

KIDS RUN THE WORLD SHP

By  
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**Abstract:**

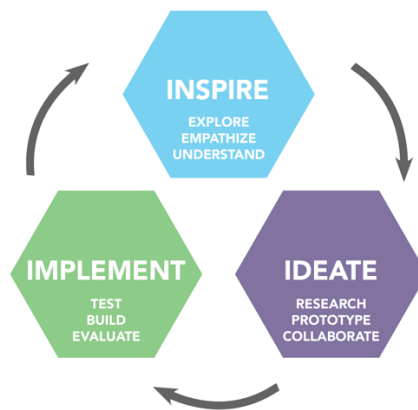
The Boys & Girls Club services children ages 6 to 18 with programs and activities that emphasize development strategies (BGCA, n.d.). It provides role models, a safe environment, and constructive activities that focus on overall health. The club depends heavily on community engagement in the form of donors, partnerships, and volunteers (BGCA, n.d.). Our local club provided programs focusing on financial responsibility, leadership, and mental health, but lacked development of physical health practices. Kids Run the World comprised various activities to promote physical health in adolescents. This program is led by college level volunteers that worked with elementary and middle school-aged children to show them fun and safe ways to exercise. Before implementation of the program, research was completed to understand the dynamics of the local Boys & Girls Club. This research included how to be an effective role model and successes of similar programs. This is when “Kid Run the World” was established and put into action. After volunteering at the Boys & Girls Club throughout the duration of our project, we have observed increased physical activity levels and overall morale when group members and athletes are there leading activities. This was successful because of consistent attendance and positive interactions with the children. We learned we needed to have a youthful perspective and engage the kids with exercises they found familiar. Despite COVID-19, our group continues to make efforts to engage youth through our organization on campus, Kids Run the World. The Boys & Girls Club has many underserved children, and this has provided our group with a unique platform that has benefited both us and the children through increased physical activity levels and community involvement.

At the beginning of our Honors journey, none of us knew that we would eventually be working as a group to combat a very real problem in our community. This paper reflects our journey as a group through Honors 2000, 3000, 4500, and 4550 and elaborates on the process of implementing our solution to the wicked problem that we chose to focus on. It defines our struggles and successes, as well as, our takeaways throughout the whole process.

### **Honors 2000**

The focus of the Honors 2000 course was Human Centered Design and how it can be used in our own lives and in our Honors Project. We were instructed to read “*Designing Your Life*” and were given assignments to supplement the information in the book. Participating in these activities sought to teach us that we are all designers of something. We were taught how to empower our ideas to create meaningful contributions to our wicked problem. “A wicked problem has innumerable causes, is tough to describe, and doesn’t have a right answer. (Camillus, 2008)” As individuals, and as a part of small groups, we were given assignments to evaluate our understanding and to progress our learning of the material in the book. A main focus of Honors 2000 was to determine what our individual interests and passions were, as well as, to build our compass. As stated by Bill Burnett in *Designing Your Life*, “You can't know where you're going until you know where you are.” Reflecting on our conscious values was important in determining a wicked problem that was meaningful to us, one that we would enjoy working on and contributing to.

The Honors 2000 course was fundamental in the sense that it gave us the necessary tools to create, evaluate, and implement solutions to real life problems. Along with *Designing Your Life*, we were educated on Human-centered design which is “a creative approach to problem solving. (IDEO, n.d.)” Doing so involves defining a specific audience and catering solutions based on specific people and their needs. Tim Brown, CEO and President of IDEO says it best. “It’s not ‘us versus them’ or even ‘us on behalf of them.’ For a design thinker it has to be ‘us with them!’” Inspiration, Ideation, and Implementation are the three main stages of the Human Centered Design process (IDEO, n.d.). Being inspired by a problem, learning from and understanding a specific need, and being able to bring a solution to practice are essential in having the ability to effectively problem solve.



