Spring 5-1-2012

Assumption Food Pantry Website and Multimedia Content

Sophia Bernard
Syracuse University

Follow this and additional works at: https://surface.syr.edu/honors_capstone

Recommended Citation
https://surface.syr.edu/honors_capstone/110

This Honors Capstone Project is brought to you for free and open access by the Syracuse University Honors Program Capstone Projects at SURFACE. It has been accepted for inclusion in Syracuse University Honors Program Capstone Projects by an authorized administrator of SURFACE. For more information, please contact surface@syr.edu.
Assumption Food Pantry
Website and Multimedia Content

A Capstone Project Submitted in Partial Fulfillment of the
Requirements of the Renée Crown University Honors Program at
Syracuse University

Sophia Bernard (in partnership with Jessica Smith)
Candidate for B.S. Degree
and Renée Crown University Honors
May 2012

Honors Capstone Project in Television, Radio, and Film

Capstone Project Advisor: _________________
Larry Elin

Honors Director: _________________
Stephen Kuusisto

Honors Director: _________________
Stephen Kuusisto

Date: April 25th, 2012
Abstract

Jessica and I worked in tandem throughout all stages of this project endeavor. Due to the scope and time intensive nature of the project and the breakdown of requirements, we felt that this partnership was necessary to complete the Capstone. One of the most fascinating aspects of modern times, in our opinion, is the limitless ways in which mankind can use multimedia storytelling and digital media to directly attack specific needs in society. We felt that as students with comprehensive knowledge in these areas of study, we could use our skills to try to create change and target hunger in Central New York.

Through previously established relations with the Assumption Food Pantry, we vowed to help them with their efforts by spreading the word about their pantry and sandwich program, and to improve their online presence. Jessica, having more skills and experience in technology, bore IT related responsibilities. Namely, she was charged with creation and maintenance of a website and all systems that support the longevity of these systems, including, but not limited to, database creation and management and programming upkeep.

I was responsible for the video content creation. These video packages were completed in the form of Public Service Announcements (PSAs) for our website, and a series of video diaries of a few volunteers who donate their time and effort to the pantry. The PSAs are intended to highlight all of the good work that is going on at Assumption, with the main focus being on the food pantry, and then the “Diary of a Volunteer” series features short testimonials from four volunteers (one of whom referred to herself as the “hostess” of the pantry.) The goal of these videos is to encourage donations in the form of time, money, or food.

We believe that an online website/forum is the best way explain our purpose and goals and to provide instructions for how to sign up and get involved, in addition to presenting profiles on the individuals who already help out there. The videos were meant to humanize the pantry and allow viewers to relate to the material they were looking at, with the hope that they would be encouraged to get involved if they were inspired by the stories and footage they saw.

After many hours spent over at Assumption, I collected a ton of footage that I was confident would accurately depict what was going on at the pantry, as well as the sandwich program that they have. I used my own equipment on every shoot, specifically a Canon EOS Rebel t3i DSLR camera, and edited the footage on my own. I created a Youtube channel for the Assumption Food Pantry and uploaded the six videos that are viewable here:

www.youtube.com/user/AssumptionFoodPantry/videos

We hope that our combined efforts will lead to an increased presence at the pantry itself in the form of volunteers, and an increased amount of donations. The work we’ve created is accessible to anyone, and we hope it can gain as much exposure as possible. The project was both rewarding and challenging, and we both grew tremendously as a result.
Table of Contents

Abstract…………………………………………………………………………………. i

Reflective Essay……………………………………………………………………… 1

Summary of Capstone Project……………………………………………………… 16
Reflective Essay

Upon completing my Honors Capstone project, I feel that I have accomplished a long-held goal of mine: to make a difference, however small, in the world around me. Though it may be some people’s dream to change the world, I just hope I can make a change in my immediate surroundings. For me, that’s a good starting place. I grew up in New York City, which we all know has a tremendous homeless population. I see the poor and hungry each and every day when I go home. I know deep down that there’s no way for me to help them all, which is at times very discouraging. Living on the same block as a grocery store, I’ve been accustomed to many homeless people who sort cans and bottles outside the entrance and ask for money on the corner. It breaks my heart to pass by the same individuals day in and day out, and to feel utterly helpless. Giving out a dollar on a daily basis wouldn’t even be close to being enough.

