During the Spring 2016 quarter, students in my COMN 3990: Family Communication Capstone partnered with Chinese Children Adoption International (CCAI). CCAI is a non-profit adoption agency dedicated to placing children (both special- and non-special needs) in the U.S. from China, Haiti, Latvia, Ukraine, and Bulgaria. CCAI serves these children and their U.S. adoptive families pre- and post-adoption. Yet, the number of children placed for international adoption represents the minority. CCAI also advocates for orphans left behind, attempting to help meet these children’s basic daily need by providing childcare, foster care, medical services, educational funds, and disaster relief.

This past quarter’s Capstone’s partnership found students assisting with pre-adoption services (e.g., compiling adoptive families’ dossiers for submission to China) and post-adoption support services (e.g., working one-on-one with recently adopted children to practice self-regulatory and sensory management skills in the Connected Children’s Group; serving as teaching assistants in Chinese language classes for adoptees at the Joyous Chinese Cultural Center).

Excerpts from student essays likely communicate best the import of this project for CCAI as an agency and the students as individuals:

“In high school, I participated in many service activities . . . While I have been a student at DU, I have made excuses like, “I don’t have enough time to do service because I am a student athlete which takes up my weekends” or “I am a broke, tired college student. I deserve a day off for relaxation. Learning more about CCAI and being a part of the orientation booklet team has changed the way I think about those things. Recently our lacrosse team gave us the opportunity to volunteer at the children’s hospital. I believe that before working with CCAI I would not have taken advantage of this opportunity . . . Working with CCAI has been life changing for me because it has inspired me to give back more and become the best community member I can be . . . forming me into a generous community member again.” - Max Planning

“Someone once said that adoption comes from loss . . . All of us who are adopted have lost something—our first family, flesh and blood, our roots, our stories’ . . . In my first essay, I mentioned that I was hesitant to start my time at CCAI. My hesitancy stemmed from my fear of having to confront all the painful memories about my own adoption . . . Although reflecting on my experiences was not easy, I am grateful for the time I spent learning and working with CCAI because it helped me gain closure and confidence in my own adoptive family dynamic.” - Jordan Greenwall
STRUGGLE WITH LOVE: 2016 COMMUNITY ORGANIZING INSTITUTE

By Kate Powers, CCESL Office Coordinator and Public Good Impact Editor

When folks ask about CCESL and the work that we do, I often give a personal anecdote to help explain: when I was a student, I was full of good intentions to change the world, but I had no idea how to actually do that. I needed tools. Here at CCESL, our mission is to educate and equip the campus community to accomplish tangible, public work. The Community Organizing Institute, an annual event held each fall, introduces DU students, staff, and faculty to the knowledge and tools necessary to begin to effectively bring about such change.

The full-day Institute, held on September 30th, included presentations from CCESL staff on topics such as power and power-mapping, collective self-interest, and critical reflection.

For many, the highlight of the day was the keynote presentation, Struggle with Love, by local Denver organizer Justin Valas. Valas discussed the importance of each person’s identity and talked about activism as having three stages: to educate, organize, and mobilize. He gave in-depth examples about his work on immigration reform and shared stories of challenge and triumph, including the time he found himself involved in an unplanned hunger strike! He also led participants through a variety of group and small group activities such as a discussion on the “world as it is” vs. the “world as it should be” and an interactive exercise exploring the concept of privilege using “privilege beads.”

Attendees were given pre- and post-assessments to help CCESL evaluate the effectiveness of the institute. On the post-assessment, attendees are encouraged to share their takeaways and provide feedback, which included:

“Don’t speak for someone but use your privilege to create spaces for [others] to speak.”

“Developing relationships and making sure they’re reciprocal is crucial to building trust and creating lasting change.”

“I am excited and happy that this training was offered. It is so valuable to ensure the environment DU strives to support (inclusive excellence).”

