



COMPASSION IN ACTION: UCSD STUDENTS FOR HOMELESS MENTAL WELLNESS

April 2023 to
June 2023

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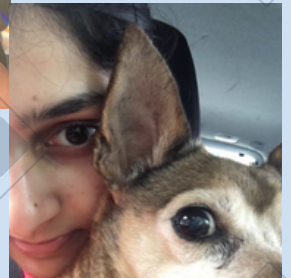
Veronica Corzo

Kayla Ton



ABOUT US

We put compassion into action by building a community of UCSD students who are educated about mental health in San Diego's homeless populations.



Theory of Change

We believe that change comes from the bottom-up rather than the top-down. Specifically, our campaign is modeled on the theory that change comes from within individuals more than from larger institutions. Additionally, the power of the individual becomes even more important when you consider that institutions are made up of individuals.

Our theory of change is focused on reform instead of revolution. Even changing one person's mind is valuable when the problem has to do with how people think and feel about another person.

While many people think that one needs to be on the "inside" of the system if they hope to change it, we are more connected to campus resources as college students than those experiencing homelessness. Thus, being on the "outside" of the system is an advantage in our case.

Problem Statement

Currently, UCSD students lack awareness and understanding of the specific mental health problems that homeless people in San Diego experience. Because of this, students stigmatize the homeless they encounter (both on and off campus) and don't believe that they should get involved in existing solutions or creating new solutions.

As students, we are privy to the assumptions and stereotypes many students attribute to homeless people. It is not uncommon to hear students on campus talk about "the crazy homeless person" at the trolley stop, on the bus, or in Price Center. In fact, one can see the degree of interactions that students have with homeless people on campus by looking at the UCSD Police Department's Crime and Fire Logs.

There is a homelessness crisis in San Diego, demonstrated by the just released 2023 Point in Time Count results (see appendix). They show a 22% increase in the region's homeless population compared to 2022, and we know this is just an estimated minimum. Students are aware that homelessness is a problem, but not enough of them are aware of the complex interactions between homelessness and mental health. For instance, many students assume that every homeless person is addicted to drugs. While it is true that substance use disorder is prevalent among people experiencing homelessness, the people who make this generalization often don't consider that the drug use can start after a person becomes homeless because it serves as a way to cope with their stressful situation. This is just one example of a reason why an education campaign is necessary

Sustainable Development Goal 3

Our campaign is inspired by the United Nations' Sustainable Development Goal 3, "Ensure healthy lives and promote well-being for all at all ages." Specifically, we chose to focus on promoting the mental health and well-being of people experiencing homelessness because of their status as a disadvantaged group. We wanted to choose a topic that our group had prior knowledge in, so we chose to focus on mental health rather than physical health since we all major in psychology. However, we acknowledge the significant overlap between mental and physical health problems in this patient group.



CAMPAIGN OBJECTIVE OVERVIEW



Event

An educational Workshop on mental illness, homelessness, and the role of compassion



Educational Resource

A pamphlet including information about our campaign, statistics on homelessness and mental illness, and community resources in San Diego



Social Media

An Instagram account where we posted statistics, resources, event information, and promoted our campaign's message



Creative Objective

We wrote and submitted an opinion editorial about mental health within specific homeless sub-populations to the *San Diego Union Tribune*

OBJECTIVE ONE: EVENT

Our team held an educational workshop to educate UCSD students about the mental health challenges people experiencing homelessness may face. We also educated them about the facts and statistics surrounding this issue in order to combat the stigma and misconceptions they have.

1

Compassion Craft Activity:

Students wrote and drew their responses to the prompt, "What does compassion mean to you?"

2

Educational Kahoot:

We provided statistics and facts about homelessness and mental illness in San Diego and ways students can help. This was intended to have attendees be engaged in the learning instead of passively listening.

- 10 players
- Top players had 73%, 68%, and 64% correct responses respectively.
- Most students hovered around the 60% correct mark- this indicates players had many misconceptions prior to this event.

