

## Section I

The goals of the Harvest Peace Co. program were to address factors related to poverty such as unemployment, economic immobility, and hunger through teaching students how to grow their own food and generate income by selling their crops; teaching empathy through gardening, discussing ethical issues focusing on stakeholders' interests (i.e. food justice, corporate social responsibility, and wealth distribution) and donating to others; and affirming the participants self-images by developing intergenerational relationships through mentor-pairings. Lastly, the goal of the program was to make the youth feel more integrated and bonded with their community by providing the youth opportunities to be active, contributing members of the community and to be celebrated by local residents during the final ceremony. This project was solely funded by the Davis Projects for Peace grant.

Operating the program was challenging, but the program ran smoothly overall. I met the participants every Monday, Tuesday and Thursday from 12:00 PM to 2:30 PM at the Wesley Community Center with two other instructors. We started planting one week later than scheduled due to scheduling conflicts among the volunteers. Instead of planting on the first week, Ohio State University Extension Master Gardener volunteers and the Ohio State University Extension Agriculture and Natural Resources Educators taught mini gardening lessons. The participants learned about microgreens and herbs, food safety as urban farmers, natural and chemical pesticides, herbicides and soil fertilization. During this week, participants and their parents were surveyed about their interest in business, gardening, and agriculture science; their academic performance during the last school year; their attitude toward violence; and whether they were involved in any fights during the academic year.

After the crops were planted, I adapted the Biz Kid\$ business curriculum to focus on entrepreneurship, social responsibility and food justice. We visited a plant nursery that began as a small garden in West Dayton and grew into a large plant nursery that services customers throughout the US. This visit helped to solidify the participants' understanding of different distribution methods and how you can use cheap but high quality planting methods to reduce costs and increase profits. During the 5<sup>th</sup> week of the program, I was able to gauge the business interests of the young ladies and found mentors for each of them from among the small business community in Dayton. These mentors ranged from realtors to restaurant owners, and the mentors often came out to the garden once per week to help us care for our crops and to talk with the girls about the progress of their business plans.

Perhaps one of the greatest challenges we faced as a group was overcoming various literacy issues. According to test conducted by Wesley Freedom Schools, nearly half of the young ladies who participated in the Harvest Peace Co were one or more grade levels behind in reading and two or more grade levels behind in math and science. One-fourth of the young women were on IEPs for a range of learning disabilities, and this challenged me to use videos, games, and other techniques to teach them the material.

Ultimately, I found that having the girls complete the readings on their own was ineffective. They read different sections in small groups and we came together in the larger setting for each group to report back on what they read. I also found that it did not work to have guest speakers cover a new module within our business curriculum if they did not typically work with children or did not teach at all. As a result, I began asking the guest speakers to review topics we had already covered earlier that week to reinforce the information the participants had learned and to build their confidence because they were more familiar and comfortable with the business language some guest speakers used.

Twelve young women directly benefited from this program. Their ages ranged from 11 to 14 years old. All the young women were African Americans who live on the west side of Dayton and come from working class or poor families. All of the young women, except two, received free or reduced school lunches. The Wesley Community Center and the people who use its food pantry also benefited from this program. Because we planted late, some of our crops were not ready for sale by the end of the program. We were able to take some of the food crops to the farmer's market and the girls made nearly \$600. They donated that money and the food from the garden to the Wesley Community Center's food pantry and youth development program. The girls also helped cook some of the vegetables they grew to serve

refreshments to the community members who attended their final event where they presented their business proposals and discussed what they had done over the summer.

I collected data to measure the success of the program in changing attitudes toward violence and promoting entrepreneurship and science. My preliminary findings suggest that the young women who participated in this program were less tolerant of violence than they were when the program started. The young women also showed increased interest in entrepreneurship and science. I am in conversation with various community leaders about piloting a similar program for young women and men in or leaving the juvenile justice system.

## Section II

I define peace as a state of contentment, a combination of self-knowledge, imagination, and self-confidence. Whether for an individual or an entire country, assessing one's personal inventory is important. Even in times of great turbulence and uncertainty, knowing your strengths, weaknesses, talents and needs gives you a basis for understanding the tools and resources at your disposal to press forward. Equally important is seeing the possibility in everything and allowing one's mind to get carried away with the possibilities. Finally, it is important to have confidence, perhaps even faith, in one's abilities and in the idea that what you have and what you can control is enough to make a positive change. These truths, contribute to a state at which the mind can rest, unburden by external forces, totally consumed in its locus of control.

This project contributes to peace insofar as it allows the participants to use their cultural and common sense knowledge to learn about entrepreneurship, a field of study that relies wholly on the individual's imagination, ingenuity, self-knowledge and self-confidence. It teaches them how to use their imaginations, to look at a vacant lot or the problem of food deserts and say, "Why can't the people feed their selves using the land in their neighborhoods?" The Harvest Peace Co provides a basis for developing self confidence in their leadership, entrepreneurial, critical thinking, and problem solving skills. One of the young ladies even said to me at the end of the summer, "Ms. J, I think if I can do all the reading we did this summer, there's no reason I can't do well this school year. I've done it before, I can do it again." That is exactly the kind of self-confidence I want all the participants to have. I expect these young women to do well in school and be the problem solvers of their generation, creating opportunities for their peers to find peace in their selves.

This project has changed me in a number of ways. I am certainly not a schoolteacher, but I realize that I can impart knowledge and learn from those I seek to teach, even as a layperson. I also recognized a lack of imagination in myself. I was so convinced that showing the students all the knowledge that had been developed in the areas of business and entrepreneurship would help them learn. This is the kind of lecture-style, transactional teaching I absolutely despise but ultimately reproduced as a result of my own educational experience. In Paulo Friere's *Pedagogy of Freedom*, he writes:

"What we mostly hear about is the teaching of contents, understood almost always, unfortunately, as the transference of knowledge. One of the reasons, in my view, for this negligence is a too narrow understanding of what education and learning are. Really, it has not yet dawned on us that education is something that women and men discovered, experimentally, in the course of history" (47).

It was not until I began letting the young women actually practice and discover some of the principles on their own that they really began to show the intellectual curiosity I had hoped for. Unexpectedly, this summer project has renewed my conviction to study corporations sociologically; to apply the course curriculum to my personal interests; and to probe my professors about the ways in which their studies relate to corporate conduct. This project was valuable as it built my own self-confidence in the abilities I had exercised in service of other organizations but never in the pursuit of my own interests. It also solidified for me that I can have a direct impact on young people despite my lack of interest in the areas of formal education and nonprofit work. Perhaps the most important thing I have learned is that my passion for business can be used to serve my community, and I can give back in tangible, personal ways despite not being in the public sector. It is my conviction to serve my community that matters most.