Once establishing our own, individual, processes and compasses, we were able to more adequately contribute to a group. Becoming accustomed to our teams and setting goals was essential in creating a strong group dynamic. We designed a Team Development document to set standards of how we would treat each other and how we would conduct meetings. This was important in setting standards for ourselves and for having something on paper to hold ourselves accountable to. As a group, we analyzed all our individual strengths and how we could utilize them not only in Honors 2000, but in the semesters that would follow.

Once the dynamic of the team was established, we were encouraged to brainstorm individually and as a group to find a wicked problem we were passionate about. We utilized the mind mapping technique from Human Centered Design to brainstorm ideas. After coming together as a group with our mind maps, we decided we could have the most impact on improving childhood physical health in Greenville, North Carolina. Using a design challenge from human centered design, we brainstormed three themes and their insights that impact our wicked problem. The three themes were: accessibility, knowledge, and influences. The insights for accessibility included that not every child is being taught correctly about healthy living, not every child has access to healthy food choices, and that not every child can engage in physical activity. For knowledge we considered that not every child knows how to plan balanced diets, how to exercise at home, and easy cooking skills for healthy snacks. For influences, we considered that schools and families are not encouraging activity and healthy eating efficiently and that friends can encourage bad habits. This activity allowed us to create three “How Might We” questions that would guide our research over the semester. Our questions were:

1. How might we present information about healthy habits in an engaging way for children?
2. How might we make exercise a desirable activity for children?
3. How might we teach children about portion control?

Once we established these three questions, we were able to focus on brainstorming ways that we could potentially combat our wicked problem. We had to create experiences for ourselves that

would put us directly in the path of being able to encounter change for our problem. We were taught how to effectively interview our peers and the people around us to enhance information for our project. Doing interviews aided in the establishment of confirming our inspiration and establishing thoughts for our ideation so that we could begin to propose solutions to our problem. The many instances when we practiced interviewing in Honors 2000 were crucial in being able to effectively do so in Honors 3000.

### **Honors 3000**

The focus within Honors 3000 was implementation of ideas and working through our failures and successes. It was during this phase of planning that we finalized our plans for solving the Wicked Problem. We decided to implement a weekly program at an afterschool facility such as the Boys and Girls Club where we would lead elementary-aged kids through fun and effective exercises, and also potentially use this time to teach healthy eating and lifestyle habits.

### **Boys & Girls Club**

When planning and starting up Kids Run the World, our group looked into clubs and services that would benefit most with what we had to offer. Things we took into account included demographics, location, available space, and age of the children. After many meetings with the Boys and Girls Club leads, we chose the Boys and Girls Club, Jack Minges Unit in Winterville. It offered us an accessible location for our members, children in Kindergarten through 8th grade, and a gym space to work with.

The Boys & Girls Club services children ages 6 to 18 with programs and activities that emphasize development strategies (BGCA, n.d.). It provides role models, a safe environment, and constructive activities that focus on overall health. The club depends heavily on community engagement in the form of donors, partnerships, and volunteers (BGCA, n.d.). As a group, we noticed the club provided programs focusing on financial responsibility, leadership, and mental health, but lacked the physical health component. We strived to bring this to them in the form of organized activities to promote physical wellbeing.

After our meetings with the head of the Jack Minges Unit of the Boys and Girls Club in Winterville, NC, we were set to begin our weekly exercise sessions with elementary kids. We would carpool in each other's cars and drive to the Boys and Girls Club every Thursday afternoon. We designated one person to be responsible for making a lesson plan for the session and that responsibility rotated from one week to the next. Some of these lesson plans included relay races, basketball games, kickball, and the kids' favorite, Sharks and Minnows. These weekly sessions were fun-filled for us as well as the kids, and we were able to engage with most of them through every session.

