

McKeesport Collaborative

Student Consultant, Don Kendall

Community Partner, Ruth Smith

I. About the Organization

Mission:

The McKeesport Collaborative is dedicated to developing and improving services for women affected by substance abuse and their children. The Collaborative provides a continuum of care which includes substance abuse and mental health treatment, family support and child development programs, self sufficiency and housing. This system benefits people seeking services, service providers and the community at large by improving efficiency, reducing duplication and providing an opportunity for planning and development.

Families access the services of the McKeesport Collaborative through case managers at the Women and Family Center or Family Services of Western PA. The case managers then provide links to appropriate services based on the individual needs of each family.

The goal is to guide the family to self-sufficiency. The Collaborative makes use of services and programs already available to achieve these goals. Working closely with its 40 member agencies women in need are directed to the programs that serve their individual needs. The process of recovery is difficult on the individual and the family. It is often hard to find the right services in this difficult time of recovery. The Collaborative fits the needs of families to services and makes the necessary referrals so that the women can get back to a productive life.

In McKeesport there are many agencies serving women in the community. Often they don't promote their services well. Some agencies have programs that overlap. In the case of substance abuse many interrelated problems arise. These problems are addressed by programs offered by different agencies. Case management must be coordinated by each agency. The trouble comes in finding which agencies and services are appropriate for each individual and family affected by substance abuse. The Collaborative provides a single case manager with the support of services from any member agency as needed.

The Collaborative works through committees, consisting of staff from member agencies. Committees develop programs in four areas:

Housing: This committee develops and promotes supportive housing environments for both families and individuals. They encourage collaboration among local housing providers. Currently, 15 units are being used by clients of Collaborative members. The Collaborative also operate housing facilities. These are provided temporarily for women in recovery. The women in case management can take advantage of these programs for up to two years. A new facility is being built to provide 8 townhouses for the families of the Collaborative. Safe and affordable housing is one of the goals central to the Collaborative's mission.

Families Working Together: This group provides ways for participants to meet and socialize in a positive, supportive atmosphere. Various activities meet this goal. Some examples include skill building, seminars, celebrations, pot-luck dinners and day trips.

Education/Employment: They work with education and employment programs in the community. The group works to ensure education is available and help provide opportunities to find employment.

HIV/AIDS Working Group: Here they are working to assess the needs of the community. They also develop appropriate community based services the respond to the HIV / AIDS crisis in the area. An example is the HIV / AIDS walk they hosted in McKeesport recently.

McKeesport Collaborative has a paid staff of three: the program director and two case managers. Volunteers make up another 67 people available for support. This includes members from all of the various agencies participating in the McKeesport Collaborative. Ruth Smith is the Program director. She reports to the steering committee that directs the organization. Mrs. Smith coordinates events which promote the Collaborative. She works with the member agencies to ensure that the program participants get the support they need. This results in very efficient operations. The task is to improve the coordination of programs. The communication with people in the member agencies maximizes the results of all the agencies as a whole. Special events bring the people and agencies together.

The McKeesport Collaborative office is located at 500 Walnut Street in central McKeesport. The office space is donated by the Women and Family Center of the Mon Yough Community Services. One case manager and the program director have offices in this building. The other case manager has an office in a different building, also located in the center of town. Both locations are close to public transportation.

The Collaborative is supported is supported by the United Way. The budget for 2001 is currently \$468,197 and \$506,184 is proposed for the 2002 year. This is funded 39% by United Way. The program serves families and is currently providing services at a cost of \$775 per family. The goal is to allocate \$900 per family in the coming year.

II. The Technology Situation

The Program Director has one computer: a Pentium I 200MHz with 64mg of memory and a 2 gigabyte hard drive. The computer has Office 97 installed. When past documents are needed they are loaded from floppy disks. The files remain on the disks. There is only one copy of each file and many floppy disks hold various files. There is a Cannon BJ4200 printer connected to the computer. It was installed to reduce the cost of the HP ink cartridges of the previous printer. Printing was done on the computers from the Women and Family center across the hall before the printer was installed. This required the floppy disks to transfer the files to another secretary's computer. It was inconvenient to print with these printers. Now the Cannon is used and documents do not need transferred for printing.

In preparation for the consulting partnership, Mrs. Smith requested that her computer be added to the network provided by the organization donating the office space. The network is an Ethernet 100baseT connection. The computer was added to the network a few days prior to the consulting period. This gave the director Internet access via a high speed DSL connection. Before the consulting partnership, Mrs. Smith had never used email or been on the Internet. She used her computer only for typing up monthly minutes and writing the annual report. Although she recognized the value and power that computing offered, she did not have a comfort level in which to begin using it. Subsequently, every problem was experienced as a barrier.

