Engaging Experiential Service Learning Through a Co-Curricular Club: The Chase Charlie Races

by Lawrence W. Judge, Ball State University, Muncie, IN; David Pierce, Ball State University, Muncie, IN; Jeffrey Petersen, Baylor University, Waco, TX; David Bellar, University of Louisiana at Lafayette, Lafayette, LA; Elizabeth Wanless, Ball State University, Muncie, IN; Erin Gilreath, Indiana State University, Terre Haute, IN and Laura Simon, Ball State University, Muncie, IN

Abstract

The efficacy of the *Chase Charlie Races* (an experiential learning activity) was demonstrated via program assessment. This was achieved via post-event evaluations of race participants and student club members, and with fitness assessments of 76 elementary students who participated in an eight-week training program. Paired sample t-tests revealed significant differences between the pre-test (M = 11.9 laps, SD = 7.3) and post-test (M = 21.3 laps, SD = 11.5) scores $t = 9.504$, $p < .001$. Beneficial outcomes from this learning experience were identified for stakeholders including the students, faculty sponsors, the co-curricular club, the university, and the community.

Key words: event planning, sport administration

Introduction

As the relatively young academic discipline of sport management continues to seek credibility from the academic community and sport practitioners, the conversion from theoretical knowledge in the classroom to practical applications in the work environment resounds as a meaningful area of study for sport management educators (Cuneen & Parks, 2001; Danylchuk & Boucher, 2003; Pitts, 2001). Sport industry practitioners have noted that a student's field experience is the most important part of their academic training (Petersen & Pierce, 2009). Through this type of experience, theory and practice are fused by bestowing students with knowledge, critical thinking skills, and expertise before sending them out into the industry (Cuneen & Parks, 1997). Theoretical considerations of experiential learning in sport management have developed over nearly 15 years (Gladden & McDonald, 1999; Pauline & Pauline, 2008; Southall, Dick, & VanStone, 2008; Southall, Nagel, LeGrande, & Han, 2003;).

Parkhouse (2001) identified two types of experiential learning activities: non-discrete and discrete. Non-discrete activities are extensions or components of a specific academic course or program. Southall et al. (2003) identified several non-discrete applications in sport management such as field projects, field trips, interviews, site visits, and role play activities. Discrete activities are self-contained and constitute a separate entity from the traditional on-campus educational setting. Discrete learning within the sport industry setting allows sport management students to make the connection between cognitive classroom theories and concrete sport management experiences. Examples of discrete learning experiences include cooperative education, field study, internships, and service learning programs (Parkhouse, 2001).

Service learning is a method of teaching where students apply their academic skills and knowledge to address real-life needs in their own communities. Service learning is a pedagogical strategy that facilitates a student's growth in academics, social maturity, critical thinking, communication, collaboration, and leadership skills (Meyer, Hofschire, & Billing, 2004). This educational opportunity possesses enormous potential to move higher education in the direction of civic involvement by taking the classroom into the community. Service learning includes an intentional and structured educational/developmental component for students, and is most typically employed in curricular settings for academic credit. However, service learning opportunities can also be implemented in co-curricular settings. Co-curricular activities are school sponsored activities or clubs that are another part of the educational process that exist outside the realm of credit-driven courses, internships, or other field-based practicum. Cocurricular clubs formed around various academic majors is a common element within undergraduate education. The co-curricular club program can be viewed as a training ground for participation in fundamentally similar organizations such as professionals (Hlebowitsh & Wraga, 1998). Clubs have the capacity to underpin the goal of teaching students to be responsible via the implementation of learning opportunities that develop character, critical thinking, social skills, and talents (National Association of Secondary School Principals, 1996). As such, the utilization of a sport management club to engage students in service learning can assist in the achievement of valuable outcomes for the students, the faculty, the university as a whole, and the community at large.

The *Chase Charlie Races* are an example of a specific community-centered service learning initiative with an innovative approach to educating sport management students by combining experiential learning and service learning in a co-curricular club sponsored activity. The *Chase Charlie Races*, organized by a Midwest State University Sport Administration Club, is an annual community event in a small Midwestern city, founded in 2000 to promote fitness and wellness in the face of growing childhood obesity rates. The event includes three race components: the *5K run, walk, or roll* for all ages; a 1 mile run for youth 13 and under called the *Mile Mania*; and the *Kiddie 100*, a 100-yard dash for children 8 and under racing the university mascot across the game field during halftime (Pauline & Pauline, 2007).

Teaching event management skills to future sport administrators is the professors' primary concern as the *Chase Charlie Races* event is designed to help the students to apply the managerial concepts they learn in a variety of sport administration courses. Equipping students with hands-on experience is imperative to preparing students for success in the field. When hands-on experiences can add value for the faculty sponsors, the university, and community in addition to the students, then the impact of the program is magnified. The purpose of this paper is to present the *Chase Charlie Races* project as a model pedagogical strategy that can assist sport management educators when applied in various settings to achieve broad educational objectives. Although currently applied

within a sport management setting, this methodology could have broad applications across many disciplines seeking to impact their communities in the areas of fitness and wellness, and to combat the growing trend of obesity. Beneficial outcomes will be examined for each stakeholder group including the students engaged in the project, the faculty sponsors providing project guidance and oversight, the co-curricular club responsible for managing the project, the university, and community members participating in the event.

