Leadership Knoxville Scholars: Community Action Project with Raising a Voice

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WHAT IS LEADERSHIP KNOXVILLE SCHOLARS?

Leadership Knoxville Scholars (LKS) is a highly competitive two-year cohort program that student leaders can begin to be a part of during their junior year. The program seeks to connect The University of Tennessee students with Knoxville change agents and servant leaders within the community through leadership education, mentorship, and service.

Leadership Education

As a LK scholar, I have participated in two separate leadership courses that have truly helped me and my fellow scholars learn more about what it truly takes to be a servant leader in our community. The first class was ELPS 411 LKS Fall Seminar during the 2020 Fall semester. In this class, we focused on Servant Leadership and the Social Change Model of Leadership. The concepts in this class that stood out to me the most was the importance of servant leadership and the history of Knoxville. Before taking this class, I was not aware of what the term servant leadership meant. I have always been someone who valued service to my individual communities that I reside; however, I did not necessarily know how these intersected the way that I have learned through this class and program. We talked about the different tenets of servant leadership and how it is important for us as leaders in our communities to take these tenets wherever we go. Some of these tenets include active listening, persuasion, and making sure our intentionality matches our impact. Secondly, one of the biggest goals of the Leadership Knoxville Scholars Program is helping students learn more about not just the campus community but also Knoxville itself. Through the class we were able to hear from a lot of stakeholders in the Knoxville Community including the current mayor. We also went on excursions where we learned about the history of the city and all that it has to offer. Without this class, I would have never been able to know what it truly meant to be a Knoxvillian and the rich history behind what we see today.

The second class was during the 2021 Spring Semester and was ELPS 411 LKS Senior Capstone, where we focused on wrapping up our experience in the program. We heard from multiple leaders in Knoxville about followership, generational leadership, and how to get engaged in the communities we will reside in. When we learned about followership, I learned how just as important it is to be a follower as it is to be a leader, if not more important. As a leader, you will not have a huge, positive impact if you are not able to inspire others to follow behind you. The followers are the people who do a lot of the more groundwork while a leader is more of the face of the group. Throughout my time at the University of Tennessee, I have learned what it means to be a follower and when I need to be a leader. Also, in this class we learned about the difference in generations and leadership styles. The COVID-19 pandemic has taught us that our generation is going to be a completely different set of leaders from our parents and grandparents. For one, we have been able to adapt to many types of workspaces and have been able to show that it is easy to go online if needed which is something other generations might not have been able to do. Finally, while I will be leaving Knoxville for now to pursue my master's degree, I have been able to learn how I can get engaged in the communities that I will be living in through service and other opportunities that I am passionate about. I also hope that I can stay connected to Knoxville through multiple alumni programs.

Mentorship

The second requirement of the program is having a mentor. In Fall of 2019, we were matched with a Knoxville leader by filling out questions about ourselves and goals in life. At the time, I was beginning to really think about going to graduate school and into a career field in higher education administration with a focus in diversity and inclusions. For this mentorship, I hoped that I was able to connect and network through my mentor to become more confident in my goals and

jumpstart me through my post-graduation career. While I was always very involved on campus, I also wanted to learn new ways I can expand what I do on campus to the Knoxville community through community partners and service.

I was matched with Dr. Ernest Brothers, an associate dean in The Graduate School here. Through Dr. Brothers' leadership and mentorship, I was able to solidify my plans to apply to graduate school to pursue my master's degree in higher education administration and student affairs. Dr. Brothers connected me with staff and faculty at other schools I was interested in to pursue my master's degree at and this was a huge help for me to learn more and make a concrete decision on what school best fit me. We were only able to meet virtually this past year because of the pandemic, but he still helped provide better insight on the city and we created a strong mentorship relationship that I believe will last.

Service

The third requirement of the LKS Program is serving the community through a year and a half long community action project with a local nonprofit in the Knoxville community. At the beginning of the year, we visited five different nonprofits and learned more about their mission and goals. From there, we were placed in a group we wee interested in. My community action project was with Raising a Voice.

WHAT IS RAISING A VOICE?

