

**We Serve to Learn:
Ohio University's Appalachian Scholars Programs
partnership with Rural Action
and their Rural Renewal initiatives.**

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Name of Project: We Serve to Learn: Ohio University's Appalachian Scholars Programs partnership with Rural Action and their Rural Renewal initiatives.

Grant Period: July 1, 2009 – May 30, 2010

Grantee Name: Ohio University

Project Director: Mark Skillings, M.A.B.A, M.A., ABD

The Appalachian Scholars Program from Ohio University began their volunteer service with Rural Action in the Fall Quarter 2008 with an initial desire to aid in developing the leadership capacities of community-based projects and by assisting in the leadership development of projects teams and their membership. However shortly after the formation of the partnership, Rural Action needed to restructure due to a variety of factors that included: a new executive director; the loss of budgetary resources due to the poor economy; and, a major personnel shift due to a transition from being VISTA (Volunteers in Service to America) to an Americorps site. In this process, a revisioning of Rural Action's vision and mission was conducted resulting in an updated strategic plan entitled Weaving the Fabric of Community Renewal: Restoration and Development through Community.

Rural Action's restructuring process resulted in the original partnership with the Appalachian Scholars Program being redefined, a process that occurred through the direct involvement of the scholars and resulting in the development of service learning project significantly greater in scope than the original partnership had conceived. The scholars were given a great deal of latitude in identifying and developing the service learning projects and the nature of the projects was the results of their personal experience growing up in, and connections to, the communities of Southeastern Ohio.

The scope and scale of the projects is a testament to the commitment level the scholars displayed for the service learning projects but more importantly to the value they placed on the service they will be providing to the communities of greater Athens County and Southeastern Ohio. The Appalachian Scholars Program is based on the foundational tenets of academic excellence, leadership development and service to one's community, which are clearly displayed through the

service learning projects that will be serving as the core activities of Ohio University's Appalachian Teaching Project.

Goals/Outcomes

Upon successful completion of the service learning projects the scholars will be able to:

- Demonstrate a fundamental understanding of issues that affect Appalachian Ohio by presenting on the genesis of their service learning projects, provide clear rationale for how each project supports community renewal efforts and describe how the projects are changing their perspective of Appalachian Ohio.
- Articulate the need for community renewal and describe how their efforts are contributing to a greater, more holistic, renewal effort led by Rural Action.
- Better understand the concept of grassroots initiatives/organizations and strategies to make such efforts successful.
- Engage fellow Ohio University students by educating them on the community need and the value of serving the community and sharing their personal experience growing up in Appalachian Ohio in their efforts to reduce the stereotypes associated with the region.
- Explain the concept of service learning and how the role of servant leader in leadership and community development.
- Identify leadership philosophies and styles and describe their personal leadership philosophy and style.
- Present and describe research findings/project results and understand how such data can be used in developing and sustaining plans of actions that produce societal change.

Upon completion of their work with Rural Action the scholars will be able to:

- Describe the value of the ongoing partnership between Rural Action and Ohio University, citing how the Appalachian Scholars Program developed a mutually beneficial relationship for the purpose of serving the needs of the community.
- Better understand the historical, cultural, economical, sociological, educational, and political aspects of the Appalachian Ohio region.
- Identify and articulate issues that are affecting Appalachian Ohio and serve as advocates for the programs and projects actively engaged in revitalizing the region.
- Create, develop and implement service learning project based on self-identified community needs that provide direct service to the community.
- Develop collaborative relationships that engage multiple stakeholders and resources to produce sustainable renewal efforts.
- Understand the meaning of, and strategies to promote, community-based sustainable renewal and revitalization efforts.