Method

Participants

Three groups of participants were examined in this paper: students in the co-curricular club responsible for implementing the service learning project, community members participating in the *Chase Charlie Races*, and children participating in the after-school running program. There were 72 university students ranging in ages from 18 to 23 (M = 20.27, SD = 1.69) involved in the service learning project that were divided into 7 working subgroups (see Table 1). There were 277 participants competing in the 5K race ranging in ages from 11 to 65 (M = 30, SD = 13). A total of 82% came from the local county (home of the university) and there was a 57% female participation rate. Additionally, 76 children from the university laboratory elementary school participated in the after-school program, with ages ranging from 9 to 11(M = 9.70, SD = 0.58), with a 58% male participation rate.

Instrumentation

The *Chase Charlie* 5k race was evaluated across three spectrums. First, survey instrument I was distributed to race participants after the conclusion of the event. Survey instrument I contained 14 questions each written at an elementary school reading level. Of the 14 questions 12 were multiple choice questions: two questions acquired demographic information (age and gender), four items assessed previous exercise activity, four questions assessed participants' opinions regarding race effectiveness, and two questions assessed participants' opinions according to educational opportunities related to wellness and healthy active lifestyles. Two questions were open-ended. The first asked participants about perceived drawbacks and how they might change the race for the future, while the second assessed perceived benefits from the race. Content validity was established in two ways. The survey was reviewed by experts for clarity and construction of the questions, and only minor editing was required to improve the clarity of the questions. Wording of the questions was designed to include descriptive information to counteract against misunderstanding of key terminology. Response choices were similarly worded to maximize participant comprehension; previous research using similar questions did not reveal any difficulty with participant comprehension.

Second, survey instrument II was distributed to 10 students in the leadership group of the co-curricular club. Survey instrument II contained seven items (see Table 2). Components of the evaluation led students to examine the success of the event, analyze the results of the post-event survey, and compare and contrast their real-life experience with the theoretical knowledge that they previously obtained in sports administration classes.

Third, the *Chase Charlie Mile Mania* after-school running program was evaluated via a traditional pre-test and post-test protocols via the PACER (Progressive Aerobic Cardiovascular Endurance Run) test. The PACER test, also known as the multi-stage fitness test, is used to assess cardiovascular fitness via a test of an athlete's VO_2 max or aerobic capacity. Athletes jog and/ or run between two points that are 20 meters apart to a set of synchronized beeps at intervals that gradually decrease (Welk & Meredith, 2008). The highest level attained before failing to keep

Table 1. ***Student Groups and Responsibilities for the Chase Charlie Races***

Group	Pre-Race	During Race	Post-Race
Marketing	Implement strategies to reach target markets: students, local schools, past participants, local community	Help course marshals	Help tabulate post-race surveys
Sponsorship and Fundraising	Solicit sponsorship and gifts for participants	Sponsor fulfillment	Thank sponsors and contributing businesses
Registration	Database management, create registration bags	Walk-up and pre-registration process	Prepare database for next year, final report on participation stats
Operations	Road closure, staffing assignments, race course design, acquire supplies	Starting line, on-course directions, signage and banners finish line, timing and results	Cleanup, awards distribution, food and drink
Financial Management	Create budget, monitor budget, deposit funds, reimburse expenses	Collect walk-up registration fees, deposit cash and checks	Create final financial statement
Public Relations	Update website, press release, public service announcement, coordinate media appearances	Photography	Press release, update web with race results, post-race surveys
Creative Services	Web design, registration brochures branding, t-shirt design, signage, awards/trophy design	Distribute nutritional information and athlete training tips	Answer any follow-up emails from participants

Table 2. ***Summary of the Student Evaluation Questions to Assess Student's Perception of the Event Management Experience***

1.) Did you apply concepts you learned in class when managing Chase Charlie?
2.) Do you feel the experience you gained in managing Chase Charlie will apply to future career opportunities?
3.) Would you feel comfortable in an event planning management position following graduation?
4.) Give an example when you used critical thinking to solve a problem that arose during Chase Charlie?
5.) In what ways is having the club operate Chase Charlie beneficial for students in the Sport Administration program?
6.) What could be changed to make Chase Charlie a more valuable learning experience?
7.) How many total hours did you spend working on Chase Charlie this year?

pace with the beep tempo is recorded as the score for that test.

Procedures

The timeline to plan both the *Chase Charlie Races* as well as the *Mile Mania* after-school running program began in January and February of 2009 when faculty members involved with the project sought internal (associated with the university) and external grant funding opportunities. Through March, April, May, and June faculty members wrote and submitted grants to aid in funding race and after-school program materials. The *Chase Charlie Races* have obtained past grant funding from sources such as: Campus Compact, State Association for Health, Physical Education, Recreation and Dance; Ball Brothers Foundation, and the ING/ NASPE Run for Something Better. This project has garnered six separate grants with a mean value of $2,447 per grant.