Raising a Voice's mission is to end human trafficking through gospel-centered community transformation and global outreach. They not only work in the East Knoxville community, but also internationally in Buenos Aires, Argentina, Nairobi, Kenya, and Kigali, Rwanda. In East Knoxville, Will and Katie Boggs support exploited and abused women at their drop-in center and provide community development through Likewise Coffee. The drop-in center serves as a place of outreach and relationship building to shape the lives of women in sexually abusive situations by meeting tangible needs like clothing, showers, and laundry. Likewise Coffee was created when the founders, Will and Katie, were inspired to have a neighborhood meeting space for the community of East Knoxville. The coffee shop serves as a headquarters for Raising a Voice on the top floor while the first floor serves the community with coffee and treats and provides room rentals for customers.

The mission of Raising a Voice stood out to me because I was interested in conducting research on the issue of human trafficking in Knoxville and the needs of women. I am also very interested in local non-profit advocacy organizations and how I can make a difference in my own community. My career goal is to go into higher education administration and student affairs with a focus on diversity within leadership and service offices. In this field, I would have to work closely with the surrounding community at whatever institution I end up at and this means that connections with nonprofits and knowing what they need from volunteers is really important to practice sustainability and increase relationships.

As a part of Leadership Knoxville Scholars, my community action project with Raising a Voice has been working as a special project assistant with my group for the past year and a half. Each semester, since spring of 2020, I have completed different projects that Will and Katie have

identified as needs of their organization and can help contribute to the Knoxville community for the better. Initially, I hoped that, through my community action project, I would be able to learn more about non-profit advocacy, increase awareness of Raising a Voice, and help form a coalition of supporters and partnerships. The challenges I felt I would face were making sure my intentions were equaling my impact, not having adequate research on sex work and human trafficking in Knoxville and battling the stigma against sex work when it came to spreading awareness and gaining supporters.

In any service opportunity a person goes into, they need to make sure that their work is actually helping, and it is not being done performatively. I do not want to go into any space, especially with identities that I do not necessarily identify with and make people feel uncomfortable and think I was just doing it for a requirement and to get hours. I wanted to make sure that I was not doing work that I just wanted to do but work that was needed to be done and would long term help the establishment rather than harm it.

I also knew that there is a stigma against human trafficking because a lot of people do not want to recognize that this is happening in their own communities. This was not only a stigma that the community needs to work through, but also a stigma that I needed to work through. Before Leadership Knoxville, I was not really aware of how deep some of the problems are within the Knoxville community because I was not from here. I had to do a lot of research to make sure that I knew the right facts and how I can better help Raising a Voice through the special projects I was assigned.

SPRING 2020: COMMUNITY ANALYSIS REPORT OF EAST KNOXVILLE

During my first semester working with Raising a Voice, I was tasked with creating a community analysis report on East Knoxville. This report included demographics of East Knoxville zip codes 37917 and 37914 and problems and solutions of the biggest issues in East Knoxville which are homelessness, obesity, access to affordable healthcare, substance abuse, and poverty (Daugherty, 2018). This task was important because it helped the founders of Raising a Voice learn more about the area as well as help them think about what needs they could address in the community that they serve in.

I really appreciated this first project that I completed because it let me learn more about other areas of Knoxville that are usually not talked about when you are an undergraduate student. White individuals in extremely poor census tracts tend to live in North, South, and Western Knoxville, but Black and Latin X individuals living in extremely poor neighborhoods are usually in East and West Knoxville (Daugherty, 2018). This concentration is usually never talked about and we do not really learn about it because most of the services and work through the campus community are in areas other than East Knoxville.

Food insecurity is one of the biggest factors that go into poverty. In Knox County as a whole, over 57,000 residents face food insecurity which is around 13% of the total population. When it comes to addressing food insecurity and Knoxville, there are only nine food pantries where people can go to receive food in the zip code 37917 and four in 37914 (Hardy et al., 2017). Breaking those numbers down even more, there are only two organizations within both of those zip codes that deliver meals and they only do that for specific aging populations. A lot of these food pantries are only open on certain days when most people who need service are not able to access. Learning more about food insecurity in Knoxville helped me realize that we not only need

more food pantries, but also accessibility such as reliable transportation or delivery to all people despite age. Also, within food insecurity, we have to think about access to healthy and affordable food not just unhealthy foods like snacks and sodas.

