

Capacity Building Institute Completes Yearlong Initiative with Polk County Nonprofits

Orlando, Oct. 29, 2007 — The Capacity Building Institute at the University of Central Florida has just completed a yearlong capacity building initiative with two grassroots nonprofit organizations in Polk County — Help Ft. Meade in Ft. Meade and the Women’s Resource Center in Lakeland.

Through grant funding from the Department of Health and Human Services in partnership with Help of Ft. Meade and Women’s Resource Center, the institute provided a comprehensive range of technical assistance designed to improve the performance and effectiveness of a nonprofit organization by increasing the skills and knowledge of its members, employees and leaders.

The Capacity Building Institute’s technical assistance program is tailor made to meet the specific and unique needs of a given nonprofit organization. Based on courses in UCF’s Master of Nonprofit Management and the Master of Public Administration programs, the institute assistance includes, but is not limited to: strategic planning, fiscal management, grant writing, board development, human resources management and program evaluation. The institute employs a creative mix of faculty expertise in public and nonprofit management, along with service learning for students, in delivering these services.

According to Marsha West, executive director of Help of Ft. Meade, the knowledge imparted by the Capacity Building Institute has created a firm foundation for future growth of her nonprofit, which was created to “help empower local people.” West noted that her organization is better able to help because of its improved capacity to undertake new projects, improved financial management and increase in overall financial competency. Help of Ft. Meade has recently been awarded two grants totaling over \$63,000. West attributes her success in grant writing to the trainings provided by the institute.

Completion of the institute’s program has created an even more hectic schedule for Cythania Clark, executive director of the Women’s Resource Center. Her organization provides emergency assistance and education to women during times of crisis, and she is now in the process of expanding her organization’s scope of services. Clark reported that the WRC’s budget increased 40 percent, which she attributes to the staff’s understanding of how to effectively raise funds and write grants. She found the capacity-building process particularly rewarding because “it allowed me to see the growth of our agency.”

West noted that the technical assistance and training provided by the Capacity Building Institute “filled in the holes” where critical skills were lacking. Overall, she was very pleased with her agency’s experience with the institute, and she looks forward to Help of Ft. Meade’s continued growth and success in meeting community needs.

For more information on the Capacity Building Institute at the University of Central Florida, visit its Web site at www.copha.ucf.edu, or contact Assistant Professor Naim Kapucu, Department of Public Administration, at nkapucu@mail.ucf.edu. Bridget Healy, a graduate student in the M.P.A. and M.N.M. programs, assisted in coordinating the projects and writing the final report.