Current technology related information:

- The creation of a web site was contracted to Innovative Designs and Solutions.
- The network in the building is managed by the technical staff of the Women and Family Center.
- The network is not the same as the rest of the computers in the building. Most of the other systems in the building have access to information resources for the participants in the Women and Family Center's activities. Since this information is confidential, the network resources have been separated. Thus LAN benefits like printer sharing are not available.

There are difficulties arising from the hardware. The computer does not have the capacity to run graphics software needed for some projects. There is simply no way to run powerful applications on the current system. This requires printing projects to be designed by outside firms. The slow computer also reduces the usefulness of other activities on the computer by limiting the speed and number of open applications.

III. The Consulting Situation

The consulting partnership focused its efforts in the following areas: 1) Improving Communications; 2) Web Access to a Local Resource Directory; and 3) Document Management. These areas were identified as the problems most needing improvement.

1.) Improving Communications

In communicating with the members of the Collaborative there are many documents that require distribution. The meeting times and locations are sent out to members of each committee. The minutes from the meetings need to go to staff as well as all the member agencies. There is the potential for great savings in time spent in correspondence.

Email can be used to communicate more efficiently. The network provides fast access to the internet. An email program, Outlook Express, was implemented to manage contacts. Groups were created for mailing lists. These groups pull from a common contact list. The email received from others can be replied to without hassle. The email program reduces the snail mail use to recipients that do not have email. This is a limited group that grows smaller in time.

2.) Web Access to a Local Resource Directory

There was no single source to find all the available resources in the community. Since most of the objectives of the McKeesport Collaborative are met using the resources in the community, a directory of services would reduce the time spent searching for the right agency and contact information. If this was delivered on the web anyone would have easy access. The web site can also promote the Collaborative's services. This directory provides advanced search options. There is also the ability to create reports based on the website database.

The approach taken was to implement databases for the use of the organization and its member agencies as well as others. The work was done by Micheal Borgania of Innovative Design and Solutions. They implemented a database and set up the web pages. Mrs. Smith took the data collected from the agencies and entered it into the database. As she did this the errors in the database structure were reported to Innovative Design and Solutions so they could update the fields of the web page forms. Once the corrections were finalized all the member agencies can enter their own information via a web form and sign up process.

We installed and used simple web design software to create and maintain web site pages. After practicing all of the relevant skills required to maintain the web site we made some pages for special events of the Collaborative. The documents from monthly meetings will be kept in linked files.

Each agency has the ability to update their information via the web site. They have a username and password to insure only the agency can change its own information. This system reduces the workload of Mrs. Smith. The directory is kept up to date without a lot of maintenance required. When a hard copy of the directory is required the database is downloaded and reports create an attractive print edition of the same information. This site is useful to the Collaborative and other local agencies. Anyone looking for local resources will also find the site through a web search. Promotion of the Collaborative and member agencies was enhanced through this project.

3.) Document Management

The storage method previously used was the 3.5 floppy disk. A system to store and protect the information was needed. A floppy is very likely to fail and should not be the only copy of a document. There was no plan in place for what to do in case of a disaster. The information would all be lost and have to be reconstructed. A document management system was needed with methods in place to ensure the reliability of the data.

The hard drive on the computer stores information safely. It also maintains a directory structure to store files for easy location. Logical directory naming keeps the files from getting lost. The files are also accessed more quickly. An on-line backup of the important files ensures the safety in case of a system failure or disaster. FTP transfer of files was easy and fast over the network connection. This project also enabled files to be downloaded to the Mrs. Smith's home computer. In fact files can now be accessed from anywhere.

IV. Results of Consulting Work

1. Implementation of New Communication Techniques Using Email

Mrs. Smith is working with email software to communicate more effectively. All the names and email of staff have been entered into the address book. The members of the Collaborative that have email are also entered into the address book. Now groups are set up to address the mailings with a distribution list rather than individually adding all the addresses. Mailings are done to targeted email lists for specific projects or committee communication. The rest of the members are becoming familiar with email. They seem to be comfortable with email communication.

Outcome 1: Email is now used daily

Now email is used regularly for communication needs. Mrs. Smith no longer misses the correspondence from other agencies using email primarily. She gets to participate in discussions conducted through email that otherwise would have been missed.

Mrs. Smith sends and receives email on a regular basis. She helps others in the office with email problems. When appropriate, email is being used to replace less efficient means of communication. Email is usually open on the computer now. The computer has seen a lot more use since email software has been installed. Others have expressed their appreciation in being able to email news and documents.

Email allows the Collaborative to increase the level of discussion among member agencies greatly. "Snail mail" is no longer needed to get news out. When urgent communication is required, email replaces time-consuming telephone communication. Now others can email her from other web sites as well as the Collaborative web site. Documents can now be sent and received. This is much easier than using the fax. The other advantage is the documents may be reprinted or modified without reducing the print quality.