Next, homelessness is also a problem that we need to address. The Knoxville's Community Development Corporation provided only 3,525 units of public housing and supported 3,500 Section-8 housing units in 2015, but there is still a long waiting list for both (Daugherty, 2018). While providing housing for people experiencing homelessness is the priority to end this problem, ways that Raising a Voice could help people experiencing homelessness is through different workshops that educate these people on living and stability by providing financial help, mental health resources, and basic education in order for them to obtain a sustainable job.

Finally, in my community analysis report, I researched services for physical and mental health treatment in Knox County. Here, only four of every ten people in need of mental health treatment receive care in a year (Daugherty, 2018). In the United States, African Americans have the lowest rate of being diagnosed with major depressive order which is because of the stigma that Black families and communities have against mental health and so many people do not seek out this help. It would be beneficial to have educational programs for people to learn more about mental health care while also connecting them with affordable resources in the area. There is also lack of good oral health in Knox County which leads to negative social interactions and lack of potential employment. One of the biggest reasons people cannot receive this care is because of inability to afford consistent products and services. One way that Raising a Voice could help the community is by providing oral care products to their clients.

FALL 2020: SLIDE DATABASE

During the Fall 2020 semester, we only met with Will and Katie virtually in order to practice safe measures. Because of this, all of our projects were again remotely done. My project was creating a slide database that included educational information that the Raising of Voice team could use during workshops, meetings, and other events where they may have to speak about certain topics.

To begin this project, I brainstormed topics that I could research and write about. The list I came up with included information about Raising a Voice, their values, the history of the nonprofit, and how to get involved. By researching a lot about Raising a Voice, I was able to learn more about what it takes to start a nonprofit and all that it takes to keep it afloat. Raising a Voice's impact is not only in Knoxville, Tennessee through their drop-in center and coffee shop, but as well as in three other countries around the world. This shows that it is really important to support women in all spaces and the work does not only pertain to East Knoxville. With this project, I decided to branch out from not only talking about Raising a Voice but also information about trafficking in the United States and what it looks like. I think it is important for all people to know about the issue of human trafficking, how it affects people all over, and how they can help.

For this project, I attended multiple workshops from other organizations across Tennessee that focus on helping women in trafficking situations. Through that, I was able to learn that trafficking is the second largest criminal industry worldwide, and in the US around 17,500 people are suspected to be trafficked each year. This creates a global profit of over 44.3 billion dollars for people in this industry ("Human Trafficking: Modern Enslavement of Immigrant Women in the United States"). This was disheartening to hear because these people range from children to adults, and it is hard to know that these people are being manipulated or forced against their will to engage

in these acts for money. In Tennessee specifically, this is the second highest rising crime in the state. In 2019. there were 180 cases reported by the National Human Trafficking Hotline ("Human Trafficking in Tennessee", 2020). For the slides I wrote about all of this information putting it in an easy-to-read format for the a Raising a Voice team to be able to educate others about human trafficking, where it happens, and what they can look for if they are suspecting human trafficking being happened.

One of my top values is education, and through this project I was able to really think about how I can not only learn from educating others, but also what it looks like when facilitating workshops in education in the best way possible in order to reach a larger audience.

SPRING 2021: RESEARCHING BUSINESS IDEAS

For my last semester, I worked on a small project for Raising a Voice where I researched businesses Raising a Voice could start that required a low upfront cost and would give them the opportunity to employ women that they serve at the drop-in center. The requirements for these jobs would that they need to be not intensively customer-facing, require few specific skills or education, and have some flexibility when it comes to hours.

While this project was the smallest and was only supposed to last for around 2 weeks or so at the end of the semester after I finished my slide database, I found it particularly hard to find businesses that would fit all of this criterion. A lot of the most common employment opportunities for people when it comes to starting a business, require at least some type of customer-facing activity, specific skills, or set hours. I began researching a lot of different sites, breaking it down into the different requirements and comparing each list to see if there are any jobs that fell in all business requirements. Some things that stood out to me that I believe Raising a Voice could do

included starting up their own creative business, where they create pieces that people could buy such as art prints or jewelry. I think it would be beneficial for Raising a Voice to start such a business and create content that people could work on.

