

STAFF SPOTLIGHT: SHAWNA KOLKA

Shawna began with LEO in July of 2014 as a Senior Research Associate. She graduated from the University of Notre Dame in 2012, where she studied Economics and Sociology. During college she enjoyed working with service agencies like Indiana Legal Services, the Family Justice Center of South Bend and the Newark Boys and Girls Club. After spending a few years after college working in financial services in Chicago, Shawna began looking for opportunities to become more involved in the nonprofit sphere again. She was drawn to LEO's focus on helping service providers and policymakers figure out how to use their limited resources to have the maximum impact on the lives of those they serve.



What is your role at the Wilson Sheehan Lab for Economic Opportunities?

The biggest part of my job is managing the day-to-day operations of research projects, including communicating with agencies, developing and implementing research protocols, and overseeing data collection and analysis. LEO is still fairly new and small, allowing me the opportunity to take on a lot of different tasks, including planning our conference last spring, recruiting, and managing our research assistants. This also provides the opportunity for me to develop protocols to track projects and to do a good deal of new project development.

What projects are you involved in at LEO?

My two biggest projects at the moment are the Padua Pilot and Nightingale. The Padua Pilot is an evaluation of Catholic Charities Fort Worth's intensive case management program. Over the last year we developed and fielded a survey for the project and began enrollment. Right now we are in the early preparations for the first round of follow-up surveys. Nightingale is a respite center for homeless patients run by Catholic Charities Santa Rosa. We are currently working with several local project partners to finalize the research plan, and we hope to start enrolling patients in the late fall.

What is your involvement with LEO's Undergraduate Research Assistants?

I oversee the RA schedules and provide guidance on assignments. Our Undergraduate Research Assistants are an integral part of all of LEO's research projects - they help out on everything from background research to data entry and analysis! They've continually impressed us with their ability to not just quickly complete tasks but to thoughtfully take ownership of projects and add their own ideas and insights.



LEO is proud to announce our participation in the Notre Dame Department of Economics' Shamrock Series Lecture! Along with panelists from the Notre Dame Department of Economics, Catholic Charities Fort Worth, Catholic Relief Services and Abdul Latif Jameel Poverty Action Lab, LEO co-founders will discuss our research initiatives. This event is free and open to the public.

COMBINING RESEARCH AND PRACTICE TO SERVE THE POOR
 FRIDAY, NOVEMBER 20, 2015
 BOSTON MARRIOTT COPLEY PLACE, WELLESLEY MEETING ROOM
 3:00-4:15 PM

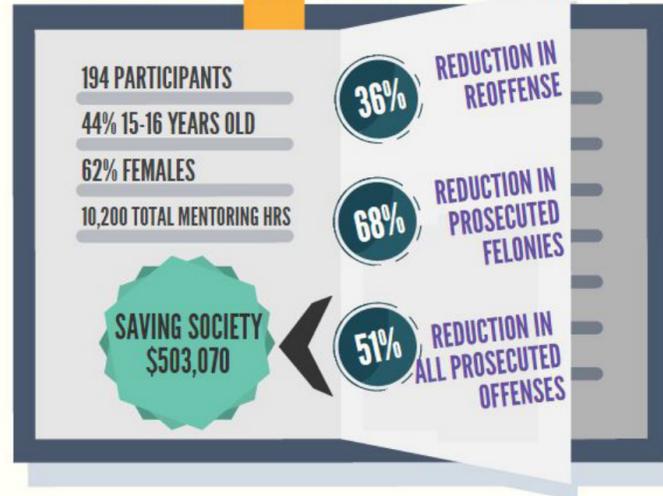
@LEOatND
 #ShamrockSeriesND

READING FOR LIFE PROJECT UPDATE

JUVENILE CRIME STATISTICS



READING FOR LIFE: SAINT JOSEPH COUNTY



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LEO NEWSLETTER FALL 2015

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A MESSAGE FROM THE FOUNDERS

Bill Evans and Jim Sullivan reflect on recent developments at LEO

The Lab is typically livelier during the summer, and this summer was no different. We had seven fulltime undergraduate research assistants (RAs) conducting background research, analyzing data, and writing reports. For the first time, one of the LEO RAs was placed onsite with a provider partner. Emily David, a junior economics major, spent her summer at Catholic Charities Fort Worth, where she assisted with LEO's evaluation of the Padua Pilot and served as a liaison to the agency. Having an RA onsite proved to be extremely helpful and we hope to expand this practice next summer.