I carried this guilt with me to Syracuse University, where I saw many people who were in a similar state to the people I’d seen at home. I knew from the start that I wanted my Capstone project to help those who have difficulty helping themselves. I couldn’t bear to enter a new community that has the same exact problems that mirror the ones I see in NYC. Jessica Smith, a fellow senior TRF student who also has a dual major in the iSchool, and I set out to spread awareness and solicit volunteers to aid people who were right outside our University.
I hope that this work will inspire others, namely my peers, to get involved and reach out to the greater community around us. Since the videos I created are hosted on the web, they will be available to anyone with an internet connection and a willingness to watch. The ease at which they will be able to be “shared” is one of the reasons we chose to channel our efforts into a multimedia campaign. Our ultimate goal is to increase the number of volunteers and donations at the food pantry: donations are what the “clients” (those who go to the pantry for meals) literally live on. Without them, many would be lost, as Ruth Paul (one of the volunteers I interviewed) so harrowingly explains. The best chance we have to spread awareness is to increase exposure to the website and videos we’re made and hope that change will spring from it.

The intended audience is really for everyone and anyone, which challenged me to make my work very accessible and flexible to the viewer. Ideally, I’d like these videos to have a direct impact on a younger audience so that they can learn and participate, but I hope they are also beneficial, rewarding, and helpful to anyone at any age. As Jim Conway said, he found himself with a ton of time on his hands after retiring and now finds that he has a renewed purpose in the workforce as a volunteer. Clearly anyone can help make a difference, no matter how young or old.

You will never see me leave leftover food on my plate. Whether at a restaurant or eating at home, if I don’t finish a meal, I make sure to hang on to the leftovers and save the food for a later meal. I’ve come to realize the importance that just a single meal has to so many people, and oftentimes those who come to
the pantry will only eat that one meal in the day. I’m deeply disturbed by the amount of waste in our community, and it is this feeling that motivated Jess and I to take action against hunger in the first place.

At the onset of the partnership between Jess and I, we were determined to create a program that would eliminate waste from restaurants in the Syracuse area. Our hope was to gather volunteers and create a campaign that would target the amount of food that is thrown out at the end of a workday at a typical restaurant. The goal was to put together a taskforce who would drive to a select few participating establishments and take the leftovers of the day and store them in a sanitary way, and then deliver these excess goods to shelters and food pantries around the area.

We encountered a few problems with this initial plan. For one thing, we realized we would be relying heavily on the participation of others, namely these volunteers and restaurants. If people were unable to help on certain days, or cancelled last minute, the whole operation would fall through. Similarly, if any of the restaurants pulled out of the program, we would be at a major disadvantage. Then there were the concerns of whether or not we would pass FDA certifications and standards. After much thought and deliberation, we decided we would have to scale down our efforts to a more controlled environment where we would just have to rely on ourselves (and each other) to make a difference.

Our revamped idea consisted of helping the Samaritan Center with rebranding their website and hosting multimedia content on this site that would bring attention to their efforts and to the stories of those who work and visit there.
This seemed to be moving in the right direction, until they told us that they had committed to another student group who was going to help them do the same exact thing. This completely blindsided Jess and I, since we were already working on logo design and a blueprint for their new site, and we had to rethink our plan yet again. Just when we thought we had run out of steam and resources, I contacted the Assumption Church after doing some research on local pantries and talked to Kim Street, who was thrilled about the idea. The next day we were sitting in the back office at Assumption, drawing up a new plan of action with Kim and Brother Nick.