My biggest takeaway from this project was that we need more access to businesses such as this to help people get back on their feet. Many times, the reason people lean towards not helping people in need is because of this idea that people can just go and get a job and make money. However, this is not the case. They are not a lot of jobs in our world now that anybody can just get because of the high skill sets needed or required. I admire Raising a Voice for thinking about the women that they serve not only short-term when they come into the center for different needs like clothing and food, but also thinking long-term and how they can help these women change for the better.

FINAL REFLECTION

In high school, I took an AP English class where we had to write a paper on a topic that we were passionate about making change in. I decided to write about human trafficking and how many adults and children have been affected by this crime and what ways we can work towards decreasing the levels of human trafficking in the United States. Then during my first year at The University of Tennessee, I took a public speaking class and gave a presentation on human trafficking, sex work, and how we as a community need to uplift adults and children who have been manipulate and exploited because of their financial or emotional situations into doing something that they did not want to do. When I joined Leadership Knoxville Scholars in 2019, and we are able to learn more about Raising a Voice and the opportunity to work with them, I knew that this was what I wanted to do because I was always interested in the work but never was able

to really make change when it comes to the topic. I am really grateful for the Leadership Knoxville Scholars Program for assigning this community action project and being able to work with Raising a Voice for the past two years and helping them better serve women and children in the East Knoxville Community. I am also appreciative for all of the knowledge that Will and Katie Boggs were able to give me throughout the process of working with them on the different final projects that I had. I hope that the work that I and the rest of my group did will be beneficial in the future as Raising a Voice makes their Mark in Knoxville and around the world.

Appendix

Community Analysis Report

Demographics of 37917

Total Population	24,286
Median Age	38.9
Percent High School Graduate or Higher	84.6%
Total Housing Units	12,802
Foreign Born Population	1,171
Poverty Level	26.1%
Veterans	1,514
Median Household Income	31,466

In the University of Tennessee's College of Social Work Office of Research and Public Service 2017 Needs Assessment, there were four neighborhoods within the zip code 37917 that had high poverty percentage rates: Sharp Ridge (48.4%), Old North Knoxville and Fourth & Gill (37.8%), Cecil Avenue and North Cherry Street (29.4%), and Whittle Springs (23.0%).

Demographics of 37914

Total Population	19,663
Median Age	40.4
Percent High School Graduate or Higher	87.5%
Total Housing Units	9,825
Foreign Born Population	37.570
Poverty Level	27.1%
Veterans	1,421
Median Household Income	37,570

In the University of Tennessee's College of Social Work Office of Research and Public Service 2017 Needs Assessment, there were four neighborhoods within the zip code 37914 that had high poverty percentage rates: Park City and East Magnolia Avenue (50.7%), Park City and South Castle Street (43.6%), Edgewood, Parkridge, and East Magnolia Avenue (43.1%), and Boyds Bridge Pike and Riverside Drive (38.7%)

East Knoxville

The top issues that East Knoxville faces are **homelessness, obesity, affordable healthcare, substance abuse, and poverty.** While white individuals in extremely poor census tracts tend to live in North, South, and Western Knoxville, Black and Latinx individuals living in extremely poor neighborhoods are in East and West Knoxville.

Food Insecurity

There are many factors that go into poverty, one of them being food insecurity. In Knox County as a whole, 57,220 residents face food insecurity (12.7% of the total population). Knox County is $31,201,000 short in their annual food budget shortfall which is four times higher than the second highest county surrounding Knox County (Blount County at 7 million).

In the zip code 37917, there are 9 food pantries where people can go to receive food compared to 5 in 37914. While there are many more that serve these zip codes, those are the ones that are most accessible. However, there is a problem with accessibility in Knoxville regarding transportation. There are only 2 organizations that serve these zip codes to deliver meals and only to specifically aging populations. A lot of food pantries are only open on a few days out of the week so one of the needs in the area is an accessible place to get food. In a discussion about unmet needs in the need's assessment, there was an obvious need for access to **reliable, affordable transportatio**n and to **healthy and affordable food**. This includes not only an improvement of food pantries now, but also **time accessibility** as most food pantries is not open on Fridays, Saturdays, and Sunday.

