AN ANALYSIS OF THE FUNDING ENVIRONMENT FOR TECHNOLOGY ASSISTED SOCIAL NETWORKING AND ONLINE EMOTIONAL SUPPORT FOR YOUNG ADULTS WITH SPINA BIFIDA

by

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ABSTRACT

AN ANALYSIS OF THE FUNDING ENVIRONMENT FOR
ONLINE SOCIAL NETWORKING AND EMOTIONAL
SUPPORT FOR YOUNG ADULTS
WITH SPINA BIFIDA

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This project analyzed the funding environment for online social and emotional support for young adults with Spina bifida. It answered the research question: how to develop a fundable program through assessing the following: 1) identifying key components that make up a fundable program, 2) the proposal process and 3) how foundations make decisions. The methodology included a literature and electronic search of key components to include when developing a fundable proposal, literature search to explore the possible funding environments for human services programs and an application of the components to funding environment using condition. Literature identified five key components making up a fundable program: statement of need, program design, evaluation plan, budget and future funding plans. Within the proposal process, results found six major steps to take: identify funding sources, review successful applicants, nurture foundation relationship, know the audience, simplify program and continue in the faith. Finally, literature found six categories funders address when making decisions: literature review, strength of design, proposal presentation, budget, personnel and benefits to society.

Electronic search of possible funders resulted in 10 highly probable foundations to consider and three foundations to develop applications for. Final three foundations included: Community Foundation of North Texas, The Reese-Jones Foundation and The Ethel-Louise Armstrong Foundation. Grant applications were developed for each foundation and are found in appendices.

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CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

Funding programs can be a tedious and daunting task for any individual. The process takes time and perseverance. Many times program developers feel alone in their dream, and it is the mission of the grant proposal to engage the funder in the same passion felt for the target population. Without program funding, human services as a whole would not work. It is within the human services umbrella we find programs for diverse populations with diverse needs, which services the American people well. Programs' being funded, changes the course of many lives, and is a vital piece to the overall puzzle of servicing society.

1.1 Definitions

- Online Support Group – A support group accessed solely through an Internet source, where one is able to seek membership to find a sense of community and understanding.
- Proposal – A written document prepared to apply for funding (Coley & Scheinberg, 2008).
- Request for Proposal – An application packet containing full instructions and all forms needed to submit the proposal (Coley & Scheinberg, 2008).
- Spina bifida - The National Institute of Neurological Disorders and Stroke (2007) defines Spina bifida as: "a type of neural tube defect, which is a problem with the spinal cord or its coverings. It happens if the fetal spinal column doesn't close completely during the first month of pregnancy" (¶. 1). There are many different types and levels of Spina bifida, but the typical repercussions of the disability include: some paralysis of the legs, learning difficulties, urinary and bowel problems and hydrocephalus (build up of spinal fluid on the brain) (National Institute of Neurological Disorders and Stroke, 2007).

1.2 Nature of Problem

1.2.1 Condition Used to Explore the Question: Social Isolation of Persons with Spina bifida

Relationships are vital to a healthy lifestyle. They are developed in various outlets of society such as, attending school, work, community groups, etc. Not all individuals, however, are allotted these opportunities. The National Spina bifida Association of America conducted studies in the year of 2001 to conclude how many individuals in the United States have Spina bifida; their results found:

> There are approximately 70,000 people in the United States living with Spina bifida… Sixty million women are at risk of having a child born with Spina bifida and each year approximately 4,000 pregnancies in this country are affected by Spina bifida, resulting in 2,500 births (SBAA, 2001, para. 1&2).

This is a significant number for social work practitioners to be aware of. The number of babies born with Spina bifida is growing every year, and this population needs encouragement and empowerment as they grow into young adulthood.

Living with a physical disability can often result in living in isolation; separated from society due to physical challenges or complications. After assessing various local resources, and interviewing experts in the field, results found there is a lack of community, relational building, and friendships within this population due to external factors such as transportation issues, inability to work or go to school, and medical challenges that often isolate individuals with disabilities.

1.2.2 Resulting Problem from the Condition

The findings lead to the resulting problem: a lack of social and emotional support among young adults living with Spina bifida. This analysis will provide a historical context of the situation, information on local resources currently offered, and expert statements on the condition.

1.2.3 History of Condition

There are few services offered for this population when working toward meeting their social and emotional needs, within the Dallas/Fort Worth, Texas area. Texas Scottish Rite

Hospital for Children (TSRHC) is a non-profit pediatric hospital. They treat children born with orthopedic disabilities who reside in Texas. Services are primarily medical, and children are discharged at the age of 18 (Texas Scottish Rite Hospital for Children, 2008).

Currently, The Spina Bifida Association of North Texas (SBANT) provides *some* social support to young adults with Spina bifida. SBANT offers an Adult Retreat every spring, which provides educational lectures and fun camp activities throughout the weekend (SBANT, 2008). The adult group also comes together a few times a year to do other activities (J. Cafeiro, personal correspondence, February 4, 2008). Joanne Cafeiro, RN, (SBANT Committee Member) supports the need for a support group for people with Spina bifida. After being asked if she felt there was a need for a Spina Bifida support group, Joanne stated:

> "I do feel there is a need. As children, this group is cocooned in the pediatric care system and so are their parents. In many ways they are out of the loop as far as what their able bodied peers are doing and thinking. This serves to isolate them even more than their disability does. A "catch up" course is sorely needed so they can fit in as adults even if they didn't as teens. Behaviors that are marginally acceptable as children and teens are not acceptable in the adult world. Taking responsibility helps with jobs and relationships. Learning to express yourself properly opens up new worlds and discussions on relationships of all types builds confidence and avoids disasters all too common to those who didn't learn this as children and teens" (J. Cafeiro, personal correspondence, February 4, 2008).

Cafeiro's comments indicate her observations when working personally with these young people for years: this population is not "socially apt" to be a part of the community at large, and may be able to open up more freely through a support group where commonalities are found and barriers are diminished.

Joni and Friends Ministry located in Dallas provides some support throughout the year

including “Special Delivery,” and “Family Retreat” (Joni and Friends, 2008). The Special Delivery program includes volunteers through Joni and Friends Ministry delivering packages to individuals with disabilities who may be in the hospital, or shut in their home for various reasons (Joni and Friends, 2008). Family Retreat occurs once a year within the span of two weeks; families, who have an individual with a disability within their family, attend a summer camp-like atmosphere for one week (Joni and Friends, 2008). Many activities take place for everyone in the family to have a good experience, and there are volunteers to assist the parents of severely disabled children (Joni and Friends, 2008).

Ellen Dibler, a longstanding member of SBANT, current member of the SBANT board, and who also served on the Spina Bifida Association National Board, attempted implementing an emotional support group in the year 2000 (E. Dibler, personal correspondence, February 5, 2008). Due to the lack of enthusiasm and involvement from participants, Ellen quickly moved her support to Joni and Friends Ministry, where she was able to offer emotional support to those who experienced the same disability as she, Spina bifida (E. Dibler, personal correspondence, February 5, 2008). No other support groups have been implemented since that time, but all leaders of the SBANT agree it is a much-needed program, especially for the young adult group.

1.2.4 Proposed Solution to Condition

In response to this issue, an online emotional and social support program has been developed to service young adults with Spina bifida. The mission of *Friends Connect* is to provide free social and emotional support for young adults (ages 18 to 25 years) living with Spina bifida through the functions of an online support group and offer quarterly social and informational events throughout the program year, whom reside in the Dallas/Fort Worth, Texas area.

Friends Connect will provide four core services. Within the homepage, there will be various informational pages and links for members to navigate, including topics of different physical, cognitive or emotional issues concerning this specific disability. Information will be gathered from various medical resources and experts in the field of Spina bifida.

The main service offered through *Friends Connect* will be the weekly discussion forums. The forums will be facilitated by a Licensed Professional Counselor (LPC) or Licensed Clinical Social Worker (LCSW), and discuss various issues of interest among members. Members will be encouraged to primarily support and lean on one another; however, the Facilitator will be available to initiate topics of discussion, traffic and control any inappropriate statements that may occur.

Blog entries will be available daily within *Friends Connect*. Each member will have the opportunity to write their own personal blog as often as they desire. Blog entries will be the outlet for members to connect on a more ongoing basis.

Four different events will take place quarterly throughout each program year. Two of the events will be a social gathering (i.e. holiday party) and the other two will be an informational lecture (RE: Spina bifida) conducted by an expert in the field.

Within the four services offered through *Friends Connect*, it is the ultimate hope this program will enhance the lives of this target population. The goals of this program include: offering a strong sense of community and understanding within these young adults, to be a source of inspiration to be comfortable in their own skin and educate these young adults on self-advocacy and becoming educators to a society that is too often ignorant of their specific needs.

1.2.4.1 Justification of Solution

"Of Americans who use the Internet, 28% participate in online support groups related to medical conditions and personal problems" (Beaudoin & Chen-Chao, 2007). Finn (1999) finds when assessing the benefits of technology to the disability population that: "Online groups…are potential resources to this large population because they combine the advantages of self-help and the accessibility of computer networks" (p.220).

Experts have found through the use of technology, individuals with disabilities benefit a great deal. When asked if online counseling for individuals with disabilities is something he does often, E. Geraty replies: "Yes I have, sometimes disabled clients find this type of counseling to be

even more beneficial... I have worked with clients who are terminally ill and bedridden and other types of disabilities which make it hard for them to attend onsite sessions" (E. Geraty, personal correspondence, March 25, 2008). In Schoech's scenario of a computer broadening the life of a young woman with cerebral palsy, we see that it provided, "a way to communicate with the outside world" and expert social work practitioners are of the opinion of technology benefiting those with disabilities (1999, p.13).

Based on these findings, justification for this decision lies in the many needs it would meet of this population, and serve the ultimate purpose of providing emotional and social support. This program would entail many opportunities within one entity, utilizing an Internet homepage website for offering information and relational connection opportunities.

This type of program would meet the emotional needs of young adults living with Spina bifida. It would meet these needs through developing the homepage to include individual blogs and scheduled online discussion forums. Ideally, co-members would add comments to blogs, stimulating discussion and resulting with members getting to know one another. The online discussion forums would take place weekly, around a previously mentioned topic/concern and implemented by an LPC or LCSW.

The program would also meet the social needs of the population through providing information on various online community opportunities. As Jayne Cravens notes, there are many online volunteer opportunities available to individuals internationally (J. Cravens, personal correspondence, February 26, 2008). The homepage website could provide a link directly to websites that promote and provide these opportunities. Entities that provide online job opportunities could also be provided on the homepage website as well.

Finally, the informational articles surrounding emotional and social concerns of this population, would educate all users on specific challenges this population faces. Each of these opportunities would promote sociality within this population, encouraging community involvement on whatever capacity they are able.

1.3 Purpose

The purpose of this project is to develop 1-5 completed grant applications for the described program. This will be done through assessing the funding environment by researching key components to developing a fundable program, the proposal process and how foundations make decisions. The purpose of developing grant applications for *Friends Connect* is to have prepared the applications for various disability agencies/organizations to review and consider for implementation of this program.

CHAPTER 2

LITERATURE REVIEW

This review of the literature analyzes the funding environment of online support programs through discussing different theories and their correlates to program development, identifying key components of a proposal and discussing the process of developing and submitting a proposal. The literature also reveals how foundations make decisions when reviewing grant proposals, and offers insight into developing a strong proposal, that will catch the attention of a grant review board. Finally, the literature reviews similar successful programs, and discusses various studies done on the benefits to implementing programs such as this.

2.1 Applied Theory in Funding Programs

2.1.1 Ecosystems Theoretical Perspective

In program development, the ecosystems perspective may be applied as well. Ecosystems perspective focuses on transactions between people and their environments (Robbins, Chatterjee & Canda, 2006); in this instance, the program and its environment. Germain (1978) characterized: "various levels of social systems within this theory, with the individual system located in the center and broader social systems closer to the periphery as their relationships to the individual became less direct" (as cited in Tangenburg, 2005, p.199). Within this perspective there is emphasis on mutual goodness of fit, "which enables people and their environments to reciprocally adapt to one another…because of the interdependence between them, people and their environments constantly change and shape one another" (Robbins et al., 2006, p.35).

Within the systems theory of the ecosystems perspective, the focus shifts from a deductive analysis of parts to a holistic approach, in which the whole becomes the important

focus (Schoech, 1999). All systems include inputs, processes and outputs (Schoech, 1999). Interaction takes place within these characteristics, thus consuming energy and resources, resulting in a state of decay, disorder and uncertainty known as entropy (Schoech, 1999). Systems survive by maintaining equilibrium (a steady state), and preserve this equilibrium through extracting energy and resources from their environment (Schoech, 1999).

