Title: Social media for Social Change in Madison County
Community Partner: Community Action Partnership

A research project that will examine social media use among nonprofits in the area which will be a good fit for any student skilled in social media and interested in nonprofit work and community impacts.

Project Description:
The Field School Fellow will help Community Action Partnership determine how human service agencies like CAP use social media effectively to help advance social change. Social media, as a medium of communication, fundraising and influencing public perception, is hard to ignore. However, most nonprofits have not been able to successfully harness this power and form cohesive strategy around its use. Nonprofits are strapped for resources, and for time to understand how social media works, funds to invest in new technology, and staff with the skills required for social media marketing. At the same time, they are under great pressure to show real impact from their work, deliver services to increasing number of people, and collect data to evaluate their impact.

CAP is interested in increasing their presence and impact on social media, to leverage Facebook as a platform for communicating with clients and the community as a whole. They post various information that they think is useful to a Facebook page and website. However, there has been no effort to analyze the impact these efforts are having, and they have no analytics on their website and no social media calendar. To remedy this, they will ask the Fellow to work closely with the Executive Director develop a social media strategy and present the plan to CAP staff and Board. The Fellow will conduct a brief literature review and/or environmental scan to better understand the successful strategies and tools being used by other agencies, develop a survey to gather topics of interest for social media posts and develop a social media calendar in conjunction with CAP Program Managers.

The analysis and development of a social media plan will benefit the agency and the community it serves, by allowing CAP to communicate with a wider group of people via the web and stretch grant dollars to serve more individuals. Any knowledge or social media strategy developed will be shared with other nonprofits in the area. CAP is a member of the non-profit consortium in Oneida and in Hamilton. CAP’s Management Team sits on a number of boards and hears the same discussion in every agency: how do we increase our online presence and what will that do for us? Through this work, CAP will be able to assist other agencies in being more effective users of social media to bring about social change.

About the Community Partner:
Community Action Partnership is a community based organization providing services to low income and vulnerable families in Madison, Oneida and Herkimer Counties. The agency was founded in 1983 to help lift families out of poverty. They have been working and serving Central New York families ever since to meet that goal. The agency serves over 3000 individuals annually and has a staff of 87. They offer a variety of program to help with housing, parenting, health and nutrition. CAP builds resilience, well-being and safety at the individual, family and community levels by meeting the basic needs of today and identifying the opportunities of tomorrow.

Required Skills:
The Fellow should have social media marketing skills, including an understanding or willingness to learn how social media platforms and tools like Google analytics work, survey analysis, social media calendar planning and communication skills. Through this experience, the Fellow will learn how a human service
agency operates. The Fellow will be able to attend meetings with the Executive Director and Program Managers, present to the Management Team and Board (time permitting), and gain a deeper understanding of how social media marketing works in a nonprofit setting.

**Logistics:**
This is a full-time paid research position (35 hours per week) to last approximately 10 weeks, conducted under the joint supervision of the Upstate Institute and Community Action. The Fellow will work with the CAP Executive Director, who is based in the Canastota CAP office. The Fellow will interact with all Program Managers, clients and staff, and will use office space and resources at both the Canastota and Morrisville offices. The Fellow may be able to work from Colgate’s campus for part of the project as well. Field School Fellows receive a research stipend of $4500 plus reimbursement for any costs associated with transportation for this project. A car and/or a U.S. drivers’ license is not required for this project, but may be helpful.