

Cover Sheet

Name of Applicant(s): Traverse Square Tutoring Program

Title of Program/Project/Research: Traverse Square Healthy Eating

Date Program/Project/Research Begins: 10/17/2007

Date Ends: 12/07/2007

Proposal Agreement: By submitting this application, applicants(s) agree(s) to:

- Spend funds awarded in the manner authorized by Office of the Dean for Diversity and Academic Advancement, unless prior written approval for changes has been obtained from the Dean for Diversity and Academic Advancement
- List the Dean of the Colleges and the Office of the Dean for Diversity and Academic Advancement as a sponsor
- Submit a final report in the form of a success story within 30 days after the completion of the program/ even/ research
- Authorize ODDA to use application and final reports (or excerpts from it) for research archival, and promotional purposes
- Comply with all University policies and procedures and that noncompliance will result in denial of funding
- Communicate truthful and accurate information to the best of the applicants(s) knowledge

## DAAF Application Personal Narrative:

Luz Burgos, 2009

My family is from the south end of Hartford, which is considered to be the poorest section in Hartford. In my neighborhood it was not uncommon for gang rivals to fighting, drug deals to happen, and for shootouts to happen. Really growing up in all of this just seemed part of the norm and all these situations did not phase me or sacred as much as they should of. I always knew that we were part of the low income community because we were and still are receiving every single type of government assistance. Even with all that help that we are receiving it is still very difficult to get by and at times we do not have money to pay for everything.

My life story is long and complicated and sounds like it came out of a book but even through all of that we had an after school program called L.E.A.P. It was through that program that I was able to meet new kids that lived next door and around my area. My mother didn't really wants us out side to much when we were young and I was in bilingual classes for a while and didn't meet many English speaking friends. The program was not only a school year program but also a summer program. It was very much like Traverse Square Tutoring program because we had an hour set aside for homework and then an hour for group projects/ free time. We were always made to read books that we didn't get to read in school and made to write in a journal. I remember that I personally at some points hated that part of it because I had been in school all day. We also had time to go to shows, computer labs and do other fun field trips. It was also the first time when I saw young people of color that were college students. It was one of the best and the only program that we had in the area and it was free. I also remember when we got our snack and yes there were times that we complained about them but in the end we just ate what we had. I remember being very hungry after school and the snack was what kept my stomach from making all those funny noises. I always wanted to be like my counselors and told them that one day I want to be just like them. Then the last year of the program happened I believe when I was in 7<sup>th</sup> grade and the program had lost its funding and could not provide all of us with the necessary tools to keep the program going. It was a sad day for me because I really loved the program and it provided so much to a community that was left abandoned. One day I hope to bring something like that back to my neighborhood.

So, as a freshman in college when I heard of Traverse Square I jumped at the idea because it reminded me of my L.E.A.P years and I still miss those years. It was my turned to be the counselor and I enjoy every second of it because I know how much it

means for all of kids that we are there. Even when they misbehave I know that they truly care for everyone in the center. Lately, the center has been doing okay but we are always worrying about snacks because we never receive funding. The snack money usually comes out of Brooke's pocket because she is the only one that can afford to buy snacks. In the end no one can really afford to buy snacks. Its not fair that she should have to pay for snacks for 50 kids and even with that money we sometimes we don't have enough. We know and understand that our children need support and motivation and if snack is one of the factors that keeps them coming then we need them. The snack is also a good way to introduce them to healthy eating habits and new things that they would not have tried by themselves.

Benefits the campus community/campus climate:

The assistance that we receive will help the campus and us because by law were are not allowed to keep children in a program of 2 hrs or more without providing snacks. Which means that we have to give them snacks someway even if it means coming from our own pocket. We can be technically closed if someone finds out that there is no snack but we would never allow that because we care too much for our kids. As students we would not have the pressure of snack money over our heads as we have been dealing with for a couple of weeks now because the WSA refuses to gives us money because the food is not cultural.