2.1.2 Theory Applied to Friends Connect

When conceptualizing ecosystems theoretical perspective in regards to *Friends Connect,* we see the program at the center of the system, made up of the identified components, and the other outside systems interacting within the proposal process. The energy from *Friends Connect* to possible funders is reciprocated at both ends, through *Friends Connect* being a potential candidate within the foundation's ultimate mission and the possible funders awarding *Friends Connect* with the needed funding. Within the community collaborations and similar agency relationship, the energy is again reciprocated at both ends with *Friends Connect* utilizing their wisdom, expertise and clients as possible members for the program and the agencies having a new referral in *Friends Connect* for their clients. For the target population component, the energy is reciprocated and maintained because of the target population providing membership to the *Friends Connect* program, validating their success, and *Friends Connect* providing accessible emotional and social support to the target population. Finally, the population at large (meaning outside of the North Texas area) the energy of the relationship is only that of *Friends Connect* benefiting the population, by acting as an example to other agencies when providing support services, and an informational resource to all persons affected by Spina bifida.

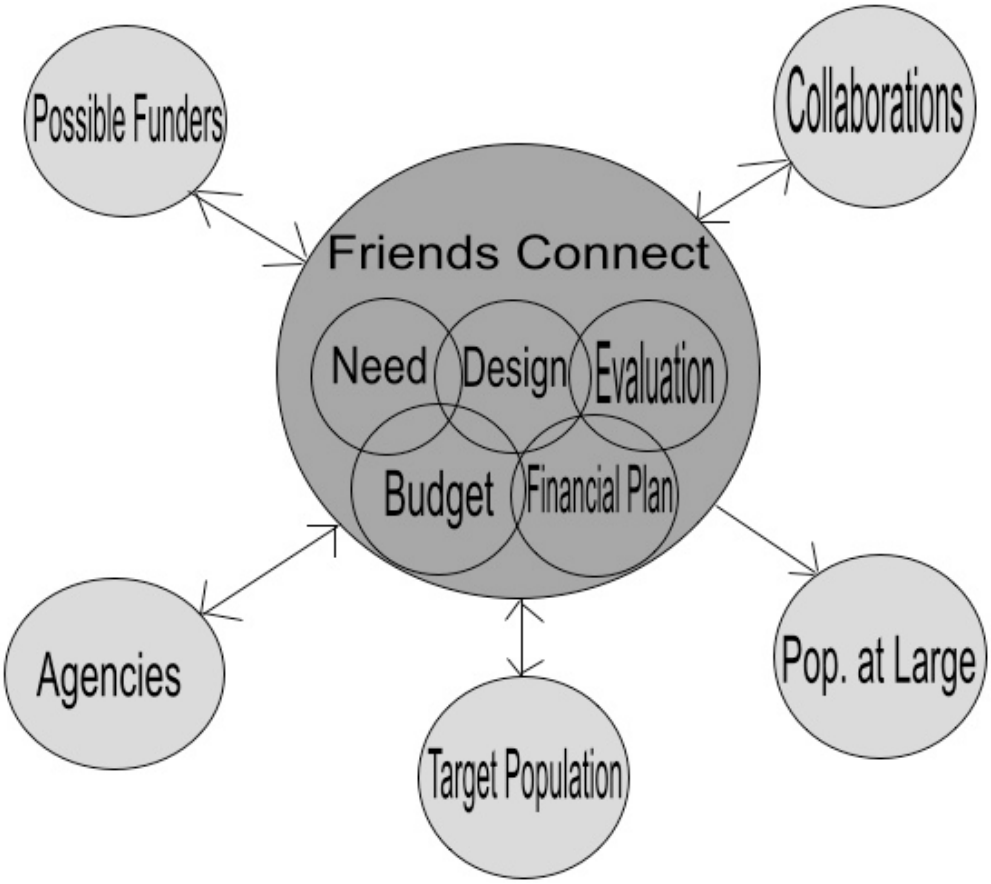

Figure 2.1 Ecomap of *Friends Connect*

2.2 How to Prepare a Successful Proposal

2.2.1 What Key Components make up a Proposal?

When identifying the key components to a fundable program, it is important review literature on developing grant proposals. Through this exercise a greater understanding of requirements in grant proposals and what most foundations look for when assessing described projects within grant proposals was obtained. The following literature review answered research sub question 1a.

2.2.1.1 Cover Letter

Coley & Scheinberg (2008) identify 10 components to be included when designing a proposal. The first is to develop a cover letter/title/abstract. It is through this introductory material

that the project and agency/organization is presented to the funder (Coley & Scheinber, 2008). Maxwell (2005) states to: “Give your program a ‘catchy’ name” (p.6). The idea is to grab the attention of the grant reviewers, in order to separate your particular project in individuality and uniqueness from the rest of the group.

2.2.1.2 Needs Statement

The needs statement is next, and vital to the proposal. “Ideas for proposals start with an awareness of the problems or needs you wish to address” (Coley & Scheinber, 2008, p.25). This section offers a description of the community to be served and the problem/need being addressed by the proposal (Coley & Scheinber, 2008). Carty & Silva (1986) describe it as, “present convincing evidence of the need for the project” (p.77). Presenting the history of the condition can be done in three ways: “a) use literature as documented evidence of project need; b) describe need based on the project setting and c) perform a project needs assessment survey” (Carty & Silva, 1986, p.77).

Coley & Scheinber (2008) also discuss the importance of understanding barriers to services currently offered to the population being addressed. There are five issues the proposer must research in regards to this: availability, accessibility, acceptability, appropriateness and adequacy (Coley & Scheinber, 2008). “Are there current services available to the population? Are the services available accessible to the client? Is the service pleasing to the client? Is this the services the right one for the client? Finally, is this service sufficient in amount to meet the community’s needs?” (Coley & Scheinber, 2008, p.28-29).

Based on the results of the needs assessment, researchers can then begin to conceptualize program ideas. Coley & Scheinber (2008) identify nine steps in this process: understand the need, brainstorm solutions, select solutions, describe expected results and benefits, thing about barriers, determine tasks to accomplish solutions, estimate resources needed, make necessary adjustments to solutions and benefits, and identify measurement of outcome.

2.2.1.2.1 Program Design

Kettner, Moroney and Martin (1999) identify the elements of a program to be inputs, throughputs, outputs and outcomes. "*Inputs* in a program include five elements representing an agency's resources and raw materials: 1) clients, 2) staff, 3) material resources, 4) facilities and 5) equipment" (Kettner et al., 1999, p.144). Throughputs are activities that will be implemented in order to carry out the program (Kettner et al., 1999). When explaining the *throughputs*, the developer provides a definition of services, the service tasks, which help to define the activities that go into the provision of the service and the method of intervention, specifying in advance the ways the service may be delivered (Kettner et al., 1999).

Outputs are the direct products of program activities (Kettner et al., 1999). Outputs identify the units of services that will be used; units of services can be measured in three ways: 1) contact units, 2) material units or 3) time units (Kettner et al., 1999). Contact units is the actual contact between a worker and a client, and is used the recording of client contact information is important. This often occurs in the information and referral services of programs. Material units of services are tangible resources provided to the client. Finally, time units are expressed in minutes, hours, days, weeks or months; actual time spent working with the client (Kettner et al., 1999).

Finally, the developer identifies the anticipated outcomes of the program. Outcomes measure, "the change in quality of life achieved by a client entry into and exit from a program" (Kettner et al., 1999, p.164). It is in hope that developers usually discuss their anticipation of bettering quality of life for the target population.

2.2.1.3 Project Description

Next, the project description should be outlined and discussed. Within this portion the applicant identifies: "the project's goals and objectives, provides details about the implementation plan, including the time line to complete project activities. This section often includes a scope of work grid of the project delivery plan" (Coley & Scheinber, 2008, p.4). Carty & Silva (1986) suggest to: "a) Present the methods section in an organized manner, b) be specific about the project and c) be realistic about what can be accomplished" (p.77). It is vital to specify attainable methods because the commitments made in the grant application must be met if the project is funded (Carty & Silva, 1986).

2.2.1.3.1 Logic Model

When trying to conceptualize the discussed elements of a program (i.e. inputs, throughputs, outputs, outcomes and impact), a logic model becomes useful (Lewis, Packard & Lewis, 2007). The logic model serves as a flowchart, which outlines specific steps to be taken in a service delivery process (Lewis et al., 2007). A logic model does not need to include the specific symbols usually used in standard flowcharting, but solely needs to make the process of service delivery clear to all who are using it (Lewis et al., 2007).

"The purpose of the logic model is to depict the sequence of events that identifies program resources, matches them to needs, activates the service process, completes the service process and measures results," (Ketner et al., 2008, p.6). The model allows the planner to see the rational flow of addressing a problem and applying a process, while maintaining focus on the purpose of the overall effort (Kettner et al., 2008).

2.2.1.4 Evaluation Plan

After having discussed objectives and their purpose, next the applicant needs to outline specific strategies to evaluate the project objectives. The purpose of the evaluation portion of the proposal is to explain measurement procedures that will be used to determine if goals and objectives have been met (Coley & Scheinber, 2008). There are several tools which can assist in

this process: a) pretests and posttests to measure target populations' needs, b) a follow-up questionnaire mailed after the deliberation of the project, c) an assessment form to evaluate the overall quality of the conference and d) frequency counts to determine the effectiveness of program efforts (Carty & Silva, 1986).

2.2.1.5 Budget Request

The budget request itemizes expenditures of the project and includes a rationale for the expenses (Coley & Scheinber, 2008). The most common format for budgeting is line item; having each expenditure itemized under appropriate categories (Coley & Scheinber, 2008). Budgeted items can include: personnel, consultants, equipment, supplies, subject costs for participants, travel expenses related to project and indirective administrative costs (Bordage & Dawson, 2003). Bordage & Dawson (2003) suggest separating the budget portion into three sections: the budget for the first year of support, the budget for the remaining period of support and budget justification. Through dividing the budget in this manner, the funding agency can readily assess budget allocations needed for the coming fiscal year (Bordage & Dawson, 2003).

The applicant may also include a personnel portion within this section; identifying, qualifications, roles and responsibilities of all project personnel should be included (Carty & Silva, 1986). Determining all expenditures within the budget, whether for operating or personnel costs, will require research on behalf of the program developer and justification of the amount requested.

Within budgeting, other issues must be addressed such as matching funds and in-kind donations (Coley & Scheinber, 2008). "When some of the costs of the project will be assumed by the agency, the agency is said to be contributing this money in-kind, and this portion of agency-borne expense is indicated in the budget" (Coley & Scheinber, 2008, pg.89). This is important to note, for funders desire to see other resources utilized in programs' efforts. In addition to noting in-kind donations, funding sources may require the agency provide matching funds of a certain percentage of the amount requested as well (Coley & Scheinber, 2008). It is vital that applicants

utilize all available resources and identify those in proposals, in order to further defend the current work being done on the presented issue.

2.2.1.6 Applicant Capability

It is wise to include applicant capability within the proposal in order to demonstrate past performance and ability to accomplish the proposed project. This portion can also include an organizational chart (Coley & Scheinber, 2008).

2.2.1.7 Future Funding Plans

Finally, it is vital to address post-funding plans within a proposal. Including this portion of the proposal indicates that there is a plan to continue the project beyond the requested funding period and that you will take action and utilize available resources to ensure the likelihood that the initiative will become an integrated part of the community (Gajda & Tulikangas, 2005). Grant reviewers often critically analyze the project's long-term benefits (Carty & Silva, 1986). "Grant proposal writers must determine the institution's commitment to the project and describe the project's intended results or activities once funding is exhausted" (Cary & Silva, 1986, p. 78).

2.2.1.8 Letters of Support

After finalizing the proposal, applicants may also include letters of support, which reflect valid support of the proposed project from program recipients, community leaders, agencies, (Coley & Scheinber, 2008). This is important to emphasize the endorsements to the program developed, and shows the review board the collaborative efforts made on behalf of this population as well, which is always attractive to grant committees too.

2.2.1.9 Memoranda of Understanding

A memoranda of understanding (MOU) should be included, only if multiple agencies are applying to the same proposal for one project (Coley & Scheinber, 2008). The MOU is a written agreement from each of the partners on how they will cooperate within the program (Coley & Scheinber, 2008).

2.2.1.10 Appendix Materials

Appendix materials are any other documentation required by the funder (Coley & Scheinber, 2008). Appendices can also include any charts or graphs provided by the applicant, reflect needs assessments conducted and so forth.