The initial thought was that we would create a brand new website for them that would focus on an exciting merger that Assumption was in the early stages of planning. Their idea was to combine the efforts of several food pantries in the area around North Salina Street, with the logic that multiple heads were better than one. When we first met with Kim and Br. Nick it was during the very same week that they were going to finalize the merger. Together, we came up with the perfect name for this new mega-pantry: Saint Anthony’s Kitchen. Saint Anthony is the patron saint of Lost and Found, so it seemed fitting.

After a couple of weeks developing ideas in the initial planning stages, we were told that the merger was a no-go. This changed our project once again. The main problem was that Assumption Church already had a website, so without a new entity (the merger) we felt that we were stuck; that there may not be anything new we could create for them. Brother Nick then came to the rescue after talking to the administrative forces above them. We arrived at our final game plan: we
would create a site solely dedicated to the food pantry at Assumption since there was not nearly enough content or traffic generated to this part of their existing site that would adequately inform people about their pantry efforts.

Our final project is an accumulation of all of the previous thoughts and blueprints we had from the start, channeled into a single online presence. My specific portion, the video content, is a product of many hours spent down at Assumption embedding myself into the whole production. I visited mostly on Mondays, when the greatest number of clients would show up for meals and food that they hoped would last them throughout the rest of the week. I filmed in the morning, for the pantry hours, and also in the late afternoon for the sandwich program.

Depending on the time of day, I would encounter different volunteers and clients, which made it a new and rich experience each time. I tried to show the same volunteers and clients over and over again in my videos so that the viewer got a taste of how much time these people spend at the pantry. This is represented by the changes in their clothes and appearance, to signify that they are there on multiple days. I was also able to get a different person’s story on each day that I went which added to the personalization of the work that was going on there.

Before I started forming the videos and PSAs into what they look like now, I met with Professor Chock at Newhouse who teaches graduate courses in theory and methods and undergraduate courses in society and communication as well. She has a background in the study of effective PSAs, utilizing psychological
concepts to explain why some work and some don’t. Since I have a minor in psychology, I was very fascinated by the topics Professor Chock shed light on. I took her advice to heart when I created the “Diary of a Volunteer” series as well as my two shorter PSAs. Her main suggestion was to make the message “help them so they can help themselves”, which translates to a hand up instead of a hand out. I kept this in mind, making sure not to make any of the clients appear to be too destitute and desperate. I wanted to show a wide variety of people coming through the pantry doors to show that these individuals are just like us; but many have fallen on hard times and bad luck.

The two main types of people I’m targeting in my videos are those who have time (volunteers) and those who have an excess of goods, either in the form of money or food (donations). One technique to get viewers to be motivated to help is the Foot-in-the-Door approach. This essentially means that if you can get someone to commit to doing one basic thing, then it will hopefully lead to bigger commitments down the line. For example, if someone were to pledge to donate just one dollar, the idea is that they will be more likely to donate again in the future and even increase their contribution.

Another technique is to demonstrate social modeling. The principle behind this is that if you show a certain behavior, others will imitate it if they can relate to it. This is also why I showed a variety of different types of people in the pieces I made, and had some of the volunteers tell personal stories and anecdotes. The hope is that someone will find something in common with any of the people they
see; whether they agree with a point that someone made, or shared a similar experience, or just feel moved by their testimonial.

The most important technique I wanted to drive home in my videos was to humanize and personalize the people you see. This is largely why I did not simply create a series of PSAs that related to the pantry; I wanted to focus more on the actual people who work and serve there and their stories. If you keep a message too general, then viewers will have a hard time finding empathy. Even though these viewers don’t know the people I’ve represented personally, they can get a look at their personal lives and feel something for them. Just seeing a static image of someone can’t tell you as much about them than if you hear them speak and see them interact with others. I made sure to keep than humanization element present in my project in order to have the biggest emotional impact on those who would view my work.