## Implementation of ECU Athletes

After the first couple of sessions, we decided it was time to begin implementing our idea of bringing ECU athletes into the sessions with us as an added bonus for the kids and an extra motivator. We knew that most athletes were required to complete a certain number of volunteer hours, so we wanted to be one of the channels that athletes could complete those hours through. We met with the ECU Athletics volunteer coordinator and figured out all the necessary steps to take in order to do that. After establishing ourselves as a proper channel, we were able to bring an ECU basketball player with us for one of our sessions. The kids were ecstatic when they saw that he had come to join us. During that session, every single one of the kids participated in the program, and every kid left with a big smile on their face and a great story to tell. After this session, we knew that our program would be way more effective if we could implement athletes every single week, therefore increasing our chances of success and sustainability in the future.

## Weekly Presentations

The Honors 3000 class required weekly presentations that updated our classmates and professors on the events from the week before. Each team member was required to present at least one time, and all were required to complete ten interviews throughout the semester. Every presentation followed the guidelines of our Business Model Canvas, a chart that clearly laid out our ideas, plans, goals, partners, successes, and failures.

<p><b>Key Partners</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Jack Minges Boys and Girls Club- Heather Joyner</li> <li>Jeffrey Pizzutilla (ECU Physical Activity Program Director)</li> <li>Student Athlete Advisory Committee (SAAC)</li> <li>Danielle Morrin (Director of Life Skills)</li> <li>Eta Sigma Gamma</li> <li>Other health clubs on campus</li> <li>Michael Denning</li> </ul>	<p><b>Key Activities</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Begin implementing program 3/21</li> <li>Program will run from 5:00-6:00 weekly (every Thursday from 3/21- 4/18)</li> <li>Athletes for 4/18</li> </ul>	<p><b>Value Propositions</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>To help elementary aged children achieve optimal health through physical activity</li> <li>Help athletes get involved in the community through a fulfilling service event</li> <li>Teach children ways to be mindful and calm, focusing on the "cool down" of exercise.</li> <li>Weekly exercise program at the Boy and Girls club</li> <li>Improve children's well-being and quality of life</li> </ul>	<p><b>Customer Relationships</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Reach out to local Boys and Club administration</li> <li>Send out surveys/ ask for feedback from children and staff</li> <li>Rewards for exercise logs</li> <li>Expand to other Boys and Girls Clubs and/or recreation centers</li> </ul>	<p><b>Customer Segments</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Elementary (fourth and fifth graders) children attending B&amp;G club.</li> </ul>
<p><b>Mission Budget/Cost</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Time/Volunteer hours</li> <li>Creating lesson plans</li> <li>Creating exercise log</li> <li>Incentives- Signed posters</li> </ul>	<p><b>Key</b></p> <p>New Ideas: Blue          Eliminated Ideas: Crossed Out          Confirmed Ideas: Green          In Progress- Black</p>	<p><b>Mission Achievement/ Impact Factors</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Get ECU athletes positively involved in the community</li> <li>Improve children's health</li> <li>Educate children on how to maintain their health in different settings</li> </ul>		

After every presentation, the floor would be opened for questions, ideas, and “relentlessly direct feedback.” Our peers and professors would ask questions such as:

- How is this feasible?
- What are your next steps to take?
- What can you do to make this project sustainable for the future?

Each of these questions allowed us to think critically about our project’s feasibility and sustainability while it also gave us guidance on next steps to take. Our fellow classmates could also give advice or ideas for next steps or ideas not worth pursuing. While it wasn’t very comfortable to sit in front of a large class and hear the things wrong or useless about our project, this sort of feedback allowed us to face some hard truths and taught us that failure is sometimes a step in the right direction.

### **Honors 4500**

At the beginning of Honors 4500 we continued our progress with the Boys & Girls Club as we had done during Honors 3000. Initially, we inherited additional group members as the end of Honors 3000 led to merging of groups and eradication of others into individual projects. We caught our new group members up to speed with our wicked problem and current solution. As a group, we enjoyed the Boys & Girls Club location we were at. It was the biggest one in the eastern part of North Carolina with many different age groups. This big facility gave us a lot to work with when it came down to deciding what age groups to work with and what rooms we would use based on the activities we had planned. As a group, we were in the swing of things after we got settled in a routine.