2.3 The Foundation Funding Environment

2.3.1 The Proposal Process

2.3.1.1 Identify Funding Sources

Before discussing the literal proposal process, it is important to address how one locates funding, for without a Request for Proposal (RFP), there is no process to undertake. Maxwell (2005) notes various searches that can be conducted when identifying appropriate funding sources: professional magazines and journals, Internet searches and to query corporations, nonprofit organizations and governmental agencies. Maxwell (2005) notes: "After developing a list of available grants and having received the applications, it is time to winnow the choices. Sort through the grants to find two or three that seem to most closely fit your needs" (p.3).

2.3.1.2 Review Successful Applicants

It is vital to do homework, meaning before submitting a proposal to a foundation, the applicant must understand the foundation's priorities, selection criteria and process (Hofland, 2007). One way to understand the particular interests of a foundation is to review past successful grant applications. Inouye & Fiellin (2005) state: "If successfully funded grant applications are available for the particular funding mechanism, these can serve as useful models for the application" (p.275).

2.3.1.3 Nurture Foundation Relationship

It is wise to propose the idea of the program to foundation staff first and get an indication of actual funding chances. Communication is key in developing this relationship; grant applicants should be constantly providing updates about the organization. These things will help to develop a strong relationship with the foundation (Hofland, 2007). Hofland (2007) also suggests the grant

applicant to discuss with foundation staff the criteria of the proposal before responding to a request for a proposal. This assists in building the relationship, and also allotting the opportunity for foundation staff to answer any questions that may be had by the applicant.

2.3.1.4 Know Your Audience

Hofland (2007) suggests grant seekers look at local foundations opposed to large national foundations; this is due to the fact that national foundations do not often give support for local projects. Inouye & Fiellin (2005) discuss the importance of discovering in advance as much as possible about the potential reviewers: "Search the literature to determine the potential reviewers' areas of expertise. The web sites of foundations, or their staff, may provide composition of review committees" (p.275).

2.3.1.5 Simplify and Clarify Proposed Program

Hofland (2007) encourages grant applicants to simplify and clarify the message of the program, in order to work toward the foundation's highest understanding of the goal. Inouye & Fiellin (2005) find: "The grant writer must help the busy reviewer understand the project by making its significance crystal clear, avoiding jargon and topic-specific abbreviations or terminology, not expecting reviewers to search references" (p.275). For the benefit of the applicant and the reviewer, the proposed program must be stated in such a way that any individual outside the field understands the concern and solution to the concern (Inouye & Fiellin, 2005).

Hofland (2007) also recommends the grant applicant to answer the three "what" questions: "Do what? So what? Then what?" (Hofland, p.59, 2007). The first question states what the proposed program will accomplish, the second describes the difference the program will make for the population served and the third allots for the idea of how the program could grow if it is indeed a success (Hofland, 2007). Answering these three questions will allow the reviewers to understand the need for the program and the benefits to society by funding the program.

2.3.1.6 Continue in the Faith

Finally, the applicant should never give up and remember the mission. Grant applications submitted may not receive funding the first time, but it is important to keep in mind that the project is still important and worthy of funding (Hofland, 2007). Maxwell (2005) states:

> "An important thing to remember is that there are hundreds if not thousands of organizations looking to fund your educational endeavors…do not be dejected if your application is rejected; instead modify, rewrite and reapply. Almost every reasonable grant has a good chance to be funded" (p.6).

2.3.2 How Foundations Make Decisions

The following literature review answered the research sub question 1b. When outlining how to write a winning proposal for research funds, Grove (2004) identifies six major categories reviewers look for: literature review, strength of design, proposal presentation, budget, personnel and benefits to society.

Within the literature review, reviewers are looking to see if the applicant has demonstrated a clear sense of previous research, relevant and related studies. The literature review is also used to convince reviewers the applicant has discovered major trends in the field (Grove, 2004). Within Nature of the Problem, trends among young adults with Spina bifida have been identified and current online programs noted that have proven to be a success.

The strength of design is to answer several questions: "Is the plan motivated by an understanding of the current dialog about the issue? Can the proposed methods answer the research questions? Is the research plan reasonable? Is it presented in sufficient detail? Can it succeed?" (Grove, 2004, p.31). The flow of the proposal thus far is for the literature review to show the answer is not already available, and the design to indicate how the investigator plans to find the answer (Grove, 2004). In the light of the proposed program, the answer is found in providing more social and emotional support to young adults with Spina bifida.

When writing proposals for research funds, it is common for a proposal presentation to be required. This is true for proposals through foundations as well. If chosen, foundations will seek to hear from the applicants and be given a complete presentation and clear vision of the goals wanting to be reached. The proposal presentation should state clear and concise information (Grove, 2004). The reviewers are looking to see if the organization of the project and its major components can be determined from the presentation as well (Grove, 2004). Grove states: "A proposal review reflects the expectation that clear thinking is linked to clear communication, and that someone who truly understands his or her subject can explain it to someone else" (2004, p.31).

The budget is possibly the most important component to a funded proposal. Not only do foundations want missions to line up, they want to know how you expect to address the concerns and how much money is needed to do so. Clayton (1982) describes the budget as: "a method of restating the plan of action using line items and costs" (p.631). Grove (2004) finds that reviewers are consistently questioning if the budget is reasonable, if there is any additional support such as in-kind donations, matching and so forth. Grove (2004) also observes that: "too often investigators write proposals aimed at meeting the sponsor's price cap rather than carefully considering the actual cost of their specific research" (2004, p.32). The same observation can be applied to applying for funds through private foundations. Grant seekers should attempt to accomplish the mission at the lowest cost possible, in order to keep up with competing applicants. The important thing is to address the need, instead of filling the personal pockets of program managers.

One process the review committee must take is reviewing personnel. The reviewers must know if the applicant has a history of activity in this field, and the qualifications necessary to successfully complete the project (Grove, 2004). This component might also be included in the program design, when outlining staff needed and the responsibilities each will hold within the program.

Finally, the reviewers must know the study is being conducted in order to benefit society, or the target population in the case of a program grant proposal (Grove, 2004).

2.3.3 Successful Programs with Similar Interests

The following is a description of three similar programs that have been concluded as a success in studies done throughout the members of each community. These programs were specifically identified to note not only the success of the program, but to gain an understanding of how they developed and maintained over the years, which is discussed in the Results section.

2.3.3.1 The Wellness Community

The Wellness Community (TWC) is an international non-profit organization dedicated to providing support, education and hope to people with cancer and their loved ones (The Wellness Community, 2008). A study done within members of TWC (cancer patients) and the benefits of online support groups found the Internet can be a positive cyber venue as illnesses are confronted, treatments are experienced and the individuals seek support (Beaudoin & Chen-Chao, 2007).

2.3.3.2 Food Allergy Survivors Together

FAST is a free online only support group for family of those with food allergies, friends of those with food allergies and individuals with food allergies. After interviewing a total of 32 members within the FAST community, Coulson & Knibb identified: “a range of benefits in FAST members such as: accessibility, receipt of social support as well as guidance on coping strategies” (2007). The only disadvantages identified involved the issues of accuracy and trust in information exchanged via the group bulletin board (Coulson & Knibb, 2007). Results also found several members reporting greater empowerment through decision-making, specifically within the healthcare provider relationship (Coulson & Knibb, 2007).

2.3.3.3 Beyond Hearing

Finally, Cummings, Sproull & Kiesler (2002) conducted a survey of an online self-help group for people with hearing loss. Results found: more active participation in the group was

associated with more benefits from the group and stronger reports of community orientation (Cumming et al., 2002). Those members with relatively low levels of real-world support particularly felt they obtained emotional and informational benefits from the group; these members also participated more and were more likely than others to remain members of the group over time (Cumming et al., 2002). They also found evidence of integration of online and real-world support benefited participants (Cumming et al., 2002).

2.4 Research Question

2.4.1 How is a fundable program developed?

After researching scholarly articles through the Social Work Electronic Library and the University of Texas at Arlington Central Library, the most prominent steps to take when developing a grant proposal have been concluded. The literature review has led to important information grant developers must know in order to allow the proposed program developed the best possibility of funding. The research question for this Thesis, therefore, is *how is a fundable program developed?* In conjunction with this research question, there are two sub questions to address as well: 1a: *What key components make up a proposal?,* 1b: *What are prominent steps within the grant proposal process?* And 1c: *How do foundations make decisions?* All sub questions were addressed, researched and answered within the literature review.

CHAPTER 3

METHODOLOGY

3.1 Literature Search and Personal Correspondence for Developing Program with Key Components of Proposal

In order to identify the key components of a fundable program, electronic and library searches have been conducted through scholarly written materials. From these sources of information I have identified five *key* components to a fundable program. The components identified are components that every RFP has requested in their application process.

Three successful similar programs have also been researched, in pursuit of identifying the development of their program and key components they look for when analyzing the funding environment for the online support program.

A final conversation with a private foundation also assisted in gaining understanding of the proposal process more fully and what specific components of a proposal catch the attention of the grant review board.

3.2 Literature Search to Explore Possible Funding Environments for Human Services and Technology Foundations

3.2.1 Criteria for Evaluating Proposals

When evaluating RFP's, it is important to have identified selection criteria. Selection criteria were developed within this project to evaluate RFP's through literature research conducted in various scholarly articles and books. This assisted in identifying the most appropriate funders' for which to apply and allot the most opportunity of funding.

3.2.2 Electronic Searches

The opportunity to research appropriate foundations was given through the membership and utilization of The Foundation Center's website. Throughout this process, selection criteria

was identified within the various fields provided of the grant application search. From this effort, numerous possibilities of funding for my developed program were identified.

Finally, the avenue of the Internet (conducting simple Google searches) assisted in locating funding opportunities as well.

3.2.3 Book Searches

In addition to the electronic research, texts were utilized, which identified many diverse foundations, and their history, in order to be led to those specific entities whose mission line up with the mission of *Friends Connect*. The particular text used in this endeavor was that of The Foundation Reporter.

3.3 Application of Components to Funding Environment Using Condition

3.3.1 Complete 1-5 Foundation Applications with Highest Probability of Funding

After having identified the key components to include in a grant proposal and the top 10 most appropriate funding sources, three grant applications were completed, which will be ready for submission after graduation from the Masters in Science and Social Work program at the University of Texas at Arlington and employment has been landed in a disability-service agency/organization. The hope is that the program receives funding soon after these endeavors, and I will be the appointed person to manage the online emotional and social support program for young adults with Spina bifida.

CHAPTER 4

RESULTS

4.1 Developing Fundable Programs to Address the Condition

4.1.1 Key Components of Proposal

4.1.1.1 Review of Literature

After reviewing the literature on how to develop strong programs and create successful proposals, while there are many components to define, I have identified five *key* components to include when developing a fundable program. The first, and most important, component is an assessment of the need the program is addressing. Without a statement of need, foundations will not understand how their funds will be used to benefit the lives of individuals. Many of the RFP's identified required discussion on the community need and how the proposed project would address this need and benefit the population served.

Second, is the program design: what services the program will provide to the target population. The program cannot begin without a strong program mission and goal. Without the mission in tow, the program will not develop properly or passionately. A mission outlines the very center of a program, and the many wonderful benefits it will bring to the population it is servicing. The design is consists of details of the program such as hours of operation, services provided, staff available to assist in services provided. Also within the program design, objectives and tasks must be identified and outlined in order to meet the overall goal of the program. The objectives are the steps in which to take to meet the mission of the program, and to reach the desired population. Without the objectives, a program staff can get lost in the translation of the mission and have no real direction on where to take it and how to go about making it a reality.

The third component to developing a fundable program is to have developed a plan of evaluating the services delivered. This portion of the proposal explains measurement procedures conducted in order to determine of the goals and objectives of the program have been met. Almost all of the reviewed RFP's required a plan of evaluation, indicating their insistence on the project being funded be ready to evaluate services implemented and assess the improvement of the addressed condition.

The fourth component is a clear and concise budgeting plan. The budgeting plan is what makes or breaks any program. It is in the budget that the program slowly develops into either a realistic goal or an unrealistic goal, for without funding, the program ceases to exist.

Finally, the fifth key component to developing a fundable program is future plans to keep the program alive and running effectively. Grant proposals only fund for an allotted time period, and a plan of action must be laid in place when the funding runs out or overturns to another source. Many things can change as a program develops, such as staff overturn, client overturn and so forth. With expected changes to take place, developers must design a sustaining plan for the program, so that it is sure to continue benefitting the target population no matter what occurs in the process.