Proposed Project versus The Reality Project

The following will briefly describe each proposed service learning project as presented in the original proposal and then be followed by the reports written by each student led group that took the initiative to achieve that which was envisioned. The 'reality project' is juxtaposed after the 'proposed projects' to illustrate that the actual projects have resulted from the ideas, actions and commitment of the students to serve the communities in which they are members. The students were given the charge to adhere to the goals and objectives of the proposed projects to the best of their ability but given the freedom to make adjustments as warranted and to achieve as many positive outcomes as possible. While several of the original objectives did not come to pass several similar outcomes, many of which could be considered to have greater value, were the results. The 'reality projects' are written by the students themselves and have been edited only for the sake of readability and to correct grammatical errors.

Service Learning Project #1

Volunteer Service Corps

The development of a Volunteer Corp of Ohio University students that will support the efforts of Rural Action's Environmental Learning Program by providing direct service to both the Monday and Sunday Watershed Restoration Projects as well as the Sustainable Forestry programs. The scholars associated with this service learning project will identify, organize and lead quarterly community service projects that will recruit fellow Ohio University students to provide direct benefit to the greater Athens community. In this process, the volunteers will be exposed to issues that are affecting the local community, learn about how grass-roots initiatives can have a positive impact and play an active role in improving the community in which they are members (if only temporarily). The following excerpt is from the Rural Action website and explains the genesis and scope Rural Action's Environmental Learning Program.

The Environmental Learning Program (ELP) uses an interdisciplinary approach to environmental education, with an emphasis on outdoor, experiential learning. We seek to:

- *Increase the overall ecological literacy of students.*
- *Foster a sense of wonder, responsibility, and stewardship for ecological systems and our natural world, with attention to the places where we live.*

- *Stimulate awareness, expand knowledge, and develop skills and attitudes necessary to make sound decisions about environmental issues in our communities and our lifestyles.*

This project will partner with various Ohio University programs including: Department of Campus Life (Amanda J Cunningham Leadership Center, Community Service); Geography Department (Dr. Geoff Buckley's Appalachian: Land and People course); and College of Education (Dr. Frans Doppen's Southeast Ohio: The Appalachian Experience course).

The Reality Project

Students for the Enrichment of Rural Ohio

Devin Wheeler, Chris Capper, Eric Alexander and Ryan Lawhorn

Our scholarship advisor Mark Skillings challenged us to do something that will both serve the area we are from as well as make use of all the potential volunteers that need to do community service work at Ohio University. He told us about Rural Action and all the great things they are doing for the land and people and all of us spend a lot of time in the woods hunting or have family farms and wanted to do things that help improve the land. We liked the idea of working with the people at Rural Action that work on environmental issues.

We asked Mark if he could help us set up an appointment with the right people at Rural Action and liked the idea of cleaning up a creek. Chris Capper went to Rural Action with Mark to meet Brian Blair to talk about organizing a creek clean-up and it was decided that he would be the leader for this project. It was decided that it was best to do the clean-up after the leaves began to fall as it is easier to see what needed to be picked up. Chris, Ryan, Mark and Brian went out to the location to see what may be needed and how big the project may be so we could make sure we had everything we needed and the right amount of people.

The creek we cleaned was next to the property of an older couple that wanted to do the right thing to make the creek cleaner and look nicer but could not do the work themselves. There were 12 of us who met one Saturday morning in November and drove about an hour away to the location. It was kind of strange to be at their house but they seemed like nice people and cooked us a lot of food for helping them out. We worked the whole morning and pulled out half of a small boat, parts

to a old Chevy, lots of old mattresses and tires and tons of old fencing and cans that were all rusty. We left it all in piles that another group was going to come out later and put into trucks to take away.

In February Ryan, Devin and Eric meet with Michelle Decker from Rural Action to talk about doing another project and she inspired us to do more than just help clean things up but to help educate other students about issues that impact the people and environment of SE Ohio. That is when we started to think about forming a student group like FWA and we spent the next month of so figuring out what we wanted to do and what lasting impact we wanted to have. In our scholarly roundtables Mark pushed us to think about making something bigger than us that would allow us to leave our own legacy on campus. We came up with the idea of a student group that would help to improve the environment while also helping to show people all the great things that can be found in Appalachian Ohio. As Mark tell us all the time “it is hard for an educated person to believe a stereotype when presented with evidence to the contrary”.

