

**Sara Saintil; 2021; UNDC
HealthFinders Collaborative; Northfield, MN
Multicultural Alumni Network (MCAN) Fellows Program**

This summer I had the opportunity to work alongside a passionate, kind-hearted group of community members and insightful Carleton and St. Olaf students at HealthFinders Collaborative in Northfield, MN. As my very first internship experience, I am lucky to have found such a warm community that welcomed me and allowed me to contribute to the growth of their organization. Being in Northfield, with the absence of vibrant college students across campus, I also had the opportunity to explore the historic and beautiful streets of the town.



Figure 1 Downtown Northfield on a warm summer day

At the beginning of the summer, I set three main goals for myself including: developing my written communication skills, learning about physician responsibilities in a clinical setting, and developing a better understanding of the cultural influences that limit healthcare in Northfield. Over the 10 weeks of my internship, I gained a great amount of writing experience, as myself and my co-interns worked on writing articles for the website and HealthFinders' business campaign that would fund their new clinic relocation in Faribault, MN. With the relationships that I created within the organization, I also had the opportunity to network with physicians at HealthFinders, securing future shadowing opportunities in Northfield. Out of these experiences, the one aspect of my internship that I enjoyed the most and gave me the most insight on the limitations of healthcare to certain groups were the community events.

HealthFinders is an organization that is dedicated to their community and I witnessed this by attending their Community Engagement team meetings. Over the summer we planned and

executed a few events that specifically targeted the Rice County community. We kicked off the summer in June with HealthFinders' Annual Community Picnic, where patients, nurses, physicians, interns, and other supporters of the organization came together for an evening of good music and tasty food! I was excited to see the diverse group that HealthFinders serves from Somali refugees to the large Latinx population. This year the event was hosted at a new location, Main Street Project Farm in Northfield. The Main Street Project Farm is very unique in that it is a non-profit organization that aims to develop specialized agricultural training and skill programs for immigrant workers to increase their incomes and leverage new job opportunities. HealthFinders' Community Engagement team selected Main Street Project Farm to highlight an organization ran by primarily underrepresented groups as well as encourage the use of healthy fruits and vegetables in everyday meals.



Figure 2 Main Street Project Farm in Northfield, MN

Working directly in the Rice County community also exposed me to the many struggles that residents face. HealthFinders, as a dedicated member of their community, believes in working at creating solutions to these problems. While working with the Community Engagement team, I was very proud to be a part of organizing the first ever Community Recourse Fair in Rice County. With over 70 representatives from different organizations across Rice County, the Resource Fair was centered around discussing the social determinants of health and ways to provide the best resources to make receiving healthcare more accessible to the members of the community. The event was set up in three different stages, the first involving each representative discussing their role in their specific organizations and sharing challenges they face in their communities. This

gave other attendees the opportunity to pinpoint people who would benefit from their work and network during the second phase. Throughout the final stage, the representatives of each organization came together to discuss solutions to the challenges that they shared in providing their services. This unique event brought together like-minded individuals who are passionate about tackling specific issues in Rice County. I look forward to witnessing the progress that will be made as a result of these collaborations.



Figure 3 Community Resource Fair

Working at HealthFinders this summer has been a great career exploration opportunity. I am grateful for the relationships that I developed and the skills that I gained, which will translate to future internship experiences and my academic work at Carleton. I have learned to love HealthFinders, with the values that align with mine and the consistent dedication to serve their community with love. Over the course of my Carleton career, I look forward to working with HealthFinders more due to their close proximity to campus. My unforgettable summer internship with HealthFinders would be impossible without the funding received from the Multicultural Alumni Network through the Carleton College Career Center, who I am extremely thankful for! This is the beginning of my journey and I am excited for the experiences I will be exposed to in the future!