

Life Skills Academy



a

c

b

$$a^2 + b^2 = c^2$$

Completed for Kosciusko Leadership Academy by:
Zac Erba, Steven Kuhn, Mitch Randall, Lon Hatfield and Chuck Josey

April 12, 2016

Life Skills Academy

Identified Community Need

There are many basic and important aspects of life that are not covered in most education systems. As a result, many young adults graduate from high school without possessing an understanding of key life skills. In fact, in today's education system, it is common for a student to graduate from high school knowing the Pythagorean Theorem, but not knowing how to file taxes, buy a home, or interview for a position. Unfortunately, these skills are often learned only after young adults are out on their own and experiencing difficulties or after failing to realize opportunities due to their lack of life skills and knowledge.

Communities are negatively affected by this life skill deficiency. When individuals do not possess interpersonal or financial life skills, their community's growth, advancement, and overall wellbeing suffer. Our team identified that while Kosciusko County is excellent in many aspects, increasing life skills and knowledge among young adults is an area in which it can improve.

However, the solution to this problem extends past simply teaching specific life skills, such as how to write a resume or how to build credit. While doing this would certainly have some benefit, it would have limited applicability due to the vast number of circumstances one encounters during his or her life. Instead, the team identified that it would be far more valuable to provide young adults with resources that allow for continuous learning and advancement of life skills. Therefore, the Life Skills Academy aims to improve community wellbeing by increasing life skills and knowledge in young adults and improving the availability of life skills resources.

Project Mission

The mission of the Life Skills Academy is to:

“Improve the quality of life for all in our community by providing needed education, support, and resources around basic life skills that will help sustain financial stability and create a healthier wellbeing.”

Research

We conducted research to develop our mission into a workable project. The first steps of our research were to interview various leaders of community organizations. The goals of our interviews included:

1. Confirming the need for the Life Skills Academy project in our community
2. Learning about other programs already in place that might be leveraged
3. Refine our vision and narrow our scope
4. Identify an organization that could own our project and bring it to fruition

Additionally, a brief survey was distributed to learn opinions surrounding the need for our project in the community, the best target audience and how best to offer the program.

As we met with various community leaders, we learned of a similar program to what we envisioned called “Getting Ahead” focused on the residents of the Enchanted Hills area in Cromwell which is run by the Bowen Center. Getting Ahead provides training to participants to help them get out of poverty. Topics such as resume writing and handling finances provide tools and encouragement needed to get out of poverty. We were pointed in the direction of some of the leaders of the Getting Ahead with the thought that they could assist with our Life Skills Academy project also.

Through networking, we also met Marsha Carey, Project Coordinator for Kosciusko Cares. Kosciusko Cares operates under the umbrella of the Bowen Center and is involved in another similar life skills training program for teens. This program helps high school students to learn about health and wellness, develop positive relationships as well as other “soft” skills preparing them for independence as adults.

Ms. Carey indicated that Kosciusko Cares would be interested in operationalizing the Life Skills Academy concept. She helped our team create and distribute a survey to obtain data on the community’s need for the Life Skills Academy, which audience or audiences to target, which topics to include, and how the program should be deployed. Through this survey and further discussion, the team narrowed the target audience of the first Life Skills Academy to high school students within Warsaw Community High School as a pilot program. This is due to the fact that we expect to be most successful in attracting participation from students while they are at school, and WCHS offers the largest number and diversity of students in Kosciusko County.

Through our research, we felt that the community need was validated. All the community leaders we met with were very supportive of our project, and 86% of the survey respondents indicated they either “agreed” or “strongly agreed” that the classes proposed would be beneficial and of interest to the community. Also as a result of our survey, we received multiple offers from community leaders to be involved in Life Skills Academy by teaching topics within their expertise or providing rewards to participants to incentivize completion of the program.

Proposal

The Life Skills Academy is a proposed program which would provide education to high school students on basic life skills that are often not taught in school. It would consist of twelve sessions, each covering a specific life skill topic. These twelve topics would fall into four overarching categories. Table 1 lists the four main categories and twelve topics serving as the structure for the Life Skills Academy.