Students in CCESL programs are required to attend the institute, but we encourage folks from across campus to join. If you are interested in attending next fall, we can notify you when registration opens for 2017. Simply send us an email, and we’ll add your name to our list!
Faculty Research Explores Wage Theft of Day Laborers

By Rebecca Galemba, Assistant Professor, Josef Korbel School of International Studies, and Raja Raghunath, Assistant Professor, Sturm College of Law

This study, funded by a Public Good Fund Grant, aimed to combine qualitative research with legal outreach and services to understand labor exploitation, especially wage theft, experienced by Latino immigrant day laborers in Denver and Aurora, Colorado. The qualitative research, led by Rebecca Galemba, partnered with Raja Raghunath’s Workplace Rights Project, as well as with El Centro Humanitario, Denver’s day labor center, and Towards Justice, a non-profit legal agency that assists low-wage workers who have experienced wage theft. Over 40 graduate students from the Korbel School have worked on the project in addition to 12 law students at the Sturm College of Law.

Throughout the study, we interviewed 170 day laborers across Denver and Aurora, as well as non-profits, lawyers, legal agencies, and employers to understand the larger climate affecting wage theft in Colorado. Some day laborers are U.S.-born, but the majority are Mexican and Central American immigrants. By definition, day laborers are usually willing to do any kind of work. They wait at various street corners and at Denver’s day labor center, El Centro, with the hope of obtaining daily work. Sometimes these jobs can lead to longer-term work arrangements, but often they are just for that day. Day laborers work in construction, landscaping, cleaning, masonry, painting, and moving. Most find work in Denver’s booming residential construction industry, which is struggling to keep pace with population increases. Since many skilled construction workers left the industry during the recession, it has struggled to keep up with demand. In this context, we expected that day laborers might exert more agency over wages and work conditions in contrast to researchers who have studied day labor during economic downturns (e.g. Ordoñez 2015). However, weak labor laws, the lack of immigration reform, and tight margins in the construction industry mean that even though day laborers have demanded higher wages, exploitation remains pervasive and redress is rare.

Over 60% of the workers we interviewed had experienced wage theft at some point, including being underpaid for work or not being paid at all. Only a handful had ever recouped wages or sought any legal redress. Regardless of actual legal documentation, workers are often exploited since employers assume they either lack status, are too vulnerable to complain, or too desperately need the work (see Fussell 2011). Yet workers are not silent. They devise strategies to prevent wage theft and demand a living wage. In the context of Colorado’s post-recession construction boom, day laborers request $12-15 an hour (versus the lower minimum wage) since they know their labor is in demand. Yet these wages are still significantly below prevailing industry wages. Day laborers organize themselves to set a wage floor so that it raises wages for all, collect employer contact information, establish clear agreements up front, and blacklist employers with poor reputations. Sometimes when a car stopped at the street corner, instead of the usual eight to ten men rushing to the vehicle, everyone would stand back, warning, “This employer does not pay...This one treats workers poorly.” Yet, we still found that desperation for work meant that workers would sometimes work for less money and return to employers who had not treated them well previously, which reinforces the cycle of exploitation. Breaking these street corner norms leads employers to believe that they can continue to get away with mistreating workers.

Additional elements that lead wage theft to proceed include the tight post-recession construction market and weak labor laws. Specifically, we began the study after the passage of an amendment, SB5, to the Colorado Wage Claim Act, which went into effect on January 1, 2015. The legislation was primarily aimed at helping low-
wage workers who have experienced wage theft. Instead of going to small claims court, they can now utilize an administrative process through the Colorado Department of Labor and Employment (CDLE). However, insufficient resources and the political climate surrounding the bill make implementation slow and challenging, which leads workers to distrust the process despite good intentions. We are currently working on a related project to help the CDLE more effectively process claims and to assess these efforts. After interviewing leaders in the construction industry, we learned that practices that became routine during the recession, such as small margins, remained the norm. Layers of sub-contracting in the industry allow employers to keep contract bids and labor expenses low and predictable, but they also make it easier to obscure responsibility. We are currently working with employers as advocates to strengthen industry norms since those who bend and break the rules receive an unfair competitive advantage.

CCESL has just released the RFP for 2016-2017 the Public Good Fund. Learn more on our website.