3

Take Home Pamphlet: Objective Two

In the pamphlet, we gave a list of ways that students can get involved on campus (like UCSD classes and clubs), a list of community homelessness programs in San Diego, and informed them about the Psychiatric Emergency Response Team and how to call them.

4

UCSD Houselessness Service

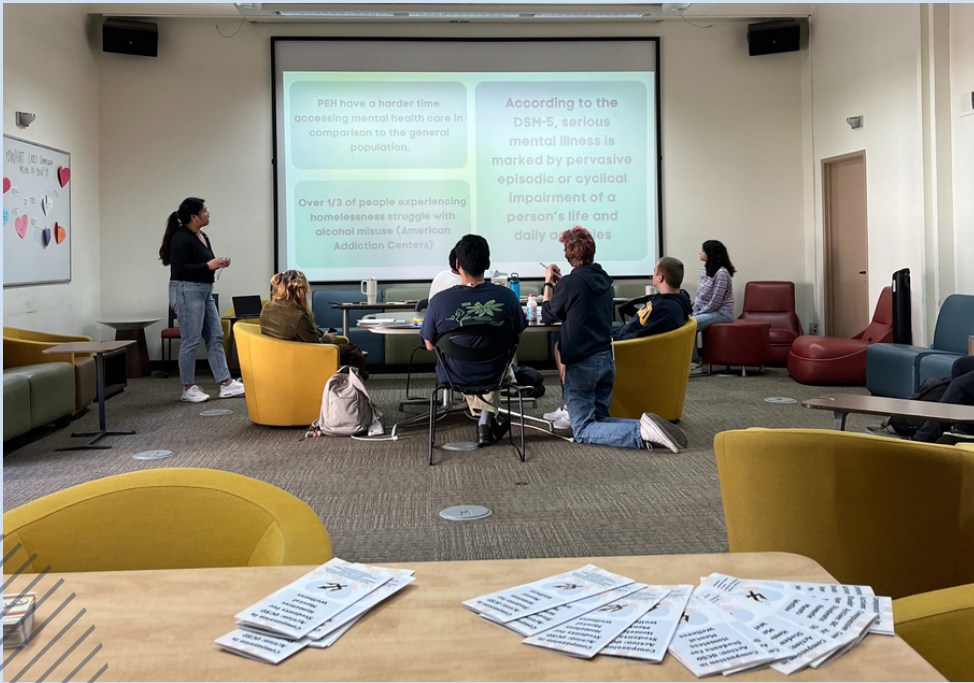
Two members from this student organization came and gave a speech for the event. They also gathered donations to give to individuals experiencing homelessness.

5

Presentation

Kayla gave a presentation explaining the information in the pamphlet.

PICTURES FROM OUR EVENT



Snapshot of our event. Kayla was giving a presentation she put together

Participants playing our Kahoot!



Our craft: each participant wrote about what compassion meant to them



Our Presentation

COMPASSION IN ACTION UCSD STUDENTS FOR HOMELESS MENTAL HEALTH

WELCOME! THANK YOU FOR COMING.



WE PUT COMPASSION INTO ACTION BY BUILDING A COMMUNITY OF UCSD STUDENTS WHO ARE EDUCATED ABOUT MENTAL HEALTH IN SAN DIEGO'S HOMELESS POPULATIONS.

FACTS ABOUT HOMELESSNESS AND MENTAL ILLNESS IN SD COUNTY

In the 2022 "Point in Time" count, 41% of homeless youth in SD County reported to have a Psychiatric condition and 14% reported having an impairment from drug or alcohol abuse

For people experiencing homelessness who were discharged from a SD ED in 2020, the top 5 primary diagnosis were

1. alcohol related disorders
2. suicidal ideation/ attempt/
3. intentional self-harm
4. schizophrenia spectrum
5. other psychotic disorder

PEH have a harder time accessing mental health care in comparison to the general population.

Over 1/3 of people experiencing homelessness struggle with alcohol misuse (American Addiction Centers)

According to the DSM-5, serious mental illness is marked by pervasive episodic or cyclical impairment of a person's life and daily activities

HOW DO I INTERACT WITH A PERSON EXPERIENCING HOMELESSNESS ON THE STREET?

