

Patrice Duckett, Near West Collaborative, Speaks on Being a Community Organizer

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Patrice Duckett

I am a proud Community Organizer. As the Near West coordinator, I have worked with the IUPUI to host six Sam H. Jones Service Scholars, four teacher fellows' projects, and multiple service learning projects. IUPUI students have created branding for the Near West side, created a garden initiative that helped form four community gardens, and created architectural designs for Hawthorne Community Center, which is currently being used in their capital campaign.

I received my Bachelor's degree in Business Administration from Martin University. During my college years, I was introduced to volunteerism, civic engagement, and resident leadership. My civic engagement at Martin University resulted in an opportunity for me to participate in the Making Connections Indianapolis leadership facilitation training.

You have to love making a difference in order to be a community organizer. Organizers usually are grant funded and usually have a limited amount of funds. In addition, nonprofit positions are usually understaffed and maybe be eliminated due to funding. However, a strong organizer will always be prepared. It is very important to know how to write grants, collaborate, understand personalities, understand the inner workings of communities, and most of all is adaptable. Surprisingly, many degrees would work perfectly in a community organizing position; however, more popular degrees such as nonprofit management, business management, and social work are listed on community organizing job descriptions.

Near West Collaborative has a quality of life plan that spans across all community concerns of a neighborhood. Whether you are obtaining your degree to become a doctor, architect, business owner, or teacher, you can definitely get some hands on experience working in a community like Near West. We welcome all students and faculty to explore our historic and engaged community. The Near West can provide an outlet for students to learn about how an inner city neighborhood functions, how grassroots approaches can provide a different outlook to a degree, and provide students an opportunity to volunteer to make a difference in a community or residents' life.