**SHARING STORIES OF COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT AT THE 2016 OPEN HOUSE**

By Kate Powers, Public Good Impact Editor

As we do each fall, CCESL launched the 2016-2017 academic year by inviting DU faculty, staff and students to our Open House. We were joined by old friends and new faces as we came together to share conversation, discuss possibilities for future collaboration, and enjoy stories of community engagement from faculty and alumni.

Pecha Kucha-style presentations were a fun and inspiring addition to this year’s Open House. Each presenter (or group) showed twenty photos for twenty seconds which they wove together to form a narrative of their community-engaged work. We enjoyed such presentations from Drs. Jennifer Hoffman, Shannon Murphy and Robin Tinghitella; Dr. Kim Bender; and Dr. Heather Martin. Public Achievement alumnus Sean Davis also returned to DU to participate.

Meanwhile, DU Service & Change members set up a mini service project in which guests could write letters of encouragement to students in local elementary and high schools as well as to DU first-years. If you were not able to join us, it is never too late to connect and explore ways to get involved. The party may be just once per year, but our “house” is always open!
MINI-GRA NT HELPS FIRST-YEAR LAW STUDENTS CONTRIBUTE TO THE PUBLIC GOOD

By Alexi Freeman, Director of Externships & Public Interest Initiatives, Sturm College of Law

More than 220 incoming first-year students from Denver Law spent the final day of a busy orientation week engaging in a range of service projects. From rolling toilet paper to reinvigorating a large garden, the students got a taste of Denver Law’s commitment to the public good.

The largest group of students picked up trash, litter, and debris – everything from cigarette butts to food to paper products – from the Downtown Denver area around the 20th and Welton Station in partnership with the city’s Keep Denver Beautiful program. Decked out in orange vests and equipped with brooms, dustpans, and trash-grabbers, over 80 students trekked around downtown, having fun while cleaning up our city streets.

50 other students participated in service projects at the Jefferson County Boys and Girls Club and Owens Boys and Girls Club. From vacuuming mini pool tables and organizing board games, to beautifying a huge garden by weeding, planting new flowers, and carrying huge bags of mulch, our students helped the clubs get ready for a new school year. They were also able to hear from the clubs’ directors and learn firsthand about the challenges the youth served face and how the Clubs can make a difference.

The International Academy of Denver, a specialty, high-need elementary school, partnered Denver Law students with teachers to set up classrooms before the students arrived a week later. Students categorized books, decorated bulletin boards, and sharpened pencils!

Urban Peak hosted students to help clean up a shelter for homeless youth, and Project C.U.R.E. hosted another group to sort and organize medical supplies that will be sent to developing countries. Lastly, 30 students organized the warehouse and helped customers shop at Metro Caring, a hunger relief organization. They carried bags of lettuce, stocked canned foods, and even rolled unused toilet paper, an item that the organization receives from major U.S. airlines.

The following morning, on August 13, some of the students enrolled in the part-time/evening division at Denver Law were joined at their project by Dean Bruce Smith. The group worked on behalf of a homeowner in the Barnum section of Denver as part of Extreme Community Makeover. The team removed about eight truckloads of debris, weeded flower gardens, and installed a pebble-stone walkway at the front of the house, bringing the homeowner to tears.

While providing one day of service certainly does not alleviate the needs of these community-based organizations, every little bit counts. And, more importantly, it shows the community at large that we at Denver Law care about contributing to the public good. It also emphasizes this commitment to a new class of future lawyers, hopefully setting them on a path to do both legal and non-legal service throughout their tenure at Denver Law and beyond. As one student participant stated, “It was exactly what I needed to refocus and do some good in my new community.” Another student added, “This was a great reminder as to why I decided to go to law school and to DU specifically.”
**DU SERVICE & CHANGE: KICKING OFF THE YEAR WITH CARNIVALS AND TRAIL WORK**

By Michaela Nee, DUSC Co-President

The year has only just begun, but DU Service & Change (DUSC) has already been making moves with volunteer opportunities and bringing together students and community partners to create positive change and impacts.

This fall, we’ve already volunteered at the Asbury Carnival, which DUSC volunteers have participated in every year since DUSC’s creation (5 years in a row)! 16 volunteers joined us to play with elementary school students, paint faces, create crafts, and facilitate games for kids and their parents to participate in! Is there any better way to start the first week of the quarter than by getting to have fun and be kids again while serving our local community?