### **Subgroups**

Kids Run the World was a much larger group than previous projects through the Honors College. Our group was made up of 15 people in Fall of 2019 and 16 people in Spring of 2020. In order to counteract the expected chaos of a group this large, we decided to split into sub groups. These included one group to coordinate with athletes, another to deal with lesson plans, and the last to communicate with the Boys & Girls Club. This was done in an attempt to split up work and delegate tasks for such a large group. One person from each group was appointed to correspond with the other groups in an effort to keep a line of communication open. The role of the first subgroup was to reach out to athletes and encourage them to come to the Boys & Girls Club. The second was in charge of making a lesson plan/ coming up with games to play with the kids. The last group coordinated any information that needed to be relayed to the Boys & Girls Club and looked for more locations to expand to for sustainability.

Our group quickly learned that these subgroups were not the best way to move forward with our project. It was too hard to keep up with what every group was doing and to stay on the same page. As a result, our group decided to abolish the subgroups and return back to the large group

we began with. From here, we were able to take turns volunteering and certain people would take on a leadership role to delegate tasks. Each member was also expected to become an expert on one portion of our project and present this information at the group meetings each week. Every person was assigned an “expertise” presentation, and we all took turns presenting at each group meeting.

## **Education**

Through the education of volunteers and Boys and Girls Club attendees, our group has worked towards the betterment of physical activity regimes in school-age children. We researched and educated ourselves on separate teaching styles for elementary and middle school-age children. Some elementary techniques, including but not limited to visualization, cooperative learning, and differentiation were implemented into the presentation and execution of activities while at our weekly meetings. Visualization examples can include providing whiteboard drawings of activity layout. Cooperative learning allows children of varying abilities to work together and interact, while also learning from one another in the process. The concept of differentiation relates to the allocation of tasks based on the individual’s ability. This becomes inherently important in the event that an attendee has a physical impairment or learning disability. When working with middle grade students, empathy and attention-grabbing techniques are most useful. Our research and learning tasks also focused on managing risks such as unhealthy attachment and how to prepare for potential for injuries.

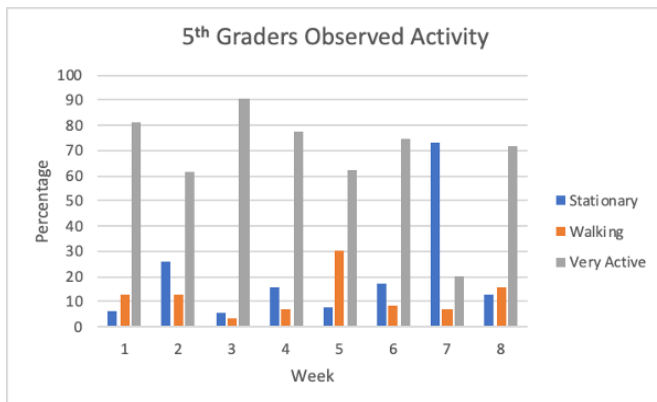
For children from low socioeconomic backgrounds, an unhealthy attachment can arise from weekly meetings. This unhealthy attachment is displayed when children become disappointed if a volunteer is not able to attend regularly. This form of attachment is avoided by switching volunteer’s week by week and avoiding excessive physical touch, thus creating ambivalence between volunteers and attendees. In our group, we designated smaller groups to volunteer bi-weekly. This was helpful in ensuring that all members were able to volunteer regularly and was helpful in limiting how many of us were at the club at a time. This new form of secure attachment allowed the children to interact excitedly and freely when volunteers were present, while also not leading them to become distraught for long periods of time after volunteers left. Kids Run the World was thoroughly committed to providing a safe and supportive environment which ensured the safety and well-being of all participants. Through careful selection of volunteers, maintaining environmental surroundings, and handling any suspicions of harm, we have been dedicated to minimizing injury risk. While educating ourselves on the methods previously listed, we also understand the importance of the physical and mental health benefits that result from daily exercise. We have been committed to educating ourselves and the Boys and Girls Club attendees about these benefits which include decreased depressive symptoms and increased social skills.