In the first week of June, faculty met with Sport Administration club officers to discuss both upcoming projects. Faculty and students established a critical task analysis for the *Chase Charlie Races* and the after-school program. October 16th was set as the official race day and the full club membership would begin planning the *Chase Charlie Races* at the beginning of the fall term eight weeks prior to the race day. The after-school running program was also planned to be eight weeks long in duration. In this initial planning session, both faculty and club officers visited county elementary schools to develop connections with physical education teachers and principals interested in the project.

On June 15-25, faculty visited the American College of Sports Medicine (ACSM) and National Institute of Fitness and Sport (NIFS) in Indianapolis to review literature and discuss after-school program design. During the last week of June, faculty selected the running program host school (University Laboratory Elementary School), finalized program goals in conjunction with school input, developed instructional strategies, assessment forms, initial marketing and participant recruitment signage.

Beginning in July and continuing through September, students from the Sport Administration Club solicited local sponsorships for the *Chase Charlie Races*. On July 21, faculty met with the Lab School physical education teacher and principal to review all draft materials for the after-school running program.

In August, faculty obtained racecourse approval and road closures. The Sport Administration Club also met and developed 7 sub-committees in order to cover the race planning (see Table 1). In the first week of August for the after-school program, faculty developed the common teaching/training modules for Sport Administration students administering the project. Starting August 8-13, faculty members finalized all program materials with the host school personnel and obtained final review and approval of all program and marketing components. From August 1418, faculty conducted university student training in order to ensure an effective program implementation. On August 20, students and faculty opened the "Elementary School Student Participant & Parent Meeting" to conduct final sign-ups, program participant orientation, and to obtain permission forms/waivers for all participants and parents. On August 23rd, Sport Administration students launched the program at the Lab school (four times a week for eight weeks) and also conducted the initial pre-test PACER fitness assessment. Seventy-six students participated in an eight-week training program. The training sessions included a combination of various fitness activities, games and running workouts. During the workout sessions, the boys and girls participated in a variety of running activities that utilized a game or a team goal. For example, sessions to build cardiovascular endurance such as the "10-minute turkey trot" or the "buddy run" were interspersed with sessions to build flexibility or speed and agility such as "run and stretch" or "steal the pin" or "the cone game".

In September, Sport Administration Club students established the *Chase Charlie Race* event budget, continued soliciting sponsorships, began to accept online and paper registration for the race, implemented public relations and marketing, and recruited additional volunteers within the club to help with event operations. Students also continued to administer the after-school running program to the laboratory elementary students.

In October, Sport Administration students continued the race projects started in September, but also purchased and obtained donations for race supplies. During this time, students continued to implement the after-school running program and began to register the after-school running program participants for the *Mile Mania* portion of the *Chase Charlie Races*. On October 16, Sport Administration students as well as faculty conducted the 2009 *Chase Charlie Races* and *Mile Mania* for community registrants and after-school running program participants. The survey instrument hyper-link was distributed via flyers to all race participants and a follow-up email was sent to race participants that had registered their email addresses. The introductory email explained the purpose of the study and provided the hyperlink to the web-based informed consent and survey instrument. Survey instrument II was administered to the student and faculty participants post-race. On October 25, final PACER fitness testing was conducted for those participating in the after-school program. The researchers' University Institutional Review Boards approved all of the procedures.

November responsibilities included event settlement and wrap-up. Inventory and final finances were assessed and running program awards were distributed to the laboratory school students. Faculty

sponsors of the event also reported results to grant agencies.

Data Analysis

A mixed methods approach was employed to analyze the data. Descriptive statistics were used to analyze multiple-choice components of survey instrument I. Paired sample *t*-tests were employed to analyze PACER fitness data retrieved from the after-school running program. Open-ended responses from both survey instruments were analyzed with the qualitative method of content analysis (Krippendorff, 1980; Tritschler, 2000). This content analysis included response review, identification of themes, and classification of responses according to the identified themes thereby giving voice to the viewpoints expressed regarding the *Chase Charlie Races*. This qualitative data adds further depth of discovery regarding key issues surrounding the event. Quantitative analyses were conducted with a modern statistical software package (SPSS version 17.0 for Macintosh). Statistical significance for all analyses was established a priori at alpha < . 05.

Results

The effectiveness of the *Chase Charlie Races* was demonstrated via program assessment. This was achieved via post-event evaluations of race participants (survey instrument I), fitness assessments of 76 elementary students who participated in an eight-week training program (PACER), and a survey of club members participating in the project (survey instrument II). Survey instrument I administered to *Chase Charlie Race* participants drew a 38.2% response rate. The event marketing feedback revealed that 37% initiated entry due to flyers and 32.9% heard from personal/friend invitation. Of the race participants, 28% were repeat participants from prior years, 23.8% were participating in an organized run or walk for the first time and 88.9% would either definitely or likely participate in the event again. The highest number of racers (41.8%) suggested including a health/wellness fair associated with the race, 29.9% suggested formal exercise classes, 20.9% suggested fitness/wellness web resources, 19.4% suggested informal exercise groups, and 11.9% suggested additional fitness/wellness brochures or booklets.