We found out what it takes to be a student group on campus, asked Mark to be our advisor and went about became an official student organization in spring quarter. The following is our Constitution.

Constitution of: Students for the Enhancement of Rural Ohio

Article I: Name

Section 1: The name of this organization shall be Students for the Enhancement of Rural Ohio (S.E.R.O.).

Article II: Purpose

Section 1: The purpose of this organization shall be to improve and enhance the environment, community and the overall perception of rural Ohio, and work for the betterment of the region’s residents and future generations.

Article III: Membership

Section 1: The majority of the membership of this organization shall consist of enrolled Ohio University students. The organization also allows membership of non-Ohio University students.

Section 2: This organization and its members shall not discriminate against any individuals for reasons of race, national origin, color, religion, gender, age, veteran status, sexual orientation, and/or ability status.

Section 3: Membership in this group shall be open to all who are interested and actively participate in the activities of the group.

Article IV: Officers

Section 1: The officers of the organization shall consist of...

A. President – The President shall preside over meetings, know and enforce the constitution and by-laws of the organization and along with other officers organize meetings and events.

B. Vice President – The Vice President shall preside over meetings in the absence of the president, is responsible for the communication amongst members and along with the other officers organize meetings and events.

C. Treasurer – The Treasurer shall be responsible for the finances of the organization in a professional manner and along with the other officers organize meetings and events.

D. Secretary – The Secretary shall take minutes during meetings and along with other officers organize meetings and events.

Section 2: The qualifications for each office shall be that the candidate be an active member of the organization for at least one month.

Section 3: The term of each office shall be one year, from the Monday of the third week of Spring quarter at Ohio University, to the following year at that time.

Section 4: Should an officer's position become vacant during his/her term, a replacement election will take place at the next general body meeting.

Article V: Advisor

Section 1: Our organization advisor must be a member of the faculty, administration, or staff of Ohio University.

Section 2: The duties and responsibilities of the advisor shall be to attend meetings (when possible), provide information on policies and procedures, co-sign all financial transactions, and provide guidance and ideas.

Section 3: Should the position of advisor become vacant during the year, the current officers will search for, and appoint a new one.

Article VI: Meetings

Section 1: Regular meetings of the organization shall be held biweekly in the quarters of Fall, Winter and Spring. The President will call the meetings.

Section 2: Special meetings of the organization shall be held when deemed necessary by any officer with at least twenty-four hours notice.

Article VII: Amendments

Section 1: This constitution shall be amended by a vote of 2/3 of the membership at any regular or special meeting.

Section 2: Provision for advanced notice of amendment shall be announced by email and at previous meetings.

Date Ratified -- May 5, 2010

We wanted to do another project and met with Michelle in April to talk about what we could do and she told us we could help pull invasive plant species from some land Rural Action had just helped the town of Trimble purchase. We meet with Tanner and Michelle to plan the event and the following is a story that Rural Action has on the newsletter web site The Rural Rambler.

Student Group Service Project; Removes Invasive Species From Community Forest

On Saturday, May 29th, 20 students from Ohio University dedicated their morning to removing invasive species and learning about native flora and fauna at the Trimble Township Community Forest. OU junior Devin Wheeler organized this service project that attracted students from programs like the Appalachian Scholars, Urban Scholars, and other students interested in getting dirty on a late spring morning.

This group of students and Mark Skillings, a faculty member who oversees the Appalachian Scholars program, helped cut, pull, and chop gobs of multi-flora rose, privet, and autumn olive from forest edges and interior. These species are invasive shrubs that were originally introduced as ornamental landscape plants, or for restoration purposes and to curb erosion in southeast Ohio during the early 20th century. Removing these species from the forest understory will help native herbs, shrubs, and trees continue to thrive in this 1200 acre chunk of forest.