Lastly, I wanted to show concrete action. Instead of just shots of food and shelves and people waiting in line, I wanted images of volunteers making sandwiches, handing out meal bags, cooking in the kitchen, and interacting with the clients. Afterall, we’re really just people helping other people, and that cannot be reduced to stagnant images of intimate objects sitting around. I chose to show close ups of many of my subjects to show facial expressions which can oftentimes be enough to communicate how someone feels and what they’re thinking even if you don’t hear what they have to say.

In organizing the videos, the “Diary of a Volunteer” series is meant to personalize the volunteers and gives you a human look at what goes on, by
meeting four people of varying ages and gender. The PSAs were meant to be short, packing a lot of emotional charge. Ultimately, I’m contrasting a deep and in-depth look at the pantry in the form of the diaries with two short, yet powerful, overviews of the help that the pantry needs.

In terms of the content of the videos, I had a lot of footage to pick and choose from. It was difficult at times to compare two clips and decide which one made a bigger impression. I was slightly biased to it all, since I got to know many of the people whom I filmed, and sometimes the clips I got of them did not do their story or situation justice. I had to remind myself to think objectively when reviewing the footage I collected, and to base my impressions solely on the visuals I had gathered, despite the background information I had on some of the individuals. In the end, I decided that showing a lot of footage of children (who happened to be adorable) was a wise tactic to employ. They’re so innocent, and to them, going to the pantry is all they know. Since they’re being raised on meals from there, people may be more willing to contribute their time, money, or food to help ensure that they’re getting healthy starts.

Another major decision I dealt with was deciding what tone to go with when creating the videos. It was challenging to find a good balance between showing the reality of a client’s situation and making them appear to be too sad. I made sure to include plenty of smiling faces, although the general outward appearance of some of the people who came in was more disheartening. I felt that if the viewer believed that the clients were too far beyond their help, that no amount of donations could make a difference, and then I would fail my mission.
Of course, that belief is not true, but I had to be extra careful to avoid accidentally portraying that misconception. I wanted to find the best way to play on people’s emotions without making the subject appear to be too pitiful. I wanted it to be clear that someone could absolutely make a difference, that although these people may be have-nots, with you help that can have.

I didn’t have too many choices when it came to creating my “Diary” pieces as there were several volunteers whom I could not coax into sitting in front of my camera. Thankfully, I met Ruth on one of my last visits to the pantry, and found what I think is an extremely compelling tale. She was quite a character to talk to and would frequently interrupt the interview to say hi and chat up the clients who walked in. Everyone knew Ruth. She’s the self-proclaimed “hostess” of the pantry, which I thought was a fantastic title for her. Though she did not have any hands-on involvement with the food or preparing meals, she was largely there for moral support and boosting throughout the day. As she says, no matter where you’re from or what language you speak, you know what a smile is, and that’s what Ruth’s there for. Off-camera, she explained to me that she had recently lost her mother to cancer and had been coming to the pantry more and more to surround herself with a supportive community who cared about her. Ruth is the perfect example of how the pantry provides so much more than just a meal for the people who come inside.

Kim Street was another fantastic person to talk to, since she had been at the pantry the longest and was able to articulate how it made a difference in her life. She explains how she even gets to improve her cooking skills day in and day
out, which is just one of the perks of volunteering there. Kim is really the mother of the pantry, her voice is so soothing and her demeanor so welcoming. I was delighted to get to know her better and better each time I visited the pantry, and watching her interact with the clients was very inspiring. It also became clear that Brother Nick would be lost without her, as she goes above and beyond her “volunteer” status and helps with administrative tasks and even trips to gather more supplies for the kitchen and pantry.

I was thrilled to meet Luke Morgan as well. He’s twenty-three years old, just one year older than myself so I found him very easy to relate to. Luke represented the demographic that I really wanted to target when making these videos, and he said it himself that he wished more young people would get involved. It was very apparent to me that volunteering at Assumption had made a huge difference in his life, and he had been there for the least amount of time out of everyone else. I was so impressed by his level of maturity and how dedicated he is to the pantry, and I think he delivers a great message to people my age.