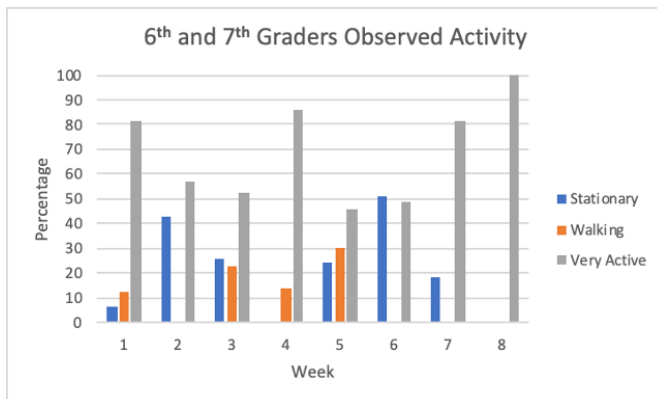
## Data Collection/Results

During HNRS 4500, we began working to measure our impact and success through the implementation of a quantitative direct observational method to accurately assess participation among the children. This method was created by adapting the System for Observing Play and Leisure Activity in Youth (SOPLAY) observational template and procures to fit our specific program. We chose to model our procedure for data collection after that of SOPLAY because it “was designed to obtain observational data on the number of students and their physical activity levels during play and leisure opportunities in a specified activity area” (McKenzie, 2006 pg. 2). For our project, we were only able to observe the children’s activity levels during times of play. For the data collection process, four observers were assigned to specific regions of the gym at the Boys and Girls Club (Observer 1: right half of the basketball court, Observer 2: left half of the basketball court, Observer 3: right baseline and near sideline, and Observer 4: left baseline and far sideline). The data collection process consisted of the four observers counting the number of children in their section that were very active, walking, or stationary (McKenzie, 2006). Data was collected for both the fifth-grade group and the combined sixth and seventh grade group. Data collection occurred during every one of our scheduled program times (once a week per group) over the course of eight weeks. Graphs 1 and 2 below show the data that was collected.

Graph 1: Fifth Grade Group Participation



Graph 2: Combined Sixth and Seventh Grade Group



During HNRS 4500 and HNRS 4550, we were able to see the impact an athlete can make on the children as we recorded that 81.25% (week 1) were active (walking and very active) on the day that an ECU basketball player volunteered compared to the average of 76.9% for fifth graders and 77.4% for sixth and seventh graders (weeks 2-8). For the fifth-grade group, we observed that the average percentage of children who were very active increased from 65.1% (weeks 2-4) to 69.1% (weeks 5-8) which suggested that our program was working. We did not observe the same results in the sixth and seventh grade group as their average for very active children fell from 76.5% to 57.1%. However, when accounting for the outlier of Week 7, there was an increase in the percentage of children who were physically active (walking and very active) from 84.3% to 87.5%. Throughout our entire time at the Boys and Girls Club we served up to 119 children per weekly session and observed that on average 79.0% of the fifth, six, and seventh graders were physically active during our sessions.

### **Honors 4550**

In Honors 4550, we continued our attendance at the Boys and Girls Club to accomplish our goal of educating children on how to live a healthier lifestyle through physical activity. We started off our second semester working on lesson plans and jumping right back into attending the Boys and Girls Club every Thursday for two hours with two different age groups to enhance our impact. Each week, we worked with middle school kids for the first half and then elementary school kids for the second half. We continued our weekly meetings to discuss how the previous week went and things we could do to improve for the next week. We also edited lesson plans and made them more relevant to our objective for the week.