Now that email is a common task it has become an essential part of the Collaborative's communication strategy. Group emails are done several times a month. Since there is constantly mail coming and going there is no chance that the new skills will be lost. As more promotion is done in regards to the web site the email use will continue to grow.

Recommendation: Make use of the address book to store additional information

The address book in Microsoft Outlook Express can be used to store additional information about the contacts. This may be easier than implementing a database to store the information. The address book already has the fields set up. You can perform most of the same functions as a database. The records hold address and phone numbers for easy retrieval. Search features of the address book make information

readily available. This information can also be imported to Microsoft Outlook if more featured scheduling software is required.

Implementing this recommendation is very simple. It only requires the information be added to the contact data. This is done right in the current software.

Resources:

<http://www.microsoft.com/windows/oe/> - Microsoft's support center. This site contains support information on Microsoft software. Clicking on [Outlook Express Support Center](#) brings up many resources to assist in making use of the features in Outlook Express.

<http://email.about.com/cs/msoutlookoe/> - tips & tricks page for Outlook Express.

Recommendation: Utilize Outlook Express features and add-ons

There are many more features of Outlook Express that can increase its effectiveness.

Resources:

<http://www.windows-help.net/windows98/oetips-idx-nf.shtml> - Outlook Express help. Useful information on Outlook Express as well as help on other software for Microsoft Windows.

<http://email.about.com/msub50.htm> - details on using stationary in outlook. Stationery can make emails more effective by making them visually appealing

http://www.software-solutions.co.nz/aladdins_el/alelabout.htm - envelope- and label-making software for Outlook. This does not work in Outlook Express but can be used with Outlook since it is also installed.

<http://www.outlook-express-backup.com/> - utility that allows you to backup and restore your Outlook Express data. The cost is \$29 and a trial is available for download. If most of the communication is going to be done using email then a backup system should be implemented to ensure the data is not destroyed.

Outcome 2: Increased dialog in response to mailings

There is now much more feedback to the announcements and meeting minutes since recipients can now send responses very easily. Without email measuring the response to the issues raised was much more difficult.

After sending a bulk mailing there are many responses. The recipients send feedback immediately. Now the response to current events can be seen directly. Any questions or issues that come up can now be addressed immediately. This improves the dialog and makes the members feel more involved in the activities of the Collaborative.

The primary goal of the McKeesport Collaborative is to bring together the local agencies to better address issues related to the women and children affected by substance abuse. The increased capacity created though email allows more issues to be resolved. The Collaborative is now getting better feedback on the policies being implemented. Opinions raised by others improve the process of finding the best solutions.

This outcome has been consistent throughout the consulting process. The ability to contribute seems to be important to the members. They value the chance to improve the level of care in the community.

Recommendation: Encourage response to the mailing

In the email there can be a note added that responses are read and appreciated. This is an extremely easy way to increase the level of discussion. If the readers know that their input is valuable to the

Collaborative they will be more likely to respond. More responses will increase the effects of this outcome.

Recommendation: Discussion board on the web site

This recommendation is described under the web site outcomes. Please refer to the web directory section for a description and implementation instructions.

Outcome 3: Substantial time saving in distributing routine communications

The routine mailings that used to take up so much time are now done using email. This is one of the most substantial improvements realized by Mrs. Smith. There has been more time savings in this area than any other.

What used to take an entire day now takes several minutes. The addresses are already in the groups required to do the mailing. The documents that were sent are added as attachments. The email itself is used to note any important information.

Now that the mailing is so simple the time can be used to address issues brought up in the meetings rather than distributing summaries of them. There is also less time for the mail to get to the recipients. There is no delay in the delivery. The postage expense has been eliminated which is useful in managing a tight budget.

As more people get email addresses the process will be even more beneficial. The Mrs. Smith already does the mailing on her own so there are no issues as to sustainability. The computer has all the lists set up so if new personnel take over the system will be equally effective.

Recommendation: Encourage other agencies use similar technique

Since this method has proved very valuable it would probably help the other agencies communicate more effectively. When more is known about what others are working on resources can be better allocated to areas with the most return.

2. Create and Maintain Website with Directory of Agencies

The directory project was completed by Innovative Design and Solutions. He used database technology to implement a directory service which contains all the community agencies. The web site uses Cold Fusion server to provide dynamic information. Queries to the database enable useful information to be extracted without difficulty. The web application is easily changed with system variables containing the global attributes. Although the site is complex and powerful, Mrs. Smith can maintain it through simple interfaces and FTP file transfers. She only needs to upload new content to the server and add the links via a simple web form.

The setup of the website has proved difficult. The programmer used complex technical terms. This generally left Mrs. Smith wondering what was meant. The consulting project enabled her to communicate her needs through the consultant's guidance. As the project continued the tasks required to maintain the site were realized. These were the topics worked on in the consulting sessions. By completing the required tasks the Mrs. Smith learnt the important techniques that are required to continue the site maintenance.