In addition to working to remove invasives, the group of students encountered various native flora and fauna. Led by Rural Action's Tanner Filyaw and Joe Brehm, students got a taste of local ecology. Literally. They learned that multi-flora rose petals can be eaten and are high in vitamin C. They also learned to identify a variety of plants, bird calls, and butterflies. This group of students immersed themselves in the ecology of Appalachian Ohio while completing a valuable and much appreciated service project. Good luck to all of these bright students in future endeavors, and Rural Action hopes to enjoy their continued involvement.

Service Learning Project #2 Future Women of Appalachia

The creation of the Future Women of Appalachia (FWA), a mentoring program that will connect female students enrolled at Ohio University with local girls in middle school and high school to help form positive self-images and to develop positive coping methods for the challenges they may face. The project will be modeled after an existing program (GirlPower) and will work in conjunction with Youth Act, an affiliated non-profit to Rural Action.

Youth Act is a community and school-based leadership program that helps young people design, and carry out, projects that make positive changes in their communities. Partnerships with schools, churches, and community groups help support the young people led by Rural Action. Outreach programs have operated in the Trimble, Federal Hocking and Alexander school districts since 2001.

The FWA will operate in a similar manner to the following Youth Act program. *As part of Rural Action's Youth Act program, and in partnership with Athens County's Big Brothers Big Sisters, ten teens from Amesville worked with experienced organic gardeners raising vegetables and herbs on the Far Valley Farm. During the season they harvested bushels of tomatoes, basil, beans, cucumbers and zucchini. The teens began growing their seeds in a greenhouse, but later moved their work to the fields, where they had to learn to meet the challenges of pest control, weeding, and local wildlife. All of the teenagers involved are from the Amesville area, and half of them are currently in the foster care system.*

Scholars involved with the project will partner with The Women Center as well as the Women and Gender Studies Program and the College of Education to develop the programming in the FWA service learning project.

The formation of an off-shoot of FWA, the Future Women Scientist of Appalachia (FSWA) will help middle school and high school aged girls recognize their natural abilities and love of the sciences, technology, engineering and mathematics (STEM) and provide support services (e.g. tutoring) to help foster their abilities in disciplines not historically recognized as professions for women.

This service learning project will involve existing programs/resources on campus that have a similar focus and include the College of Education, Mathematics Department and the Russ College of Engineering. For example, the Russ College of Engineering has served as local host for MATHCOUNTS (Math) and TEAMS (Engineering) competitions that host over 250 local middle

school students. Currently five Appalachian Scholars are enrolled in the College of Engineering or Mathematic Department and will actively recruit fellow students to participate in the project.

The Reality Project

Future Women of Appalachia
Shea Daniels and Brittany Wolverton

You've heard the phrase "the elephant in the room." During one of our first Scholarly Round Table discussions, our advisor Mark had asked us what our elephants were. Each of us had wildly different elephants yet a common theme was the struggles of being an Appalachian student at a world renowned university. None of the ten freshmen participating said it in so many words but many of our elephants alluded to the components of the culture shock we were currently weathering. Perhaps it was this conversation we mulled over when asked to pioneer our own volunteer project. Perhaps it was the stories of our mothers and grandmothers or the poverty and difficulty that seem to cycle with the seasons in many Appalachian hamlets. Whatever it was we decided to create a mentoring program for local girls in order to provide healthy re-enforcement, positive role models, and empowerment.