Act with Compassion

Humanizing our homeless neighbors experiencing homelessness who are often ignored and stigmatized by society is always the first step toward helping them. People experiencing homelessness on the streets of our city need understanding, not contempt and ostracization. Many people living on the streets talk about feeling invisible and therefore worthless.

Treating struggling neighbors with compassion means looking them in the eyes, smiling, and offering kindness at a time when they may need it most.

When you see a person who is trying to survive on the streets, remember to not define them solely by their homelessness. By recognizing the humanity of people who are homeless, we can begin to address the underlying factors that contribute to and exacerbate homelessness such as:

- Insufficient income and a lack of affordable housing in San Diego
- Disability and/or chronic illness
- Domestic violence
- Systemic discrimination based on race, ethnicity, and gender, and sexual orientation
- Mental illness
- Substance Use Disorder

No matter what circumstances may have caused their homelessness, our neighbors living on the streets are deserving of dignity and respect.

<https://my.neighbor.org/how-to-help-someone-experiencing-homelessness/>

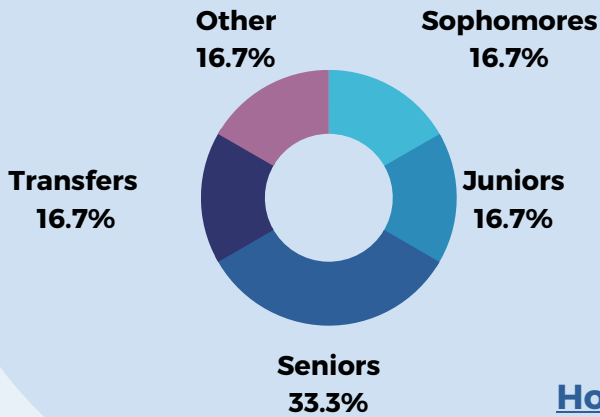
Take a minute and reflect then draw and/or write about what Compassion means to you.

PLEASE TAKE OUR EXIT SURVEY



Survey Results from 6 responses

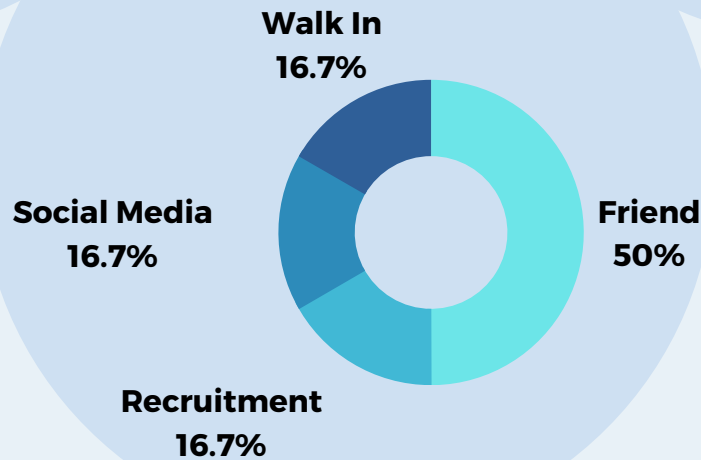
Year in School:



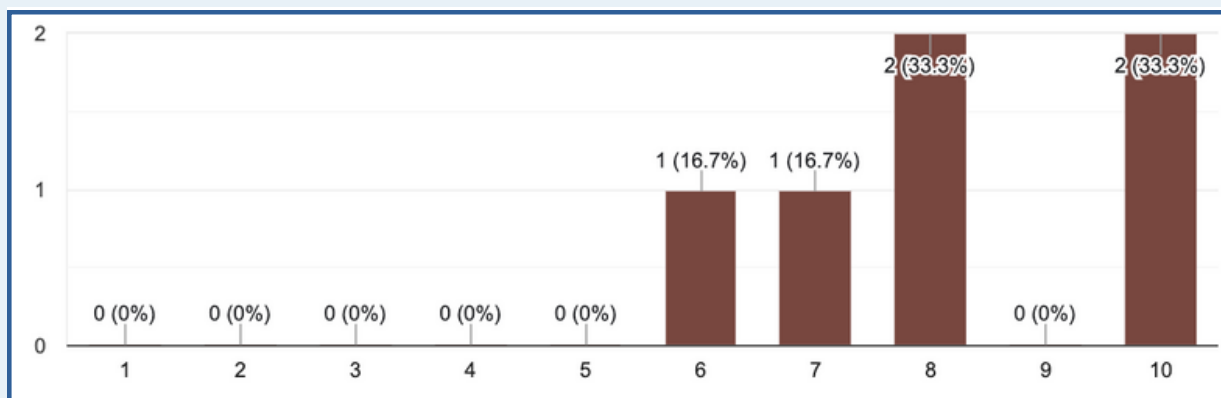
Type of City Raised In:



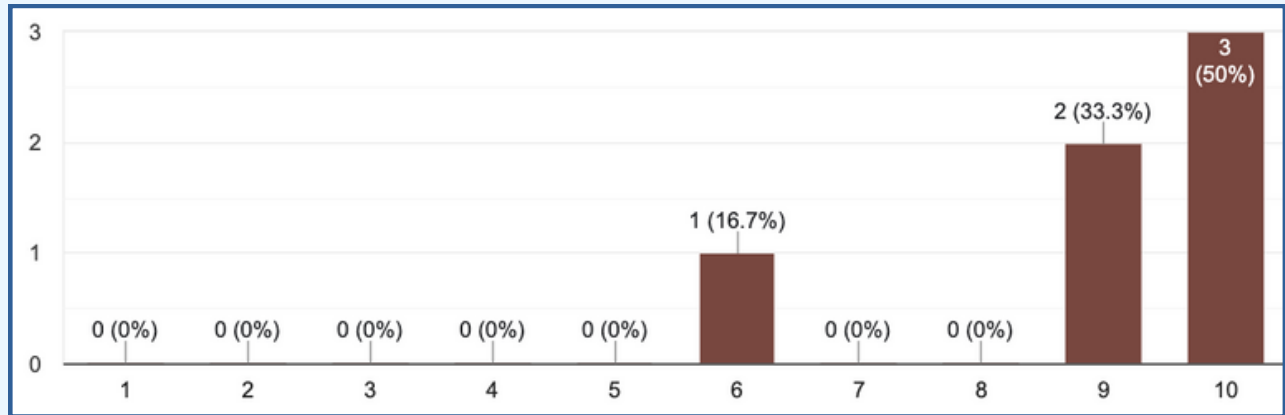
How Did You Hear About Us?



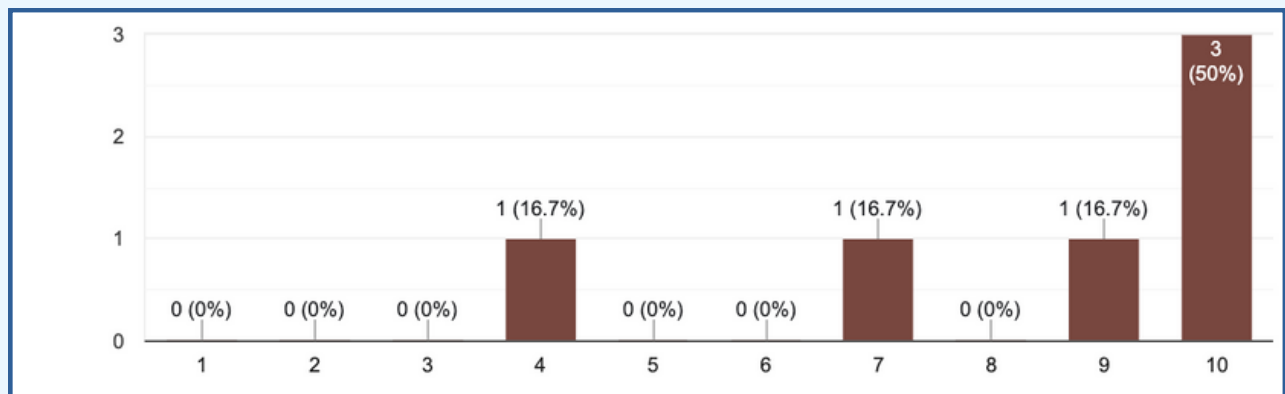
1) On a scale of 1 to 10, how much did this workshop improve your knowledge of the mental health issues people experiencing homelessness may face? (1 = I did not learn anything and 10 = I learned a great amount!)