This semester taught us a lot through the continuation of working in a large group. As stated previously, our subgroups in Honors 4500 were not as effective as we had planned for them to be. One of our main objectives in Honors 4550 was to begin working on our presentation posters. Since we had such a large group, assigning specific duties sought to be a challenge and we were finding that not all group members were actively engaging and putting equal efforts into the project. Despite our failure of subgroups in Honors 4500, we decided that working in subgroups would be more effective for this phase of our project. We divided into three different subgroups: Boys and Girls Club, Education, and Future. These groups were distinguished based on the topic of expertise each person researched and presented on to the group during our weekly meetings in Honors 4500 and the beginning of Honors 4550. These groups were beneficial in making sure that all members contributed equally and that the posters were completed on time.

We started out moving slow due to the lack of communication and presence of chaos as we were making plans to complete our mission. We tried to implement spokespeople who were in charge of communicating between groups; however, the middle-man method was insufficient. Groups were working on their own timelines, and they were not considering our large group to-do list.

We weren't considering adding a new location or moving locations until some problems arose. Many factors played a key role in considering moving locations, one being communication. We delegated one person to be in contact with the Boys & Girls Club so that communication would not get lost and so that we had an organized way of keeping records. However, communication works both ways which was a problem when sometimes it would become one sided. With little communication between this location of the Boys & Girls Club and our group, it was difficult to make sure we were always on their schedule. We made sure the staff knew we had planned to be there every Thursday. We also made sure we could use the gym and that they approved of it. However, there were instances when we were not informed about a change in their plans in regards to when they had special events going on. There were multiple times that members of our group would show up and there would be no children in the gym because of prior commitments the Boys & Girls Club had that day. To try and avoid this, we designated a group member each week to reach out to the club to make sure that we were on the schedule still. Even with this effort put in place, there was still a lot of inconsistency when it came to communication and attendance which produced inaccurate data for our project. Because of this, we decided to think about changing locations or expanding, depending if the communication progressed. Other locations we were interested in exploring were other Boys & Girls Clubs, Eppes Recreation Center, and the ECU Community School. We had plans of reaching out to these other organizations until things were put on hold due to COVID-19. Because of this, we stayed in touch with the original Boys & Girls Club location, making sure activities were still sent for the children to do at home.

After the Coronavirus closed the Boys and Girls Club, we had to come up with a way to continue our project under these difficult circumstances. The only way we would be able to continue contact with the children was through technology. We communicated with the Boys and Girls Club to send out a newsletter to the families with exercises that can be done at home and motivational videos from several ECU athletes. The purpose of the exercises are to keep children active while they continue their education from home. We reached out to athletes to record short videos that we could share with the students. These videos provided inspiration to keep the students engaged in our program. The Boys and Girls Club reached out to us to thank us for our continued dedication to the children after we sent the athlete videos and workout list out. COVID-19 also hindered the group's ability to present at Research and Creative Achievement Week. The Boys and Girls Club subgroup was able to present during the revised online Research and Creative Achievement Week. This consisted of posting our research poster on a Canvas link and responding to the judges comments. Overall it went well and they were pleased with our poster. This semester was a challenge for us because while we had gotten into a routine of going to the Boys and Girls Club in Honors 4500, we had to raise the bar in Honors 4550 and do as much as we could to progress our solution to the wicked problem.

## **Sustainability**

Sustainability is an important factor in making a lasting impact and creating value for the long-term. There are many key elements that make a program sustainable. One of the most important aspects is strategic planning, which is planning for the end from the beginning. Our group collected data on resources in the community and similar programs when planning in order to enhance our program and our ability to last in the long-term. To become sustainable, it is vital to have organizational values that motivate members to increase voluntary efforts towards a shared goal (Mayo, 2016). Having these values and a program with a purpose will attract other volunteers and organizations to get involved and possibly continue the program in the future. A sustainable program should be able to adapt to changes and our group showed that this is possible through COVID-19.