4.1.1.2 Personal Correspondence and Organization Research

4.1.1.2.1 The Wellness Community

TWC was founded in 1982 and has grown to over 100 locations worldwide, including 24 U.S. based and 2 international centers with 73 satellite and off-site programs, 3 centers in development and online at www.thewellnesscommunity.org (The Wellness Community, 2008).

When inquiring on the initial funding source for TWC, Lynn Ryker, Director of Online Initiatives, responded:

> "Dr. Benjamin funded the organization personally at its inception. Over the years, funding sources have expanded. We receive corporate and foundation grants, contributions from corporations and individuals, and we host fundraising events. We also receive some

funds from the sale of certain items (books for instance) where part of the proceeds of the sale of an item will be donated to TWC. We do not receive any insurance reimbursement or government funding. Since all of our programs are offered free of charge, fundraising is constant and ongoing" (L. Ryker, personal correspondence, October 21, 2008).

Within the personal correspondence Lynn was asked what components do TWC grant writers look for when selecting the most appropriate funding sources. Lynn responded informing that she sent the question on to the development department; however, a response was never received from them.

4.1.1.2.2 Food Allergy Survivors Together

FAST was founded in 1994 as a local newsletter, and then moved to an online community in 1997 (Melissa Taylor, 2003). Within the Questions and Answers portion of the FAST website, Melissa Taylor explains the everyday management of the online community:

> "I literally spend countless volunteer hours managing this website. In the case of the minimal non-free items, no profit is intended to be made. Indeed, if I put in all of the hours I spend on FAST, I can guarantee that no one would be willing to switch jobs with me," (Melissa Taylor, 2003).

The following table identifies the financial statement of FAST:

Table 4.1 FAST 2003 Financial Statement

Outgoing Funds	
Publishing costs of handbook	$160
Copyright costs of handbook	$30
Domain registry	$30
Incoming Funds	
Book sales (2002-2003)	$116.59
Online store	$7.03
Total 2003: -$96.38	

The results show managing the program is more of a cost than a profit for Melissa Taylor. Her Food Allergy Survivors Together Handbook did not even generate enough of a profit to break even with her investment.

4.1.1.2.3 Beyond Hearing

After contacting Steve Barber, volunteer of Beyond Hearing, to understand their initial development and funding source, he stated:

> "Sorry, Holly, Beyond-Hearing is all volunteer. No fund what so ever. It began as a volunteer activity by Dr. Mimi Clifford (now passed away) with donated computer time from Duke University (where Mimi had been a professor). All Duke provided was the computer resources for a simple listserv. I built the web pages to go with that and hosted that on Geocities (a free web server). All my work was volunteer. When Mimi retired, the list was taken over by another volunteer (Emilie Quast), who does the list management. So, no expenses, no income, no problem" (S. Barber, personal correspondence, October 22, 2008).

The current list manager, Emilie Quast noted: "I sincerely hope we never have to look for grant money, though we probably could get some from various organizations--most of those are NPs, and as their donations dry up--well, it's a nightmare I hope to avoid," (E. Quast, personal correspondence, October 23, 2008).

4.1.2 Steps in Proposal Process

The proposal process was outlined within the literature review, but within the literature, certain steps to be taken appeared to be of more importance than others. These steps included: identify funding sources of highest probability, nurture foundation relationship, simplify proposed program and continue in the faith.

After describing the literature results of the proposal process to Johnnie Hamill of the Gil and Dody Weaver Foundation, she noted one step to be of most importance: "It is very helpful to

make at least one phone to each organization you are looking for funding from, just to make sure you're on the right track" (J. Hamill, personal correspondence, October 15, 2008).

4.1.3 How Foundations Make Decisions

The literature outlined a number of decision-making tools most private foundations utilize in reviewing grant applications: review of literature, strength of design, budget plans, review of personnel and how project will benefit society.

Hamill of the Gil and Dody Weaver Foundation also noted it is vital the information provided be correct and succinct (J. Hamill, personal correspondence, October 15, 2008). Her comments indicated that lengthy grant applications can be tiresome and overwhelming to application reviewers, and she personally prefers much information packed into as few words as possible (J. Hamill, personal correspondence, October 15, 2008).

4.2 Top 10 Foundations for Funding the Program

4.2.1 Selection Criteria

With many foundations that hold great missions to filter through, it was quite an overwhelming process to decipher proposals most appropriate for funding *Friends Connect.* It was key to develop selection criteria as I researched each foundation in depth. Based on the literature research conducted, the selection criteria to evaluating appropriate funding sources are: Foundation purpose and activities, fields of interest, geographic focus, types of support and application guidelines.

The first criterion was the alignment of the foundation's purpose and activities against the mission of *Friends Connect*. With *Friends Connect* being a new and innovative project the SBANT (hypothetically) would implement, it was best to choose foundations interested in helping fund new projects and ok with the funds being put toward start-up costs, management and maintenance of the project.

The second criterion involved the Foundations' fields of interest; what subjects most interested the Foundation and the population groups the Foundation desired to focus on and

serve. This was the key selection criterion, for if the Foundation did not support human service projects or organizations, and did not list people with disabilities as a population group of interest, I did not waste time reviewing their application process.

Third, location of each foundation was assessed, and geographic focus the foundation wished to serve. It became quite clear location was key to assessing applications, when each Foundation would specifically mention physical locations they are interested in and support.

The fourth criterion was the assessment of types of support the foundation agreed to endorse. Each Foundation was specific to describe how the funds (if given) could be utilized within the project or organization. Because *Friends Connect* is a start-up project, never having been implemented, types of support were confirmed to include all costs, i.e. materials, management, administration, etc.

Finally, the application guidelines were a selection criterion as well. A step-by-step process of each foundation was reviewed and discussed to verify if this particular program would be a strong candidate. All foundations stated the organization receiving funding must be 501 (c)(3) and most noted there must be a community collaborative effort.

4.2.2 Selected Foundations

The top 10 potential funders of *Friends Connect* have been identified, and all have met most or all of the selection criteria discussed. Each Foundation is discussed thoroughly, covering all criteria topics.

4.2.2.1 Community Foundation of North Texas

It was established in 1981 as a program of the United Way, then the status changed to independent community foundation in 1989 (Foundation Center, 2008). The foundation provides stewardship for many individual charitable funds and gives donor efficient charitable fund administration (Foundation Center, 2008). CMNT supports community development, social services, education, youth, health and cultural programs, with an emphasis on one-time grants to new and innovative programs (Foundation Center, 2008). Fields of interest range from AIDS

research to human services, with an interest in serving the aging, disability, economically disadvantaged, homeless and women populations (Foundation Center, 2008). The geographic focus is funding within the state of Texas and the application deadline was before August 15, 2008 (Foundation Center, 2008).

4.2.2.2 The Constantin Foundation, Inc.

Located in Dallas, Texas The Constantin Foundation trust was established in 1947 by Mr. and Mrs. Eugene Constantin (Foundation Center, 2008). The foundation places an emphasis on higher and other education, but also provides some support for cultural programs, social service and youth agencies (Foundation Center, 2008). Fields of interest include human services with the desired population group of people with disabilities (Foundation Center, 2008). The focused geographic is within the state of Texas and supports: building/renovation, capital campaigns, endowments, equipment, land acquisition, matching support, program development and scholarship funds (Foundation Center, 2008). An application form is not required, but a letter of inquiry is; the deadline falls annually around September 15, and the foundation considers funding up 10% of total project because they prefer to be one of at least three foundations participating (Foundation Center, 2008).

4.2.2.3 The Dallas Foundation

The Dallas Foundation was established in Texas in 1929 (Foundation Center, 2008). The foundation seeks to serve as a resource, leader and catalyst for philanthropy by providing donors with flexible means of making gifts to charitable causes that enhance the community (Foundation Center, 2008). Fields of interest range from animal welfare, to human services to recreational projects, with a focus on the African American population, aging, people with disabilities and economically disadvantaged (Foundation Center, 2008). Types of support include: building/renovation, capital campaign, employee-related scholarships, equipment, general support, matching support and scholarship funds (Foundation Center, 2008). The

application deadline is August 1 for unrestricted funds, October 6 for unrestricted fund full proposals and April 2 for field-of-interest application (Foundation Center, 2008).

4.2.2.4 Hillcrest Foundation

The Hillcrest Foundation was established in 1959 in Texas (Foundation Center, 2008). The purposes of the foundation include: to relieve poverty, advance education and promote health (Foundation Center, 2008). It also offers support for higher education, health and hospitals, social services, including programs for youth and child welfare, drug abuse, rehabilitation and housing (Foundation Center, 2008). Field of interests includes: aging, cancer, and human services, along with other various fields (Foundation Center, 2008). The two primary focused population groups are the aging and people with disabilities (Foundation Center, 2008). The types of support include: building/renovation, capital campaigns, equipment, land acquisition, matching support and program development (Foundation Center, 2008). An application form is required and deadlines include end of March, August and November (Foundation Center, 2008).

4.2.2.5 The Eugene McDermott Foundation

Incorporated in 1972, the Eugene McDermott Foundation absorbed The McDermott Foundation in 1977 (Foundation Center, 2008). Their giving is primarily in Dallas, Texas and support cultural programs, higher and secondary education, health and general community interests (Foundation Center, 2008). Fields of interest and population groups vary widely, but do include servicing people with disabilities (Foundation Center, 2008). There is no application form require, but an initial letter (Foundation Center, 2008). No deadlines are noted, but a final notification prior to August 31 (Foundation Center, 2008).

4.2.2.6 The Reese-Jones Foundation

This foundation is fairly new and established in the year 2006 in Texas (Foundation Center, 2008). The mission is to provide support and funding for programs that will help to improve in tangible ways the quality of life and life circumstances of the people it serves (Foundation Center, 2008). Fields of interest include: children services, Christian agencies,

education, employment, family services and health care (Foundation Center, 2008). The focused populations range from children to people with disabilities and the economically disadvantaged (Foundation Center, 2008). The focused geographic is in Texas, supporting capital campaigns, employee matching, general support, management development/capacity building, matching support, program development and scholarship funds (Foundation Center, 2008). An application form is required, with no deadlines but proposals should be submitted several months before funding is needed (Foundation Center, 2008).

4.2.2.7 The Gil and Dody Weaver Foundation

Established by Galbraith Weaver and Elisabeth Eudora Weaver in 1980 within Texas (Foundation Center, 2008). Their primary focus of giving is in Texas, but also spread funds to Louisiana and Oklahoma (Foundation Center, 2008). Fields of interest include: aging, child development, human services, protestant agencies and theological school and education, focusing on the aging, disabled and economically disadvantaged populations (Foundation Center, 2008). The foundation supports annual campaigns, continuing support, general support and scholarship funds (Foundation Center, 2008). There is no application form required, but an introductory letter including organizational information, with a deadline on May 31 and the final notification September 30 (Foundation Center, 2008).

4.2.2.8 The Meadows Foundation

Established in 1948 by Algur and Virginia Meadows, The Meadows Foundation is a private philanthropic institution existing to benefit the people of Texas (The Meadows Foundation, 2008). The mission of the foundation is to assist the people and institutions of Texas to improve the quality and circumstances of life for themselves and future generations (Meadows Foundation, 2008). Since its inception, the Foundation has given over $550 million in grants and charitable expenditures to over 2,000 Texas institutions and agencies (The Meadows Foundation, 2008).

4.2.2.9 The Ethel Louise Armstrong Foundation

Margaret Staton founded the Ethel Louise Armstrong Foundation, Inc. (ELA) in 1994 to "Change the Face of Disability on the Planet" (ELA, 2008). The foundation seeks to support the work of organizations that are led by or support the work of women with disabilities, encouraging distinctive projects that make a substantial difference (ELA, 2008). Margaret Staton states: "Total inclusion of people with disabilities in every aspect of society can and will happen as all of us embrace this vision together. Anything less than this is just not acceptable" (ELA, 2008). The foundation states that the grant request must be for a program in the area of arts or advocacy and must serve adults with disabilities (ELA, 2008). The foundation also makes clear that local support must be had in order to be considered for their grant program, a complete program budget with income and expenses is required, as well as a funding plan and other funding sources (ELA, 2008). Grant deadlines are: May 1 at 5pm (Pacific time) and November 1 at 5pm (Pacific time) (ELA, 2008).