Table 1. The twelve session topics covered in the Life Skills Academy

Safety & Maintenance	Job Skills	Finance	Health & Wellness
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Home safety & maintenance• Auto safety & maintenance	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Interviewing• Resume writing• Job search	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Budgeting• Loans• Establishing and repairing credit• Insurance	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Wellness• Healthcare resources• Healthy cooking on a budget

We have further developed a list of community-based businesses and non-profit organizations and have contacted and verbally secured them for sponsorship of one or more of the programs. Sponsorship will include providing an instructor and potentially incentives for participants' completion of the session or curriculum as a whole. As an example, NAPA in Warsaw will sponsor the auto safety & maintenance topic by providing an instructor for the class, and possibly, discount coupons for participants upon completion of the Life Skills Academy. In return for sponsorship, the businesses and organizations have the opportunity to display themselves to the participants as experts on their session topic and build goodwill in the community. Every effort will be made to ensure that classes are educational and not merely sales pitches for the sponsoring organization's goods and services.

Recognizing that one hour is insufficient time to cover all aspects of the topics being presented, the education will focus on providing an overview of the topic with mention of common problems to avoid, and direct participants to further resources either on-line or within the community. An example of basic skills that could be covered in the auto maintenance session would be how to check oil and vital fluid levels in a vehicle, how to know when oil should be changed, and how to change it. Additionally, the session may cover the proper method for checking tire pressure and determining whether or not tires need to be rotated or changed. These basic car maintenance skills are crucial to maintaining auto safety, yet some young people never learn them. The session would conclude with providing resources for further information if the participants were to have any questions after the session.

Sustainability of this program will require a community-based organization to assume ownership and administration on a moving-forward basis. The frequency, length, number, and content of the sessions would ultimately be determined by the owning organization. As stated previously, our project team has worked to identify Kosciusko Cares as that organization. The team will continue to work with Kosciusko Cares to establish and pilot a successful program.

Together with Kosciusko Cares, the team has determined that Warsaw Community High School is the best setting in which to pilot the Life Skills Academy. Therefore, the timing of each session will be determined, in part, by the availability of the students and the space within the school. We expect it to be easiest for sessions to be held during if not soon after school ends, between 3:00pm and 4:30pm. Therefore, the session presenters (employees of businesses and organizations) will not be required to extend their workdays into the evening hours.

Our research indicated that Life Skills Academy would likely only be successful if the classes are offered to the community free of charge. Further, participants will likely need to be incentivized with a reward for participation. Accordingly, we will encourage local businesses to provide incentives for individuals successfully completing either individual classes or all classes in the curriculum.

Participants may attend the classes individually or as a full curriculum. Marketing for the program will be performed by Kosciusko Cares, potentially in partnership with Warsaw Community High School. Program participants will be empowered through the skills learned and will, in turn, strengthen our community. Participating community-based businesses and non-profit organizations will also benefit from increased visibility and awareness of their services.

Project Business Plan Pro Forma

Like most community programs, there are costs associated with operating the Life Skills Academy. Table 2 shows the estimated expenses for operating both the initial program as well as programs in following years.

Table 2. Estimated expenses required to operate the Life Skills Academy

Life Skills Academy Expenses			
	Start-up	Annual	First Program
Contracted Staff	\$0	\$6,000	\$6,000
Supplies	800	1,200	2,000
Marketing	1,000	500	1,500
Other	100	400	500
Total Expenses	\$1,900	\$8,100	\$10,000

The assumptions that were used in creating Table 2 are shown below:

1. Estimated non-volunteer, contracted staff required:
On-going marketing and community outreach: 10 hr/month x 12 months/yr
Assume cost for staff is \$50/hour. Salary calculation is shown in Table 3.

Table 3. Annual Contracted Staff Expense

	Hours per yr	Yearly salary at \$50/Hr
10 hr/month x 12 months/yr	120	\$6,000

2. Supplies include \$800 for video production; otherwise, expenses should be minimal; signage, mailings, refreshments provided for participants, etc. (estimated \$100 / month)
3. Marketing supplies include brochures and other materials.
4. Other expenses estimated at \$500/year, including start-up
5. Classes will be led by volunteers or companies donating their time to the program. Meeting space for the classes has been assumed to be available at no cost.

Project Challenges

In order to be successful, every KLA project needs to have three fundamental characteristics. First, the project must be wide-reaching. That is, it needs to positively affect as many people within Kosciusko County as possible. Second, the project must be feasible, meaning that it is able to be put into practice. Finally, the project must be sustainable, meaning that it can continue to function and grow for years after initiation. All obstacles to the Life Skills Academy can be categorized by which characteristic they impede.

Several potential challenges affect the wide-reaching aspect of the Life Skills Academy. The first of these challenges is the location, time, and frequency of the sessions. No matter when or where the sessions are held, there will be individuals who cannot attend due to prior commitments such as work or athletic practice. The team aims to hold the sessions at WCHS to make the timing and location convenient for as many students as possible. Another obstacle to program success is making sure that potential participants know about the opportunity to attend sessions. Our project team plans to invest into marketing and community outreach in order to maximize this effort. We plan to heavily utilize communication channels within WCHS, such as the school video announcements and flyers. Unfortunately, this approach limits the target audience to only WCHS students. The team plans to pilot the Life Skills Academy with this focused audience in order to

refine and improve the program. After gaining momentum, we plan to expand the program to a larger target audience.