Outcome 1: Interactive database driven web site

The Collaborative now has a well-designed web site. It is completely customizable and data-driven. All the site features such as color schemes and buttons can be easily changed via web forms. The site searches the database for agencies that match given criteria. A detail page provides all the relevant information and links to email or visit the agencies web site.

The steering committee is very excited about the new site. They are eager to enter their information and test the site out. This shows the web site will be very helpful to many agencies. The web site is located at <http://www.MCollaborative.org>.

The caseworkers, other agencies, Mrs. Smith, and anyone in general can now get information on community resources through the web. One can easily search by program type, program name, or agency name, enabling everyone to get the information they need instantly. The database for the site will be downloaded and a print edition will also be completed for caseworkers doing home visits. The McKeesport area has never had anything like this and other communities have found print directories useful. The complete solution as now implemented has increased the capacity of the Collaborative and others to bring solutions to the people in need.

Mrs. Smith has already created a new page and put it on the web site. She was pleasantly surprised at how easy the process was and is working on more content. Whenever there are major changes required Innovative Design and Solutions can be contracted at reasonable rates. The application design requires no regular maintenance. The links are changed very easily through a settings page. This makes the page easy to keep current and new information should increase the number of repeat visits.

Recommendation: Discussion board

A discussion board may be added to the web site for increased collaboration among the users. The mission of the collaborative is to increase the discussion among service providers in order to increase the quality of service in the area. By using an online discussion board everyone can learn from the open discussion of current event affecting the community. This also gives members of the community a place to voice their opinion.

It requires special software to add the discussion board to the site. This could be added best by the current web designer. Another web designer could implement the board as well. If someone wanted to learn programming they could learn a scripting language and implement the changes on their own.

This recommendation requires interest from the Collaborative agencies to be useful. An email should first be sent to all parties that may want to participate to find out if there is interest. If a strong response indicates that the objectives for the discussion board would be met then the recommendation will be useful. The resources listed provide some starting points to look at. The site already has the capacity to implement a Cold Fusion solution.

Resources:

<http://www.bulletinboards.com/> - provide information about discussion boards. This site is useful for determining the uses of a discussion board. It also goes through a list of features to look for in comparing implementations. They also sell a product at \$101.50 yearly.

<https://drb-software.com/> - bulletin board software. This company has full-featured software for \$99.00. They implement the bulletin board using PERL and CGI scripts. They will also install it for \$59.00.

http://www.lansunlimited.com/about_discussion.htm - an ASP implementation of discussion boards. Provides a demo and detailed installation instructions. The cost is \$99 but there is a \$25 discount. This software uses a different server implementation.

<http://devex.macromedia.com/developer/gallery/> - a search on discussion boards will give you a lot of packages with different features and designs. Some of them are free and others have a cost associated. The features can be chosen and then the web designer can easily implement the additional code.

Innovative Design and Solutions – the current web designer has implemented the site well and has an intimate knowledge of the inner workings. An addition to the site would be best and most economically implemented by the same firm.

Outcome 2: Mrs. Smith has the ability to create/update web pages

Mrs. Smith can now create new pages for the web site. This is important because information often changes and if the information is out of date then the site's usefulness is diminished. Web pages have already been created by Mrs. Smith. She is comfortable using Microsoft FrontPage since she is used to Word. The only part to learn is the formatting differences in headings versus content. She is getting used to the FTP software also.

Now no outside support is needed to update the website. This reduces the costs associated with the web site. New pages can instantly be posted to the site. No extensive knowledge of HTML or scripting is required.

As more pages need created the knowledge will only sink in. The only problem would be if the site does not get updated often enough to keep the knowledge current. Even then the web designer can make the changes. So there is no possibility that the site will become out of date.

Recommendation: Implement new web publishing techniques

There are always ways to improve the web site design. Technologies such as Macromedia's Flash can add animation and interaction to the viewing experience. Other sites are a good way to see what works well. Once you have some ideas of what looks good it can be applied to the Collaborative site. There are also classes at local universities that teach web publishing.

Resources:

<http://macromedia.com/> - Macromedia has many products geared toward web site development. They have tools for HTML as well as Flash.

3. Document Management / Disaster Recovery

All the disks have been copied to the hard drive at the office. Now that they are all in one place they are being split up into logical groupings. These groupings are made into directories which are all put in the My Documents folder. The documents are placed into the intuitive directory structure. This is then backed up to the web server every week to ensure the data is safe and secure. The data that is needed from home can be downloaded from the server. Any other time a document is needed it can be downloaded.

The web site has also been downloaded to the local computer. This ensures that the web application is safe from server breakdowns. The data in the directory is also backed up.