Volunteers also took a day-trip to Colorado Springs on October 1st to hike around the Austin Bluffs open space area and rebuild and restore some hiking trails. 5 volunteers dedicated a whole Saturday to work unbelievably hard at reshaping some well-loved trails for residents of Colorado Springs. It was tough work but well worth it for the sustainable paths that countless Coloradans will continue to use for years to come and the community bond that was formed.

Amongst our various service opportunities, we have brought on a fresh team of co-chairs and co-presidents that are ready to create service projects and tackle social injustices throughout the Denver community:

**Co-Presidents:** Ashley Edinger, Michaela Nee

**Project Action:** Weekly/bi-weekly volunteer opportunities in the community meant to expose members to a variety of social justice issues. Project Action explores projects meant to start conversations about why these issues exist and the short-term relief that volunteering can provide.

  **Co-chairs:** Isabella Brenington, Ellen Megerson, Erin Zamora, Mika Smith

**Project Volunteer:** One-day events each quarter where University of Denver students, faculty and staff can engage in a variety of volunteer activities throughout the Denver community.

  **Co-chairs:** David Garcia, Daniel Lorenzo, Will Ekern, Kiira Walsh

**Project Connect:** Leads and organizes drives/fundraisers throughout each quarter that promote awareness and help a specific cause through the funds and donations raised.

  **Co-chair:** Zainab Dafalla

**Project Depth:** Long-term and committed projects where those involved discuss and learn about public issues while exploring their root causes and looking for better solutions.

  **Co-chairs:** Sungmin Yi, Laura Georgiev, Elisa Martinez Cancino, Katie Grogan, Sarah Rowse

**Project Immersion:** Intensive service that addresses and meets critical community needs in areas like public safety, health, disaster service, environment stewardship, etc. for a period of time in which members are immersed in the community.

  **Co-chair:** James Joseph

We are so thrilled to see where this year takes us with both new and renewed community partnerships, service opportunities, and forging together a DUSC community that connects with the greater Denver population and beyond to create positive change for public good.
PUBLIC ACHIEVEMENT KICKOFF: NINTH GRADE ACADEMY

By Brittaney Baker, Public Achievement Summer Intern

In August, the Public Achievement (PA) program had the privilege of hosting George Washington High School (George) for the second year and welcomed incoming high school students for their Ninth Grade Academy. Almost 300 high school freshman were in attendance for a day of fun, connecting, and the building of school spirit. With the help of teachers, Patriots in Training (upper-class George students), and GWHS alums, the event was a great success.

A host of activities, collectively known as the Patriot Games, involved students rotating between various stations that highlighted extracurricular activities that George has to offer. Among the stations, students participated in “drama relays” where they raced against each other to dress in costumes and recite famous lines from Romeo & Juliet, ran in an ROTC obstacle challenge, debated one another on the correct way to brush your teeth, and even made an impromptu marching band with the help of children’s musical instruments.

Finally, every team created their own mural which reflected what it meant to be an incoming George Washington Patriot and a 2020 graduate. The event was highly interactive and took place for two days in the heart of DU’s campus.

Reflecting on their time spent at the academy, one student explained, “You know on the first day of school when you don’t know anybody and you don’t want to help anybody? Well, this is helping me meet friends.” By the end of the week, students will have made new friends, created a new connection to the George community, and be assured that they are not alone as they begin their high school journeys.

At the end of the Patriot Games, one George teacher shared their thoughts on why Ninth Grade Academy is so crucial for incoming students. “We’re really trying to make kids know and feel that George is a place that they can be supported and that they can be successful.” Those of us in CCESL’s Public Achievement program look forward to working with these students in the year ahead.
WELCOME TO THE 2016-2017 PUBLIC ACHIEVEMENT TEAM LEADS!