In addition to these challenges, several obstacles also affect the project feasibility. The largest of these obstacles is obtaining funding for the start-up costs. Our team has worked to minimize these costs by completing much of the planning as part of our KLA project. We also hope to identify grants and donations to offset these expenses. Another obstacle to feasibility is obtaining sponsors for each session. The team will continue to work to secure verbal commitments from local businesses and organizations. Many such businesses and organizations in the area have a strong sense of community and will therefore be more likely to volunteer their time. There is also an incentive for organizations to sponsor sessions since they will have the opportunity to increase their visibility. Furthermore, multiple respondents to our survey indicated their interest in leading sessions or providing incentives to participants.

Finally, in order for the Life Skills Academy to be feasible, there must be sufficient attendance to justify the resources invested in the program. Attendance will be driven by whether or not young adults feel they could benefit from the program. As stated earlier, one of the goals of our research was to gauge the community's need for life skills education, and the results strongly confirmed that there is. Additionally, a regular time and location for all sessions will help promote higher attendance. Our project team will continue to work with Warsaw Community High School to reserve classroom space on a recurring basis in order to accommodate a large number of participants.

Obtaining engagement and buy-in is possibly the most critical milestone on the path to creating a successful Life Skills Academy. Students and young adults often do not recognize or prioritize the need for the education that the completion of this program provides. Our vision is to market our program such that students and young adults will recognize the need the Life Skills Academy classes and, as stated previously, incentivize completion with some type of reward.

Next Steps and Looking Forward

While the team has made much progress toward realizing the goal of a successful Life Skills Academy, there are still details that need to be finalized. These details include the logistics of each session. Our team needs to continue working with WCHS to determine the exact dates, times, and place that the sessions will be held. Our team also needs to arrange those that have verbally committed once the exact dates, times, and places are secured. Once these two items are complete, a schedule can be created for the first Life Skills Academy, listing the times, dates, locations, and sponsors for each session. Marketing and outreach initiatives will need to be kicked off in parallel in order to maximize attendance and interest in the program. Marketing may include social media, signage, mailings, brochures, other materials, and word of mouth.

Our Vision

Through the development of Life Skills Academy program, we have created a functional toolkit that can be used by others. Kosciusko Cares, with the support of our project team, has the vision and desire to act out our mission by taking this toolkit and fulfilling its purpose. The most desirable setting is in the high schools of our community. This would be preferred in an in classroom setting, but may also be successful in a before, or after, school program. Contact has been made with Troy Akers, Principal at Warsaw Community High School, and ground work has been laid to establish Warsaw Community High School as a pilot location.

The findings and importance of the program, demonstrated first in this pilot program, will then be rolled out to other area high schools. A big question is, who should be exposed to these twelve areas of life skills. We desire anyone wishing to be a part of this program to have the opportunity to develop, but we would also seek the expertise and recommendation of high school guidance counselors, who have established relationships with students and can best identify individuals who would most benefit from this program.

Other Possible Program Venues

Through this shared vision, some other possible groups Kosciusko Cares might roll this program out to include area youth groups, Bakers Youth Club, the Kosciusko Community YMCA, and other organization that target similar demographics with a focus on community development, which is an essential element of our project's vision. As we have laid out previously, the importance and focus on this program is to improve the all-around wellbeing of the youth in our community and to help develop critical life skills that will prove useful in bettering their future. Community development is critical to all those that call this community home.

Community Resources Needed

As stated previously, we hope this project is used as a toolkit for future programs. In every toolkit there is room for expansion, change, and further development. There is one thing that will need to prove steady regardless of where the program is implemented, who is leading it, or to whom we are developing. That steady force is the need for community experts to deliver the curriculum. No one individual or one representing organization will be able to fulfill the desired level of expertise the broad scope of this program will require. The steps taken to identify key stakeholders in our community to deliver the curriculum of each session will prove most beneficial in fulfilling the vision of this program. It is crucial to develop the relationships needed with these organizations we have previously identified, or any others that might be identified in the future, to best provide quality experiences and education to those participating in the sessions.