4.2.2.10 The Abell-Hanger Foundation

Mr. and Mrs. Abell established the foundation, to carry out the philanthropic endeavors they each pursued in their lifetime (Abell-Hanger Foundation, 2007). The foundation supports any benevolent, charitable, educational or missionary undertaking (Abell-Hanger Foundation, 2007). The areas of giving include but are not limited to: education, health services, human services, arts and cultural activities and community or societal benefit (Abell-Hanger Foundation, 2007).

4.2.3 Selection Decision Processes

The decision process reverts to the selection criteria I discussed earlier. I confirmed the three selected Foundations' mission, fields of interest, geographic focus, types of support and application guidelines to match with the developed project, *Friends Connect.* The one criterion *Friends Connect* did not meet in each of the grant applications was that of the proposal deadline. Because *Friends Connect* is a hypothetical program, implemented hypothetically through SBANT,

I did not feel it necessary to allow this unmet criterion to hold me back from developing each of the completed applications. For the purposes of this Thesis, the developed applications are ready for submission post Graduation and having obtained employment. The hope is I will be able to submit for funding possibly the next funding period, in the year 2009.

4.3 1-5 Completed Foundation Applications

After having identified the top 10 potential funders, I then narrowed down the possibilities to three foundations that closely fell in line with the mission of the *Friends Connect* program.

4.3.1 Community Foundation of North Texas

The Community Foundation of North Texas was chosen specifically for their emphasis on funding one-time grants to new and innovative programs, which *Friends Connect* is. Their fields of interest include human services and people with disabilities as well, with a geographic focus of north Texas. *Friends Connect* is developed to service those young adults with Spina bifida residing in the north Texas area, and would provide new services that have never been offered in the area before. Out of the three grant applications identified and completed, I feel that CMFNT is the funding source with the highest probability of funding a program like *Friends Connect.* The completed application can be found in Appendix A.

4.3.2 The Reese-Jones Foundation

The Rees-Jones Foundation has many fields of interest, but includes family services, education and serving the disabled population. This foundation was chosen because of their mission to provide support and funding for programs that will help to improve in tangible ways the quality of life and life circumstances of the people it serves. *Friends Connect's* mission is to improve the quality of life among young adults with Spina bifida, through offering emotional and social support via the Internet, an accessible source to this population. With the program evaluations set in place, *Friends Connect* is also ready to assess the improvement of the quality of life in this population at the end of the first program year, which makes this program attractive to the Rees-Jones Foundation as well. The foundation wishes to endorse the Texas area, and

allows funds to be utilized for general/operating support, management development/capacity building and program development; an additional reason for choosing to apply to this foundation. The completed Rees-Jones grant application can be found in Appendix B.

4.3.3 The Ethel-Louise Armstrong Foundation

The Ethel-Louise Armstrong Foundation is the one source not limited to funding in Texas. It is a national Foundation that allots the opportunity to not only receives funding from, but also guidance as a source outside of the program area. The ELA Foundation has the mission to change the face of disability on the planet. It funds grants for programs in the areas of arts and advocacy, which are led by or support adults with disabilities who are 22 years and older. *Friends Connect* services the young adults with Spina bifida population (18-25 years) and proves to be a source of advocacy, in that, it provides informational pages to the targeted population; educating members on different issues a person with a disability faces as they become an adult, with suggested solutions as to how to confront and work through those issues. *Friends Connect* also desires to encourage and teach self-advocacy to its members, through not only the informational pages online, but also the quarterly informational events offered each program year. The completed ELA grant application can be found in Appendix C.

CHAPTER 5

DISCUSSION

5.1 Limitations of Research

The limitations of this research include: limited resources for researching appropriate foundations and RFP's, RFP deadlines having surpassed, Thesis time restraints and lack of certified research conducted on the condition addressed. Throughout the research, there were few resources used to identify private foundations and appropriate RFP's for the program developed. With more resources to analyze, the number of possible funders may have surpassed 10 and given an even higher probability of funding to the program.

The Thesis time restraint was another limitation within this research. Having gone through the process of first developing *Friends Connect* and then locating funding for this program, it became clear that time was a major component to the grant process, with RFP deadlines having surpassed and Thesis due dates not aligning against those deadlines.

The final limitation of this research was the lack of certified research to include within each grant application completed. Having done surveys among the target population would have increased the validation of the proposed project, and given the program a higher possibility of funding.

5.2 Discussion of Findings

5.2.1 How to Develop a Fundable Program

Throughout this project, I began to understand in order to develop a fundable program you must assess the funding environment with a holistic or macro perspective, opposed to a micro perspective. It is only through researching all stakeholders within the process, and the process itself, which leads to deeper insight of getting a program to the point of high probability of

funding. Within the review of the literature and results, it was important to identify key components of a proposal, typical proposal review processes and how foundations come to a decision when reviewing applicants.

5.2.1.1 Key Components

Within the research process I found in order to develop a fundable program the developer must refer to a grant proposal for guidance. The answer is to identify what types of programs, and their inclusion criteria, potential funders are interested in and requiring of. The results section identified and outlined five key components one should include when developing a fundable program. The components outlined and discussed included: a statement of need, program design, program goals and objectives, a budgeting plan and plan for financial endurance. These components were not only conjured through the review of the literature, but also identified and based upon each grant proposal reviewed throughout the process as well.

After having personally corresponded with three of the two successful similar programs, The Wellness Community and Beyond Hearing, it became clear, however, these programs began as a passion within one person to bring an outlet of emotional support to the desired population. I found through the correspondence two of the three programs do not and have never operated on outside funding, but merely on free of charge email list serves. All three programs began as personal projects of each founder, and one in particular (The Wellness Community) grew to a much larger organizations, eventually operating and depending on private funding.

Beyond Hearing's volunteer staff was very adamant about the program being completely volunteer-based, and never being in need of outside funding. Computers were donated from a local university to kick off the program, and it grew from that point on. Those who work so faithfully for Beyond Hearing are very thankful to not be a certified nonprofit organization, for their firm belief in the difficulties it only brings.

FAST was founded by one person, and maintained by one person for the past 14 years, having first started on a local newsletter and then moving to the Internet in the year 1997. The

Founder, Melissa Taylor, has kept the group strong on her own and has never sought for outside funding to maintain the program.

5.2.1.1.1 New Possibilities to Implement Program

These findings led to a deeper understanding of online support and how one might develop and maintain a group without seeking private funding. These results led me to the belief that Friends Connect could begin as they, through an email listserv, and possibly grow to the level of needing a specific Internet homepage.

After having received these results, I began a final online research effort to possibly identify social networking services. I found one specific service: Ning, which offers the opportunity to create any social networking group desired, and completely free of charge (www.ning.com). Ning.com offers both open services (allowing advertisements on the homepage) or closed services (keeping advertisements off the homepage) for a service charge (www.ning.com).

5.2.1.2 Proposal Process

The proposal process can take much time. Developing a program in itself can take months or even years, depending on the amount of research conducted. Once a program is developed, however, that is only half the battle.

Because of the specific purposes of this project, I did not take every identified step within the proposal process. The steps I took included: identify grant proposals, gain an understanding of my audience, and simplify the proposed program within the application. Throughout the project I discovered it was first important for me to understand the mission of the project before I sought appropriate RFP's. I had to know the overall goal of *Friends Connect*, in addition to logistical details, in order to identify grant proposals of highest probability of funding. Once I had an understanding of the type of proposals I was seeking, the search process became much easier.

After identifying potential funders based upon simple requirements met (i.e. mission alignments, populations served and geographic locations) I began to research other projects they

had funded in the past. It was through this process I was able to seriously consider each funder and the possibility of their interest in funding *Friends Connect.* Not only did I research past grant recipients, but also the history of the foundation, and their initial reason for coming into existence. It was through their history and review of mission I was able to identify funders potentially most interested in the mission of *Friends Connect*, and desire to see this program come into existence. This assessment helped me gain a greater understanding of my audience, and how I might write the application in a manner that would align with the foundation mission and catch their attention through the grant review process.

Finally, based upon the literature search and correspondence with The Gil and Dody Weaver Foundation, I noted the importance of simplifying the entire grant application and purpose of *Friends Connect.*

5.2.1.3 Foundation Decision Processes

Through the development of the application by confirming the strength of the needs statement, strength of the design and budgeting plan was based on gained insight into how foundations come to a decision within the grant application process. The literature was clear to indicate that foundations typically fund those projects of validation and past successes, for they desire to be involved in a project that will likely benefit the community. Foundations also want to know the strength of the design will be tested against evaluations, and measure the improvement of the condition as well. Finally, foundations want to know the money granted will be put to wise use, and will provide services at as low cost as possible. In-kind donations are important to note when achieving this task, for foundations desire to see developers utilizing all available resources to help this project become a reality.

5.3 Issues in Funding Programs

There are many obstacles to overcome when obtaining funding for a program. Obstacles personally faced included: program validation (with program being a new and innovative project for the North Texas area), lack of community collaboration, and lack of certified research

conducted on the condition (lack of emotional and social support in target population). Within this specific program developed, I had these noted obstacles to overcome because of the lack of validation in my research and the lack of confirmation the program will be implemented through SBANT. The project was to assess the funding environment, so I might gain a greater understanding of how one goes about funding a program such as Friends Connect, however, without the certification of being a nonprofit organization and no real community collaborations, this project will not stand to be funded on its own. These obstacles are not only ones that I personally face, but any new organization attempting to develop from the nothing. Funders want to know the organization is known, respected and successful with past projects implemented; this is a disservice to those new and innovative programs who are in need of start up funding.

5.4 Lessons Learned from Research

Many lessons were learned from this research. The first was being given the opportunity to study more fully how a program is developed in a highly fundable manner. This was done through researching and identifying the components of programs, and how private foundations make their decisions. Both of these studies allotted me the opportunity to write promising grants for three grant proposals.

I also learned the complex process of analyzing grant proposals, and how to identify only those with the highest probability of funding. Locating foundations with similar interests was not quite as difficult as anticipated, however, I began to understand that similar interests needed to be defined more concretely and specifically in order for a program and private foundation to make strong partners. While many foundations' interests included serving people with disabilities, most did not list their specific interest of helping to meet the social and emotional needs of this population, merely physical.

Finally, the greatest lesson learned from this research is to never narrow down options of how to implement a new and innovative program. After the statements made within the personal correspondence, I began to realize that while Friends Connect may locate funding some day, and

become its own entity of social and emotional support among young adults with Spina bifida, it could also begin from already existing sources, such as email listservs and free online social networking services.

5.5 Suggestions for Future Research

Suggestions for future research include: validated research regarding the emotional and social condition of young adults with Spina bifida, a more thorough study conducted on how other online programs began and received initial funding and finally, how current Internet services offered could play a vital role in making this dream become a reality.

APPENDIX A

COMMUNITY FOUNDATION OF NORTH TEXAS DISCRETIONARY GRANT APPLICATION

Spina Bifida Association of North Texas

Friends Connect

Holly Strother, (soon to be) MSSW, Program Developer

682-559-1378

I. Purpose of Grant

- Community Need Met

After assessing various local resources, and interviewing field experts, results find there is a lack of community, relational building and friendships within the community of young adults living with Spina bifida. This condition is a resultant of various external factors, such as: transportation issues and the inability to be actively involved in the community due to increasing health challenges.

The project, Friends Connect, would meet the ultimate issue: lack of emotional and social support in young adults with Spina bifida who live in the Dallas/Fort Worth, Texas area. *Friends Connect* will meet this need by providing an online source where these young people can gather via the Internet. It would be a venue to share their hopes, dreams, struggles and stories. The program will provide informational pages, which includes topics of different physical, cognitive or emotional issues concerning their disability. There will also be weekly discussion forums offered to all members. The forums will be facilitated by a Licensed Professional Counselor, and discuss various issues of interest among members. Members will be encouraged to primarily support and lean on one another; however, the Facilitator will be there to traffic and control any inappropriate statements that may occur. Blog entries will be available allowing members will the opportunity to write their personal blog as often as they desire. Blog entries will be the outlet for members to connect on a more ongoing basis. Finally, four different events will take place quarterly throughout each program year. Two of the events will be a social gathering (i.e. holiday party) and the other two will be an informational lecture (RE: Spina bifida) conducted by an expert in the field.

- Target Population

The target population consists of any and all young adults with Spina bifida who live in the Dallas/Fort Worth, Texas area. The program goal is to reach as many of these young adults as possible.

- Expected Outcomes

The expected outcome of *Friends Connect* is to enhance the lives of young adults living with Spina bifida, through offering free online emotional and social support to them daily. The program hopes to reach them on their level and provide a safe place to be who you are, where the other members' often understand the different challenges and opportunities this disability can bring on.

