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University of Minnesota, Morris students track benefits of the Statewide Health Improvement Program (SHIP)

Summary: Amanda Granaas '12, Vermillion, South Dakota, finished the project during summer 2011.

(August 17, 2011)-Since last September 2010, University of Minnesota, Morris students have been evaluating community-based projects designed to improve nutrition and physical activity among residents in Todd, Morrison, and Wadena counties as part of the Minnesota Statewide Health Improvement Program (SHIP). The SHIP grant is funded by the Minnesota State Health Department and was established to encourage healthy behaviors, such as increasing physical activity and the amount of fruits and vegetables consumed. The project team included Ellie McCann '10, St. Joseph, Joe Dunlavy '11, Spicer, Austin Kelsey '11, Brookings, South Dakota, Masera Turkson '11, Hopkins, Amanda Granaas '12, Vermillion, South Dakota, and Jon Braegelmann '14, New Ulm. The fruit of their labor was a report submitted to the state of Minnesota at the end of July 2011.

Granaas spent summer 2011 compiling data from grantee interviews and finishing up the project. She has been wrapping up interviews with the grant recipients and the people who participated in the grant funded programs, trying to determine the impact and effectiveness of the grant activities. Some of the funded projects included a program to promote walking to school, a Frisbee golf course, and a farmers market. She is specifically looking at what made projects successful and what the government can do about the challenges people encountered. She says they want to “make sure these grants stay useful to small communities so the state can continue funding in a way that is beneficial.”

Granaas is anticipating a career in rural health after graduation next spring, so when she approached Jessica Beyer, Center for Small Towns (CST) community program assistant, about working at CST this summer, this job seemed like a perfect fit. Granaas appreciated the opportunity to “see what small communities can do for themselves because it gives me a better idea of what I can do to help.”

Though CST student employees generally have a high level of job satisfaction, Granaas is particularly enthused about her work. “I didn’t expect to actually like my job this much. All of these projects have touched people in a bigger way than anyone expected.” She also says she had a great support system in Beyer and Karen Mumford, former assistant professor of environmental studies, and she “cannot say enough good things about CST.”

The [Center for Small Towns](#) is a community outreach program housed on the Morris campus that serves as a point-of-entry to the resources of the University of Minnesota. Small towns, local units of government, K-12 schools, nonprofit organizations, and other University units are able to utilize CST’s resources as they work on rural issues or make contributions to rural society. CST’s mission is to focus the University’s attention and marshal its resources toward assisting Minnesota’s small towns with locally identified issues while creating applied learning opportunities for faculty and students.

Through personal and academic discovery, the University of Minnesota, Morris provides opportunities for students to grow

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