Greater Valley Community Services

Executive Summary

Community Partner
Tempestt Henderson – Director of Foster Care
Student Consulting Team
Jasmine Nie, Ryan McGrady, and Annie Eng

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Background

Greater Valley Community Services (GVCS) is a non-profit social services organization located in Braddock, Pittsburgh and serves the greater Pittsburgh area. GVCS provides a variety of social services that help children and families with appropriate resources to overcome challenges. Their mission statement encapsulates their work and is below:

To strengthen, educate and empower children and families through collaboration and resources while promoting safety, growth, and a strong community.

Some of GVCS' services include their oldest program: foster care, and others such as the summer camp, food pantry, elderly care, and support groups for various causes. Since its founding in 2009, GVCS has grown to 20+ staff members and has served over 12,000 people in the greater Pittsburgh area.

Project Description

Project Opportunity

The focus of the project is GVCS' Foster Care program and its tedious file organization and collection process. Throughout the course of a foster care arrangement, GVCS must collect numerous forms from foster parents for compliance and evaluation. These files are currently stored in paper form and manually organized in large binders. In addition, each caseworker at GVCS must keep track of form due dates for each of their foster parents, wait for physical paper forms to be delivered or for pictures to be shared, and read handwriting to decipher the forms. This resulted in additional work for caseworkers and a slow onboarding process for foster parents. The consulting team sees an opportunity to make file organization and collection faster and streamlined by converting to digital forms.

Project Vision

The project will create a centralized location where foster parents and case workers can reference to retrieve and submit form items. Our vision includes a Submission System web application and a set of fillable PDFs that foster parents can easily download and complete. The Submission System will allow caseworkers to assign forms to foster parents, and for foster parents to submit their work. In addition, the Submission System will act as an organized database for caseworkers to store information about each of their foster families.

Project Outcomes

Our primary outcome is a Ruby on Rails web application, where caseworkers can assign fillable PDF form items to foster parents, receive submissions, and reference submissions in an embedded database. Throughout the project, the team conducted interviews, transformed user stories into hi-fidelity interactive prototypes, and provided extensive documentation and training materials to the client. We ensured that our client, Tempestt Henderson, understood how to use the web application through training sessions throughout and after the application development process, and was equipped to teach other caseworkers and foster parents. Lastly, we set up further communication channels with Professor Heimann and Jasmine Nie via email to reconnect with GVCS in August 2023 about purchasing their own domain after three months of trial usage.

Project Deliverables

The team transitioned two main deliverables ready for use: a deployed web application hosted on rook-cmuis.net and a set of fillable PDF forms. To accompany the web application, the team delivered a technical documentation packet that describes the structure and logic of the codebase, a training video that teaches the client how to use the application, and two Github repositories that serve development and deployment purposes respectively. These accompanying items were delivered via email.

Recommendations

The team recommends that GVCS continue to use the Submission System web application to streamline their file organization and collection process and purchase a domain of their own on hover.com by August 2023 to continue hosting this application online. In the future, the team also recommends that GVCS hires a Ruby on Rails developer from Fiverr or contracts a future 67-373 consulting team to implement the following:

1. A public newsroom on the web application for caseworkers to post announcements.
2. A password recovery feature for caseworkers or foster parents to reset their passwords.
3. Amazon S3 system for more efficient file storage.

These recommendations will expand the functionality and scalability of the platform as more foster parents join and submit their files.

Student Consulting Team

Jasmine Nie served as project manager and lead designer. She is a third-year senior majoring in Information Systems with two minors in Human-Computer Interaction and Business Analytics. She will be joining A.T. Kearney full-time after graduation in New York City as a Strategy Consultant.

Ryan McGrady was the client transition manager and lead developer. Ryan is a third-year student majoring in Information Systems with minors in Computer Science and Computational Finance. He will be interning at Millennium Management as a Quantitative Trading intern in the summer of 2023.

Annie Eng was the quality assurance manager and led the testing of the web application. She is a senior majoring in Information Systems. After graduation, she will be joining J.P. Morgan as a full-time Software Engineer in New York City.