The Office of Multicultural Student Access and Retention (OMSAR) paired us with Rural Action (a local non-profit) who in turn paired us with Girl Power. The Girl Power group works to empower and educate girls in Trimble School district, a local community approximately thirty minutes from Ohio University. Our lack of transportation and the cost of mass fingerprinting of the volunteers necessary to work within the school led us to reevaluate our priorities and options in order to create a more feasible project. Thus we were on hold until fall quarter 2009-2010 when Kerri Shaw of Girl Power met with us in a local sandwich shop. We chatted for most of an hour about rural Athens County and Girl Power programming. Because of budget cuts, a yearly lock-in held for approximately 80 4th-8th grade girls was in jeopardy. The girls' favorite part of the night each year is a dance hosted local DJ Rockin' Reggie. FWA committed to financing the Girl Power Lock-In Dance Party despite having no funds, no prospect for acquiring funds and no idea how to fundraise.

We decided the next logical step was for FWA to become a full-fledged student group so we could obtain a university treasurer's account and in February 2010 Brittany and I passed FWA's first official meeting by ourselves. Because of a double booking in the Women's Center we sat by ourselves outside of an art gallery in the student center. A mildly to severely creepy gentlemen with blasting headphones sat across the way, so I guess one could honestly say there were three of us at our first meeting. We still weren't sure we'd really raise the funds for the Dance Party. Our hopes included having somebody besides the two of us at an FWA meeting, fixing the double-booking issue in the Women's Center and not failing Karri.

We hung up a bunch of posters, Shea's boss forwarded our newsletter to a local women's group email list and a woman contacted us about making a donation to Girl Power. We continued to receive support from the university community both in the form of donations and spreading the word. Local newspapers have helped us greatly by spreading the word about the region and our group. This process has helped shape both of us into more professional young women. FWA has roughly 10 active members, complete with officers, and we've become a functional student group much faster than anticipated. We're both proud of this year's accomplishments and looking forward to next year.

We volunteered at the Girl Power lock-in during Winter Quarter and though it was exhausting it was also very rewarding. We were even listed as a sponsor on the Girl Power tee-shirts! We made lemonade and coffee, worked with groups of students, cleaned and ran an activity center which focused on teamwork. The girls we met had diverse backgrounds. Some lived with both parents while others were in foster care. Some thought they knew everything and others needed validation and encouragement. All had the potential of soaring—but all had the potential of falling into cycles of generational poverty and abuse which haunt our region. Mostly, this experience cemented our choice to partner with Girl Power. Because of Karri's ability to provide transportation for the Girl Power girls much of our early programming will focus on them. This will not only give us the chance to work kinds out of FWA's original programming on a small scale but provide a resume of accomplishments for our organization to utilize when reaching out to other community groups.

Part of our early programming revolves around a campus visit program. We held a campus visit day earlier in the quarter, bringing 15 Girl Power girls to OU for an afternoon. They did crafts. They were treated to a private performance in the school of dance, and participated in a mini-clinic afterwards. The girls toured campus, visited different departments and a residence hall. They visited the Convocation Center, our sports arena, where they participated in a volleyball clinic with the Varsity Volleyball team which included a visit to the locker room and an autograph session with players. The girls then stopped at the Women's Center to talk with its director Dr. Dietzel who talked with them about issues of empowerment. Several gentlemen associated with the Appalachian Scholars Program did behind the scenes work all day that included running errands and setting up a cook-out on OU's main green. By all indicators the girls had an absolute blast.

Corresponding to the campus visit is our snail-mail mentoring program, again beginning with the Girl Power girls. Our plan is to write letters to the children and adolescents we work with ahead of time, and with each letter adding a stamped envelope addressed to FWA. It's a simple premise—if you write us a letter, we'll write you a letter and send back another addressed, stamped envelope—but it has far-reaching consequences. Not only are the girls we correspond with being provided with additional positive re-enforcement during a crucial time in their lives, but their dreams are being affirmed. In the process, a sense of stability is being created. When a letter arrives there is 'fun' practice reading, and as they write a letter back 'fun' practice writing. An additional pro to our snail-mail mentoring is understanding of the postal service—how to address a letter, etc. In our minds this program is a simple way to make a lot of difference, though the cost of stamps poses a significant challenge as this program continues to expand.