Homelessness

In Tennessee as a whole, working at minimum wage will require you to have to work 75 hours to afford a modest 1-bedroom rental home at Fair Market Rent. In Knoxville, a household needs to earn $32,280, a year, or roughly $15.52 per hour, in order to afford housing in Knox County. The Knoxville's Community Development Corporation provided 3,525 units of public housing and supported 3,500 Section 8 housing units in 2015, but there remains a long waiting list for both. There are many reasons why people in Knoxville are homeless, and while increasing the amount of affordable housing units in the area can be hard since it is time-consuming and very expensive, there are other ways to help combat homelessness. There is definitely a need in East

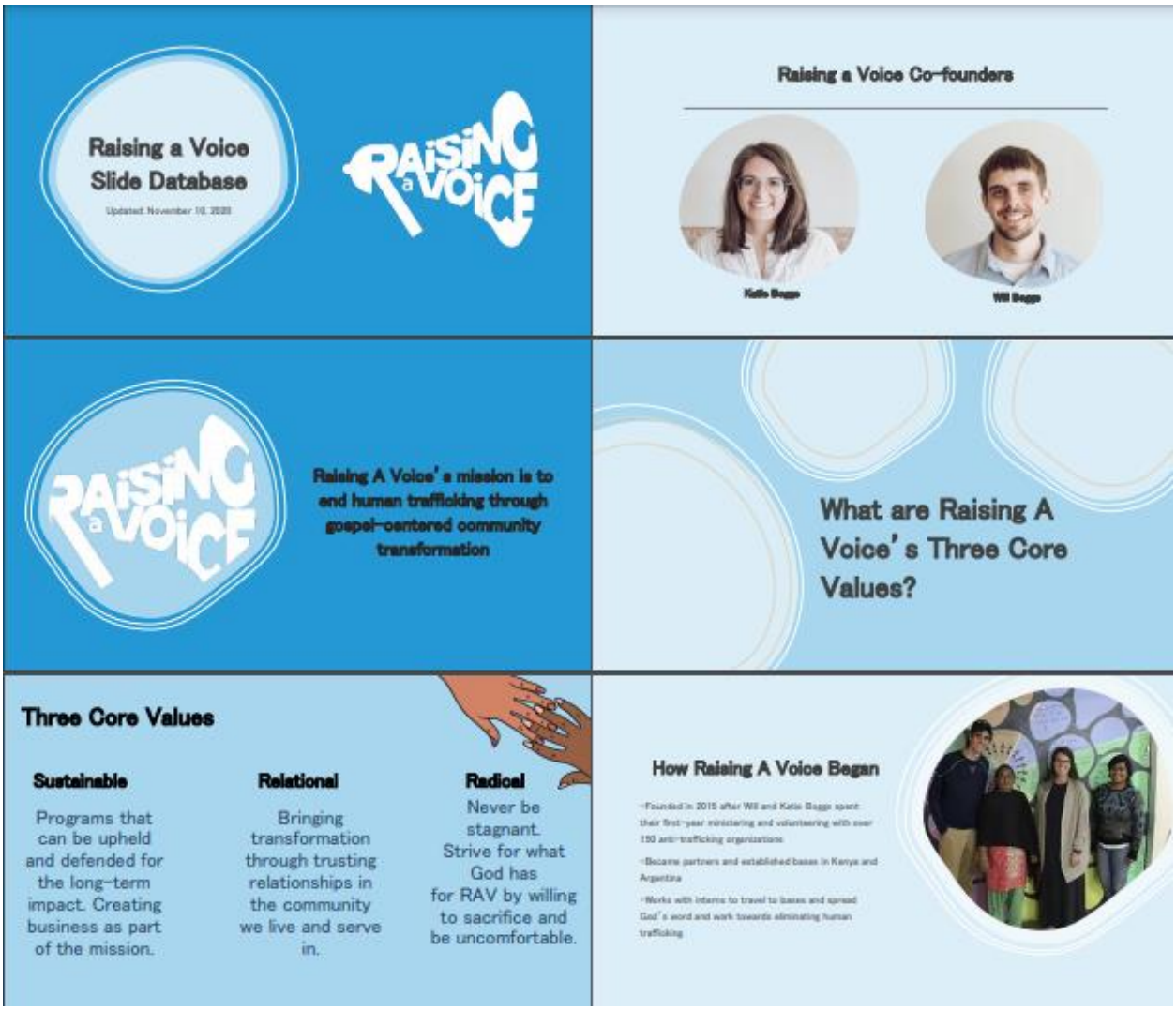
Knoxville for **different programs that educate people, especially young people, on financial security, mental health resources and accessibility, basic educational subjects.**