Outcome 1: Easy to find files

Finding files can waste a lot of time. Easily bringing up the right file saves time and frustration when looking for documents that "must be there somewhere." Access time of the floppies was very slow. This will no longer be a concern when loading files.

Files are now all in one place. It is no longer necessary to search several disks to find a document. When files are needed the Find feature of Windows can be used to search all the files in My Documents at once. Now that the directories are set up the hard part is done. When saving files the directories all appear and it is easy to see which one is appropriate.

Recommendation: Consider a naming convention for filenames

If some thought is put into the way you name files it becomes easy to find what you want. For example, keywords can be used in the name. Since filenames can now be over eight characters and include spaces there is no reason a file should be cryptically named.

Recommendation: Use subdirectories to further subdivide the directories

As logical divisions of document categories become evident they can be used to further subdivide the directories. Some care must be used to keep the directory structure simple. If the directories are increased too much, the gains from separating the files will not be realized. Instead more time will be spent navigating the directory structure.

Outcome 2: Files are protected from any type of disaster

Files are located in multiple locations. There is no way they can be destroyed completely. The server files are also protected from problems on the other end. With the backup policies we have determined that the Collaborative will not have to worry about what to do when a disk fails or an entire system crashes. These events are bound to happen eventually. Evidences of this outcome will only be observed in a system crash or disaster.

The outcome has increased Mrs. Smith's awareness of technology planning. She would not have otherwise thought about how to recover in the event of a system crash. This planning for every possible occurrence will benefit technology planning in general.

The protection requires that the files be regularly sent to the backup location. There is some possibility that the outcome may not be sustained. If the Program Director neglects to regularly transfer the files then the backup will be outdated. It is still better than having nothing though.

Recommendation: Automate the backup process using software or scripts to transfer files

The backup process can be automated using specialized software. This would eliminate the need to manually FTP the files from computer to computer.

http://www.ipswitch.com/Products/WS_FTP/index.html - WS_FTP's newest version supports this feature.

<http://www.primasoft.com/32org/32ftp.htm> - AutoFTP Professional 3.3 This is another solution to backup automation.

Recommendation: Burn a copy of the data from a remote location to ensure total protection

For her home Mrs. Smith can make a complete backup of the complete directory of documents, web pages, and scripts. This can be stored on a CD, which is not susceptible to being overwritten or corrupted. This method provides complete protection and needs only to be done once a year. We have already installed a CD burner on a home computer. The FTP software needs installed on the home computer. Then the data can be burnt to CD. This CD needs to be kept in a safe location preferably not at the office.

Resources:

http://www.nextag.com/serv/main/buyer/ProductM.jsp?nxtg=2f9a37_1B5B689D1AC75A69&kw=Easy_CD_Creator_5_&ptitle=3079279&pdir=3&click=n&node=300170 – this is a listing of available CD burning software with reviews and prices.

The FTP software is already on the office computer. A copy for the home system can be downloaded from <http://www.cochran.com/start/guide/ftp.html>. This site has information on various software and links to the download sites.

V. Additional Recommendations

Recommendation 1: Increase use of databases for information accessibility

The huge success of the directory shows the power of databases. Another problem identified was information accessibility: there is room to improve the methods used to store information. The progress has been substantial in the areas addressed already.

In the past, when information was needed, it was difficult to access. The Collaborative has many clients and contacts which could be easily entered into a database. Everything resided in files stored in file cabinets. This made information difficult to retrieve. Binders and other paper records cover the bookshelves. There is no central location for the information needed. This information strategy is also useful for the reports and strategic planning of the organization.

Mrs. Smith would have much less work to do once the databases are set up. The web site being set up already uses a database to store all the agencies information. This could also be used on her personal computer to query information about how the area agencies cover service areas.

The annual report for funding requires that information on the operations be reported. If the data is already in database format a couple of reports would provide the needed data for the annual report.

Once the databases are set up the queries would not need to be often modified. The web designer could then build a web application to provide access to case workers when entering and updating the information.

Since case workers are located in different offices a web page would be useful in collecting data for the annual report. This would automate the process of compiling the data manually.

Then success of the current web project and the response from the steering committee indicated that the Collaborative is heading in the right direction. As more member agencies implement similar strategies there will be more opportunities for sharing information. This will lead to optimal services utilization.

Resources:

<http://www.rowden.net/learn/guides/access/> - a beginner's guide to Microsoft Access. This is a good place to start.

<http://www.csun.edu/itr/guides/access/2000/beg.html> - another guide to Microsoft Access.

The services of a programmer will be needed for the complicated applications. Mike at Innovative Design and Solutions has been doing good work and is capable of solving future IT problems.