Jim Conway was the last volunteer I interviewed, and he added a unique perspective on what it’s like to volunteer even after his career is over. He’s retired, and has found much joy in spending some of his free time at Assumption. It’s given him a new purpose in society, outside of the general workforce. Hopefully his story will inspire people of his age group and employment status to get involved.

The artistic approach I had in creating my material was largely an accumulation of the techniques and practices I’ve learned in my many Television,
Radio, and Film classes here at Syracuse University. Timing worked out perfectly in my classes, as I took Light and Lens in the fall of 2011 and got my first look at what proper lighting is and how to achieve it. I started to look through my camera lens in a completely different way, not to mention I finally learned what it meant to white balance correctly and add depth to an image. In addition to taking this very technical course, I am currently enrolled in TV Production, a class that takes up approximately twenty hours a week of my time. Though the time commitment is huge, I love every second of it, and have learned so much from my peers who have superior knowledge of how to use a camera to its fullest potential.

I was able to convince my parents to give me an early graduation present in part because it would be vital to the completion of this project. Soon enough, I held my very own DSLR (digital single-lens reflex camera) in my hands. Once Phase: Acquire Camera was complete, the next step was to learn how to use it. I was fortunate to have friends who had been using this kind of camera for years and they took the time to show me how to format the right settings depending on the environment I was in. Eventually, I was able to figure out the settings on my own, and played around with them when I went down to Assumption. One major advantage of a DSLR camera is its small size in comparison to the larger and heavier camera models they have on reserve at the cage at Newhouse. I was able to be slightly more inconspicuous at the pantry and less intimidating. On top of that, I could swap out lenses that completely altered how my footage came out so I could find the right look for my videos.
I experimented with tight close-ups of clients and volunteers (using a zoom lens) since those came off as more intimate and evoked more compassion from the viewer. Additionally, I tinkered with depth of field (the distance between the nearest and farthest objects in a scene) and adjusted which object would be in focus in my frame. This resulted in interesting shots where I could rack-focus between objects in the background and then make objects in the foreground slowly come into focus; sharpening images that the viewer may not have noticed before. This was an effective way of telling more than one story in any given shot by alternating between what I wanted to viewer to pay attention to.

Behind the artistic choices I made lay a lot of inspiration that got me headed towards the direction of this project in the first place. I spent the past two summers interning at a couple of different news shows: Dateline NBC and ABC Nightline News. Though my greater interests are in the field of creative television and film, the experiences I had at these internships were truly invaluable. At Dateline, I spent the entirety of my summer working on a special series called “America Now” which focuses on the lives of Americans who are struggling, but who try to help each other despite their tough circumstances. The particular hour-long episode I was assigned to was “America Now: Friends and Neighbors” which followed one woman’s campaign in Ohio to fight hunger and featured several struggling families.

All summer long, I logged and transcribed footage of these families who were trying to make ends meet and to feed their children. It was some of the saddest material I have ever seen, and knowing that it was raw and unedited only added to the upsetting reality of the stories. Part of my responsibility was to also
handle callers who contacted Dateline after watching the special, looking to make donations to the featured families and community. I was so touched by each and every one of the strangers who called in, and truly realized the impact that videos can have on the community at large. It was extra touching that a few months after my internship ended, the episode won an Emmy for Outstanding Continuing Coverage of a Breaking News Story in a News Magazine. It was thrilling to know that I was a part of something that had achieved national recognition and praise.

The following summer, at Nightline, I was exposed to more short-form versions of the type of work I did at Dateline. Nightline, for one thing, is only thirty minutes long and squeezes in three packages in one episode that vary their topic. Each package was only about six minutes long, so the producers had a very different style and approach to putting together their stories, as opposed to an hour-long episode of Dateline that is dedicated to one single story or topic. On top of that, the show is filmed live Monday-Friday, so every day meant a new deadline.