ADEOLA AJIROTUTU

Adeola Ajirotutu is a first year master’s student at the Josef Korbel School pursuing her degree in International Human Rights with a focus on gender equality and global health. She was born in Lagos, Nigeria but grew up in New York City (the greatest city in the world) and received her bachelor’s degree from the University of Pittsburgh in Religious Studies and Italian Studies. Adeola is passionate about women’s rights, minority rights and racial equality, and equal opportunities in education. She also enjoys reading, singing, and watching/playing soccer—sometimes all at the same time. Adeola is hoping to develop a love for the great outdoors now that she lives in Denver (but she says not to hold your breath)!

HELEN CHAO

Helen Chao was born in Macau, China and immigrated to the United States when she was 7 years old. She grew up in Apple Valley, Minnesota and graduated from the University of Wisconsin-Madison in 2015 with a degree in Psychology and a certificate in Asian American Studies. Go Badgers! This past year, Helen served on a year-long service corps, Young Adult Volunteers (YAV). Through YAV, she worked at a refugee settlement agency as well as a day shelter for seniors without homes in the Denver metro area. Helen is currently a first year Counseling Psychology graduate student at the Morgridge College of Education.

ANDY FOX

Andy Fox is the first in his family to attend college where he earned a Bachelor of Arts and Science degree in Business Management with honors from Colorado State University-Pueblo. Andy understands the power of education both inside and outside of the traditional classroom. While in college, he served as YMCA camp counselor and taught outdoor leadership skills to youth over the course of six summers. Upon graduation, he joined AmeriCorps’ national service model, City Year, completing 1,700 hours of community service with a cluster of Philadelphia’s at-risk youth. The following year, he served as a live-in tutor as part of a college preparatory program designed to support academically talented, economically disadvantaged minority male students. His extracurricular activities include volunteering as a firefighter, coordinating volunteers at church to raise more than $60,000 to build fresh water wells in South Sudan, serving as a middle school track coach, and recently completing one full and three half marathons to raise money for St. Jude Children’s Research Hospital. His interests also include a global health focus, and he has traveled to six countries; most recently, he was selected to travel to Ghana to serve as a Water Sanitation and Hygiene (WASH) volunteer for ten weeks with World Vision. Andy holds a Master of Public Health (MPH) from Drexel University and is currently pursuing his PhD in Education Leadership and Policy Studies.

(continued on page 11)
SUZANNA MAGUIRE

Suzanne Maguire is currently earning a Master of Social Work degree with a focus on positive youth development and advocacy. She is committed to social justice and values opportunities to educate and empower students to become civically engaged. She has also served as an AmeriCorps NCCC Member, a Direct Support Staff for clients with intellectual, developmental, or physical disabilities with human service organization Chrysalis, and a Special Needs Assistant and Tutor with the Iron County School District in Utah. Suzanne graduated from Southern Utah University with a Bachelor of Science in Sociology.

ALICIA SAXE

Alicia Saxe is a PhD candidate in Curriculum and Instruction and has a passion for research, holistic education, activism, and human flourishing. She grew up in Colorado, but she loves the ocean just as much as the mountains. Alicia completed a double bachelor’s degree in Psychology and Spanish at the University of Hawaii and then spent eight years traveling, teaching, living and studying in various parts of the world. Chile, Venezuela, Portugal, and Australia have all been home for her, and they all have great mountains or beaches, or both! Alicia has one brother and two sisters, and despite their opposing affiliations with all four houses at Hogwarts, they are her best friends. She is an enthusiastic teacher and life-long learner who thrives in the classroom and in the outdoors. Lastly, Alicia is not sure if she believes in reincarnation, but she often feels that she was a mermaid in a past life.

ALEJANDRA MARTINEZ: GRADUATE ASSISTANT & PA PROGRAM COORDINATOR

Alejandra is a current graduate student in Higher Education at the University of Denver. She holds a B.S. in Industrial & Organizational Psychology and a B.S. in Human Development & Family Studies from Colorado State University in Fort Collins. She has served as a family resource navigator and advocate through United Way of Larimer County and a local Loveland non-profit. She is also a graduate from the Family Leadership Training Institute, a civic engagement program. Alejandra is interested in community-engaged work, public policy and college student development.