Recommendation 2: New office computer

The office computer is very old. It is a Pentium I with 64mg of memory. This causes many problems. The computer sometimes crashes and only one application can be run at once. Some applications will not work on this computer. The ones that do usually run at very slow speeds. This causes a loss in productivity.

This recommendation developed from experience in the consulting situation. When evaluating software to use we were limited in the power of the applications which would run on the Mrs. Smith's system. Current graphics software requires a newer computer to meet the minimum requirements.

Mrs. Smith would have an easier time with a new computer. Currently the applications run slowly and there is doubt as to whether they are doing what you want. For instance, several mailings went out multiple times because of the delay after pressing the send button.

There are many more things that could be accomplished with current computer technology. Some examples are the flyers that are needed for various events. These could be made right in the office rather than having printers produce documents which may have errors. New web pages with current information could also be made easily. If more was being done with the web site to provide more information infrastructure, then a newer computer would be needed with an up-to-date operating system to provide data integrity.

A new computer would enable more to be done in-house. There are brochures and other publishing requirements that currently must be sent somewhere to be done. These are generally simple and could be done with desktop publishing software and a graphic package.

The network connection is very fast but the computer cannot take advantage of it. The computer can't keep up with the speed of the network. With a fast computer the speed of the network could be taken advantage of. As more work is being done with the internet the computer should be able to easily interact with the server.

New computers have never been cheaper. The amount of increase in power in comparison with the price makes a new computer look very attractive. Even the maintenance of an older computer is not justified with the possibility new technologies have to offer.

Resources:

DELL – (<http://dell.com>)

This is the leading computer reseller. They are consistently ranked first in many product categories. their web site allows you to order directly and they have regular specials including rebates and free shipping. DELL also has an excellent customer service department. They can answer most of your questions about the system setup. They also have a good return policy that enables you to get just what you want.

PCMagazine – (<http://www.pcmag.com/>) - They have regular reviews as well as issues dedicated to reviewing all the new computers at one time.

ComputerShopper – (<http://zdnetshopper.cnet.com/>) - This magazine has many advertisements for PCs and other computer equipment. It is useful in establishing the current prices of many competitors. They also have reviews of systems and software.

A search on any of the popular search engines will bring up many more resources for new computer shopping.

There are many grants available to non-profits that want to update their technology. Money from the grants would offset the budget issues. These site all list grants and funding options available for non-profits.

<http://www.psvp.org/>, Pittsburgh Social Venture Partners
http://www.samhsa.gov/news/click1_grants.html
<http://www.senate.gov/~wyden/feature/bookwww.htm>
<http://www.lib.msu.edu/harris23/grants/2sgalpha.htm>

Use messaging software to communicate

Sometimes even email can be too slow. Messaging software gives you instant responses. In some situations such as a planning meeting time this can be very useful. There is no waiting for a reply from email. The software must be used by every person who wants join in the conversation.

As well as chatting in text there are also video options. Software such as Microsoft's NetMeeting allows users to see live video as well as text, a whiteboard and also share applications. This is the most advanced solution. In order to take advantage of the features the users must have video equipment installed. This generally requires an open USB port. Installation is easy. The computer must be relatively fast to handle the video and audio though.

Resources:

Instant Messenger (<http://www.aim.com/>) – AOL implementation. Here you can see the features of the product as well as download a copy.

Windows Messenger (<http://messenger.msn.com/>) – Microsoft's implementation. Here you can see the features of the product as well as download a copy.

NetMeeting (<http://www.microsoft.com/windows/netmeeting/>) – video conferencing. This site has the features and allow you to download a copy of the software.

About the consultant:

Don Kendall, Senior in Business Administration, minor in Computer Science.