Traverse Square is the main community that gets blame for all of the townie incidents and yes all communities have there "rotten apples" but that does not mean that we should make the children pay for it. It's a times when these incidents occurs that makes you think what if Wesleyan would have been working on building a connection with the Middletown community since the beginning would these incidents still occur. Would there be such a division between Middletown and Wesleyan. Wesleyan likes to pride itself on the fact that they help found the Green Street Art Center and how they build it in a low income community. The place only benefits a certain type of class and Middletown resident for the most part. The art center is also far away from campus there is no direct connection with direct community 24/7. Many students don't even know that it does exist.

Traverse Square on the other hand in right next to Wesleyan next to High Rise. They have direct contact will all of the residents as T-Square all the time. The program allows for students to meet the families that live in T-Square housing projects which opens up communication between the two. And when there are problems with T-Square, Wesleyan always calls the co-chairs and the tutors of the program to speak to the residents. We are the true bridging unit between Wesleyan and Middletown. Our program does not only benefit the students that attend but the Wes students that are tutors. It is an opportunity for Wes students to see a different perspective of Middletown besides the clean-cut version we see here on campus. It is the one of the program that builds community and strengthens bonds between Wesleyan University and the "real" Middletown community. We are not only tutors but we are mentors to children that are being ignored everyday by the Middletown Public School system.

Mike Bolds  
Co- chair of Traverse Square  
Class of 2008

Behind the rain battered and slightly dented brown door lies an often overlooked world of positive possibilities. As a rising freshman entering that door for the first time years ago, I would never have anticipated the significance such an unassuming space could manifest. But through action and patience, laughing, loving, and learning, the Traverse Square Tutoring Program has grown into one of the most amazing educational initiatives I have ever had the pleasure to encounter. Therefore to succinctly encapsulate what the Traverse Square Tutoring Program means to me is quite a challenging and frankly unfathomable considering the wealth and diversity of experiences and perspectives transmitted over the past four years. However, I can with confidence and assurance proclaim that the program is an essential component of the Traverse Square community's health and well-being, evidenced in both the quantities progress of improving grades and in-school incidence reports as well as the equally if not more so valuable successes that shine through smiles, sharing, and strategies for more respectful and just community. As one of four Leadership Staff team members, I have the unique privilege and opportunity to speak in-depth with parents and guardians of involved children and implement programmatic changes as per their suggestions. Consistently, they remind me of the tremendous difference that personalized attention of concerned tutors and productive activities makes in the short and long term successes of young people. The consistent message has been that without what we collectively and affectionately refer to as "the Center", community children would be left with few constructive options within their home environment, a consideration exponentially exacerbated by the recent demolition of the under maintained yet over needed playground. Living in such close proximity to an institution of the prestige and resources of Wesleyan surely allows for tremendous, reciprocally beneficial interaction between those who would otherwise be without and those who have much to give- theoretically. Yet as children and parents alike consistently espouse, they are more often than not woefully unaware of what resources are available and how to access them. In this regard, the Tutoring Program allows for concerned students to assume the collective responsibility of their university to lift the veil of misinformation and unawareness by acting as a liaison between said resources and the Traverse Square community, as well as adding critical dimensions of care and humanity

to a structural relationship often otherwise characterized by policing and avoidance. Although as the program is completely designed and operated by undergraduates, much of the time and finances needed to efficiently run an educational institute of its magnitude are sorely lacking. As the tangible face of concerted support and engagement from Wesleyan to Traverse Square, the program would be exponentially bettered by receiving University funding for snacks. Snacks are a legally mandated component of the daily structure, and a point of relaxation and nourishment for all involved. By providing funding, the University dually acknowledges the importance of the work students are and have been conducting for over seven years, as well as ensures that limited resources are directed towards keeping pace with the changing face of the community, such as the purchase of bilingual Spanish/English books and language learning videos for pre-literate children. The strongest and most distinct feature of the Traverse Square Tutoring Program is its constant adaptation and evolution, and I'm very blessed to say that I've been present to see its germination and bloom.

Mark Leonida  
Tutor  
Class of 2008

Beginning in fall of 2005, I started working at the Traverse Square After School Program, primarily as a way to adhere to my own standards of social responsibility and ethics. Coming from a similar background as many of these children, I found that I could relate to many of their situations and social contexts. At Wesleyan I often feel a peculiar detachment and separation from any tangible social change, a sensation sharpened by my numerous classes talking about race, class, oppression, and domination. Traverse constantly reminds me of the stakes of my time at Wesleyan, and I have received seventy-seven fold what I have given to the program.

