Ozarks Area Community Action Corporation (OACAC) reached out to other organizations that have the Reality Enrichment and Life Lessons (REALL) project to hear about their experience with it and to share any feedback they had.

MVCAA is the 1st “Get to Know…” story featured in the OACAC Newsletter. An interview of Cortney Mullins was conducted by OACAC. The newsletter follows along with agency photos taken during REALL simulations.

Picture below is Cortney Mullins, MVCAA Community Projects Manager.
Missouri Valley Community Action Agency

MVCAA had 3 staff go through REALL training in 2014. Since that time they have created 2 kits and provided the simulation in 4 of their 7 counties. We had the pleasure of hearing from Cortney Jolliff-Mullins, the Community Projects Manager for MVCAA, on how REALL has been received in their area.

MVCAA began having schools want to do simulations back to back in one day so they decided to create a second kit to accommodate that request. Cortney worked alone on putting both kits together and says she knows it very well now. Looking at each piece as it's being created and then packing everything from scratch gave her a better understanding of the kit. She suggests all facilitators take time to really go through their kit piece by piece to understand it all. She also said that even though she knows it well and has facilitated many times, she still uses the facilitator script so she doesn't miss anything. She has added her own notes about announcements she wants to make throughout the simulation and takes notes during the simulation to address things in between weeks but she still reads from the script to ensure all the necessary items are covered.

MVCAA has begun a great partnership with the Chamber of Commerce in Higginsville. The Chamber was already working with the school there to offer the CHOICES program to 8th grade students. Often agencies tell us that when a school already has a program for youth, they are reluctant to do REALL as well. But MVCAA created an agreement with
the school and the Chamber to partner the two projects to provide the most impact for students. Now, 8th grade students complete the CHOICES program and in 9th grade they go through the REALL simulation to build on the foundation set by CHOICES.

Another unique experience MVCAA was a part of was a REALL simulation for teachers at the Therapeutic Learning School in Marshall. After the Superintendent saw the students participate in the simulation, she wanted the teachers to also participate in it. For the teachers' simulation she asked to add a booth where participants had to do a "dumb school assignment" representing what many parents have to deal with on top of work and parenting. Cortney created a worksheet about poverty in their county which she said was very eye opening for the adult participants. She said it was a great experience and would love to do it with other schools.

Like many groups doing REALL, finding enough volunteers is often a struggle. They have worked with their local college to get college students involved and that has worked well. They have also recently partnered with the United Way to get volunteers for a Poverty Simulation and are hoping to have the same success with REALL.

Cortney said they have heard great comments from participants as well, such as the necessity of graduating from high school and having a low income student feel successful and that she could be self-sufficient because she knew how to get her bills paid.

We know Cortney and the rest of the Missouri Valley team will continue to have success with the REALL project and making a difference in their community! Thank you for sharing your stories and the photos below with all of us.