FWA recently partnered with other groups at OU to support their efforts to bring approximately 50 9th-11th grade Appalachian high school students to OU during fall quarter. This is being targeted as a campus visit day for students whose parents either lack the means or desire to bring them to visit a university. Transportation will be provided as will snacks, meals, an O.U. tee-shirt and an aforementioned letter/envelope combo. Although the day is still being planned, FWA is playing a supportive role in the process and believes the entire day sounds utterly fantastic. We plan on using the winter quarter to plan and fundraise. Next spring we plan on bringing the Girl Power girls back to OU for another visit and also collecting Prom dresses to distribute to area students.

It's been a great year. We applied for a Pepsi Refresh Communities Grant and although we lost the process was incredible. Brittany and I as well as the other members learned a great deal about networking, perseverance, time management, and handling disappointment. The whole year has been a giant learning experience. We came here overwhelmed, confused, and with our defenses up. We leave for summer break, two years later, confident and with a better understanding of the world and this university. We have grown to be generally comfortable in our own skin and in taking on increasingly demanding leadership roles within the university community. We've become stronger young women, more aware of ourselves and others, and more able to express strengths and weaknesses. It's been a growing process, sometimes painful but always rewarding.

We do all of this because investing in girls is the key to ending poverty—because little girls should get to dress up as princesses or knights, and have no fear of dragons. And because every girl deserves the chance to simply be a girl. We're empowering some of the 204,488 girls in Appalachia Ohio, and in the process we're discovering what courage means as we step outside of our comfort zones. Perhaps John Wayne explained it not only accurately, but fittingly: "Courage is being scared but saddling up anyway."

Service Learning Project #3

Home Energy Retrofits

The development of a corps of students, faculty and community members to will perform energy audits and home quality assessments to improve the living conditions of community members in the greater Athens area. The project will consist of a group of individuals that will: identify those with a need for such services; conduct the audits; gather the necessary resources to make the necessary improvements; and, provide the direct service of home improvement. Students will work with Rural Action's Energy sub-committee to be trained to perform the energy audits. The following excerpt is from the Rural Action website and explains the genesis and scope of the Energy Committee:

The Rural Action Energy Committee formed from Rural Renewal house parties where energy was identified as a top priority for southeast Ohio, and since then has been gathering information and developing focus areas. After meeting and exploring energy issues for two years, the group is now ready to launch programming efforts in these areas:

- *Creating a Park and Ride system beginning with a pilot program for Athens County to launch in Fall 2009;*
- *Evaluating the potential of a soy-based biofuels corridor along State Route 33 from Pomeroy to Columbus, Ohio;*
- *Helping Rural Action members undertake “deep energy retrofit” to their homes, achieving home performance beyond the usual reductions;*
- *Providing broad-based climate change and energy efficiency education in small communities;*
- *Exploring with many partners how energy can be a platform for “green” job-creation.*

There are several academic programs that will be recruited in the Fall Quarter 2009 to serve as partners in the project as there appears to be direct connections between their fields of study and the service to be provided by the Home Energy Retrofit service projects and include: Environmental Studies in the College of Arts and Sciences and the Civil Engineering and Industrial Technology Engineering programs in the Russ College of Engineering.

The Reality Project

INSULATE – The OU Version
Trace Lydick

The Model Project

The idea was my own, but like all things, somebody somewhere was already doing most of what I had in mind. I proceeded to reach out to them, the students and faculty of Warren Wilson College near Asheville, NC. This particular school has a requirement for all students to complete at least 100 hours of community service per academic year. With a need for a service project and with a lot of student initiative, they set out to find something that they could do that would affect climate change as well as to help people. The idea that came forth was that they might be able to insulate the homes of low income families. As a result a student group was formed and the initial start-up group had appeal to a like-minded president who was equally motivated to do good works for the environment. For example, the president of the college proceeded to sign a carbon emission pact with the city mayor so that both organizations would work to reduce carbon emissions.