Seventy-six students participated in an eight-week program that included pre-training and post-event fitness testing via the 20-meter version of the PACER test (Table 3). Paired sample t-tests revealed significant differences between the pre-test (M = 11.9 laps, *SD* = 7.3) and post-test (*M* = 21.3 laps, *SD* = 11.5) scores *t* = 9.504, *p* < .001. Based upon the Fitness Gram standard (Welk & Meredith, 2008), the male participants were below the healthy fitness zone for the PACER assessment at the beginning of the training period and progressed into the middle of the healthy fitness zone by post-event (pre: *M* = 12.9 laps, *SD* = 9.0; post: *M* = 24.2 laps, *SD* = 13.9). The female participants progressed from the very bottom of the healthy fitness zone towards the middle by post-event (pre: *M* = 11.8 laps, *SD* = 7.0; post: *M* = 15.5 laps, *SD* = 7.5). Although the males demonstrated greater increases in PACER performance during the training, both genders' changes were independently significant (*t* = 4.6, *p* < .001).

Table 3. ***PACER Test Data Summary and Paired t-Test Results***

Item	Pretest Score	Post Test Score
Number of Pairs	76	
Mean	11.9	21.3
Standard Deviation	7.3	11.5
Difference in Means	9.4	
t - value	9.504	
Degrees of Freedom	75	
Significance	>.001	

Qualitatively, five themes emerged from the combination of open-ended questions from both survey instruments. Students, faculty, co-curricular clubs, university/schools, and community participants represent the five stakeholders benefiting from this type of service learning project. Components of the evaluation led students to examine the success of the event, analyze the results of the post-event survey, and compare and contrast their real-life experience with the theoretical knowledge that they previously obtained in sport administration classes. The ways in which the students benefitted in their own words are presented in the discussion section.

Discussion

Program Evaluation

The efficacy of a learning experience like the *Chase Charlie Races* or any experiential learning activity must be demonstrated via program assessment and evaluation. The *Chase Charlie Races* are assessed and evaluated in several different ways. This evaluation process was completed using several direct measures such as: results of the PACER test, event participation levels, participant feedback and surveys, external funding support via grants and sponsorship, and feedback from the club member event volunteers and leaders. The PACER test is possibly the most commonly used endurance fitness test conducted around the world and can be used to gauge the effectiveness of the *"Chase Charlie Races"* preparation program. Based upon the Fitness Gram standard, the male participants were below the healthy fitness zone for the PACER assessment at the beginning of the training period and progressed into the middle of the healthy fitness zone by the end of the program (Welk & Meredith, 2008). The female participants progressed from the very bottom of the healthy fitness zone towards the middle of the zone at the conclusion of the program. Although the males demonstrated greater increases in PACER performance during the training, both genders' changes (improvements) were independently significant. The *"Chase Charlie Races"* preparation program not only physically prepared participants for the race but also educated participants on important health and fitness issues. This educational component was positively reflected in post event survey results as the running program and race participants played a significant role in the evaluation. To close the feedback loop, it is important to examine how the participants of the *Chase Charlie Races* felt about the overall experience and how participation numbers compared with estimated numbers or past events.

Every race finisher was asked to fill out an online questionnaire evaluating the experience on topics such as the experience, value, importance, and repeat attendance expectations. The online post-event participant survey served as an important teaching tool for

faculty mentors and provided key management insights for the student leaders of the club. The post-event survey data described above demonstrates some of the key applications for event improvement via assessment and evaluation.

Not only did the race participant evaluation measures offer great feedback to improve the *Chase Charlie Races* and to increase future participation, but the professors involved with the project also used the post-race evaluation as a learning tool for the students. The professors met with the club executive board and had a debriefing meeting following the event. Many of the administrative decisions that were made regarding the event were compared with the results of the post-race survey. Specific areas such as advertising, marketing strategy, target market, race day administration, sponsor gift bags, health and fitness educational materials and overall participant satisfaction were compared to the participant's post-race survey and the concepts taught in the classroom.

Student Benefits

In order to directly assess the impact of this event on the students and student leaders, a post-event survey was developed to allow for reflective thinking and writing about the project. The general responses to the student leader post-event evaluation were also supported in prior studies. Furco (2002) found differences on the formulation of career plans and emphasis on finding a career that was personally satisfying and/or beneficial to others between the service-learning and service groups and the non-participants. This service learning experience indeed demonstrated positive impact on the future paths of students participating in the project. Students commented:

> I most definitely feel that the experience I have gained through *Chase Charlie* will benefit me in future career endeavors. In this industry, any experience you can gain is extremely valuable, and I feel the experience gained through *Chase Charlie* will be extremely valuable moving forward in my career;

> "Yes, I think this experience is more than a resume builder. It was a great experience for me and will allow me to execute future events;" and

> There are several reasons *Chase Charlie* is beneficial for club members. It gives us work experience that cannot be gained in the classroom. In this industry, immersive learning and relative work experience is key to moving forward in the industry.