I took the subject matter of Dateline (people helping others who are in need) and combined it with the production approach of Nightline (short-form videos with a tight deadline) and my capstone project is the result. I’m happy that I was able to make use of the two internships that lead up to my senior year and that I could harness the skills I gained at each of them. Additionally, at both internships I usually worked in a pair with another intern to tackle the hoards of tapes that we were meant to log and transcribe. When we reached the end of the tapes, we submitted our comments to the producers on what shots we thought were the best, and even a rough outline of the order in which we thought the
footage should go in. Being used to this partner-environment, it felt very natural to have Jess working on this project with me.

Jess and I decided to work together at the start of junior year when we discovered that we shared a passion for making a difference in the local community by using our skills and backgrounds in multimedia (Newhouse) and web design (iSchool). I have a minor in the iSchool, so I have taken some classes that have overlapped with Jess. As I am more comfortable in the production side of multimedia content, my focus in our capstone project resided primarily with filming and editing the videos that we wanted to put up on the site. She is a far more talented web designer than I am, so her speciality was the creation of the site itself, while I helped with design principles and the logo. It was helpful to have some knowledge in the area that the other person was focusing in so that we could provide helpful feedback to each other. It really was the perfect match for what we wanted to get accomplished.

I’m very used to filming and editing on a regular basis, partly due to the job that I hold at the communications department of ESF. There, I assist the media relations coordinator with the creation of multimedia content for ESF’s website. On a weekly basis, I’m editing video on Final Cut Pro for about six hours. Outside of the office I cover student events and contribute my own footage that I also edit. At Syracuse University, I’m the multimedia editor of JERK magazine which means that I’m in charge of all of the video content uploaded to the JERK’s website. I have a staff of eight other students and we usually make all our videos together, which has also made me well suited for group work.
It’s difficult to find the words to express how much I’ve taken away from the experience of working on and completing my Honors Capstone project. I feel that for the first time in my life, I have been able to reach out to others in a way that is mutually beneficial: I’ve helped bring awareness to issues that these individuals face on a daily basis, and I’ve grown so much as an aspiring videographer as well. Being able to put into practice all of the skills that I’ve learned over the past four years here, including the internships I’ve held, is extremely rewarding and illustrates to me that I’ve gotten such an amazing education here. There were times when I thought I just wouldn’t be able to keep up with honors on top of everything else I had going on in my life, but I feel so accomplished for having followed through with what I set out to undertake my freshman year. Being able to help people in the process has made it priceless.
Summary of Capstone Project

Since attending Syracuse University, the concept of “Scholarship in Action” has been engrained into our minds and our hearts since we embarked on our education four years ago. We have benefitted from the resources on the Hill, and seen the striking poverty that infests the city below it. When the opportunity to pursue our senior Honors Capstone project arose, the obvious option to us was to harness the abilities we have acquired here as students of both Newhouse and the iSchool and use them to better the human condition here, or at least at one small aspect of life in the city of Syracuse. It only seemed right that our efforts go towards something productive; both of us cringed at the idea of putting all of our effort and knowledge forth to something that would sit on a bookshelf or on a flash drive for years, only to benefit the readers themselves.

Enter Assumption Food Pantry. A pantry in northern Syracuse that struggles to keep up with a seemingly ever-expanding need and dwindling resources of both manpower and food, they seemed like the worthiest of candidates for our efforts. After establishing a relationship with them, we partnered with them in our pursuit of our capstone project. To hit on our IT and Television, Radio and Film skills, we opted to create a full digital media immersion and a variety of multimedia content.