For three of our RAs, the highlight of the summer was a trip to New York to help with a new project run by Catholic Charities Brooklyn and Queens. Their task was to digitize a few thousand paper applications for low-income senior housing. While the work was tedious, the opportunity to explore New York for a week made it well worth it.

We are excited to see some of our first projects now nearing completion. One project that is capturing a lot of attention is our evaluation of Reading for Life, a juvenile diversion program that provides an alternative to prosecution for first-time, nonviolent offenders here in South Bend. Our study shows that the program leads to a large decline in recidivism, particularly for serious offenses. This impact caught the attention of the White House Council of Economic Advisers, which highlighted Reading for Life in a recent report.

In July Jim testified before the U.S. House of Representatives Committee of Agriculture's Subcommittee on Nutrition. In his testimony at the hearing on "Past, Present, and Future of SNAP: Developing and Using Evidence-Based Solutions," he explained that one of the greatest advances in the social sciences in recent decades is the development and application of methods that allow researchers to determine whether social programs are having their intended effect. He called for more research to determine the impact of food stamps on the health and well-being of the poor.

Finally, we are excited that LEO has been selected to participate in an event hosted by the Department of Economics preceding the Shamrock Series game in November at Fenway Park between Notre Dame

and Boston College. The event, "Combining Research and Practice to Serve the Poor," will highlight the work that economists are doing in partnership with social service groups to address the causes and consequences of poverty. We hope to see you all there!



WILLIAM EVANS, LEO CO-FOUNDER



JAMES SULLIVAN, LEO CO-FOUNDER



Research Assistants & Research Associates
Summer 2015

FACULTY AFFILIATE UPDATES

LEO's research network is comprised of faculty affiliates from universities around the country with experience evaluating anti-poverty programs. LEO identifies interesting projects and matches them to academic researchers with appropriate expertise.

MELISSA KEARNEY

Professor Kearney co-authored the paper "Early Childhood Education by MOOC: Lessons from Sesame Street" which was published as an NBER Working Paper in June 2015.

NICOLE MCNEIL

Professor McNeil and her colleagues at the non-profit research agency WestEd received a \$3.5 million grant from the U.S. Department of Education's Institute of Education Science (IES) to conduct a large-scale efficacy trial of the math intervention McNeil and her research team at Notre Dame developed for second graders.

MARIANNE PAGE

Professor Page co-authored the paper "Are Recessions Good for Your Health? Understanding Pro-cyclical Mortality," which will appear in the *American Economic Journal*.

KATHERINE WAGNER

Professor Wagner was appointed an Assistant Professor of Economics at Marquette University after receiving her Ph.D. in Economics from the University of Notre Dame in May 2015.

MARCI YBARRA

Professor Ybarra was selected as the Spring Quarter 2015 Self-Sufficiency Research Clearinghouse Emerging Scholar. The SSRC is supported by the the Office of Planning, Research and Evaluation, and Administration for Children and Families, U.S. Department of Health and Human Services.

RESEARCH PROJECT UPDATE

Evaluating the Nightingale Center

Partner Agency: Catholic Charities Santa Rosa (CCSR), Sonoma County Department of Health Services (DHS)

Policy Focus Area: Homelessness, Healthcare

Investigators: William Evans, Marrienne Page

Project Description: Nightingale provides a temporary home, in lieu of a longer hospital stay, for homeless patients in need of a safe environment for recuperation. Patients receive a bed, three meals a day, and wrap-around exit-planning services designed to reduce readmission rates. Nightingale is a CCSR program.

