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Building Bridges Rhode Island

Refugees and immigrants are an integral part of communities. According to the American Immigration Council, 13.5% of Rhode Island's population is foreign-born. The goal of the Building Bridges Rhode Island project is to foster inclusiveness by engaging RWU students in cross-cultural interactions with refugees to break down barriers, foster empathy, enhance intercultural communication and build peaceful host communities. Key components of Global Citizenship Education and the United Nations 17 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) frameworks were integrated into project activities to foster inclusion, intercultural communication and empathy through cross-cultural interactions. Professor Lynch and RWU students organized the following community events as part of the Building Bridges Rhode Island project:

International Women's Day Celebration | Global Exchange with *Asylum Access Thailand*

On March 3, 2020, 6 RWU students in Prof. Lynch's Nonprofit Management course had the opportunity to engage across borders with Naiyana Thanawattho, Executive Director of *Asylum Access Thailand*, an international non-governmental organization that provides legal counsel and representation to refugees seeking asylum in Bangkok, Thailand. Ms. Thanawattho presented to students live via Skype to help students understand the situation for female refugees in Thailand in recognition of International Women's Day.

Support from the Community Development Education Mini Grant funds were used to compensate Ms. Thanawattho for serving as a guest speaker.

Think Globally, Talk Locally: Building Community Through Dialogue | Virtual Dialogue Event

We collaborated with *Essential Partners (EP)* to design and facilitate a virtual dialogue on May 22, 2020 to bring together students across Rhode Island from both the refugee and host communities. EP works collaboratively to generate tailored dialogue models, facilitating dialogue around particularly tough topics to help organizations and communities build trust. Applying EP's reflective structured dialogue approach, students were invited to speak and listen to peers about what it means to be a part of a community. The purpose of the dialogue was to inspire students to think globally and talk locally, build relationships through talking about differences and to reflect on the strengths that they bring to the work of building community across differences. 9 participants in the dialogue included students from RWU, Juanita Sanchez High School, Burrillville High School and students from the refugee community.

Support from the Community Development Education Mini Grant funds were used to compensate Essential Partners to help map, design, and facilitate the dialogue.

THINK GLOBALLY: TALK LOCALLY

*Building Community Through
Dialogue*

**FRIDAY, MAY 22, 2020
1 P.M. - 3 P.M.
ZOOM SESSION**

You are invited to engage with students across Rhode Island to speak and listen to peers about what it means to be a part of a community. Come prepared to share what community means to you!

Register Online
Please reply by Friday, May 15th.
Space is limited!

Think Globally: Talk Locally is coordinated by Building Bridges Rhode Island and Essential Partners. Building Bridges Rhode Island is made possible by a USDA/NIFA Higher Education Challenge Grant.

For more information, contact Mary Ellen Lynch at mlyncherwu.edu



Collaborative Logo Design



Prof. Lynch collaborated with Vraj Patel, RWU student and *Fellswood Creative* to design a Building Bridges Rhode Island logo used to promote the project on social media. The bridge is the Mount Hope Bridge that connects the RI towns of Portsmouth and Bristol and represents RWU as Bristol is the town where RWU campus is located.

Support from the Community Development Education Mini Grant funds were used to compensate *Fellswood Creative* for designing the Building Bridges Rhode Island logo.

Course Design | Summer 2020

Prof. Lynch designed two new *Thriving in a Global World* courses in summer 2020 to further the integration of Building Bridges Rhode Island into her curriculum. The courses apply global citizenship frameworks to equip learners of all ages with the skills needed to thrive in an increasingly interconnected world. One course was offered as a professional development course through the Center for Workforce and Professional Development at RWU University College. The second course was offered to high school and middle school students enrolled in a summer learning program through RWU University College.