According to Milner (1995), consumer based projects or events provide students a more actively comprehensive learning experience than role playing or simulated learning approaches. This proved to be the case for the 75 sport administration club students utilized throughout the course of planning and implementing the *Chase Charlie Races*. First, the students benefited from working in a fully authentic project that was completely implemented by the co-curricular club organization. As a voluntary co-curricular based experience, the level of motivation and ownership for the student organizers was very high, and likely much greater than if mandated via a course-based project; therefore, the level of engagement and positive learning outcomes were enhanced. The co-curricular setting also provided the opportunity for freshman and other underclassman to become directly involved in the event operations for multiple years and allowed upperclassman the opportunity to assume leadership roles within the event. Student leaders developed skills in the delegation of work responsibilities under the guidance of faculty mentors in the areas of marketing, community outreach, fundraising, sponsorship, public relations, creative services, operations, and registration. Students commented:

> It allows people in the club to get involved outside of class and receive some event management experience. I like how we split into the only groups that would give people something to do (like fundraising and marketing) at the beginning of the semester, and waiting until closer to the event when we split into groups for operations and registration. I think it makes them feel like they're actually helping out when they're given a task to be responsible for, whether it's hanging up fliers, looking for donors, or being a directional person on the racecourse.

> "The most rewarding experience of the project for me was when I saw the t-shirt and saw sheriff Goslin's logo on the back. That was the sponsorship that I got for the race."

> "I got to gain some experience doing things that are not usually offered by a college course and to sell and purpose sponsorships as well as work event day operations."

> I have learned that I enjoy trying to sell things. When I went to different hotels it was fun for me because I think of it as a challenge. I hope to learn more about the art of selling and see if I have a knack for it that I want to.

> "Seeing my hard work on the T-shirt design come to life and seeing people a day or two later wearing the shirt knowing that I made it."

Students also benefited from operating within a realistic community sport setting; the activities and skills developed directly relate to what many students will face in their future internships or careers. For example, students worked in small functional groups led by a student who also served as a member of the sport administration club executive board. All of the students in the sport administration club were allowed to choose the group they wanted to work with. The largest and most popular group was the operations group, which included approximately 40 students. Each one of the students worked with group members in a collaborative effort to prepare their assigned tasks for the upcoming event. Each of the five group leaders were charged with organizing the tasks for each member, and the leaders prepared and delivered progress reports at weekly executive board meetings of the club. For example, one of the tasks of the marketing and promotion group was to develop the marketing plan that would be used by the club for the event. This group work environment simulated the realistic climate of a sport-marketing firm working for a client. The student group was responsible for the creation and implementation of a marketing plan that was used to market the event to the university,

local community and the surrounding metropolitan area.

The students also benefited from the highly interactive roles with key leaders including the advising professors, the administrators within the university athletic department, and educational and civic leaders in the community. These professor and leader/administrator roles become less distinct and separate and can often develop more into a mentorship role within these types of learning environments (Southall et al., 2003). When professors and students work together on a project instead of restricting their relationship to teaching and learning, the relationships are then enhanced upon returning to the classroom setting. This again benefits the student and student-learning process. Students commented:

> "I like how we had the freedom to get tasks done the way we wanted to"
>
> "Working with a professor outside of class was a new experience"
>
> We are responsible for every aspect of the event. It gives us the chance to take charge, to delegate, to get the behind the scenes look at things. If something goes wrong, we have to work with the professors to figure a way to fix it.

As Overton and Malinauskas (2007) concluded, the implementation of service learning into the sport management curriculum is one avenue that enables students to experience the internal operations of a sport organization and be an avenue of preparation for their internship. Students deepened their social interaction skills by working in a team setting for this experiential program. Furco (2002) found significant differences between service and service-learning participants and nonparticipants on all measures of ethics, with far more positive ratings for those who participate in service or service-learning. It is expected that similar outcomes from an ethical decision-making perspective would be developed with the student participants in this event. Students additionally benefitted from the project by leveraging this "real world" experience into a resume enhancement, as several students in the program said this experiential service-learning project was added as a prominent entry to their resumes.

Faculty Benefits

The faculty involved with the project took an ambitious approach to teaching within this project by moving outside the traditional curriculum and launching this community-based service-learning project through a co-curricular club. This experiential service-learning project was developed to establish and enhance relationships with the community. As a result, the faculty created strong connections with school principals throughout the county, with coaches and physical education teachers within six school districts, and with leaders in the local YMCA. These relationships opened the door to sustain this particular project and to provide a foundation to establish future ventures.

By anchoring this learning experience in a real-world project, it naturally served to pull participating faculty members in the direction of functional and conceptual integration. Indeed, over and beyond such integration, it promoted new opportunities for dialogue among disciplinary participants. Enhanced collegiality and communication amongst the educational leaders involved created an additional benefit for the faculty in the use of service-learning programs.

This methodology creates a new and energizing service-learning environment where the faculty involved will continually modify and enhance teaching methods to meet the student and project needs (Swanson, & Gwinner, 2008). In this type of program, the faculty sponsors typically become a facilitator through five roles: setting a positive learning climate, clarifying the learner(s) purposes, organizing the learning resources, balancing intellectual and emotional learning components, and sharing thoughts and feeling with learners without dictating attitudes and beliefs (Rogers & Freiberg, 1994). The project also fostered the development of a strong professional relationship between the faculty sponsors and the primary contacts of the athletic department. For example, the *Chase Charlie Races* nurtured a strong working relationship between the faculty sponsors and leaders of the Ball State University athletic department including assistant athletic director for operations, director of facilities, director of marketing, and the director of ticket sales. The working relationships fostered dialogue that enhanced the faculty sponsors' knowledge base for this and other industry segments. Additionally, this experiential program created an avenue for pedagogical research in the growing area of sport management education. The launch of the *Sport Management Education Journal* in 2007 demonstrates the increased interest and value of these pedagogical lines of scholarship within the field of sport management.