2) On a scale of 1 to 10, how informative did you find this workshop ? (1 = Not educational at all and 10 = Super informative!)



3) On a scale of 1 to 10, how much has this workshop changed your personal beliefs/ attitudes about people who are homeless? (1 = My opinions did not change at all/I don't care and 10 = My perspective changed greatly/I have new, positive attitudes towards this issue)



4) Was there anything you were hoping to learn that was not included in the workshop?

- "What activities are illegal when being homeless in San Diego?"
- "Perhaps a further discussion on bills or laws being put forth that can address the issues discussed"
- "Causes of homelessness and policy solutions"
- "No comments, it was perfect"

5) Any comments, questions, or concerns?

- "Really good!"
- "Knowing about PERT is super helpful and I'll mention it if I'm ever contacting the police about a homeless person going through a crisis"



Survey Analysis

Demographic Information:

- We had a pretty wide range of grade levels, 33% being seniors, the rest being an equal amount of the other year options.
- Most were born in the suburbs

Questionnaire Information:

- 1/2 of our participants heard about our event from a friend, and then the rest were walk-ins, heard about it on social media, or were recruited.
- All of the participants said our event helped further their knowledge about this issue (scale of 6+).
- A majority said it was informational.
- A majority said their personal beliefs and attitudes were also changed for the better after this event.

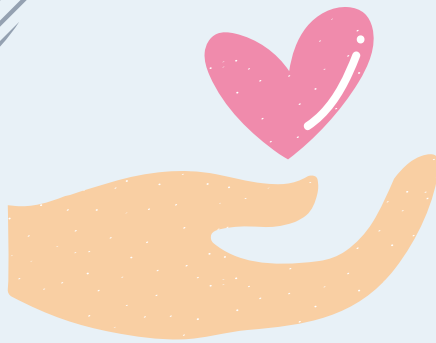
Comment Section:

- It seems like people were really interested in our topic and left with some further questions that maybe they would research on their own.
- They also said our event was very informative and helpful.

Takeaways From the Event

Everyone really enjoyed our event and said that they learned a lot of new information and initially came in with many pre-conceived ideas about homelessness. Many participants said that they were now much more educated on this topic and had no idea this issue could be so complex.

OBJECTIVE 2: EDUCATIONAL RESOURCE



Challenges

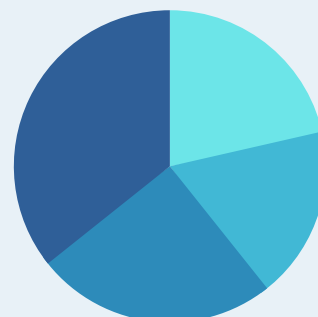
At first, It was hard to chose what we wanted to include on our pamphlet. We debated making it fact heavy or even including all of the addresses to the homelessness programs in SD County. It was not feasible since the pamphlet would become too "crowded" and hard to ready, understand, and follow along.

We decided to create a pamphlet (see appendix) as an education resource for the UCSD student community as well as the surrounding homeless population. We wanted to educate UCSD students specifically on homelessness facts in SDCounty and with resources so they're able to help others in need. We wanted to emphasize PERT through our pamphlet. Since PERT is not educated on or discusses much, we wanted to emphasize a way to help someone having a mental health crisis. Bystanders are able to help those who are in crisis, especially for the homeless population that frequents the same areas as UCSD students

"This pamphlet looks great. It is very resourceful especially the section about PERT!" - Manuel 2023

We printed out 50 copies of our pamphlets to hand out but we also made it accessible via QR code. We were able to hand out 36 during our event and by the trolley. We handed out what was left during our class presentation We received many compliments on how useful it is and how easy it is to understand.