- Project Evaluation
    - *Yearly Evaluation*

At the end of each program year, the Program Director will administer online surveys for each member to complete. The survey will measure member reactions, through use of a Likert scale, to the different functions of the program such as: quality of information provided via homepage, quality of facilitation during discussion forums, quality of technological applications such as online discussion forums and blog entries, and finally quality of four different in person events throughout the year. In addition to these responses, the evaluation asks how the program might be improved to meet the needs of the member. The Program Director will then assess answers given by members and make suggested changes for the following program year. An example of the administered survey is found in Appendix A1.

- *Final Evaluation of Graduating Member*

One week before graduation from *Friends Connect*, the Program Director will administer a final evaluation for the graduating member to fill out. The final evaluation will ask the graduating member a series of questions regarding their approval and appreciation of the program and finally will ask for any suggestions of improvement for the next generation of *Friends Connect* members. An example of the program evaluation is found in Appendix A2.

- Description of Expenses
    - *Salaries and Wages Costs*

The total salary budget is: $40,540.00, which includes three part-time positions. The Program Director salary totals at: $28,000.00 ($20 per hour) to administrate *Friends Connect* throughout program year. Program Director will only be required to work a total of 20 hours per week. The Group Facilitator salary totals at: $3,100.00 per year to facilitate on-line weekly discussions ($50 per hour), in addition to assisting at quarterly social and informational events and attending initial member interviews ($25 per hour). Group Facilitator will facilitate group member discussion one hour per week (4 hours per month), assist at quarterly events at a maximum of two hours per event, and attend initial member interviews capping at 20 members the first program year, resulting in 20 extra paid hours ($500.00). The Information Technology (IT) Associate salary totals at: $8,640.00 per program year ($12 per hour). The IT Associate will be allowed to work a maximum of 15 hours per week, resulting in 60 hours worked per month.

Due to all staff being employed part-time, *Friends Connect* will not be responsible for health insurance or worker benefits.

- *Reimbursement Costs*

Reimbursement costs total at: $2,400.00, including: mileage and cellular phone plans. Mileage for part-time staff to visit members and attend events will be reimbursed at $0.50 per mile with a total mileage budget cost at: $600.00 per program year. This total allots the Program Director and Group Facilitator each 600 miles to be utilized per program year, with a maximum budget at 1,200 miles per program year. Each staff member will be provided a cellular phone in order to accomplish various work tasks throughout the year. Budget allots for $50.00 cellular plans/per staff member each month, which totals at: $1,800 per program year.

- *Technology Costs*

Technology costs total at: $850.00, with budget including: laptop/printer package (valued at Best Buy), the software program Microsoft Office 2007 (valued at Best Buy), and the software program SharePoint Designer, which has been donated to the *Friends Connect* program. The laptop/printer package is valued at: $550.00 (including tax), and Microsoft Office 2007 valued at: $300.00 (including tax).

Materials are vital to the *Friends Connect* program, for all technology start-up work will be done using the laptop by the IT Associate, in addition to maintaining member database information by the Program Director throughout program year, and finally to allow the Group Facilitator to facilitate online discussions through the use of this laptop.

- *Marketing Material Costs*

Marketing material costs total at: $329.80 including: paper, printer ink cartridges, printing and duplicating services and stamps for mail-outs. Four 150-sheet packages of paper will be purchased for entire program year, totaling at: $35.00 (including tax, valued at Office Depot). Three ink cartridges will be purchased for entire program year, totaling at: $42.00 ($14/per cartridge, including tax, valued at Office Depot). 400 mail-outs will be issued per program year across four various same-interest clinics and agencies (100 mail-outs/per place marketed), which will total printing and duplicating costs at: $220.00 ($0.50/per sheet printed, including tax, valued at FedEx-Kinko's) per program year. Finally, four books of stamps will be purchased per year, totaling at $32.80 ($8.20/per book).

All materials discussed are vital to effectively marketing *Friends Connect* among the various clinics and agencies within the Dallas/Fort Worth, Texas area. Materials costs also considered and budgeted for any needed information to be printed by staff throughout program year.

- *Event Costs*

Event costs for *Friends Connect* total at $710.00 per program year, including: $70 for an event with snacks ($3 per head), $240 for an event with dinner ($10 per head), $200 for two guest speakers ($50/ per two hour lecture) and $200 in taxi fees to transport members to events.

- Budget Amount Requested

The *Friends Connect* program total budget request is: $44,829.80.

II. Financial Information

- Line Item Budget

Table A.1 Friends Connect Line-Item Budget

Budget Line-Item	***Program***
1. Salaries & Wages	
Program Director	$20/per hour
Group Facilitator	$50/per hour
Group Facilitator at Events and Interviews	$25/per hour
Information Technology Associate	$12/per hour
Total Salaries & Wages:	**$40,540.00**
2. Reimbursement	
Mileage	$0.50/per mile
Staff Cellular Phone Plans	$1,800
Total Reimbursement Costs:	**$2,400.00**
3. Technology Costs	
Laptop/Printer Package	$550.00
Microsoft Office 2007	$300.00
Sharepoint Designer	Donated
Total Technology Costs:	**$850.00**
4. Marketing Materials	
Paper	$35.00
Printer Cartridge(s)	$42.00
Printing & Duplicating	$220.00
Stamps	$32.80
Total Marketing Costs:	**$329.80**
5. Event Costs	
Event Location Cost	None
Food (Snacks Included)	$70.00
Food (Dinner Included)	$240
Speaker Stipends	$50/per hour
Transportation (Taxi Service)	$200
Total Event Costs:	**$710.00**
TOTAL COSTS:	**$44,829.80**

- Financial Plan of Duration

After creating enough community interest, *Friends Connect* also aspires to operate on corporate or individual donations. In addition to applying for the Dallas Foundation, *Friends Connect* has applied to the Meadows Foundation. Through these various outlets, *Friends Connect* plans to sustain the funding needed to continue on in future program years.

- Other Grant Opportunities

Friends Connect is a new and innovative project, which is the precise reason developers, chose to apply to the CFNT grant. Other opportunities Friend Connect is currently seeking: The Rees-Jones Foundation and The Ethel Louise Armstrong Foundation.

- How CFNT Grant will Leverage Additional Funding

Because the budget request is made up of the total project start-up costs, CFNT would assist in all of the areas of the budget. CFNT would allow the program to come into existence and assist in maintaining the program for the grant year. Should CFNT decide to not fund the total amount of start-up costs, the foundation would assist in allowing the program to begin and manage effectively on the amounts given.

III. Background of Organization

- History of Organization

The Spina Bifida Association of Dallas (now Spina Bifida Association of North Texas) was born with the help of the Easter Seal Center staff and a very concerned orthopedist, Dr. Margaret Watkins. As the word got around SBANT was able to round up about thirty families for an organizational meeting on February 15, 1973 held at the Center.

- Purpose of Organization

To serve, strengthen, and enrich the lives of those with Spina Bifida and those who love them through research, prevention, education, and advocacy.

- Board of Directors

Executive Board of Directors

Robin Lee, President

Rita Selene, Vice President

Gaye Morrison, Treasurer

Jana Hardwick, Secretary

Kelly Ferguson, SBAA Delegate

In terms of project involvement, Robin Lee will be the one the Program Manager reports to on a bi-monthly basis, and to turn to if difficult situations come up. Gaye Morisson will track the monies, to keep the program accountable.

- Current Staff

SBANT does not have staff; they merely run on the time and support of volunteers. Once *Friends Connect* is funded, however, the one and only staff member will be the Program Manager.

- Qualifications

SBANT is known to be the local authority on Spina bifida and how to service this population. They are a nonprofit organization and current member of the Spina Bifida Association of America. Their expertise on this disability, and the challenges and opportunities members face daily, allow them to be a vital asset to the program, *Friends Connect.*

IV. Additional Information

- Tax-Exempt Determination Letter
- Organization's Most Recent Audited Financial Statement
- Organization's Current Operating Budget

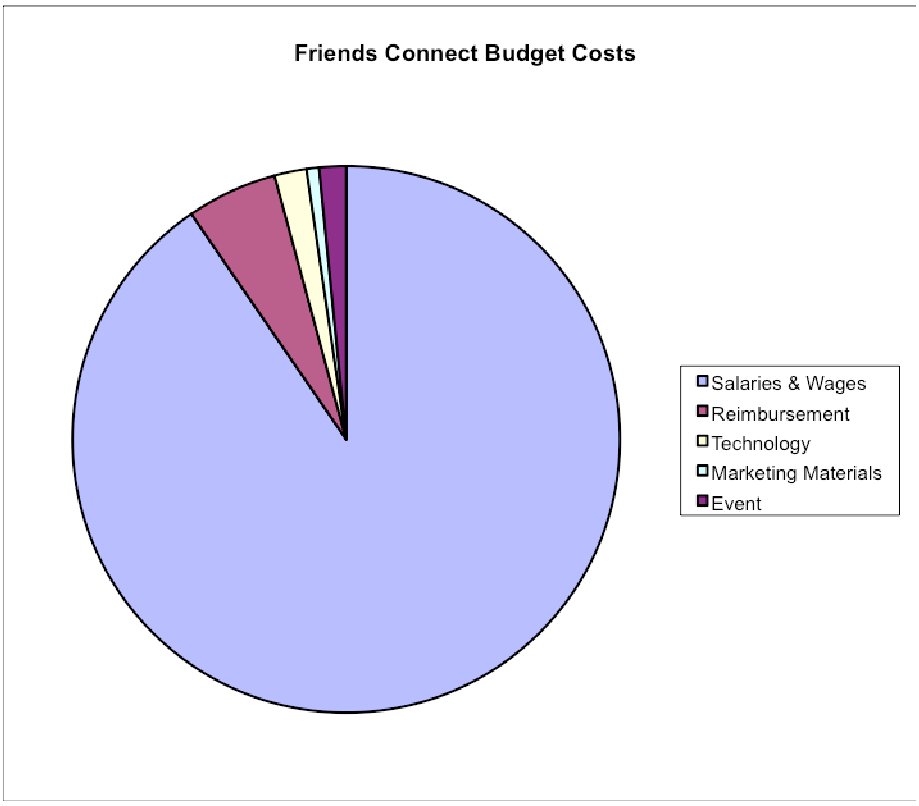

Figure A.1 Friends Connect Budget Chart

Yearly Evaluation of *Friends Connect*

1. **Information provided via homepage**

1 2 3 4 5

2. **Facilitation during discussion forums**

1 2 3 4 5

3. **Technological applications**

   a. **Discussion forums**

1 2 3 4 5

   b. **Blog entries**

1 2 3 4 5

4. **Events of the year**

   a. **Social gatherings**

1 2 3 4 5

   b. **Informational Lectures**

1 2 3 4 5

5. **How can this program be improved to better meet your needs?**

Final Evaluation of *Friends Connect*

1. **Discuss your first experience with Friends Connect.**

2. **Did the program improve or worsen from that point?**

3. **Have you enjoyed the program overall? Why or why not?**

4. **Name your favorite features of the program. Please explain.**

5. **Name your least favorite features of the program. Please explain.**

6. **Did the program meet your expectations?**

7. **Do you feel that you have formed lasting relationships among members? Why or why not?**

8. **Have you gained beneficial information from *Friends Connect*? Please discuss.**

9. **Would you be interested in a program for adults 26+ years of age?**

10. **Do you have any suggestions for future program development?**

We have enjoyed having you as apart of the Friends Connect family!
We wish you best of luck in the future!

APPENDIX B

THE REESE-JONES FOUNDATION GRANT APPLICATION

THE REES-JONES FOUNDATION

GRANT APPLICATION

I. Organization

Spina Bifida Association of North Texas
Holly Strother
4938 Oak Hollow Dr.
Grand Prairie, Texas 75052
682-559-1378
hollystrother@gmail.com

www.sbnorthtexas.org
www.friendsconnect.org

II. History of Organization

The Spina Bifida Association of Dallas (now Spina Bifida Association of North Texas (SBANT)) was born with the help of the Easter Seal Center staff and a very concerned orthopedist, Dr. Margaret Watkins. As the word got around SBANT was able to round up about thirty families for an organizational meeting on February 15, 1973 held at the Center.

