



2017-18 NBA Ministry and Mission Grantees
Impact Report:
Community Dinner Kitchen Skills Training
Champaign, Illinois

The purpose of **Community Dinner Kitchen Skills Training** is to provide training and education to high school students in cooking, healthy kitchen management, nutrition, and food justice issues. In the process, through the paid internship, students will acquire transferable job skills and be placed in peer-mentor relationships with university students they wouldn't otherwise have had the opportunity to meet.

Mission Category: At-Risk Children and Youth **Catalyst Grant:** US \$5,000

Goals, Outcomes, and Learnings:

- We recruited high school students last spring, even before we received the grant check. They were slated to begin in August, and have already been trained for and passed their Food Handlers certification process with the County Health Department. They have had initial training, including orientation to the kitchen and its equipment. They have also met with student leaders from the university who have experience volunteering with the program, so relationship building has begun prior to the start of their academic year.
- Community agencies and student volunteer groups are continuing to inquire about our dinners. We expect the program to grow even beyond our usual 100 or so guests per dinner.
- We are housing an after-school program at UniPlace for boys, kindergarten through fourth grade, from our neighborhood. These economically disadvantaged families will be invited into the community of Community Dinner and encouraged to stay for supper when they pick up their boys. In addition, we expect friends of the high school students we are training and their families to be added to our growing community.

- Our student interns both come from Champaign Unit Four Schools which offers a quality educational environment for a demographic which includes more than 50% of its students receiving free or reduced lunch, and more than 50% of the housing stock in the district being rental properties rather than homeowner occupied residences.
- We were approached by a new partner in ministry, the DREAAM program (Driven to Reach Excellence in Academic Achievement for Males), which will be housed at UniPlace. This program is targeted at boys in our neighborhood who are surrounded by influences which could lead to negative outcomes for their future. In its fourth year, this program serves boys by bringing them into a rich and challenging learning opportunity after school, with a goal of creating a preschool to university pipeline. We were sought out because of our location in the thick of things on the STEM side of the University of Illinois campus, our commitment to building community, our track record in positive engagement with university students and faculty, and our demonstrated commitment to the neighborhood. Our high school interns will now work with both the older university student volunteers, and the little boys from DREAAM as they hone their kitchen skills. We are thrilled with this opportunity for cross-pollination in our community building efforts.
- We are developing an increasing number of partnerships with local agencies working for food justice in our community.
- Through a student-created app which pairs local retail food stores with health department sanctioned feeding programs and allows time-sensitive transfers of "sell by date" foods, we are now the weekly recipients of high-end organic foods from our local Food Co-op, at no cost.
- We envision adding more high school students to the program in the future, as well as adding a kitchen skills class for the younger boys from DREAAM. We hope to create Church Kitchen Days for the families from DREAAM to join with UniPlace families in sharing their love of food, their recipes, and their unique take on what is best to bring to the table.

As the health and social services general ministry of the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ), the National Benevolent Association partners with congregations, regions, general ministries, and a variety of Disciples-related health and social service providers to create communities of compassion and care. Founded in 1887 by six women responding to the needs of the day and on their doorsteps, for more than 130 years the NBA has continued to serve "the least of these." Learn more at www.nbacares.org.