As an uncle three times over and a volunteer during summer classes at my elementary school, I honestly do not find working with kids the idealized picture of cute, warm, happiness that many might make it out to be. However, I realize the gravity of the work I am engaged in at Traverse, just in terms of the guidance, mentorship, and friendship I could provide these children. The greatest priority in the center remains that the children finish their homework, and in the midst of this process, the children receive snacks, usually within the best compromise between price and nutrition. The Black Panthers knew that one could only do so much, when one's stomach has been constantly growling; hence, their course of action to provide food in their communities.. In his insightful and incisive critique of colonial society, Frantz Fanon writes: "But the fellah, the unemployed and the starving do not lay claim to the truth. They do not say they represent the truth because they are the truth in their very being." Granted, the historical context has changed, but the concerns and institutional challenges remain quite pointedly almost all too similar. My primary mentee, Isac Frazer, a 3<sup>rd</sup> grader, told me that he works better knowing that he will receive snack as he tries to focus on his homework. For me, that is the truth.

Stephanie Calvert  
Tutor  
Class of 2008

My name is Stephanie Calvert and I am a senior at Wesleyan University. I have worked at Traverse Square since first semester junior year. This experience has been challenging, fun, and rewarding. I've tutored various students, but have spent the majority of my time working one-on-one with a five-year-old girl named Alondra. Seeing her progress and helping her work through academic challenges has been difficult. However, I still love everyday I spend with Alondra at Travers Square. She is such a bright individual and has advanced so much in her schoolwork, I feel like I have made a real and positive impact on someone's life. Every time I am at Traverse Square, I see the same challenges and rewards occurring with the other kids and their tutors. Having such a motivated and caring group of student workers is really key to the kid's development. Another important part of a day at Traverse Square Center is the meager but essential resources, including books, crafts, and snacks. Having a nutritious snack not only gives the children necessary nutrients, but also helps them focus on schoolwork by making sure they are not distracted by hunger. It's also been a critical part of the daily ritual at the Center, signaling homework time. The effects of Traverse Square Center, despite it's somewhat small means, can be seen year to year with the academic, social, and mental growth of it's children. Any help to further the program is greatly appreciated not just by the invested student staff, but also by the children and their community.

Kara Rutledge  
Tutor  
Class of 2009

My name is Kara Rutledge and I am a member of the class of 2009. I have been tutoring at traverse square since my sophomore fall semester and it was not long before I grew to love the kids. The reason that I continue to be involved with T-Square is because it is so rewarding. The children come to the Center from 2-4pm, Monday-Thursday and we as tutors try our hardest to help provide a welcoming and fun environment for the children. The main goal each day is to help them with their homework but everyone gets so much more out of it. We have had programs such as swimming with the kids in Freeman, taking them to see performances on campus, and barbecues with the residents of hi and lo rise.

I am writing because I have learned that our funding for snacks are being dropped and this is a huge concern. It might seem like it's not a big deal but it means so much to the kids. They come to the center right after school and stay there until dinner (a prime time for hunger). When there are days that snacks are low the kids, for good reason, get upset because it should not be a big issue at all. They want to know why we can't just buy more food. Just the other day we had a new child come to try out the program. She is three years old and was shy at first. After coloring with her friends and other tutors and warming up to everyone she said "I'm hungry" which was soon accompanied by "I want to go home". Luckily snack was on its way and knowing this she decided to stay. She realized she had everything she needed at the Center and ended up having a great first day. If we are working with kids who are hungry they are not able to focus on their work. They will ask if they can leave and buy a snack, which not only cuts into the small amount of time allotted with them, but it is not safe because if a younger kid sees older kids leaving T-Square they want to follow suit. Last year I remember having to walk three younger kids to a corner store and 2 of them darted across the street without looking. Providing snack just puts every child on the same page. There's no comparing or trading foods and everyone gets to get their work done. I think this is a great program although we accept and appreciate a little help where we can find it; having snacks makes a fundamental difference in the overall mood of the day.