Due to the nature of this event as community service seeking to impact the obesity issue, there were many opportunities to obtain external grant funding. This benefitted faculty sponsors in developing grant writing and grant management experience. As a student-led service learning community event, additional corporate sponsorship funding opportunities also arose from the races. This funding allowed for reduced cost event entry fees and for the generation of event profits to fund other club or academic opportunities as well as to provide charitable contribution to community organizations aligned with the event goals. Reducing the cost of participation was important during tough economic times. Eighty percent of the participants in the *Chase Charlie Races* were from the city in which the University was based where the personal per capita income in 2010 was $26,825 and 29.2% of the students received food stamps (Indiana Quick Facts, 2010). As the opportunities for outside funding and resource development in the academic field of sport management are typically quite limited and competitive, it remains challenging for faculty to meet this job expectation in a research-focused institution (Pauline & Pauline, 2008). The *Chase Charlie Races* aided faculty pursuit for grant-funded projects by initiating a revenue stream that proved vital to the overall scholarly productivity of the faculty leaders.

Co-Curricular Club Benefits

The co-curricular club reaped benefits from the partnerships created through a well-structured experiential service-learning project. Within the *Chase Charlie Races*, the cocurricular club officers were able to make direct contact with an entire class of sport management students via class presentations to the academic

major's introductory class of 100 students and to students attending weekly club meetings. During the second week of classes the sport administration club held an organizational meeting for the *Chase Charlie Races*. This meeting allowed for the co-curricular club to inform the students of their organization and future opportunities. Student group leaders were engaged in face-to-face, direct email, and phone contact with local businesses throughout the project. Due to the amount of sponsorship money gathered and the high volunteer hours logged, the project required a relatively low monetary investment by the co-curricular club; a benefit to any student organization. Funds raised through the event were invested both in further club activities and events and for support to community agencies and programs aligning with the goals of the *Chase Charlie Races* event. For example, the club was able to make a donation to the local YMCA in the amount of $1,000 following the most recent event.

University Benefits

In addition to student, faculty, and club benefits, in many instances the university can benefit from the experiential service learning project. Evidence is beginning to confirm that service learning can enhance the achievement of the university curricular goals within the courses where the methodology is utilized (Strage, 2001). Besides enriching teaching and learning, service learning can build reciprocal partnerships within the local community and can extend university resources beyond the boundaries of the campus. For example, a state university in the Midwest has recently taken an innovative approach to education. University officials have adopted the slogan, "education redefined" and, along with it, have made an effort to support immersive learning, which is a 7-element adaptation of cross-disciplinary experiential learning (Ball State University, 2007). Enhanced technology utilization was another university-wide goal addressed through the *Chase Charlie Races*. The development and use of the student-created website ChaseCharlie.com for the event met this university-wide goal. This alignment with key elements of the university's strategic plan also greatly increases the likelihood of garnering internal grants and funding to either start-up or bolster any projects in existence. The visibility of the university and the students directly in the community also increases the *Chase Charlie Races* value on a university-wide scope. Finally, the project created externally funded revenue streams. Although the initial grant for the event was not extremely large, this type of contractual funding does return indirect costs back to the university to further support the contract and grants area infrastructure. A growing number of American universities have increased expectations for faculty to augment their salaries or develop external financial resources through additional programs or activities (Sowell, 1993). Traditional grant funding is often limited in the sport management discipline thereby increasing the impact of this grant funding.

Community Benefits

In society today, including the local community, choosing healthy behaviors, including physical activity and a low fat diet, are not practiced to the degree that they should be. Recent data ranked Indiana 12th among all states in the United States with 61.3% of adults either overweight or obese (Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, 2006). Unfortunately, obesity is not only an issue for adults as the number of children who are overweight had doubled in the last three decades (Ogden et al., 2006). In the face of the growing childhood obesity epidemic, parents and educators in the county were asking for more health awareness and resources in support of youth development efforts. Therefore, community events or programs, which provide opportunities for physical activity, can be very beneficial to maintaining an active lifestyle for children and adults (Pauline & Pauline, 2007).

The *Chase Charlie Races* were specific community-centered initiatives with an innovative approach to address growing health concerns in the county. Augmented opportunities for social education in non-formal settings, like sport, have implications for community agencies and institutions (Judge, Petersen, & Lydum, 2009). According to the United States Department of Health and Human Service Healthy People 2010 report (2010) only 22% of adults engage in moderate physical activity for 30 minutes five or more times a week and nearly 25% of the population is completely sedentary. In addition, only about 25% of young people (ages 12-21) participate in light to moderate activity nearly every day (Troiano & Flegal, 1998). Lack of physical activity continues to contribute to the high prevalence of overweight individuals and obesity within the United States. Because of the gravity of the youth obesity epidemic, *Mile Mania* and *Kiddie 100* participation is of supreme importance to the community. Instilling the importance of physical activity, teaching youth how to perform, making it convenient and enjoyable, are also important and obtainable goals from such a project. These would make it more valuable to the community and society.