SBANT provides an array of services not solely to individuals with Spina bifida (SB), but also to their families as well. The SBANT hotline provides information about SB and the services of the association. There is emergency assistance, which helps persons with SB financially in emergency situations. SBANT also provides parents' counseling for new and expectant parents' counseling. Summer camp occurs each June and SBANT sponsors a 6-day residential camp for children with SB ages 8 to 15. Family Camps are also sponsored each year, including a weekend of fun, relaxation and sharing for the whole family. Adult Retreat Weekend is committed to serving persons of all ages with SB, for a weekend each May. SBANT also has a scholarship program to persons pursuing post-high school education. There is a Horizon Newsletter SBANT publishes, which is a bi-monthly newsletter educating members, health professionals, educators and people interested in SB on the

news of SB and what the organization is currently doing. For many families living with SB in North Texas, Spanish is the primary language spoken. Recognizing this fact has led us to offer more services in Spanish. We believe families with children with SB benefit by periodically gathering and exchanging ideas. In addition to the holiday party in December, we generally hold an Easter Egg Hunt and a picnic for families with younger children during the year. It is especially beneficial for children with SB to meet other kids like them.

III. Program Description

a. Statement of Need

After assessing various local resources, and interviewing field experts, results find there is a lack of community, relational building and friendships within the community of young adults living with Spina bifida. This condition is a resultant of various external factors, such as: transportation issues and the inability to be actively involved in the community due to increasing health challenges.

b. Goals and Objectives

i. A program logic model can be found in Appendix B1.

Goal 1: To increase the sense of community and belonging among young adults living with Spina bifida in the Dallas/Fort Worth, Texas area.

Objective: By the end of the first program year, *Friends Connect* will have 20 registered and active members. Program Director will measure membership through the assessment of young adults within member database. Program Director will also measure activity among members through assessing the number of live chat participations, blog entries and comments.

Task 1: Create promotional flyers in order to enhance outreach efforts among various agencies that service young adults with Spina bifida.

Task 2: Build relations with 2 agencies that service young adults with Spina bifida, in hopes to increase membership and future collaboration within the community.

Task 3: Compile email list through the Spina Bifida Association of North Texas, in order to build membership clientele.

Goal 2: To offer the opportunity for young adults living with Spina bifida to make new and lasting friendships through the functions of the online support group (i.e. live chats, blogs, etc.).

Objective: By the designated start of the program, *Friends Connect* will have all online functions designed and ready for member use which will allot members the opportunity to meet fellow members. Information Technology (IT) Associate will measure each individual function's accessibility through the assessment of technological features of each function.

Task 1: IT Associate will build *Friends Connect* homepage.

Task 2: IT Associate will design the various functions within *Friends Connect* (i.e. live discussion forms and blogs)

Goal 3: To offer the opportunity for young adults living with Spina bifida to meet quarterly throughout the year, attending various events (i.e. social gatherings and informational lectures).

Objective: Program Director will have planned four events after one month from the start of the program; two social events and two informational lectures. Event participation will be measured by Program Director through assessing the number of members at each individual event.

Task 1: Survey members on social gatherings of interest to them, and what type of information would be most beneficial to their living with Spina bifida as young adults.

Task 2: Based on answers given, plan and develop two social gatherings.

Task 3: Based on answers given, seek expert lecturers on subject matter of interest among members and schedule date for event.

c. Services Offered

i. Informational Pages

Within the *Friends Connect* homepage, there will be various informational pages and links for members to navigate through that includes topics of different physical, cognitive or emotional issues concerning their disability. Information will be gathered from various medical resources and experts in the field of Spina bifida.

ii. Discussion Forums

The main service offered through *Friends Connect* would be the weekly discussion forums. The forums will be facilitated by a Licensed Professional Counselor, and discuss various issues of interest among members. Members will be encouraged to primarily support and lean on one another; however, the Facilitator will be there to traffic and control any inappropriate statements that may occur.

iii. Blog Entries

Blog entries will be available daily within *Friends Connect*. Each member will have the opportunity to write their own personal blog as often as they desire. Blog entries will be the outlet for members to connect on a more ongoing basis.

iv. Social Gatherings and Informational Lectures

Four different events will take place quarterly throughout each program year. Two of the events will be a social gathering (i.e. holiday party) and the other two will be an informational lecture (RE: Spina bifida) conducted by an expert in the field.

d. Target Population

The targeted population for *Friends Connect* is young adults (between the ages of 18-25) residing in north Texas (DFW area) who have Spina bifida. Participants would not be excluded

based on exterior or social reasons, such as Socio Economic Status. All who are eligible (RE: age and location) are invited to join.

IV. Budget Amount Requested

The *Friends Connect* program total budget request is: $44,829.80. This budget request includes Staff Salaries and Wages Costs, Reimbursement Costs, Technology Costs, Marketing Material Costs, and Event Costs.

Because the budget request is made up of the total project start-up costs, The Rees-Jones Foundation would assist in all areas of the budget. The grant awarded would allow the program to come into existence and assist in maintaining the program for the grant year. Should Reese-Jones decide to not fund the total amount of start-up costs, the foundation would assist in allowing the program to begin and manage effectively on the amounts given.

V. Other Grant Opportunities

Friends Connect is a new and innovative project, which is the precise reason developers, chose to apply to The Rees-Jones Foundation grant. Other opportunities *Friend Connect* is currently seeking: Community Foundation of North Texas and The Ethel Louise Armstrong Foundation.

VI. Program Budget

A line-item budget spreadsheet and chart can be located in Appendix B1.

a. Salaries and Wages Costs

The total salary budget is: $40,540.00, which includes three part-time positions. The Program Director salary totals at: $28,000.00 ($20 per hour) to administrate *Friends Connect* throughout program year. Program Director will only be required to work a total of 20 hours per week. The Group Facilitator salary totals at: $3,100.00 per year to facilitate on-line weekly discussions ($50 per hour), in addition to assisting at quarterly social and informational events and attending initial member interviews ($25 per hour). Group Facilitator will facilitate group member discussion one hour per week (4 hours per month), assist at quarterly events at a

maximum of two hours per event, and attend initial member interviews capping at 20 members the first program year, resulting in 20 extra paid hours ($500.00). The Information Technology (IT) Associate salary totals at: $8,640.00 per program year ($12 per hour). The IT Associate will be allowed to work a maximum of 15 hours per week, resulting in 60 hours worked per month.

Due to all staff being employed part-time, *Friends Connect* will not be responsible for health insurance or worker benefits.

b. Reimbursement Costs

Reimbursement costs total at: $2,400.00, including: mileage and cellular phone plans. Mileage for part-time staff to visit members and attend events will be reimbursed at $0.50 per mile with a total mileage budget cost at: $600.00 per program year. This total allots the Program Director and Group Facilitator each 600 miles to be utilized per program year, with a maximum budget at 1,200 miles per program year. Each staff member will be provided a cellular phone in order to accomplish various work tasks throughout the year. Budget allots for $50.00 cellular plans/per staff member each month, which totals at: $1,800 per program year.

c. Technology Costs

Technology costs total at: $850.00, with budget including: laptop/printer package (valued at Best Buy), the software program Microsoft Office 2007 (valued at Best Buy), and the software program SharePoint Designer, which has been donated to the *Friends Connect* program. The laptop/printer package is valued at: $550.00 (including tax), and Microsoft Office 2007 valued at: $300.00 (including tax).

Materials are vital to the *Friends Connect* program, for all technology start-up work will be done using the laptop by the IT Associate, in addition to maintaining member database information by the Program Director throughout program year, and finally to allow the Group Facilitator to facilitate online discussions through the use of this laptop. Microsoft Office 2007 will be needed in order to create marketing materials through Publisher and Word, to develop

member database through the use of Excel, and to create any information presentations for events through the use of PowerPoint.

d. Marketing Material Costs

Marketing material costs total at: $329.80 including: paper, printer ink cartridges, printing and duplicating services and stamps for mail-outs. Four 150-sheet packages of paper will be purchased for entire program year, totaling at: $35.00 (including tax, valued at Office Depot). Three ink cartridges will be purchased for entire program year, totaling at: $42.00 ($14/per cartridge, including tax, valued at Office Depot). 400 mail-outs will be issued per program year across four various same-interest clinics and agencies (100 mail-outs/per place marketed), which will total printing and duplicating costs at: $220.00 ($0.50/per sheet printed, including tax, valued at FedEx-Kinko's) per program year. Finally, four books of stamps will be purchased per year, totaling at $32.80 ($8.20/per book).

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Event costs for *Friends Connect* total at $710.00 per program year, including: $70 for an event with snacks ($3 per head), $240 for an event with dinner ($10 per head), $200 for two guest speakers ($50/ per two hour lecture) and $200 in taxi fees to transport members to events.

VII. Financial Plan of Duration

After creating enough community interest, *Friends Connect* also aspires to operate on corporate or individual donations and private foundation grants. In addition to applying for The Rees-Jones Foundation Grant *Friends Connect* has applied to The Community Foundation of North Texas and The Ethel Louise Armstrong Foundation. Through these various outlets, *Friends Connect* plans to sustain the funding needed to continue on in future program years.

VIII. Program Evaluation

a. Yearly Evaluation

At the end of each program year, the Program Director will administer online surveys for each member to complete. The survey will measure member reactions, through use of a Likert scale, to the different functions of the program such as: quality of information provided via homepage, quality of facilitation during discussion forums, quality of technological applications such as online discussion forums and blog entries, and finally quality of four different in person events throughout the year. In addition to these responses, the evaluation asks how the program might be improved to meet the needs of the member. The Program Director will then assess answers given by members and make suggested changes for the following program year. An example of the administered survey is found in Appendix B2.

b. Final Evaluation of Graduating Member

One week before graduation from *Friends Connect*, the Program Director will administer a final evaluation for the graduating member to fill out. The final evaluation will ask the graduating member a series of questions regarding their approval and appreciation of the program and finally will ask for any suggestions of improvement for the next generation of *Friends Connect* members. An example of the Evaluation Form is found in Appendix B3.

IX. Board of Directors

Robin Lee, *President*

Rita Selene, *Vice President*

Gaye Morrison, *Treasurer*

Jana Hardwick, *Secretary*

Kelly Ferguson, *SBAA Delegate*

In terms of project involvement, Robin Lee will be the one the Program Manager reports to on a bi-monthly basis, and to turn to if difficult situations come up. Gaye Morisson will track the monies, to keep the program accountable.

X. Qualification of Staff Involved in Program

SBANT does not have staff; they merely run on the time and support of volunteers. Once *Friends Connect* is funded, however, the one and only staff member will be the Program Manager. The Program Manager will be required to be a Licensed Master Social Worker.

XI. Organization's Current Operating Budget and Year-to-Date Financial Statement

XII. Additional Information:

a. Last Certified Audit

b. Copy of 501(c)(3) Status

Table B.1 Friends Connect Line-Item Budget

Budget Line-Item	***Program***
1. Salaries & Wages	
Program Director	$20/per hour
Group Facilitator	$50/per hour
Group Facilitator at Events and Interviews	$25/per hour
Information Technology Associate	$12/per hour
Total Salaries & Wages:	**$40,540.00**
2. Reimbursement	
Mileage	$0.50/per mile
Staff Cellular Phone Plans	$1,800
Total Reimbursement Costs:	**$2,400.00**
3. Technology Costs	
Laptop/Printer Package	$550.00
Microsoft Office 2007	$300.00
Sharepoint Designer	Donated
Total Technology Costs:	**$850.00**
4. Marketing Materials	
Paper	$35.00
Printer Cartridge(s)	$42.00
Printing & Duplicating	$220.00
Stamps	$32.80
Total Marketing Costs:	**$329.80**
5. Event Costs	
Event Location Cost	None
Food (Snacks Included)	$70.00
Food (Dinner Included)	$240
Speaker Stipends	$50/per hour
Transportation (Taxi Service)	$200
Total Event Costs:	**$710.00**
TOTAL COSTS:	**$44,829.80**