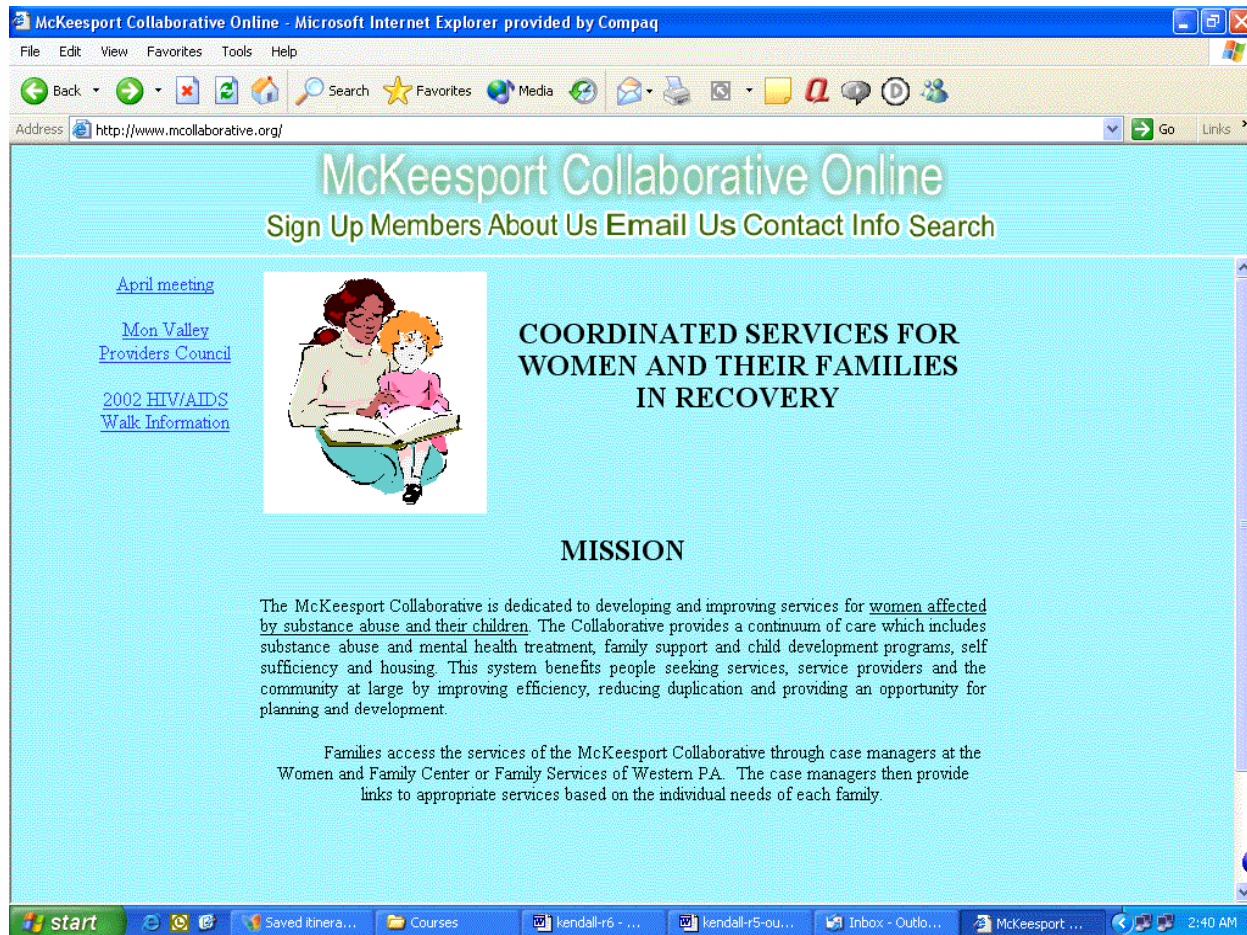
I am studying business in the expectations of running my own company someday. I plan to work in finance and information systems for several years to gain experience in the workforce.

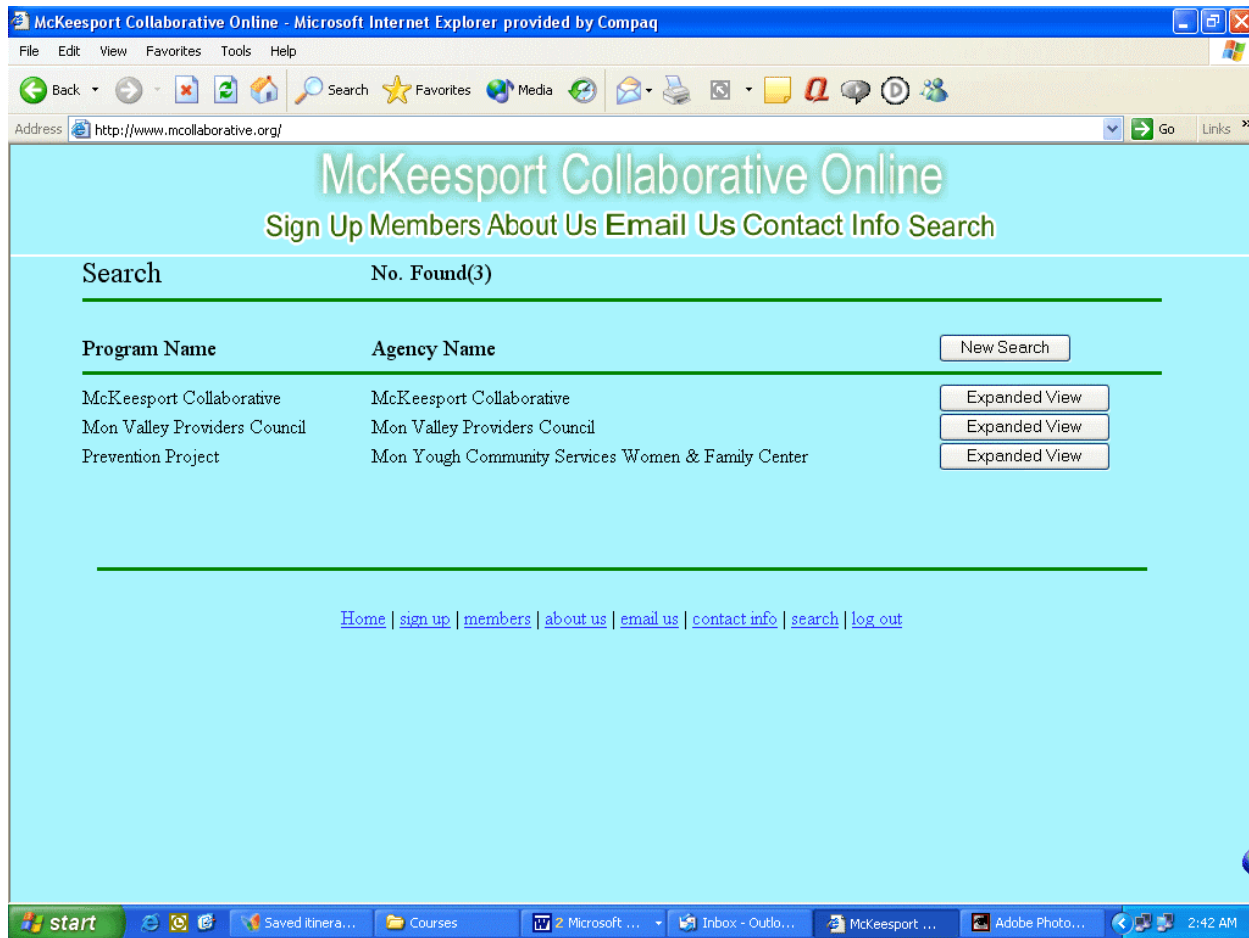
Afterwards I plan to apply information systems skills in a business that will help other companies maximize their competitive advantage over other companies in their industry.

