



Loyola University Chicago BRAVE Project

Advisory Board Newsletter
SPRING AND SUMMER 2021

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**Photo credits Centro Romero and By the Hand Club for Kids*



Continued Response to COVID19

BRAVE agencies that remained solely online have continued to see participation in their virtual platforms. To maintain participation otherwise, BRAVE site coordinators and MSW interns worked to develop various strategies to engage youth and their families' social, emotional, academic, and financial needs. Programming included play-based approaches, and at some sites, typical in-person activities resumed. Youth's participation has been encouraged through distribution of gift cards, virtual and in-person outreach to both youth and parents, LUC's donation of laptops, modems, and service fees to eligible youth and their families, and continued use of Google surveys for youth and parents to fill out electronically.

Year 4 Second and Third Quarter Agency Highlights

Vietnamese Association of Illinois (VAI)

The Vietnamese Association of Illinois (VAI) has continued to provide online programming via Zoom. The agency resumed offering in-person programming to students at the end of May. Programming included weekly wellness check-ins, interactive workshops, field trips, and game nights. Through these activities, youth received social-emotional support and engaged in new learning experiences. Among the varied programs, a series of workshops explored identity, power, and oppression. Other more recreational programs included virtual field trips to visit USA national parks, Edinburgh, and The Andy Warhol Museum.

Throughout the spring semester, VAI's long-standing community partner agency KAN-WIN led workshops on the root causes of gender-based violence. Students discussed common misconceptions about sexual violence and applied their knowledge to examples in the media. Moreover, VAI received the IDHS Healing IL grant for implementing cultural competency and anti-racism training workshops for staff and students.

Centro Romero

Centro Romero's BRAVE program has transitioned from hybrid to in-person programming. While following CDC guidelines, students were able to participate in many activities together. At the beginning of the year, several BRAVE students enrolled in the community navigators program which provides them a \$50/month stipend. This is a volunteer role in which the students have the opportunity to develop leadership skills by supporting their community. Events have included participating in "Know Your Rights with Eviction" presentations and collaborating with Heartland Health Center for COVID19 vaccine outreach. Other programming included playing indoor soccer at Futsal, playing volleyball at Emmerson (Louis) Park, and offering Latin dance classes led by one of the BRAVE

students themselves. On one occasion, the agency coordinated with the Chicago Police Department to lead a gang information session with the youth. As the semester came to a close, the BRAVE students attended a “Prom” party at the site and celebrated two of their graduating seniors with a billiards party.

By the Hand Club for Kids-Englewood

At by the Hand Club for Kids, in-person programming was offered through April. Since then, programming has been 100% virtual as the agency has decided re-locate and is looking for a new space. Staff have focused on offering relational in-person activities off site and through in-person outreach to sustain youth and family interest while remaining virtual.

To date, BRAVE programming has included enrichment activities such as hosting a mock trial, offering a parent grocery store, and celebrating By The Hand 20th anniversary with a mural unveiling. For the anniversary, students worked with an artist during the month of February and March to design a mural that represented their site. Each site’s mural was installed at the Cabrini Green location where By The Hand was founded. In May, “ABC” students were treated to a Six Flags field trip or a personalized gift basket as a reward. Additionally, the agency partnership with YMCA allowed for a 5-week STEAM program to be offered during which staff were trained in STEAM activities. Staff delivered STEAM materials to students and then participated in the activity with them on Zoom in effort to retain students while virtual. Also completed was a four-year SEL parent engagement cohort which trained staff on SEL. Staff has been sending out Google form to parents every two weeks asking parents to select food items from the “parent grocery store.” At the end of the semester, 8th graders participated in a cross over ceremony to mark their entrance into the NXT high school program. Students were recognized for high GPA’s, attendance, and improvement. At the end of school year, students were taken for field trip to Urban Air.