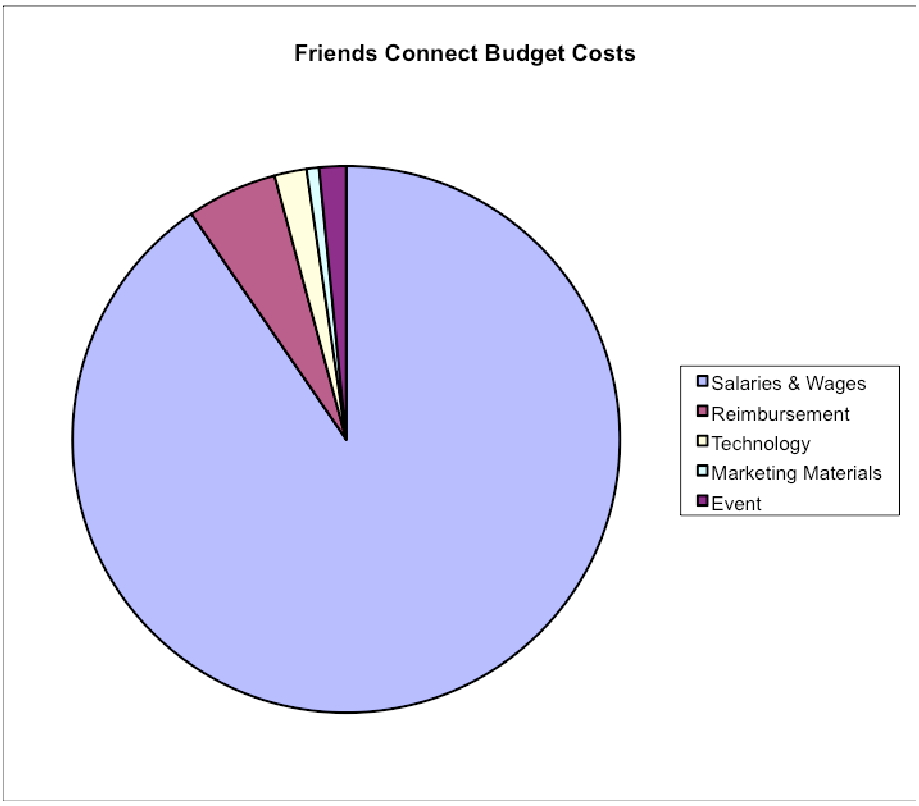

Figure B.1 Friends Connect Budget Chart

Yearly Evaluation of *Friends Connect*

6. Information provided via homepage

1 2 3 4 5

7. Facilitation during discussion forums

1 2 3 4 5

8. Technological applications

a. Discussion forums

1 2 3 4 5

b. Blog entries

1 2 3 4 5

9. Events of the year

a. Social gatherings

1 2 3 4 5

b. Informational Lectures

1 2 3 4 5

10. How can this program be improved to better meet your needs?

Final Evaluation of *Friends Connect*

11. **Discuss your first experience with Friends Connect.**

12. **Did the program improve or worsen from that point?**

13. **Have you enjoyed the program overall? Why or why not?**

14. **Name your favorite features of the program. Please explain.**

15. **Name your least favorite features of the program. Please explain.**

16. **Did the program meet your expectations?**

17. **Do you feel that you have formed lasting relationships among members? Why or why not?**

18. **Have you gained beneficial information from *Friends Connect*? Please discuss.**

19. **Would you be interested in a program for adults 26+ years of age?**

20. **Do you have any suggestions for future program development?**

We have enjoyed having you as apart of the Friends Connect family!
We wish you best of luck in the future!

APPENDIX C

THE ETHEL LOUISE ARMSTRONG FOUNDATION GRANT APPLICATION

The Ethel Louise Armstrong Foundation Grant

A. Summary

- **Purpose of Project**

The purpose of Friends Connect is to address the need within young adults with Spina bifida population: lack of emotional and social support. A logic model of the program design can be found in Appendix C1.

- **Amount of Grant Requested**

The *Friends Connect* program total budget request is: $44,829.80. This budget request includes staff salaries and wages, reimbursement, technology, marketing material and event costs.

- **How Project will change the face of Disability in the Community**

Friends Connect will provide a service to the disability population, that no other known organization has tried to provide within the North Texas area. *Friends Connect* will act as a supplement to emotional and social support for these young adults with disabilities, and hopefully serve as a role model to other disability organizations. It is the dream of *Friends Connect* to kick off an idea on the local level, and as the program becomes a success, expand to the national level and even international. *Friends Connect* believes the services provided would meet not only the emotional and social needs of this population, but as resources permit and services expand, the emotional and social needs of any person living with a disability.

- **Population Served**

The target population consists of any and all young adults with Spina bifida who live in the Dallas/Fort Worth, Texas area. The program goal is to reach as many of these young adults as possible.

- **Expected Outcomes**

The expected outcome of Friends Connect is to enhance the lives of young adults living with Spina bifida, through offering free online emotional and social support to them daily. The

program hopes to reach them on their level and provide a safe place to be who you are, where the other members' often understand the different challenges and opportunities this disability can bring on.

- **Program Target Dates**

There are no particular program target dates at this time. As soon as the program is funded, it will begin development and implementation.

- **Evaluation Plan**

    - Yearly Evaluation

At the end of each program year, the Program Director will administer online surveys for each member to complete. The survey will measure member reactions, through use of a Likert scale, to the different functions of the program such as: quality of information provided via homepage, quality of facilitation during discussion forums, quality of technological applications such as online discussion forums and blog entries, and finally quality of four different in person events throughout the year. In addition to these responses, the evaluation asks how the program might be improved to meet the needs of the member. The Program Director will then assess answers given by members and make suggested changes for the following program year. An example of the administered survey is found in Appendix C2.

    - Final Evaluation of Graduating Member

One week before graduation from *Friends Connect*, the Program Director will administer a final evaluation for the graduating member to fill out. The final evaluation will ask the graduating member a series of questions regarding their approval and appreciation of the program and finally will ask for any suggestions of improvement for the next generation of *Friends Connect* members. An example of the Evaluation Form is found in Appendix C3.

B. Financial Information

- **Program Budget**

A line item budget and chart can be found in Appendix C4.

- Salary and Wage Expenses

The total salary budget is: $40,540.00, which includes three part-time positions. The Program Director salary totals at: $28,000.00 ($20 per hour) to administrate *Friends Connect* throughout program year. Program Director will only be required to work a total of 20 hours per week. The Group Facilitator salary totals at: $3,100.00 per year to facilitate on-line weekly discussions ($50 per hour), in addition to assisting at quarterly social and informational events and attending initial member interviews ($25 per hour). Group Facilitator will facilitate group member discussion one hour per week (4 hours per month), assist at quarterly events at a maximum of two hours per event, and attend initial member interviews capping at 20 members the first program year, resulting in 20 extra paid hours ($500.00). The Information Technology (IT) Associate salary totals at: $8,640.00 per program year ($12 per hour). The IT Associate will be allowed to work a maximum of 15 hours per week, resulting in 60 hours worked per month.

Due to all staff being employed part-time, *Friends Connect* will not be responsible for health insurance or worker benefits.

- Reimbursement Expenses

Reimbursement costs total at: $2,400.00, including: mileage and cellular phone plans. Mileage for part-time staff to visit members and attend events will be reimbursed at $0.50 per mile with a total mileage budget cost at: $600.00 per program year. This total allots the Program Director and Group Facilitator each 600 miles to be utilized per program year, with a maximum budget at 1,200 miles per program year. Each staff member will be provided a cellular phone in order to accomplish various work tasks throughout the year. Budget allots for $50.00 cellular plans/per staff member each month, which totals at: $1,800 per program year.

- Technology Expenses

Technology costs total at: $850.00, with budget including: laptop/printer package (valued at Best Buy), the software program Microsoft Office 2007 (valued at Best Buy), and the software program SharePoint Designer, which has been donated to the *Friends Connect* program. The laptop/printer package is valued at: $550.00 (including tax), and Microsoft Office 2007 valued at: $300.00 (including tax).

Materials are vital to the *Friends Connect* program, for all technology start-up work will be done using the laptop by the IT Associate, in addition to maintaining member database information by the Program Director throughout program year, and finally to allow the Group Facilitator to facilitate online discussions through the use of this laptop. Microsoft Office 2007 will be needed in order to create marketing materials through Publisher and Word, to develop member database through the use of Excel, and to create any information presentations for events through the use of PowerPoint.

- Marketing Material Expenses

Marketing material costs total at: $329.80 including: paper, printer ink cartridges, printing and duplicating services and stamps for mail-outs. Four 150-sheet packages of paper will be purchased for entire program year, totaling at: $35.00 (including tax, valued at Office Depot). Three ink cartridges will be purchased for entire program year, totaling at: $42.00 ($14/per cartridge, including tax, valued at Office Depot). 400 mail-outs will be issued per program year across four various same-interest clinics and agencies (100 mail-outs/per place marketed), which will total printing and duplicating costs at: $220.00 ($0.50/per sheet printed, including tax, valued at FedEx-Kinko's) per program year. Finally, four books of stamps will be purchased per year, totaling at $32.80 ($8.20/per book).

All materials discussed are vital to effectively marketing *Friends Connect* among the various clinics and agencies within the Dallas/Fort Worth, Texas area. Materials costs also

considered and budgeted for any needed information to be printed by staff throughout program year.

- Event Expenses

Event costs for *Friends Connect* total at $710.00 per program year, including: $70 for an event with snacks ($3 per head), $240 for an event with dinner ($10 per head), $200 for two guest speakers ($50/ per two hour lecture) and $200 in taxi fees to transport members to events.

- **Funding Plan and Other Funding Sources**

After creating enough community interest, *Friends Connect* also aspires to operate on corporate or individual donations and private foundation grants. In addition to applying for The Rees-Jones Foundation Grant *Friends Connect* has applied to The Community Foundation of North Texas and The Ethel Louise Armstrong Foundation. Through these various outlets, *Friends Connect* plans to sustain the funding needed to continue on in future program years.

- **Organizational Budget**
- **Audited Financial Statement**

C. <u>Attachments</u>

- **US 501(c)(3) Letter**
- **Printed Materials: Annual Report, Organization Brochure, Newspaper articles, etc.**
- **ADA verification of Compliance**
- **Emergency Preparedness Plan**
- **List of Donors to Organization**
- **List of Board of Directors**

Robin Lee, *President*

Rita Selene, *Vice President*

Gaye Morrison, *Treasurer*

Jana Hardwick, *Secretary*

Yearly Evaluation of *Friends Connect*

11. Information provided via homepage

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13. Technological applications

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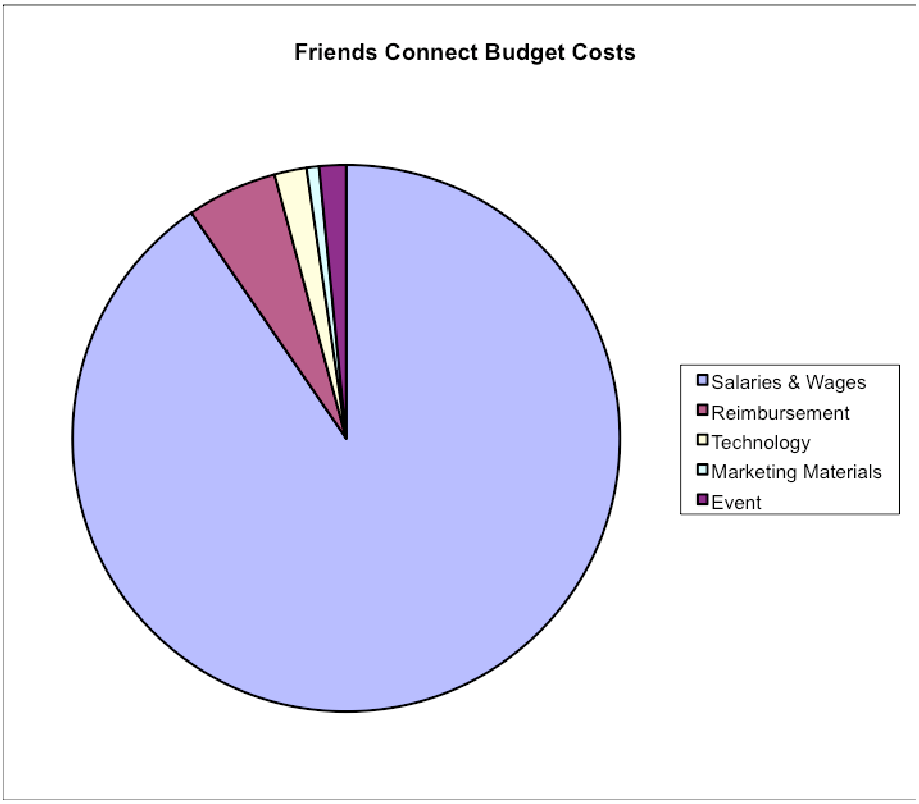

Figure C.1 Friends Connect Budget Chart

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BIOGRAPHICAL INFORMATION

Holly Strother has her Bachelors of Arts in Psychology and Sociology from Dallas Baptist University, and will have obtained her Masters of Science in Social Work by December 13, 2008. Her interests and passions lie with the disability population, and hopes to someday research the emotional and social condition of young adults with Spina bifida. While Holly enjoys working with many diverse populations, her ultimate career goal is to build emotional and social support programs for people with disabilities and their families. Throughout this Thesis process, she has been able to develop a Pilot Program similar to this goal, and plans to work toward obtaining funding for it in the next two years.