The PHLOT CORE Leadership Program is designed to provide intensive leadership and team-building skills and experience, professional mentorship provided by recognized leaders in the fields of students’ interests, and additional practice-based experience to a select group of MS or MPH students committed to public health practice. Competitive admission to the program is based on academic achievement, demonstrated dedication to future employment in NYS, and overall potential for leadership in the field of public health.

Each year, the Public Health Leaders of Tomorrow CORE program members design and implement a community service project with a local Capital District organization. This year, the 2012 CORE members worked collaboratively with Equinox, a non-profit organization that provides advocacy, outreach, and prevention services to youth and families living in Albany. After considering several public health issues, the group decided to focus on youth violence; an issue of significant public health concern both locally and nationally. According to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, homicide is the second leading cause of death for young people ages 10 to 24 years (CDC, 2009).

In January 2012, the CORE members conducted a focus group with Equinox youth outreach program participants to collect information about youth violence in Albany. The focus group revealed that, along with concerns about violence, youth felt their community did not listen to, or acknowledge them in a positive way. Knowing this, the group discussed potential project ideas with Janine Jurkowski, the CORE faculty advisor, and Kristi McClamroch, Director of Youth Development at Equinox. To dig deeper into these issues, CORE members held several weekly group discussions at Equinox with the program participants to talk about violence and youth voice, which resulted in the group’s decision to help youth send their own message to the Albany community. The resulting product was a letter-to-the-editor, written by the CORE members on behalf of the youth, asking the Albany community to recognize and encourage successful urban youth. The letter to the editor is in its final stages of editing and will be submitted to the Times Union newspaper, as well as to Equinox.

Additionally, the CORE group created a white paper, which is comprised of a literature review on youth violence as a public health issue, a detailed overview of youth violence in the NYS Capital Region, and information about the Albany Youth Health Survey conducted by Kristi McClamroch in 2008. It also summarizes the work conducted at Equinox, including the process of selecting and working with a community non-profit organization, the methods used in data collection, the results of the project, the successes of the project, the limitations of data collection, and an overview of the Public Health Competencies that were addressed through the project. This white paper will be used as a resource for future students who plan to work with urban youth, which includes recommendations for future work, as well as the challenges that can be expected while working with this population.