Alejandra partners with the CCESL Program Coordinator and serves as the Program Coordinator for Public Achievement (PA). In PA, DU students serve as coaches and work closely with a group of high school students from one of CCESL’s partnering schools to identify social justice issues that students care about within their school and community. She also contributes to all CCESL student programs across CCESL’s four initiatives, which include service, civic development, community-engaged learning and community-engaged scholarship.
FLINT, STEEL, AND PUBLIC ACHIEVEMENT

By Adeola Ajirotutu, Public Achievement Team Lead

“Does anybody have a lighter?” You might be surprised to hear that those words encompassed an important part of our Public Achievement (PA) retreat during the last weekend of September. And before you ask, no, we were not engaging in any illicit activity or promoting arson. Instead, we spent almost two full days in a cabin up near Mt. Evans centering ourselves, learning more about each other, and preparing for the work we were about to embark upon with the PA program.

After a wrong turn or two and quickly backing out of a cabin that was definitely not ours, we eventually arrived at our lodging for the weekend. To our great surprise and pleasure, we discovered a fire place in the living room! I should mention that it was fairly cold in the cabin, so we were perhaps more excited about that fireplace than was strictly necessary. Two Team Leads worked diligently to build a roaring fire using the aforementioned lighter and a bag of Doritos—if you’re like me and have never built a fire before, the discovery of the wonders of Doritos would blow your mind. We spent much of that weekend tending to and stoking the fire in that fireplace and the one that was growing in our hearts. That metaphor is incredibly cheesy but no less fitting. Though all of us may have come to PA for various reasons, we were bonded that weekend by our growing passion for the work we would be doing this year.

Besides connecting with “nay-chur,” taking a beautifully breathtaking drive up to Summit Lake, enjoying the vegan tacos from City O’ City (they taste just like chicken!), and finding the most hilarious ways to say “pterodactyl,” we also delved deeper into the ideas of privilege and oppression, considered the role of implicit bias in developing cultural competence, and discovered an alternative and fun way to manage a classroom using a Task Party. Each of these activities challenged us to be open, honest, and vulnerable, to contemplate the impact our experiences have had on our worldview, and to think deeply about what knowledge, biases, hopes, fears, and expectations we would be bringing into our PA classrooms. While reflecting on the retreat, returning Coach Grace Carson stated, “I really admired everyone’s openness. I think I just realized that everyone is afraid of failing in their teaching, just like I am. We’re all human.” Perhaps that is one of the most important takeaways from the weekend – that we are not doing this work alone or in a vacuum.

The lighter came back to the forefront at the end of our first day when we made bracelets to remind ourselves of the commitment we were making to each other, to the program, and to the communities with whom we would be working. PA is about public work, and an important distinction that is often made between that work and community service is the idea of working with a community as opposed to working for the community. That idea really resonates with the Team Leads and Coaches who are a part of PA, and it is something we will continue to keep in mind as we engage with our classes and our students this year.
COLORADO PUKSTA SCHOLARS GATHER FOR ANNUAL RETREAT

By Aaqil Anwar, Puksta Scholar

On September 17th, 2016 the DU Puksta Scholars program took a trip to the campus of CU Boulder for the second annual Autumn Intercollegiate Puksta Retreat. This retreat serves as the kick-off event for the DU Puksta Scholars program in which scholars are given the chance to meet with colleagues from other schools and share their experiences in the program. For many first-year DU scholars, the retreat also serves as an introduction to “life in Puksta” and provides them with a better understanding of the structure of the program. For the rest of the DU scholars, the retreat signals the beginning of the academic year, serves as a reminder that there is work to be done on their Puksta projects, and ignites a renewed focus on their selected social justice area.

The keynote speaker at this year’s retreat was the Emmy award-winning and former Puksta scholar Alex Landau, who provided scholars with insight on his experiences as a community organizer and social activist. The insights provided by Mr. Landau demonstrated to this year’s cohort of scholars that even the tiniest of actions can have the largest of impacts. Furthermore, Mr. Landau challenged each and every scholar not to just dive in head-first when tackling their social justice problem but to plan things out in order to ensure that scholars are working smarter, not harder, when taking action steps to solve problems.