handed out in class
35.7%



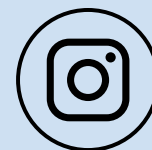
handed out in the workshop
21.4%

given to houselessness service club
17.9%

handed out by the trolley
25%



OBJECTIVE 3: SOCIAL MEDIA



Having a social media presence is crucial to having an effective social impact campaign in today's world. After considering a variety of social media platforms (Snapchat, Facebook, YouTube, Reddit, etc.), we chose to use Instagram because it is the most commonly used among students at UCSD. We named our Instagram account "ucsd_compassion_in_action" because we wanted it to be clear to students that we were a group from their school so that they would be more likely to follow us, accept our follow request, and look at our posts.

We wanted the content of our account to reflect our campaign's message and goals: to educate students about mental illness and homelessness in San Diego, and to get them to empathize more and think more compassionately about people who are homeless. To align with these ideas, our account consisted of both educational and emotional posts, communicating that mental illness in homelessness is both an objective and subjective social problem.

In addition to producing our own content from scratch, we also utilized the existing Instagram accounts of student clubs, community groups, and national organizations that focus on homelessness and/or mental health.

These were the first accounts we decided to follow in order to give our account more credibility. We prioritized following smaller student accounts just as much as larger accounts (like the National Institute of Mental Health with 48.5k followers) because we knew that having recognizable student organizations following us would increase our credibility with our target audience, UCSD students.

Our Instagram was successful in spreading our campaign's message and raising awareness about the mental health experiences of San Diego's homeless populations. Our metrics of success come directly from the "Insights Dashboard" that is a feature of business accounts (which is why we made our account a business rather than a personal account).



Instagram Insights

Total Posts: 18 (3x/week)

Total Stories: 20

Total Followers: 67

207

Accounts Reached

The number of unique accounts that saw our content at least once

2124

Impressions

The total number of times our content was seen

63

Accounts Engaged

The number of unique accounts that interacted with our content, including post interactions and story interactions such as likes, comments, shares, and saves.

264

Content Interactions

The total number of times our content was interacted with, including likes, shares, comments, and saves on our posts and stories

