

# Community Engagement Experience the Browne Leadership Fellowship

Jolie M. Haertter

## Placement Information

In my hybrid placement, I worked on a variety of different projects online and in person. The Millvale Free Store was a project proposed by a resident to create a place for those in need to gain necessary items for no expense. Secondly, the Triboro Ecodistrict Report 2.0 2021 was a report that was created to track community progress. I contributed to the digital art that will be published with the report. Lastly, I had the pleasure to help plan and volunteer for Millvale's first Pride Celebration by photographing the event.

## Statistics

### Quantitative Statistics

- [Race and Ethnicity Breakdown](#)
- 86.6% White, 8.88% Black, 3.18% Multicultural, 0.675% Hispanic, 0.614% Asian
- [Economic View](#)
- \$21,700 less than the US Average Median household income
- \$17,200 less than the Pittsburgh Median household income
- While males between the ages of 55 - 64 are the largest demographic living in poverty, the 2nd (age 45 - 54), 3rd (75+), 4th (55 - 64), and 5th (18-24) are females.

### Qualitative Statistics

General questionnaire was sent to public leaders

- How would you describe Millvale/Triboro community?
  - Community-led, close to resources around Pittsburgh, genuine people, older community but increasing diversity
- Do you feel like outside resources are helpful or harmful to your community?
  - For the most part, resources are helpful when either sought after OR a community poll is taken to determine what is needed.

### Major Outcomes

- Resources are most beneficial when they are assisting and supporting issues that the community needs to be addressed
- Environmental (flooding, sustainability), Equity (older, white community; hosting events like pride), Economic (building systems to provide needed items to those who are struggling financially)

During my placement in **Millvale**, I now understand the purpose of **community engagement work** and how a community's efforts can help improve their **diversity, sustainability, and environment.**

## Major Community Issues

The major issues range from environmental, equity, and economic concerns.

- Environmentally, flooding and protecting the trees in the area is helped through Girty's Trees work and the Adopt a Tree Program.
- Equity awareness is increased through events like Millvale Pride and an Indigenous fair in the community.
- Economically, the Free store idea helps people who struggle to afford food and necessary items but giving access to feminine hygiene products become an interest of research for me.
  - With the gender pay gap and the higher poverty level for females in Millvale, affording general and feminine hygiene appears to be a challenge for citizens. Some current Millvale resources include diaper drive, free food pantries that collect health care products, and female projects drive.
  - As the free store develops, I hope the store can gain a focus on clothing sustainability and possibly provide a meal and/or collect donations to afford feminine health products.

## Final Reflections

During my time in Millvale, I was awed by the community's consistent and impactful efforts to help improve their home for the people and environment. I gained a new understanding of purpose community engagement work and the importance of a community.

Working in my cohort and in smaller teams, I learned how to communicate ideas, share research, and collaborate with people of different backgrounds. Through communicating and interacting with the community, I understood the importance of observation and listening to citizen perspectives when understanding the needs and concerns in the area.

## References

Bureau, U. S. C. (2021, August 25). *American community SURVEY (ACS)*. The United States Census Bureau <https://www.census.gov/programs-surveys/acs>.

Millvale, PA. Data USA. (n.d.). <https://datausa.io/profile/geo/millvale-pa/#demographics>.

Millvale, Pennsylvania population 2021. Millvale, Pennsylvania Population 2021 Data (Demographics, Maps, Graphs) (n.d.). <https://worldpopulationreview.com/us-cities/millvale-pa-population>.

Millvale, Pennsylvania. Millvale, Pennsylvania (PA 15209) profile: population, maps, real estate, averages, homes, statistics, relocation, travel, jobs, hospitals, schools, crime, boat moving, houses, news, sex offenders. (n.d.). <https://www.city-data.com/city/Millvale-Pennsylvania.html>.

Qualitative data collected through author-made questionnaire.

## Acknowledgements

The Browne Leadership Fellowship should be acknowledged for providing an immersive seminar and my community engagement summer placement. Director of Community Engagement Dr. Durham facilitated the seminars and the connections to community leaders in Pittsburgh for fellow placements. She connected me to major people such as Brian Wolovich who was a local school teacher raised in Millvale and coordinated several of the projects in Millvale. In collaboration with Mr. Wolovich, I worked closely with Jill Insocho to help her with developing her Free Store in the community. Lastly, I want to thank every other inspiring activist I met and taught me the importance of community.