The *Chase Charlie Races* targeted participants of all races, genders, classes, and abilities, in the county and local community. Gaining a clear understanding of the needs of the community has made the Chase Charlie event a continually growing success. The *Chase Charlie Races* promoted the core values of legacy, philanthropy, integrity, and effectiveness (Ball Brothers Foundation, n.d.). The races promoted "legacy" by emphasizing the continuity of involvement in both the annual race and healthy exercise, and seeking to build the community. They incorporated students and professors from Ball State and all members of the community with nearly limitless participation availability. The "philanthropy" value was the very mission of the activity. The project directors were passionate about increasing youth participation and setting positive health-related goals for youth participants through competition and education. Sportsmanship acts as the "integrity" value in the event. The races created an atmosphere of fair competition for community members where competitors displayed respect and appreciation for each other's efforts. Finally, the *Chase Charlie Races* reached "effectiveness" by setting good examples of fitness within the community. The Ball State Sport Administration Club not only provided volunteer race management but also demonstrated good examples of successful students actively involved in sport leadership. The most important goal, however, was to set an example of physical activity and health consciousness throughout the county.

Once the *Chase Charlie Races* have been completed and evaluated, those involved in the project have gotten back far more than they have given. The idea of this project is to ensure

the community receives both monetary and service benefits from the project. Universities have valuable resources (ie. students, faculty, facilities, libraries, technology and research expertise) that become available to the community when the project/partnership addresses specific community needs (Bringle & Hatcher, 1996). Community-based organizations that involve college students in service-learning projects identify the following kinds of benefits (Naughton, 2000; Roehlkepartain, 2007): (1) The opportunity to expand their mission and reach without significantly increasing costs by engaging a team of proficient, motivated college students who share their talents and time in support of the organization's mission; (2) The addition of new energy, ideas, and enthusiasm as well as specialized skills that young people can bring to the organization.

What is distinctive about the reflection part of this project is its multi-layered quality: students reflect on the project, not just in greater academic mastery (course content) but also in an expanded appreciation of the contextual/social significance of the project as it relates to the youth in the county and local community. The overriding goal is for students to gain an enhanced sense of civic responsibility as they interact with the community sport leaders and discuss their observations and possible solutions. Student social capital development (e.g., their relationship with adult civic leaders and community organizations) has been demonstrated to be much higher in students who participated in service-learning than those who did not (Henness, 2001). By extending the concepts of the classroom to include youth and schools in the county, it links traditional on-campus learning to experiences in the world beyond the campus. This project seeks to reverse the perception of professors at the university primarily using the community as a research laboratory for the university's own ends.

Conclusion

This research project demonstrated that experiential service learning engages the participants in an active student-driven learning process producing such benefits as integrating theory, research, and practice to skills in the real world, including the critical and analytical thinking involved in putting on an event. The benefits of student club-based service learning

demonstrated within the *Chase Charlie Races* support the continued expansion of this learning modality within sport management. Keep in mind though the benefits outlined above are not automatic or universal. The specific impacts will vary based on focus, scope and quality of the service learning project (Roehlkepartain, 2007). As the opportunities for outside funding and resource development in sport management are typically quite limited, the *Chase Charlie Races* program initiated a revenue stream that proved vital to the development of the experiential service learning co-curricular project. Continued implementation of such events benefits the students, faculty, university, and community.

The initial success of the *Chase Charlie Races* as a service-learning project provides a working model for implementation of similar projects in the future. Although this project was focused upon implementation in a sport management setting, application of these concepts by other academic units with similar goals of positively impacting their community through physical activity, such as physical education, health education, or exercise science, is recommended. However, additional research should be conducted regarding specific assessment of learning objectives, and to explore other direct measures of stakeholder benefits to further demonstrate the value of these types of learning experiences within the curricular or cocurricular setting. The additional research in this type of pedagogical method will provide additional empirical evidence of outcome achievement and will create a more clear assessment of student learning. The benefits for the multiple stakeholders within these experiential learning programs create a value-added product that deserves an expanded part in sport management pedagogy as well as related fields.

References

Ball Brothers Foundation. (n.d.). *Core values*. Retrieved from http://www.ballfdn.org/index/corevalues.asp

Ball State University. (2007). *Strategic plan 2007-2012: Ball State University education redefined*. Retrieved from http://cms.bsu.edu/~/media/0D3AE86AFB364077960B6DCD6A98F372.ashx

Bringle, R., & Hatcher, J. (1996). Implementing service learning in higher education. *The Journal of Higher Education 67*(2), l, Retrieved from http://www.compact.org/advancedtoolkit/pdf/bringle-all.pdf

Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. (2006). *Youth risk behavior surveillance – United States, 2006: Surveillance summaries, June 9, 2006*. (Morbidity and Mortality Weekly Report, 55 No. SS-5).

Cuneen, J., & Parks, J. (1997). Should we serve sport management practice or sport management education? A response to Weese's perspective. *Journal of Sport Management, 11*, 125-132.

Cuneen, J., & Parks, J. (2001). Competing interpretations of Stier's and Schneider's (2000) undergraduate sport management curricular standards study. *International Journal of Sport Management, 2*(1), 19–30.