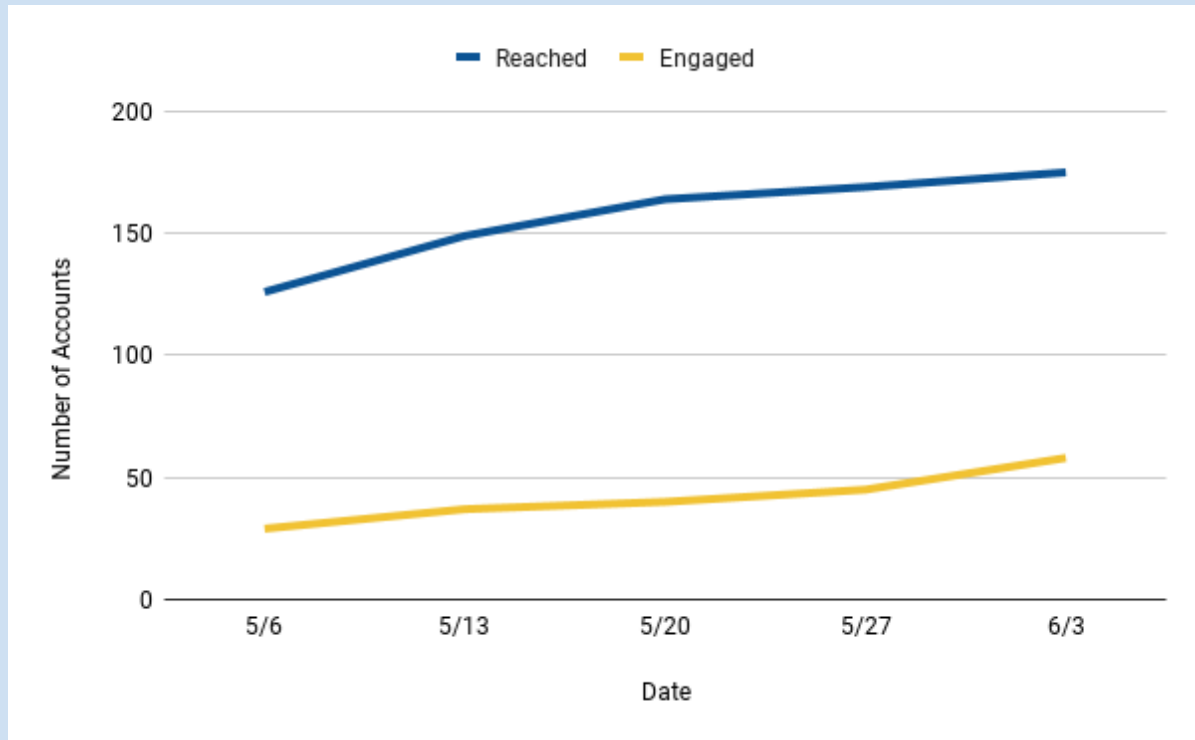
698

Profile Visits

The total number of times our profile was visited

Account Reach & Engagement Over Time

The number of accounts reached and engaged steadily increased over the course of our campaign. We created the account in Week 5 and by the end of that week had reached 126 accounts and engaged 29 accounts. By the end of Week 9, we reached 175 and engaged 58 accounts.

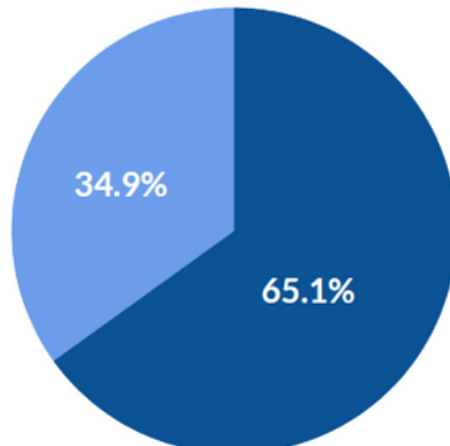
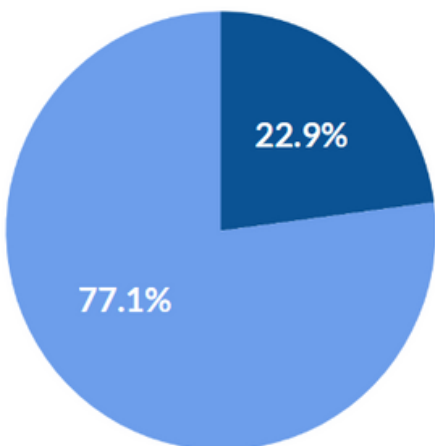


Follower vs. Non-Follower Activity

Accounts Reached

Accounts Engaged

● Non-Followers ● Followers



Not surprisingly, the majority of accounts we reached were made up of people who didn't follow us. Our goal was to have as many people see our content as possible, which is not necessarily the same as having more followers. So, we made the choice to have a public profile to extend our reach. However, the power of having followers is still demonstrated by the fact that the majority of the accounts that actually interacted with our content were followers.



OBJECTIVE 4: CREATIVE



We decided to write an opinion piece and submit it to a local newspaper, The San Diego Union-Tribune

We had originally planned to submit an opinion piece to the UCSD Guardian, which is the university’s own student run newspaper because the target audience for our campaign is the UCSD student population. However, we discovered that in order to submit for publishing, you need to be a member of the Guardian, as they typically only publish what is written by their staff. We looked into applying to become a member, however that was a lengthy process that required prior journalistic experience, and a commitment to write pieces regularly, both of which did not make sense for the timetable and goals we had for this project overall.

In this paper we attempted to bridge the gap between UCSD students and the homeless population and develop an understanding that these two groups have more in common than what students may have originally believed. We did this by focusing on three specific communities within the larger San Diego homeless population—veterans, LGBTQ+ people, and college students. We chose these three groups because there are students at UCSD who are veterans, LGBTQ+, and/or homeless or housing insecure. We tried to show that as a result of shared similarities, students should be able to garner more empathy towards the unhoused community.

.....