Thank you for your time,

Kara Rutledge

Clayton Smith  
Traverse Square Student  
6<sup>th</sup> Grader

Well T-Square is important to me because people like me, most of us are not that good at homework and without the tutors I would not be able to complete my work with excellence. Snacks is always good because we can eat something in the time that we are not hungry the whole time in T-Sqaure.

Titi  
Parent and Supporter  
Former Director of the Traverse Square Tutoring Program

The center is important because it helps the kids do better in school and they meet new students and it allows them to help other. They want the tutors and miss them when they are break and the tutors help us in many ways. As the parents my kids listen to and they respect and help more around the house and in general they help me out a lot so please help the program with whatever they need. When snacks are provided at the center the help because they are healthier and the kids want to do their homework and wait for their snack quietly. The center is very important to the kids and any help that they can get will help the program and the kids really have no where else to go but the center.

Annmarie Giannottie  
Parent of Christian Berry  
15 Traverse Square

The Traverse Square After school Tutoring program is important because of the opportunities given to the children of some of the unfortunate families that may live here. As a parent the center has helped my child by giving him one on one attention that sometimes is hard for me because I have an infant. Snacks are important because it gives the children incentive to learn. The fund will help because it will keep the kids motivated to attend the program.

Eva S.  
Parent of Jadriel and Erik  
8 Traverse Square

The Traverse Square after school program helps the children by providing them with opportunities and great benefits in life, that otherwise would not be offered in school. As a parent the program has provided relief because I do not speak English and I am not able to help my children with their homework. At the center they have someone that can provide them with that one on one help. Snacks are an essential part of the program because most of the time when all of the kids come from school their parents are not home yet from work and there is no food for them to munch on. A couple of hours will pass by the time they get home at 6 pm. The snacks also provide a motivation for all of the children and keep with something to look forward to.

Grandmother of Jameel Thompson  
18 Traverse Square

The Center is very important to the children of Traverse Square because, it gives the children a chance to meet with the college students and teaches them how to get along with the older adults. My grandson really looks forward to going everyday. As a grandmother the program gives me a chance to do things around the and for him to talk to other that he can trust. The snacks provided nutritional value to the day, The Wesleyan students should not have to pay out of pocket if there are other sources out there. They are doing our community a great help and they students love them! Thank you

Mirna Alonzo  
Parent of Victor and Kristilin

Traverse Square is an important place the children know will be provided and improve and understand how good it is to be in school. It's a place where the kids feel home. You have people that listen, talk, understand their point of view if they can't find it at home. As a parent the tutors show us different patterns, ways to help our children. Plus they have feedback on other ways to help our children understand the homework. Snacks are something that kids look forward to and appreciate about the center. It's one way of getting the kids to come and keep coming back. And many children don't get

nothing to eat. Many kids wait for snacks to help their hunger. The fund to cover the snack will help the directors of the program to go to other resources and worry about other things such as supplies and trips.

### Financial Narrative

I have gone in twice as the treasure representative for Traverse Square Tutoring Program at the SBC meeting we have been denied funds both times because the food is not cultural. In the past we had donations from an organization group but the years before that the SBC allocated funds for snacks. We were told that we do not fit the description under the code for allocations.

This is the break down of how snacks work at the center.

Cost of a week worth of snack for one day:

Nestle Juicy Juice 100% Apple/Grape – 8 pack

Cost:  $2.19(7\text{Boxes}) = \$15.33$   $(.06) = 16.24$

Apples Granny Smith (Varies Bananas, Oranges)

Cost=  $.59(50) = 29.50$   $(.06) = 31.27$

Bachman Kidzels Pretzels For Kids

Cost:  $3.29(3) = 9.87$   $(.06) = 10.46$

Total for a Day: \$ 57.97

Total Cost for a Week: 231.88

Number of Weeks left: 8 weeks = 1, 848

The cost for snack per a child is about .93 cents we can round up to a \$1. 00 per day. There are about 50 kids in the program.

### Other Funds:

We tried SBC but we are definitely looking for more ways to get funding for snacks.