Conclusion

Our team has identified a need for life skills training, especially among young adults. The Life Skills Academy will provide this necessary education and positively impact our community as a whole. Participants will be empowered through the skills learned, and participating community-based businesses and organizations will benefit from increased visibility and awareness of their services. While there are challenges to this project, our team has worked to identify and appropriately address all obstacles. Therefore, the Life Skills Academy is a wide-reaching, feasible, and sustainable solution that will provide essential life skills education to members of our community and fulfill the ultimate project goal of building and improving our community for years to come.

Appendix A – Summary of Survey Results

Constant Contact Survey Results

Survey Name: KLA Team Community Survey

Response Status: Partial & Completed

Filter: None

Feb 21, 2016 8:10:31 PM

1. Please enter the information indicated below.

Job Title _____
 Postal Code _____

2. I feel the classes listed below (called the Life Skills Academy), offered free of charge, taught by local experts from area businesses, would be beneficial and interesting to the general public: Home safety & maintenance; Auto safety & maintenance, Job Interviewing, Resume writing, Job search skills, Personal budgeting, How to qualify for a loan, Establishing and repairing credit, Insurance, Wellness, Healthcare resources, and Healthy eating on a budget.

	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly Agree
	7%	0%	7%	52%	34%

3. I think the general public will sign up and attend Life Skills Academy training one time per month for each topic.

	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly Agree
	0%	7%	34%	55%	3%

4. I think the general public will sign up and attend Life Skills Academy classes as a 12 week series, one topic per week.

	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly Agree
	0%	32%	39%	25%	4%

5. I think middle school students would benefit from the life skills training units.

	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly Agree
	0%	17%	7%	45%	31%

6. I think high school students would benefit from the life skills training units.

	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly Agree
	0%	0%	3%	31%	66%

7. Please rate the topics you feel are most needed, and would generate the most interest, by age groups:

	Age 8 - 12	Age 13 - 18	Age 19 - 21	Age 22 - 24	Age 25+
Home Safety & Maintenance	10%	10%	17%	10%	52%
Auto Safety & Maintenance	0%	31%	55%	3%	10%
Interviewing and Job Search	0%	28%	52%	17%	3%
Resume Writing	0%	31%	41%	17%	10%
Budgeting and Loans	0%	24%	38%	24%	14%
Establishing and Repairing Credit	3%	17%	21%	24%	34%
Insurance	0%	17%	24%	31%	28%
Wellness	28%	21%	7%	14%	31%
Healthcare Resources	3%	17%	14%	28%	38%
Healthy Cooking on a Budget	3%	24%	21%	17%	34%

Appendix B – Resources for sessions

Supporters of the Life Skills Academy

- **Kosciusko Cares**
Marsha Carey, Project Coordinator
(773) 431-3881 Mobile
(574) 371-0710 Work
marsha@kosciuskocares.org
- **Warsaw Community High School**
Troy Akers, Principal
(574) 371-5099 Work
takers@warsawschools.org
- **Ace Hardware**
James Maze, President and Owner
(574) 267-5315 Work
jmaze@acewarsaw.com
Area of Interest: Home Safety and Maintenance
- **NAPA**
Josh Witt, Sales Manager
(574) 267-5133 Work
(574) 551-1826 Mobile
Napa.wittj@gmail.com
Area of Interest: Auto Safety and Maintenance
- **Zing Recruiting**
Areas of Interest: Interviewing, Job Search, & Resume Writing
- **Lutheran Health Network KCH**
Charles Josey, CFO
(574) 372-7664 Work
cjosey@kch.com
Areas of Interest: Budgeting, Coordination of Academy
- **Lake City Bank**
Ralph Villalon
(574) 267-6144 Work
ralph.villalon@lakecitybank.com
Area of Interest: Loans

- **Junior Achievement**
 Renea Salyer, Area Director
 (574) 551-6082
Renea.salyer@ja.org
 Area of Interest: Establishing and Repairing Credit
- **Hall & Marose Silveus**
 Mike Hall, Owner
 (574) 267-3266
Mike.hall@hallmarosesilveus.com
 Area of Interest: Insurance
- **Kosciusko Community YMCA**
 Steven Kuhn, Director of Aquatics and Inclusive Programing
 (574) 269-9622 Work
skuhn@kcymca.org
 Areas of Interest: Wellness, Coordination of Academy
- **Eligibility Screening Services, LLC**
 Fabiola Hernandez,
 Eligibility Screening Services Representative and Marketplace Certified Application
 Counselor
 (574) 372-7818 Work
cjosey@kch.com
 Area of Interest: Healthcare Resources
- **Parkview Center for Healthy Living Warsaw**
 Melissa Buesching, Community Outreach Coordinator
 (574) 269-9622 Work
Melissa.buesching@parkview.com
 Areas of Interest: Cooking Healthy on a Budget
- **Martin's Super Market (Not been contacted)**
 Kami Johnson, Community Affairs Rep. Cooking School Coordinator
 (574) 371-9000 Work
 Areas of Interest: Cooking Healthy on a Budget