Having celebrated its 15th year of existence, the Puksta Foundation has helped develop Puksta Scholars programs at various universities in the state of Colorado. Both John Mulstay, Executive Director of the Puksta Foundation, and NicShe Meis, Director of Development and Community Outreach, spoke to scholars throughout the retreat and provided insight on the strides that the Puksta Foundation has made in the last 15 years along with their long term vision. Finally, Mr. Mulstay emphasized the importance of being a Puksta scholar but also provided a reminder that academics do come first, reminding students to “be a student first and a scholar second.”

Looking back at this year’s retreat, second-year scholar Andrea Bonilla recounted, “This year’s autumn retreat was a great reminder to me of how powerful and inspiring the stories of my fellow scholars can be. Getting to know them and all of their experiences makes me so proud to be a part of this organization.” First-year scholar James Artis added, “I’ve only been a Puksta scholar for a couple months, but I do feel a sense of belonging and community in this program. I am so grateful for meeting my fellow scholars and getting to learn more about what Puksta stands for.”

This year’s Autumn Intercollegiate Puksta Retreat provided scholars with the opportunity to reflect on their participation in the Puksta Scholars program while also shifting their focus towards the future.
SPARKING SUCCESS IN LOCAL COMMUNITIES

By Allison Grossberg, Puksta Scholar

This summer I had the wonderful opportunity to be an intern at Spark Mindset, a Colorado-based social enterprise. I worked as an intern the previous summer for a different company, and as I walked into the front doors of Spark’s downtown building, the image of sheets of white paper flying at me from an angry copy machine filled me with some anxiety about what was to come. My internship with Spark, however, involved no copy machines, coffee runs, or file folders. Instead, I was welcomed as a part of their team, and I dove wholeheartedly into the work.

Spark Mindset’s goal is to “help build a world in which every person can discover and reach their full potential.” In order to achieve this ambitious goal, they offer corporate and community-based training that helps individuals and groups to shift their mindset in positive and productive ways. During my time at Spark Mindset, I was tasked with gathering current research in the fields of Neuroscience and Psychology that informed the curriculum. I also developed surveys and other important research tools that can be used to understand and improve the culture of the communities Spark touches and to assess the effectiveness of their programming.

In his book “What I Believe,” celebrated author and philosopher Bertrand Russell wrote “The good life is one inspired by love and guided by knowledge.” Spark Mindset’s two founders are deeply motivated by the love they feel for their respective communities, which drives them to help individuals and companies to fulfill their potential. I too am deeply driven by a desire to help those around me to find passion, purpose, and happiness. I believe that this can be done in a meaningful way by sharing knowledge and creating relationships. Spark Mindset exemplifies this in many ways. Above all, they emphasize the value of knowledge and use it to equip people with powerful tools they can use to be successful, healthy, and happy at home and in the workplace.

The work I did enabled me to better understand challenges that inhibit people from reaching their full potential. I used that new understanding to design informative, applicable and evidence-based curricula beneficial both to individuals and to the broader goal of creating change. This relates deeply to my work as a Puksta scholar, as it involves understanding and addressing systemic problems that hinder individuals from being successful. I also developed hard skills relating to research that are essential components of both Psychology and Neuroscience – fields which are the core of my academic work at DU.

While I am still not proficient at operating a copy machine, the experiences I gained at Spark Mindset gave me real-world skills and new perspectives that are vital in understanding the people and world that exist around me. I feel that I was really able to influence those that Spark Mindset touched by sharing new and impactful knowledge that ultimately has the power to open minds and hearts.
INTERNATIONAL DAY OF PEACE

By Cara DiEnno, CCESL Associate Director

On September 21st, DU hosted the university’s first annual day of events in recognition of the International Day of Peace. The theme for this year was Many Stories, One DU. As we came together as a community and looked back on a year of many challenges and tensions in our world, we wanted to recognize the power of peace. The day included an Interfaith Service/Ceremony and Breakfast, led by remarks from Chancellor Chopp. The day culminated in an Action Kickoff Celebration, which CCESL and DU Service & Change helped organize. The celebration featured a reflection activity on the free speech wall, a food truck, an alumni musical performance and an opportunity for DU members to commit to taking action following the Day of Peace.