Our group members shared a passion for the group's long-term goal of educating children on living a healthier lifestyle through physical activity and were motivated to continue improving the program and overcoming obstacles that came our way. We made long-term plans for the future of Kids Run the World by becoming an official club at ECU that any student can join. There were many factors involved in becoming an organization on campus. Members of our group attended virtual workshops through Student Activities and Organizations (SAO) and created a formal constitution, listing all officer positions and procedures of the club. Current group members of Kids Run the World became officers and members of the club. We worked to advertise our new club on campus and through social media to recruit more students to join. In the future, we plan to continue our relationship with the Boys and Girls Club and expand our club on campus.

## **Pivots and Setbacks**

While perfecting the many aspects of our project, there were a few pivots that needed to happen before coming to our most feasible and sustainable ideas. The main pivot that we experienced was our idea of expanding to other locations than the Boys and Girls Club in Honors 4500. We decided that our potential three channels for the program would be the Boys and Girls Club, the Eppes Center, and the ECU Community School. After meeting with a leader within the ECU Community School and being shot down after a major miscommunication, we decided to focus mainly on one location to test out the waters and see if it worked, and then decide whether or not to expand. We learned a lot from pivoting our project. We learned that miscommunications can happen and learned to elaborate more in emails about potential interviews. We also learned that it is okay to start small and work our way up, since a big goal is not always the most achievable one.

When we first engaged with the Boys and Girls Club, communication sought to be an issue. There were also setbacks when some group members were getting cleared to volunteer and

others weren't. The Boys and Girls Club has a strict process for becoming an eligible volunteer at their organization. Aside from filling out an application and giving consent to a background check, volunteers also had to attend an orientation at the specific club that they chose to volunteer in. Because of the delay that this caused, as well as the addition of new group members in Honors 4500, not all group members were able to attend weekly sessions at the Boys and Girls Club. We had set standards for group members to sign up for times to volunteer and it was made an expectation of how many times each group member should volunteer throughout the semester. It was challenging to meet this expectation due to the application process. This helped to ensure that all group members were participating, and it created a balance of commitment to the project. This rendered us somewhat less effective, as we were not as large a presence and therefore had less control over the kids when fewer members were able to attend. Once everyone was approved, we had an easier time filling all volunteer roles each Thursday.

We learned a lot through our participation in this project. Pivots sought to be very relevant and while they were "failures" they made us think differently in order to progress our project forward. Working as a group can be challenging, especially if it is the size that ours was. Through this experience, we were able to enhance our leadership skills and our abilities to effectively work in teams. Reflecting on our journey to now, we are proud of our efforts and contributions and look forward to seeing how our project continues to make an impact through our organization on campus.

### **Individual Contributions and Reflection**

When it comes to individual contributions, I was tasked with building the partnership with East Carolina University Athletics. This relationship was going to be crucial to the success of our group, and it was in our best interest to establish this relationship as quickly as possible. As the manager for the Men's Basketball team at ECU, I had a great connection when it came to getting athletes to the Boys and Girls Club. After practice, I spoke with members of the coaching staff, who were all in support of our idea, and what we stood for. Our first athlete that came was Addison Hill, a senior on the team, who actually went to the same Boys and Girls Club as a kid. This brought back great memories for him, as it allowed him to give back to a place that he said helped him grow as a person younger in his lifetime.

The second athlete we brought with us was Evan Umstead, a junior on the Men's Basketball team who felt very empowered by giving back to his community. He enjoyed the time with the kids, and wanted to be a part of our organization as a way to help benefit a community that he felt he could be an active member in.

Reflecting on what I brought to this group, I felt as if I was a crucial member in this group, and was key to the success of our group. We did a great job as a group having cohesive communication and being able to overcome barriers and necessary pivots. I think that our ability to impact those children's lives will go on long after the days that we were there.

Presented 2x at RCAW in 2021, virtually through a panel with the COVID-19 pandemic.

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