Lincoln Park High School

While CPS opened up classrooms for in-person learning in April, BRAVE programming remained virtual at Lincoln Park High School. Staff used telecommunication to perform outreach.

Remote programming has included check-ins and providing academic support though a drop-in service twice a week. Additionally, discussions have been offered around violence prevention, self-esteem, resiliency, and considering activities that will create opportunities for positive healthy interpersonal environments during the summer months. In May, one youth was granted acceptance into the Chicago Scholars program. This opportunity will afford the student access to academic support and planning, mentoring, and career placement over a seven year course of time. During the last day of school, an in-person event was hosted on campus. In conjunction with LPHS School Culture and Climate and the Behavioral Health Team, BRAVE staff will continue working to engage youth with opportunities during the summer and into the fall.

Challenges from COVID-19

While BRAVE programming has consistently and emphatically focused on coping behaviors and provided space to relax, stress from the pandemic continued to exist. COVID-19 related impacts have included BRAVE students and staff learning to adjust and support each other; mindfulness of the

CDC guidelines in order to keep the agencies open; operating a programming hybrid model straining group cohesion and functioning; BRAVE staff relying on frequent outreach; BRAVE staff encountering challenges contacting families of youth who are not fluent in English and seeking out translation assistance from other programs' staff and online resources; Students' burn out from virtual programming; stress about students' health and academic success; families struggling financially contributing to stress on BRAVE youth.

Accomplishments

Despite barriers mentioned above, all partner agencies have continued to actively engage with intervention youth and their families to accommodate emerging needs during COVID-19. In some cases, youth engagement increased due to an increase of in-person activities being offered. Throughout the last two quarters, BRAVE programming has provided:

- In-person and virtual field trips
- Indoor soccer and outdoor volleyball
- Education for high school, college, and career planning
- CASA Latino X curriculum addressing cultural identity and cultural service learning
- Celebration of Women's Day
- Community Navigators providing youth with leadership opportunities rewarded with a monthly stipend
- Mock Trial enrichment and local Chicago Police workshop
- Virtual workshops for preparing immigrant and first-generation youth for college, gender violence, privilege and power, Black History Month, and the new federal administration and current political climate.
- College Q/A panel of Loyola GlobeMed students to discuss college acceptance process
- PSAT test support
- Students serving as student ambassadors, working with an artist to design a mural that represents their site, for agency 20th anniversary mural unveiling
- Dental and vision services for youth
- LUC donation of laptops/internet service for select students in need
- Where available, served a clean, quiet space for students to attend online classes
- Connected students to third party online/virtual tutoring services and volunteers

News

- The final monthly meeting for Year 4 was hosted in person at Centro Romero in June.



- The BRAVE Project received a No-Cost Extension until June 30, 2022.
- The Vietnamese Association of Illinois (VAI) left the project on July 1, 2021. The BRAVE LUC team is thankful for VAI's participation since the start of the project, and appreciate their role as the BRAVE fiscal partner during Years 3 and 4.
- BRAVE Team's Publications:
 1. C. Kim, R. Hong and P. Hong (under review). Racial Differences in Internalizing and Externalizing Behaviors: Comparison among Black, Latinx and Asian Youth, *Vulnerable Children & Youth Studies*.
 2. Caleb Kim (2021). Essential facilitators in building university partnership with ethnic minority communities, *Journal of Sociocultural Community Development and Practices*, 19(1), 59-68.
 3. Caleb Kim (2021). The Pathway of University-Community Collaboration for Preventing Youth Violence, *World Journal of Education and Humanities*, 3(2), 50-62.

Participating Agencies

By the Hand Club For Kids - Englewood

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****Cover Photos***

Top Left: Centro Romero BRAVE youth participating in indoor soccer

Top Right: By the Hand Club for Kids Englewood Mock Trial enrichment

Middle Left: By the Hand Club for Kids Englewood mural event

Bottom Right: Centro Romero BRAVE high school seniors and incoming Loyola University Chicago undergraduates