Our intent was to create a dynamic and aesthetically appealing website that would help the pantry gain grants by becoming more visible and more vocal. We made a forum that would supply online resources for volunteers in terms of
calendars of dates needed and volunteer sign-up forms. We posted information for those clients of the food pantry who had access, making it possible for them to harness the public forum of the web in order to be informed about serving times and eligibility for some of the other services. On top of that, we provided an in-depth look into the pantry by creating videos and testimonials that will inform the world of what it’s like to lead a life subsidized by the offerings of a food pantry. We also created a social media immersion proposal to suggest ways that the food pantry team can better harness social media to reach out to grant-issuers, volunteers, clients, and donors alike. This was to be a true digital and social media immersion.

One of the more difficult aspects we encountered was to create the website in the Wordpress atmosphere so that it would be easily accessible and updated by the staff at the food pantry, who have rather limited knowledge in technology. The ultimate goal was to hand off a product to them that they could easily maintain that would truly enhance their abilities to function at a higher level not just as a food pantry, but as an organization. To aid in the transition of the site, we created a comprehensive guide that the staff of Assumption Food Pantry can keep on hand to use as a reference guide when updating the site or pulling forms. It highlights the basic functionality of a Wordpress site, and goes on to detail how they can make every change they could possibly need to make during the course of their maintenance of the site. On a similar note, we also created in-depth suggestions and templates for their social media endeavors. By creating Youtube, Twitter, and Facebook accounts for the pantry, we gave them the keys to public
outreach. By handing them the comprehensive social media proposal plan, we gave them the ability to turn those keys and leverage social media to fulfill their needs.

In addition to this broad, revamped online presence, we wanted to create original content that would be hosted on the site that would give viewers a clear insight into what working at the pantry is really like. We created two short Public Service Announcements that were meant to highlight the key aspects of life at the pantry, including footage of both the clients and volunteers alike. The nature of a PSA is extremely short-form, just thirty seconds in length, and so we also decided to get a more personal look at the individuals themselves who lend their time and skills to the pantry.

A series of video diaries was the result. The series features one of the key players of the pantry, Kim Street, who works right alongside Brother Nick in the daily operations and programs. Kim and Br. Nick were our two contacts at Assumption, and without their cooperation and enthusiasm this entire project would never have seen the light of day. Kim shared how she first got involved with the pantry and sandwich program, and the reasons why she continues to come back day after day, four years running.

Jim Conway was another dedicated volunteer whom we profiled. He represents volunteers who are retired and who have found themselves with extra time on their hands, and who are looking to make a difference and continue to contribute to society even after their long term careers have ended. Jim reveals
how he was inspired by his own family to get involved since his son and granddaughter would occasionally donate food to the pantry.

In order to represent the younger age group, the group we were primarily focused on, we interviewed Luke Morgan who came to Assumption right out of college. He is twenty-three years old and understood our generation’s tendency to be relatively apathetic when it comes to volunteering, as people our age are mostly focused on their long-term career goals and their next steps in life after graduating. It was so refreshing to meet someone who put his own professional goals on hold in order to do something for the greater good. He shows up Monday through Friday, helping out at the sandwich counter for at least an hour a day. He can also be found in the kitchen, helping one of the cooks prepare that day’s meal or even organizing the stock room. He is the face that we hope viewers our age will relate to and find inspiration from.

Ruth Paul is the self-proclaimed “hostess” of the pantry and she is more concerned with the mental well-being of the clients than just their physical state. She claims that no matter where you are from, you will be able to understand what a smile is, and I think that is such a fundamental human need. The clients who come to the pantry have fallen on hard times, and to have someone there who gets to know each and every one of them on a personal level is such a blessing. Ruth finds solace in the pantry as well, as she considers it to be the meeting ground of her own community. We hope that Ruth will drive home the point that all of this comes down to people helping each other in any way that they can, and even a simple smile can be the greatest donation of them all.
We hope that our project will bring much needed attention and aid to a fantastic operation in the Syracuse area. Our biggest goal is just to make a difference in these people’s lives, and by getting their stories out there and representing them in a medium that is so accessible, we hope that we can provide the helping hand that they need. Our project has allowed us to grow both as students and as people, and we hope that it will inspire future students to use their Capstones to make change in the world.