Significance: Providing healthcare to homeless patients generates high costs for multiple reasons. First, hospitals are unable to discharge recovering patients to their own homes to recuperate. Hospitals must maintain homeless patients in-hospital during the recovery process. Also, homeless patients have high readmission rates and high usage of emergency departments after discharge.

Research Questions: LEO is evaluating Nightingale's impact on patient outcomes and the cost to hospitals of treating the homeless population. LEO is studying treatment costs as well as hospital readmission rates, emergency department use, and mortality rates.

Experimental Design: Nightingale currently has a limited capacity to house homeless patients. Due to this capacity constraint, Nightingale is forced to turn away patients for lack of bed space. Whether or not there is a bed available at Nightingale at a given time is essentially random. CCSR maintains a waitlist of all eligible patients for Nightingale and monitors which patients receive a bed. The partner hospitals, CCSR and DHS collect data for all eligible patients. These data allow LEO to track hospital related costs, emergency room visits and readmissions for those who receive a bed compared to those who do not. LEO is studying the difference in cost to treat and outcomes for patients who are accepted by Nightingale as compared to those who must stay in the hospital to recuperate.

Project Status: We are in the pre-launch phase of this project. LEO is collaborating with the hospitals, DHS and CCSR to design and field test the data collection, intake and follow-up processes before enrolling patients in the study.

PARTNER SPOTLIGHT:

JENNIELYNN HOLMES

Jennielynn Holmes is the Director of Shelter and Housing at Catholic Charities Santa Rosa (CCSR), overseeing all of the homeless service programs, including street outreach efforts, a safe parking program, emergency shelters, supportive services, to housing. CCSR is the largest homeless service provider between the Golden Gate Bridge and the Oregon border, serving around 6,000 individuals every year. Jennielynn began at CCSR in 2009.



How did you become interested in serving the homeless? I began at Catholic Charities 6 years ago as a part-time counselor while I was applying for law school, but once I got to know the stories of those who were experiencing homelessness it completely changed my life and this became my personal mission and career.

How many individuals are served at Nightingale? There can be up to 13 people per night at Nightingale, and on average we serve around 120 individuals per year. In collaboration with LEO, we are expanding the program to serve 26 people per night. The expansion will be completed in October 2015.

What do you believe could improve homelessness prevention programs across the US? I think there are several areas for improvement. The first and most significant being the amount of resources available to increase these services. The second would be the collection and analysis of data to back up those programs that most efficiently and effectively prevent homelessness. The last would be to understand how policy decisions create and affect homelessness. For example, in California, both prison realignment and Prop 47 have significantly impacted homelessness prevention efforts.

How has your partnership with LEO evolved over the past year? The partnership with LEO has been a tremendous gift. We met at a CCUSA annual gathering when we were doing a presentation on Nightingale and the social return on investment it created for the hospitals. After that initial meeting, we began coordinating with the local hospitals as well as the County of Sonoma and have developed a strong program design. The support and guidance from LEO has been tremendous and has allowed us to learn from a very unique research lab.

How do you anticipate LEO's research study will improve Nightingale? I think that LEO has already dramatically improved Nightingale by allowing us to design tighter systems and internal controls. The research results will allow us to see the impact we are making or not making. It is important that we are maximizing our impact on the lives of those we serve, and LEO will allow us to truly understand that. We can make adjustments to make the program stronger, but without true research we wouldn't be able to make the most effective decisions.

In your opinion, what role does research have in reducing homelessness? Research plays a very important role in reducing homelessness. It will not only help us to provide continuous evaluation of our programs to be the best they can be, but it will also allow us to replicate programs that have been proven successful, so that we don't have to start from ground zero. We can take programs that work and make a bigger impact in our nation.