Community Awareness and Program Sustainability at GiGi’s Playhouse Nashville
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Mission and Vision
- The mission of GiGi’s Playhouse is to change the way the world views Down syndrome through national campaigns, educational programs, and by empowering individuals with Down syndrome, their families, and the community.
- Their vision is to see a world where individuals with Down syndrome are accepted and embraced in their families, schools, and communities, in doing so, they advance a global vision of acceptance for all.

Goals of Experiential Component
This Experiential Component (EC) consisted of three individual projects, each with their own goals:

1. Distribute informational material regarding GiGi’s Playhouse to local healthcare professionals
   - Goal: increase awareness and knowledge in these healthcare professionals and the families they serve in regard to GiGi’s Playhouse, their program offerings, and their mission and vision.
   - Long-term goal: increase program participation of 0-5 year-olds.

2. Gather information from current adult participants about interest in GiGi Prep, GiGi University, and GiGi’s internship programs
   - Goal: provide the Board of Managers with feedback they can utilize to make a data-driven, financially responsible decision.

3. Create a database of visual recipes for Cooking Club and lesson plans with lists of tips for each program for future program leaders.
   - Goal: increase sustainability of programs by reducing the time and planning required of program leaders, making it feasible for the programs to be offered on a regular basis, even without a consistent program leader.

Rationale and Clinical Relevance
“Occupational therapy practitioners guide individuals with Down syndrome and their families to help them reach their potential throughout the life span. Occupational therapy intervention should begin as soon as a diagnosis of Down syndrome is established and should continue throughout the individual's life.”
- This statement specifically addresses the importance of therapeutic activity beginning with initial diagnosis and continuing into adulthood, which are the specific age groups that the three components of this EC will be benefiting.

Kumin and Schoenbrodt (2016) found that currently, “there is high unemployment for adults with Down syndrome” and of those adults with Down syndrome who are employed, they “often work or volunteer in a limited number of fields, primarily in the areas of food, janitorial work, landscaping, and office work” (p. 330).
- The proposed career development programs would address these concerns by teaching adults with Down syndrome necessary job and life skills for employment in a wide variety of areas that are consistent with their strengths and interests.

Outcomes of Project 1
Increased community awareness:
- GiGi's Playhouse brochures were provided to 22 pediatricians, gynecologists, and therapy offices in close proximity to GiGi's. Approximately 200 new families will learn about GiGi's Playhouse and have the opportunity to participate in programs.

Additional examples of increased community awareness:
- Development of a partnership with Chick-Fil-A Thoroughbred Square for future fundraising and donation opportunities.
- Cooking Club appearance on Murfreesboro Fire Rescue Department's cooking show, "Cooking with MFRD".
- Job placement and training of an adult participant at Taziki's in downtown Franklin.

Outcomes of Project 2
Expansion of adult programming:
- All households with adult participants (287 households) were called and asked to provide feedback about whether or not they would be interested in participating in the proposed programs and why/why not.

Outcomes of Project 3
Increased sustainability of Cooking Club:
- Database of 72 visual recipes was created and compiled to serve as recipes for future program leaders in Cooking Club.
- Recipes included gluten and dairy free alternatives for participants who may require these modifications as this was discussed as a potential challenge for future program leaders.

Increased program sustainability for other programs:
- Document including tips and lesson plans for each program led during the spring semester.
- Creation of literacy tutoring materials.

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References

*Additional references available upon request.