McKeesport Collaborative Member Agencies:

ACTION Housing
Allegheny County Health Department
Allegheny Intermediate Unit Early Childhood & Family Support Services
Auberle
Bridge to Independence
City of McKeesport, Department of Community Development
Collaboration Project
Community College of Allegheny County
Domestic Abuse Counseling Center
Duquesne Community Mobilization Project
Educational Opportunity Center, Penn State McKeesport
Even Start
Family Resources
Family Services of Western PA
First Steps Recovery Homes
Goodwill Industries of Pittsburgh
Greater Pittsburgh Literacy Council
Healthy Start House
Helpline / Contact Pittsburgh
Intersection
Louise Child Care
McKeesport Area School District
McKeesport First Steps Parenting Program
McKeesport Housing Authority
McKeesport Housing Corporation
McKeesport Salvation Army
Mon Valley Education Consortium
Mon Valley Providers Council
Mon Valley Community Services:
Bridge to Recovery
Center for Substance Abuse
Crisis / Outreach Program
Student Assistance Program
Women and Family Center
Mon-Yough Juvenile Probation Office / Juvenile Court
Pennsylvania Low Income Housing Coalition
People's Building Family Support Project
Presbyterian Senior Care
National Kidney Foundation
Resource Mothers
Sisters Place
UPMC McKeesport
Womansplace
YMCA of McKeesport
YWCA of McKeesport
Zoar Home

Screen shots of website:





The image shows two overlapping browser windows from Microsoft Internet Explorer. The left window displays the 'McKeesport Collaborative Online' website, featuring a search bar and a table with columns for 'Program Name' and 'Agency'. The right window displays the 'Mon Valley Providers Council' website, which includes contact details such as address, phone, fax, and email, as well as a description of the council's mission and services.

Program Name	Agency
McKeesport Collaborative	McKeesport Collaborative
Mon Valley Providers Council	Mon Valley Providers Council
Prevention Project	Mon Valley Providers Council

Mon Valley Providers Council
 519 Penn Avenue
 Turtle Creek, PA 15145
Phone: 412-829-7112
fax: 412-829-4363
Web: www.hscc-mvpc.org **Email:** dcoplan@hscc-mvpc.org

Executive Director: Randy Thomas

Program Type: Employment, Training, Education, General Human Services, Health Services, Housing Services, Youth Programs.

Area of Service: 37 Mon Valley Communities in Allegheny County

Program name: Mon Valley Providers Council
Contact: Director Dave Coplan
Phone: 412-829-7112

Description: The Mon Valley Providers Council is an alliance of over 80 dues paying member agencies. The members agree that they can accomplish more by workign together to FILL GAPS IN SERVICES. Agencies identify gaps, develop the appropriate programs to respond and implement the programs through four Working Groups: Employment and Training, Health, Housing, and