

Amanda Roper **Student Research Assistant**

Amanda Roper is a native of San Angelo, Texas and is currently an undergraduate student of Sociology at Angelo State University (ASU). Amanda will graduate in December 2009. Amanda has worked as a preschool teacher at Trinity Lutheran Early Childhood Center from 2004-2007. Amanda participates in the STARS mentoring program at Fannin Elementary to help children excel on the TAKS test. In the spring of 2008, Dr. Kenneth Stewart asked her to be a student research assistant for the Community Development Initiatives. Amanda is currently working on mapping the results of eighteen social indicators in order to compare the San Angelo community with other areas of Texas. Amanda is also helping to develop a social capital index and is participating in the Complete Count Committee for the 2010 Local Census.

Testimonial on CDI experience:

As a CDI research assistant, I've been exposed to the important notion of social health, and have helped create a set of data maps using ARC GIS with narratives describing local and statewide comparisons on 18 different community indicators. With this knowledge of community social health, I have a new outlook on how interconnected our community is and how important it is to have a socially healthy place to live. The CDI Social Health Index project also has given me a great chance to learn GIS mapping technology, giving me a skill that I will be able to utilize beyond my college career.

I have also learned about social capital and how the social bonds and networks in a community are valuable resources. Next semester I look forward to working with CDI on the project to measure social capital at the community level. I have already helped on this project by developing a set of potential social capital indicators that can be directly measured and updated each year without cumbersome surveys and interview projects.

Through my work on CDI's social health and social capital projects, I have learned how valuable this knowledge is to everyone in a community. The CDI has taught me how to take ideas and apply them to the real world to actually make a difference in the community. I have gained experiences and opportunities I never would have been able to get from a class or a lecture. The CDI has helped prepare me for life after college by giving me a chance to see firsthand how community development takes place.

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