DU organizations are hosting follow-up action projects to continue the momentum from the day. Student leader of Day Without Hate, Matt Meyer, reflected upon his participation in the kickoff celebration:

International Day of Peace provided us with not only a place to raise our voice but also a place to support and experience other life-changing organizations. Although we all began in hesitation due to weather, once we got the music playing and the food cooking people started to participate. Not only did we have people participate in our activity, but people also signed up to help execute Day Without Hate this year in April.

For a summary of action projects and more information on how to get involved, visit http://www.du.edu/cme/media/documents/ducme-peaceday-actionprojectflyer-2016.pdf.

GEARING UP FOR NOVEMBER – NATIONAL VOTER REGISTRATION DAY

Over 60 DU students registered to vote or updated their voter registration as part of National Voter Registration Day on September 27. In addition, nearly 500 more students have registered to vote to date during fall quarter. CCESL partners with the nonpartisan community organization New Era Colorado to increase voter registration efforts on campus. Students may also register to vote online through www.govotecolorado.com.

Election Day in Colorado is Tuesday, November 8, 2016. To view election information, polling locations or sample ballots, please visit: http://www.sos.state.co.us/pubs/elections/electionInfo.html.
**ALUMNI CORNER: EMILY ARASIM**

Interview by Elaina Fenstermacher, CCESL Social Media Specialist

**Briefly, what was your position at CCESL, and when you were you here?**

I was a Public Achievement (PA) coach for three years before graduating with a degree in International Studies in 2014.

**Can you share a little about what you are currently up to?**

I now work as the Communications Director for Women’s Earth and Climate Action Network (WECAN), an international environmental organization. WECAN supports women on the front line of climate change to find solutions.

As the Communications Director, I write newsletters, run social media accounts, manage the website, write articles for newspaper and magazines, as well as do photography and videography.

Through this work, I have had the opportunity to travel to places like Ecuador and Standing Rock, North Dakota.

**Please share more in depth about your history with CCESL and what you did while part of the team.**

I was a PA coach at South High School and Kipp High School. The final student projects from the classes I worked in were a community garden at Kipp, a donation room at South where students could get the school supplies they needed, and a social justice poetry project.

**Do you have a favorite memory from CCESL?**

I always loved the Martin Luther King Day parade and getting to be out with students. I also enjoyed our weekly drive to our classes with the other coaches. We found strength and support within the CCESL team – such a diverse group of people and so many of the great change-makers at DU!

**What advice would you give to current CCESL students?**

We are all increasingly aware that our world is facing social, economic, and environmental injustices, and it is always so wonderful to remember that in going into that class with the students, you have the opportunity to show them the reality of the world. You have the agency to address it in such a big way. It is so important that when you work with students to go in with passion and to understand yourselves as key change-makers with the power to open their eyes.

It is amazing work, and it is bigger than just being in the class. Even when it gets sticky, remember that you are part of a bigger movement for economic, environmental, and social justice. Just keep excited about the big picture and amazing things can be done!

**Lastly, please share your goals. Where do you see yourself in 10 years?**

I definitely see myself continuing to be very involved in media and communication around climate change and women around the world building solutions. I want my own hands in the soil – I am a farmer at heart. I hope to develop an environmental education center and create a food bank to help local areas across the West and around the world.
Get Out And VOTE Colorado!
You Can Register and Vote on November 8

Check your registration and find your polling place
govotecolorado.com

What ID do I need to vote?
If you vote in person you will need to show ID to cast a ballot.
IDs include:
  - Colorado student ID card
  - Colorado driver’s license or state ID card
  - U.S. passport
  - military ID card with photo
  - current utility bill, bank statement, or paycheck

Options to Cast Your Ballot
  - All registered voters will receive a mailed ballot. Return your ballot by mail or drop it off at a Voter Service and Polling Center.
  - You may also vote early in person at a Voter Service and Polling Center.
  - Early Voting Period:
    October 24 — November 7

You Can Register on Election Day!
Register to vote in person at a Voter Service and Polling Center or at your county clerk’s office up to and on Election Day.
Register by mail or online by October 31

If you have problems, contact the Election Protection Hotline:
866-OUR-VOTE
campusvoteproject.org