Health and Wellness

Physical and Mental health in Knox County has many reasons why it has become a major problem. When it comes to mental health, fewer than four of every ten people in need of treatment receive care in a year. There has also been a big impact on quality of life because of lack of good oral health. Bad oral health can contribute to negative social interactions and potential employment. However, many people, especially the homeless population in East Knoxville, are not able to afford consistent oral hygiene products and going to the dentist. There is definitely a need for **oral care products.** Historically, African Americans have the lowest rate of being diagnosed with major depressive disorder in The United States. East Knoxville's poorest neighborhoods are made up of predominantly Black and Latinx populations. There is a stigma in black families and communities against mental health, and many marginalized identities do not seek out the help they need mental health wise. There definitely needs to be **programs to educate people on mental health resources and accessibility, which can include little things like self-care and hygiene to what are some types of help that they can get affordably.**

When it comes to physical health, obesity in Knox County continues to rise from 21.1% in 2002 to 28.6% in 2014.

Slide Database



Watch: About Raising A Voice

Adding Video from How Page to play?

Raising A Voice Across the World



Knoxville, Tennessee

Supporting exploited and abused women at our drop-in center and providing community development through Likewise Coffee



Buenos Aires, Argentina

Running a safehouse for women and their children who are coming out of being trafficked



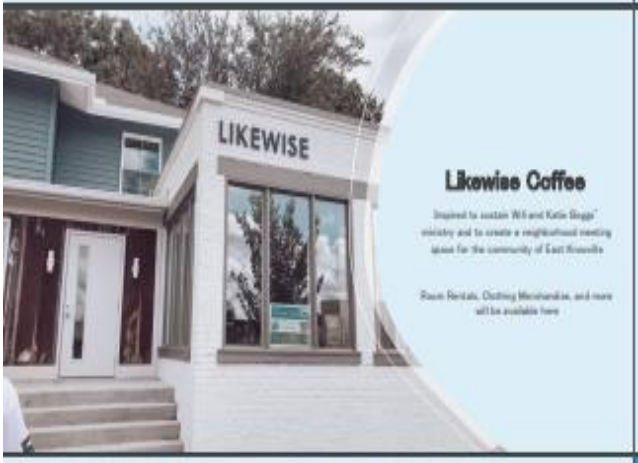
Nairobi, Kenya

Providing social, emotional, and spiritual aid to teenage mothers and young women in prostitution or at high risk of being exploited



Bali, Indonesia

Currently planning on doing a vision trip to Bali for three months in January 2021, partnering with the local church and workers to fight against human trafficking



Likewise Coffee

Inspired to sustain Will and Katie Boggs' ministry and to create a neighborhood meeting space for the community of East Knoxville

Room Rentals, Clothing Merchandise, and more will be available here

Drop-In Center

Open for women in sexually abusive situations. The goals of the Drop-In center include building relationships, shaping futures, and creating room for Jesus to show up and transform lives.

This is the starting point for outreaching and meeting tangible needs like clothing, showers, and laundry.



How to Get Involved with Raising A Voice



Trafficking in the United States


Trafficking in the United States
What Drives Trafficking?
Trafficking in Tennessee
What Does Human Trafficking Look Like?
Types of Human Trafficking
Sex Trafficking
–Manipulated or forced against their will to engage in sex acts for money
–Most Prevalent
High profit, Low risk
–Men, women, and children are all at risk
Forced Labor
–Can be found in factories, on farms, doing construction work, and more
–Victims are made to work for little or no pay
Domestic Servitude
–Hidden in plain sight, forced to work in homes
–Victims working as nannies, maids, or domestic help
Most Vulnerable to Human Trafficking

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