Appendix C - PowerPoint



Life Skills Academy

Presented by:

Zac Erba
Chuck Josey
Lon Hatfield
Mitch Randall
Steven Kuhn

A Toolkit presented to:



Identified Community Need

- ▶ Certain life skills not typically learned in school
- ▶ Often result in costly mistakes or lost opportunities
- ▶ Deficiencies include finance, safety & maintenance, employment skills, health & wellness



Life Skills Academy

Projects Mission

“Improve the quality of life for all in our community, by providing needed education, support, and resources around basic life skills that will help sustain financial stability and create a healthier wellbeing.”

Research

Goal of interviews:

- ▶ Confirmation of the need for Life Skills Academy
- ▶ Learn about other community programs already in place
- ▶ Refine our vision and narrow our scope
- ▶ Identify an organization that could operationalize Life Skills Academy

Goal of survey:

- ▶ Confirmation that Life Skills Academy could achieve the intended purpose
- ▶ Data to help determine:
 - ▶ Timing for classes (i.e. weekly, monthly)
 - ▶ Audience
 - ▶ Topics

Research - What We Learned

- ▶ Validation of need for Life Skills Academy
- ▶ Similar "Getting Ahead" program in Enchanted Hills
- ▶ Kosciusko Cares
- ▶ Pilot program to target high school students
- ▶ Likely need incentives to interest participation
- ▶ Learned of volunteers willing to lead classes

What will it look like?

Safety & Maintenance	Job Skills	Finance	Health & Wellness
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Home safety & maintenance• Auto safety & maintenance	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Interviewing• Resume writing• Job search	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Budgeting• Loans• Establishing and repairing credit• Insurance	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Wellness• Healthcare resources• Healthy cooking on a budget

Who will lead these sessions?

- ▶ Home Safety & Maintenance
 - ▶ Ace Hardware
- ▶ Auto Safety & Maintenance
 - ▶ NAPA
- ▶ Interviewing, Resume Writing, & Job Search
 - ▶ Zing

Who will lead these sessions? Continued

- ▶ Budgeting
 - ▶ Lutheran Health KCH
- ▶ Loans
 - ▶ Lake City Bank
- ▶ Establishing and Repairing Credit
 - ▶ Junior Achievement

Who will lead these sessions? Continued

- ▶ Insurance
 - ▶ Hall & Marose Silveus
- ▶ Wellness
 - ▶ Kosciusko Community YMCA
- ▶ Healthcare Resources
 - ▶ Eligibility Screening Services, LLC
- ▶ Healthy Cooking on a Budget
 - ▶ Parkview Center for Healthy Living Warsaw

Operations

Life Skills Academy Expenses			
	Start-up	Annual	First Program
Contracted Staff	\$0	\$6,000	\$6,000
Supplies	800	1,200	2,000
Marketing	1,000	500	1,500
Other	100	400	500
Total Expenses	\$1,900	\$8,100	\$10,000

What we over came!

- ▶ Finding support in the community
- ▶ Finding statistics that support our idea
- ▶ Finding ownership
- ▶ Finding companies to support us

What we need to be prepared for

- ▶ Finalizing the details of the Academy
 - ▶ Dates
 - ▶ Time
 - ▶ Location

What we need to be prepared for

- ▶ Securing support of sponsors for each session
 - ▶ We have verbal commitment for each session
 - ▶ Once details of dates are set we will need to secure them for their date of responsibility
 - ▶ Incentives
 - ▶ Reoccurring Support

What we need to be prepared for

- ▶ Keeping cost in check and supported funding
 - ▶ Team has completed much of the planning
 - ▶ Donations and grants from community organizations
 - ▶ Kosciusko Cares general operations

Lets get started

- ▶ We are presenting this toolkit to Kosciusko Cares
 - ▶ Shared Vision
 - ▶ Continued Support
 - ▶ Opportunity for growth

Where can it be used?

- ▶ Organizations focused on youth and community development
 - ▶ Schools
 - ▶ Bakers Youth Club
 - ▶ Youth Groups
 - ▶ Kosciusko Community YMCA

Our working toolkit

- ▶ Kosciusko Cares is working with Warsaw Community High School to pilot this program
 - ▶ Large captured target audience
 - ▶ Similar structure of project already taking place
 - ▶ Will show the feasibility to other schools

Questions