2018 Upstate Institute Summer Field School Fellowship

Title: Improving Administrative Processes and Strategic Planning at a Community Center
Community Partner: Midtown Utica Community Center

The Upstate Institute's first partnership with a community center in Utica that serves the needs of the refugee community will give a student a holistic experience in nonprofit work that serves former refugees.

Project Description:
The Midtown Utica Community Center (MUCC) will host a Fellow this summer to help them discover how their various programs and processes can be improved in order to enhance their organization's effectiveness and sustainability. In addition to conducting research on existing models of strategic planning for nonprofit organizations, the Fellow will help the MUCC develop a plan to raise funds for an executive director. The Fellow will also help the center determine the potential impacts of student research and other academic projects that might come out of partnerships with institutions of higher education in the region. The Fellow will consider possible connections with students from nearby schools and universities to determine how they can contribute to the work of the organization, rather than cause a strain on organizational resources.

The Fellow will be immersed in a wide range of organizational activities in order to analyze the various processes and to create alternative and strategic planning. The Fellow will work closely with the Executive Director to understand the evolution of these administrative processes, constraints, and goals. The Fellow will participate in different aspects of the organization’s activities, such as writing reports and newsletters, responding to media, and giving tours in order to have an holistic understanding of what the MUCC does. The Fellow will gain experience working with refugee community members, conducting simple programs, participating in field trips, hosting visitors, and planning for and supervising summer campers and/or counselors.

Currently, there is a gap of understanding between the refugee community and the wider community. Refugees have many needs as they struggle to adjust to American life, and this project can help review strategies for organizations to help this population more effectively. The research will advance the work of the MUCC by providing an outside view of some of the familiar activities that they do. The student’s work will make the work of the Executive Director easier and help plan for future collaborations with students and nearby universities.

About the Community Partner:
MUCC’s mission is to build and provide a multi-cultural, refugee-friendly space that serves all. MUCC provides space for community members of all ages to study, learn, teach, solve problems, and celebrate culture and community in a wide variety of ways. The organization acts as a bridge between the refugee community and the community as a whole, and seeks to connect people in the city of Utica with each other.

Their vision is to support the refugee and low-income population of Midtown Utica by providing educational and cultural programs, solving problems by connecting community members with other agencies and resources, and promoting a safe community environment for people of all ages and cultures. MUCC partners with local nonprofits, organizations, and schools to enhance opportunities for funding, community building, community service, and education. They foster community by hosting holiday meals, neighborhood meetings, job training, and ethnic celebrations to which all are welcome. Our aim is
to encourage environmental responsibility. Rather than duplicating available resources, the MUCC helps people who are having trouble accessing those resources or need additional help.

**Required Skills:**
A Fellow will need a flexible attitude, friendly manner, and general office and administrative skills such as strong writing and the ability to use Microsoft office products to complete this work. The Fellow will also need to have the ability to fill out paperwork of all kinds and a willingness to ask questions and learn new things. Media production and web design skills are a plus but not essential.

**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 the Midtown Utica Community Center at their location in Utica. The Fellow will be supervised by the Executive Director, Chris Sunderland. Field School Fellows receive a research stipend of $4500 plus reimbursement for any costs associated with transportation for this project. A car is not required for this project, but may be helpful.