ICCD Clubhouses as Service Learning Sites

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Finding community programs that address the needs of adults with mental disorders AND mirror the values and principles of community psychology is challenging. The International Center for Clubhouse Development (www.iccd.org) certifies approximately 300 Clubhouses which do just that. Students (juniors and seniors) taking community psychology at Gordon College have the option of serving at our local Clubhouse, Pioneer House (located about 10 miles away), throughout the semester. Each student completes 15 hours on-site, working on a specific, well delineated, short-term project suggested by the Clubhouse with a team of Clubhouse members (the adults served by the program) and perhaps one or two other students. Projects range from hosting a legislative breakfast, to improving members' access to transportation, to developing library resources in the Clubhouse.

Throughout the semester, members and staff at Pioneer House provide feedback about students' performance. Students keep a log of their activities, indicating dates worked, projects worked on, and members involved.

Community Psychology Pioneer House Projects Log

Date	Time Spent	Specific tasks addressed today	Members working with you today

At the end of the semester, this work log is submitted with a 5-page reflective paper. Prompt questions for the paper include:

- What how did you contribute to the projects at Pioneer House? Among your strengths, which came to the fore in these projects?
- How did someone else, with radically different strengths from your own, contribute differently to the projects? For this comparison, select another student, a Pioneer House staff person, or a Pioneer House member with whom you worked at least 5 hours at the House. Refer to this comparison other by his or her initials rather than using full names.
- How did your perceptions of the House, the members you worked with, and the projects change over time?
- What did you learn (about yourself, about working in groups, about people with serious mental illnesses) through your involvement with Pioneer House? Was it, in fact, a learning experience for you?
- Should participating in projects like this be part of future community psychology courses? If so, what changes should be made in this assignment?

Serving at the Clubhouse has enhanced Gordon students' understanding of basic concepts in community psychology, such as empowerment, underpopulation, and mutuality. Before taking the course, students tend to view people with mental disorder through a clinical lens, and they are surprised at how dramatic is the shift to a community-psychology lens. For some, the shift can be disconcerting, as they move out from behind the status of the "mentally health helper, here to give you the benefit of my energy and experience" to a place where they are encountering these "others" as people. In the end, this has been a uniformly positive experience for the students, who report that they learn a great deal about themselves, and about community psychology, as a result. Experiences at Pioneer House also enhance classroom discussions, giving students a common, concrete reference point. Likewise, Pioneer House has enthusiastically supported the involvement of the students.

Getting students involved in Clubhouses like Pioneer House is not difficult. Clubhouses can be located through the ICCD directory, at http://www.iccd.org/clubhouseDirectory.aspx. Part of the normal operation of the Clubhouse is providing tours for all sorts of people, which is a great way to get a sense of the program and begin thinking of ways that the Clubhouse can contribute to students' education.