Danylchuk, K. E., & Boucher, R. (2003). The future of sport management as an academic discipline. *International Journal of Sport Management, 4*, 281-300.

Daughtrey, C., Gillentine, A., & Hunt, B. (2002). Student collaboration in community sporting activities. *Journal of American Alliance for Health, Physical Education, Recreation and Dance, 15*, 33-36.

Furco, A. (2002). Is service-learning really better than community service? A study of high school service. In A. Furco & S. H. Billig (Eds.), *Advances in service-learning research: Vol.1. Service-learning: The essence of the pedagogy* (pp. 23–50). Greenwich, CT: Information Age.

Gladden, J. M., & McDonald, M. (1999, June). *Implementing experiential learning: Techniques, challenges and rewards*. Paper presented at the annual North American Society for Sport Management Conference, Vancouver, British Columbia.

Henness, S. A. (2001). K–12 service-learning: *A strategy for rural community renewal and revitalization*. Washington, DC: Corporation for National Service.

Hlebowitsh, P. S., & Wraga, W. G. (Eds.). (1998). *Annual review of research for school leaders*. New York: Macmillan Library Reference USA.

Indiana Quick Facts: US Census Bureau, Delaware County, Indiana. Retrieved from: http://quickfacts.census.gov/qfd/states/18/1851876.html

Judge, L. W., Petersen, J., & Lydum, M. (2009). The best kept secret in sports: The 2010 Youth Olympic Games. *International Review for the Sociology of Sport, 44* (2–3), 173–191.

Krippendorff, K. (1980). *Content analysis: An introduction to its methodology*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications.

Meyer, S., Hofschire, L., & Billing, S. H. (2004). The impact of service-learning on student achievement: A statewide study of Michigan Learn and Serve grantees. *RMC Research Corporation*.

Milner, L. M. (1995). Telemarketing for the business school as a sales course project. *Journal of Marketing Education, 17*(3), 73-79.

Mullin, B., Hardy, S., & Sutton, W. (2007). *Sport marketing*. Champaign,

IL: Human Kinetics.

Naughton, S. (2000). *Youth and communities helping each other: Community-based organizations using service-learning as a strategy during out-of-school time*. Washington, DC: Corporation for National Service.

National Association of Secondary School Principals. (1996). *Breaking ranks: Changing an American institution*. Reston, VA: NASSP.

Ogden, C. L., Carroll, M. D., Curtin, L. R., McDowell, M. A., Tabak, C. J., & Flegal, K. M. (2006). Prevalence of overweight and obesity in the United States, 1994-2004. *Journal of the American Medical Association, 295*, 1549-1557.

Overton, R., & Malinauskas, B. (2007). College sport management student perceptions regarding Special Olympics curriculum and service learning. *The Sport Journal, 10*(3). Retrieved from http://www.thesportjournal.org/article/college-sport-management-studentperceptions-regarding-special-olympics-curriculum-and-servi

Parkhouse, B. L. (2001). *The management of sport: Its foundation and application* (3rd ed.). New York: McGraw Hill.

Pauline, G., & Pauline, J. S. (2007). Chase Charlie run, walk, roll. *Indiana AHPERD Journal, 36*(1), 26-28.

Pauline, G., & Pauline, J. S. (2008). Teaching sport sponsorship activation through a client-based experiential learning project. *Sport Management Education Journal, 2*(1), 19-37.

Petersen, J., & Pierce, D. (2009). Professional sport league assessment of sport management curriculum. *Sport Management Education Journal, 3*(1), 107-121.

Pitts, B. G. (2001). Sport management at the millennium: A *defining moment. Journal of Sport Management, 15*, 1-9.

Roehlkepartain, E. (2007). Benefits of community based service learning. Retrieved from http://www.servicelearning.org/benefits-community-based-service-learning

Rogers, C. R., & Freiberg, H. J. (1994). *Freedom to learn* (3rd ed.). Columbus, OH: Merrill/MacMillan.

Southall, R. M., Dick, R. J., & VanStone, J. (2008). *Bridging the gap: Design, development, implementation and evaluation of a sport-ticket sales training program* (Paper presented at the annual North American Society for Sport Management Conference), Toronto, ON.

Southall, R. M., Nagel, M. S., LeGrande, D., & Han, P. (2003). Sport management practica: A metadiscrete experiential learning model. *Sport Marketing Quarterly, 12*(1), 27-36.

Sowell, T. (1993). *Inside American education*. New York: The Free Press.

Swanson, S. R., & Gwinner, K. P. (2008). An examination of the undergraduate sport marketing curriculum: Tying together course objectives and assignments. *Sport Management Education Journal, 2*(1), 38-56.

Tritschler, K. (2000). *Barrow and McGee's practical measurement and assessment*. Philadelphia: PA: Lippincott Williams and Wilkins.

Troiano, R. P., & Flegal, K. M. (1998). Overweight children and adolescents: Description, epidemiology, and demographics. *Pediatrics, 101*, 97 –504.

United States Department of Health and Human Service. (2010). *Healthy people 2010*. Retrieved from http://www.healthypeople.gov/document/tableofcontents.htm

Welk, G. J. & Meredith, M.D. (Eds.). (2008). *Fitnessgram/activitygram reference guide.* Dallas, TX: The Cooper Institute. ■