The students looked for an organization that was already doing this because they believed their efforts would be better spent applying their time and energy supportive existing efforts. They informed the community action agencies, who were handling most of the logostoc, when they could work and the allowed the agency put them to good use. It was these other organizations who went out and did the pre-audit, took photographs, etc. They organized the volunteers who had

knowledge on the subject such as the Asheville homebuilders association and went to work, calling their program INSULATE.

After the pre-audit and inspection, the community agency would come and meet with the volunteers and go over safety training, OSHA requirements and what needs to be done with each home. This could include how to walk in an attic, such as only stepping on the support beams etc. The community action agency deals with the DOE and state and government funding. The students and the college were basically there to provide man power. Jobs such as laying down roll insulation, sealing off leaky registers and carrying out items in the attic so that the attic could be insulated were the main focus for the students. They could then hire a company to provide blown-in insulation (paper, blue jeans, etc.). Lastly, health concerns, such as water issues or mold, within the structure of the house could be taken care of during this time structural issues such as trimming out a floor or ceiling that had been filled with cocking was done by the homebuilders association.

Ohio University's Model Program

A lot of what the INSULATE program at Warren Wilson did was smaller on the grand scale of things however it is still very important work. My goal is similar in scope and for the sake of simplicity and continuity is going to revolve around many of the same ideas. I am in the process of presenting these ideas and findings to the Rural Action organization, specifically the Energy Committee, and obtaining their opinion on what could be done. I also need to schedule a meeting with the University's energy department or some other organization within the university that addresses such issues (Office of Sustainability or the EcoHouse). One important reason for the partnership is I believe that dealing with governmental laws, such as the Davis Bacon Act, and working with larger organizations such as Americorps is too large of a task for one or two students to truly manage. Therefore, if such a community action organization exists that has the same ideas and is willing to work with Ohio University students I will in all likelihood reach out to them. I feel however that we do have the ability to do more than just move furniture and lay in cocking. I would like to see students gain skills as these projects move forward. I feel that our role could be larger as we could fundraise, perform structural reinforcement to the home such as supporting sagging floors or decks and even put in vapor barriers.

I am unsure however how I want to organize everything. A student group, similar to FWA or S.E.R.O., could work however ensuring volunteer attendance via such a group could suffer. One could envision starting a non-profit however I feel that would imply that the organization would be doing everything from buying materials to managing the entirety of the project, which may be too large a task for a student organization. Either way, once the group is formed I plan on relying upon my fellow scholars and others from the university, who either have a community service requirement or are like minded, to volunteer. The group would then follow a similar course of action as that of the INSULATE model. A foreseeable problem for such an organization is the management of volunteers. I feel that I could handle this management but know that I would also want to be in the middle of the direction and work that is being done on the home. I would therefore require assistance from a like minded person who is either intelligent in the field of construction or able to manage people and volunteers.

The pre-audit of the home is something that I envision being a possible problem as well as I am currently unsure if the community action agencies are in the position or have the people qualified to perform such an audit. One way around this would be to educate a few engineering majors within the group on how to go about auditing the house. The benefit of such a role would be two fold as it would 1) make the students and organization a more integral part of the program and 2) would put the university and its charitable students in the homes of people whose opinions and views of the university may not be positive. This could have the ability to turn the opinion of some locals to being in favor of the college could serve as free advertisement of the good works that Ohio University does every day.

The idea is solid and I feel that it could be accomplished quite readily. I just have to get on the ball and communicate my ideas to those people who could help me get the program rolling. With the assistance of Rural Action I hope to be fully functional by no later than spring 2011 with a long term goal of finding a faculty member or administrator to lead the group long term so that it may continue after I graduate. I believe we could serve more homes than the 10 homes that the INSULATE model achieved. I can also see this being a program that may be ideal for a community service organization, such as Americorp, to take a lead role in the future. Regardless I want to see

whatever is created to last longer than my time at Ohio University and to provide a benefit to the community for the foreseeable future.