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SBA students make strides as social entrepreneurs

By Claudette Zolkowski, contributing writer

Today's economy touches everyone. As individuals and companies scrutinize every dollar spent, the funding that nonprofits traditionally relied on is shrinking at the same time economic pressures increase demand for the services these organizations provide.

With assistance from two Oakland University School of Business Administration (SBA) graduate students, three local organizations - Oakland Family Services (OFS), Macomb Family Services and Family Services, Inc. of Detroit and Wayne County - are consolidating resources to form the Family Service Alliance for Southeastern Michigan. Their goal is to better address the behavioral health challenges confronting families and children.

This places SBA students in the midst of the social entrepreneurship movement, as the business functions of the alliance will create new business opportunities, lower management and overhead costs, and make more money available to provide direct services to clients.

"We estimate our efforts will achieve ongoing savings in the range of \$300,000 each year, increasing our ability to serve an additional 900 to 1,500 people per year," said Michael Earl, president and CEO of OFS and managing partner of the alliance. "This is the first time such an alliance has been created in Michigan and only the second time it has been done in the country."

Under the guidance of SBA Dean Mohan Tanniru, recent MBA graduate Pallavi Inamdar joined Dean Przymusinski, a master's student in SBA's Information Technology Management program, in analyzing the integration of the three organizations' technology, billing, quality assurance, purchasing and more.

"The OU students brought a unique perspective, an incredible energy and a very professional approach and execution to the analysis," Earl said. "What is most impressive is how they seamlessly integrated with a fast-moving, dynamic management team."

The internship proved invaluable for the students.

"I learned so much through this experience. I got a dual experience of managing the project as well as performing the business process analysis for the project," Inamdar said.

"It was also a great opportunity to talk to experts and learn directly from them," Przymusinski added.

The internship was made possible with support from the Foundation for the Society of Information Management.

SUMMARY

The students helped several regional social organizations consolidate as the Family Service Alliance for Southeastern Michigan and save \$300,000 in the process.

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