In the United States, there has been a long-standing notion that hard work and determination brings opportunities for reward, advancement, and financial stability. However, for millions of Americans who maintain employment and work hard, this is not the case. For these individuals, the chance to provide a secure future for their families may be hindered by financial constraints (Dyk, 2004). In 2015, the poverty threshold was $24,250 for a family of four (U.S. Department of Health & Human Services, 2015). Increasing costs in housing, food, childcare, and health care further exacerbate the situation. The negative impact of these stressors on individuals may be evidenced by diminished decision-making capabilities and changes in executive functioning skills, including problem solving, emotional regulation, judgment, organization, and multi-tasking (Babcock, 2014). Without the federal, state, and local support needed to attain affordable housing, education, increased pay, and appropriate physical and mental healthcare, these individuals struggle to advance and obtain a more secure financial position and improved quality of life. In an effort to address one of these elements, A Hand Up for New Hope was created to assist individuals and families to locate and transition into a more stable living environment.

The purpose of this residency project was to expand upon the Hand Up for New Hope program at Greenhouse Ministries in Murfreesboro, TN. Hand Up for New Hope provides services to low income individuals and families and assists them to improve life skills as they transition into a new environment. The purpose of Hand Up for New Hope is to provide working individuals and families the necessary spiritual, financial, educational, and physical tools needed for success in home and life management, and provide spiritual support as they begin or continue their journey and relationship with the Lord, Jesus Christ. To complete this residency project, community churches and community leaders were educated about the mission, vision, purpose, and goals of the Hand Up for New Hope Program. An outcome measure was created and developed to assess the effectiveness of the Hand Up for New Hope program that can be used for future research and publication. Lastly, future needs and potential solutions were identified to further improve the Hand Up for New Hope program.

In phase 1, community churches and community leaders were identified and contacted about becoming involved in A Hand Up For New Hope. Community churches and community leaders were educated about the need, mission, vision, and purpose of the Hand Up For New Hope program. Two churches a week were contacted through phone or email, to educate them about the program. During this phase, time was spent in the community meeting with churches and making presentations about the program. A presentation was given to several non-profits of Murfreesboro to educate and spread awareness about the program within the community. By the conclusion of the residency project, a total of three churches were part of Hand Up for New Hope and were assisting individuals and families in need. In this phase, ideas about an outcome measure to assess program effectiveness were gathered, as at this point the procedures of the program were thoroughly understood.

In phase 2, an outcome measure was created and developed to measure program effectiveness for the Hand Up For New Hope program. A review of the literature was completed to explore the different types of outcome measures. It was then decided to create a pre-test and post-test survey. A review of the literature was also completed to explore assessments that evaluate quality of life as survey questions were formed around aspects of quality of life. Ongoing support and feedback was obtained from the expert mentor in regards to the outcome measure’s content and structure. Based on input from the expert mentor and faculty mentor, participants will also fill out the Greenhouse Ministries Global Life Skills Assessment, Rosenberg Self-Esteem Scale, and the outcome measure created, as pre and post-test measurements.

In phase 3, further needs of the Hand Up for New Hope program were identified. In the final weeks of the residency, a list of further needs for the program was made, as well as potential solutions to meet those needs. A presentation and discussion about those needs and potential solutions was given to the Greenhouse Ministries staff and expert mentor at the conclusion of the residency.

References