*Women of Excellence Grant*

**Mind Body Empowerment Workshops for**

**Bhutanese Nepali Teenage Refugee Girls 2014 Summary**

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The project funded by Women of Excellence, Mind Body Empowerment Workshops for Bhutanese Nepali Teenage Refugee Girls, took place on August 8 2014 in Smith Hall at Xavier University. The program was attended by 38 Bhutanese Nepali refugee girls compared to the 23 last year. The girls were transported by 5 volunteer drivers from the community. In terms of volunteers, there were 14 volunteers from the Xavier and community population. In terms of speakers and workshop leaders, there were 7 participants from the Xavier and community population. Thus, in summary, there were around 64 participants for this program.

On Friday August 8, the program lasted from 10 AM to 5 PM and consisted of 1) registration, 2) a welcome speech by Pooja Amatya, 3) an art project led by a community art teacher Sarah Hellman in which the girls painted an abstract collage on a canvas replicating a stained glass type of art and discussion about the healing power of art, 3) buffet lunch at Hoff Dining Commons in Fenwick Place, 4) campus tour by a Xavier undergraduate student Mark Roepke, 5) a speech by Xavier admissions counselor Erica Krasienko on Xavier undergraduate life, 6) a speech on Business careers by Dr. Rashmi Assudani, Ph.D., Professor of Business professor of Business, 7) a speech on Cosmotology careers by Sheryl Rajbhandari, M.B.A., 8) snack at Hoff Dining Commons in Fenwick Place, and 9) yoga by professional yoga teacher Layla Gilman at Xavier O'Connor Sports Center.

The items that were gifted to the 38 girls included a canvas drawstring bag containing new school supplies and a flashdrive and a tshirt specially designed for the event and featuring the Women of Excellence name. Volunteers also received the tshirt. The extra purchased school supplies are in the process of being donated to other Bhutanese refugees in the community by Sheryl Rajbhandari, Executive Director of Heartfelt Tidbits, a non-profit that provides educational, citizenship and job mentoring programs for local refugees. Sheryl expressed that these surplus supplies are in definite need among Bhutanese Nepali refugee children not attending the program, including boys and younger ages, and would be put in good use and distributed for the upcoming school year.

The items gifted to volunteers included tshirts. Drivers, workshop leaders, speakers, and key volunteers also received $50 Kroger gift cards for their time, energy, and expertise, and the yoga teacher received a $150 Kroger gift card.

Please see Budget for an item by item financial report of projected and actual costs. The program spent $595 less than the projected amount. The grant projected cost was $8150 whereas the actual cost was $ 7555.44.

The testimonials indicated that the program was successful in increasing the girls’ feelings of career preparation as well as giving them enjoyment. According to the survey results, all the written comments were positive, with no negative comments. The comments expressed gratitude, learning, and enjoyment. One of the most frequent “improvements” was to have the program again next year for more days or a week, suggesting that the girls enjoyed the activities and wanted more time together. One sample testimonial said, ***“Today I feel like I am valuable on this earth. I feel like I want to do every class in the United States. I learned that education is important in my life. I learned how people can be successful if they work hard and take education more importantly.”*** Another girl wrote, ***“Today is the best day in my life. I didn’t know doing yoga can make us feel so much relaxation. I feel great for being here and I’ll always do once a day from now on because I enjoy doing yoga. My body feels so relaxed.”***

The program was also successful in raising awareness among the Xavier and Cincinnati community of the refugee population and giving them leadership and service opportunities. Speakers, volunteers, and workshop leaders both from Xavier and the Cincinnati community verbally repeatedly expressed their gratitude and positive experience of the program during the event.

Pooja Amatya and Dr. Joshi feel the program was successful overall and did not encounter any obstacles executing the program. However, future ideas for improvement include more marketing to Xavier psychology graduate students and also incorporating male refugees into the program to expand the lives positively affected.