“Every major positive change begins with compassion and it's about time we extend that level of understanding to those experiencing homelessness so together, we can be the generation that creates a more equitable and safer future for us all.”



What we learned

1 Bureaucratic red tape

There is a lot of "red tape" to cut through. In order to reserve any space on campus, you have to be a registered student organization to officially do it. We started the process of becoming an organization, but it was not feasible within our time frame. Additionally, you need permission to just simply post flyers in certain spaces, which we learned when one of ours was taken down in Price Center. The less-trafficked the area is, the less likely it is that they will get taken down, but then that would defeat the purpose of putting them up in the first place.

2 Connections Matter

Connections matter because if not, we would not have had a place to hold our event. We had to connect with other groups on campus to advertise our campaign and events also, without them, we would not have as much of a following that we do now. For example, we reached out to more than 9 groups on Instagram and 3 of them promoted us on their accounts.

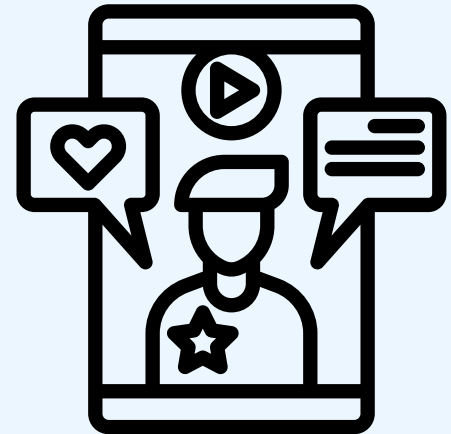


What we learned

3

You won't become an influencer overnight

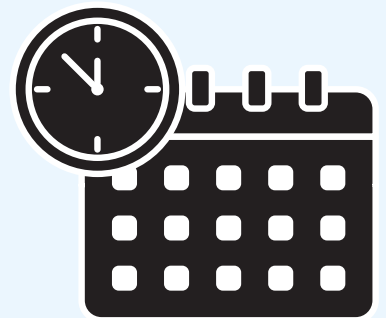
Running a social media account and developing a strong presence takes time and energy. When you start off as a brand new account with zero followers or posts, people automatically assume you are a bot or spam account and are therefore more hesitant to follow back. Additionally, making the content itself is time consuming and takes a lot of careful consideration. We had to be constantly asking ourselves: "How could this be interpreted? Is this sending the message we want it to send? Does this convey our campaign's values?"



4

Timing & Location Matter

We held our event on a Friday afternoon when there weren't as many students on campus. It was also in a location that didn't have as much foot traffic which may have made it more challenging to get people to seek out and join our event.



APPENDIX

Instagram



Pamphlet



Survey



Op-Ed: <https://opinion-piece-pdf.tiiny.site/>

Event Kahoot

<https://create.kahoot.it/share/kahoot-for-compassion-in-action/e2f3aa63-ab3a-4f3a-89a3-ad8c2eaeaa96>

Duplicate of Kahoot for Compassion in Action

Created by: bettyechargin7
Language: English

| | |
|-------------|--------------|
| Plays: 1 | Shares: 0 |
| Players: 10 | Favorites: 0 |

Play

The image shows a Kahoot! game card. On the left is a thumbnail image of a city skyline at night with the word "Kahoot!" overlaid. On the right, the title "Duplicate of Kahoot for Compassion in Action" is displayed. Below the title, it says "Created by: bettyechargin7" and "Language: English". A statistics section shows "Plays: 1", "Players: 10", "Shares: 0", and "Favorites: 0". At the bottom right is a purple "Play" button.

2023 Point in Time Count: <https://www.rtfhsd.org/wp-content/uploads/2023-San-Diego-Region.pdf>



Come join

Compassion in Action

**UCSD Students for Homeless Mental Wellness
&**


UCSD Homelessness Service

for an educational workshop on

 **Friday, June 2nd 2023** 
from 2:30pm - 4:30pm
The Lodge at the Village Pepper Canyon
East

**Be apart of the change and learn about
what we're about! Crafts, activities and
games will be provided!**

**We will also be collecting donations:
sanitary products (toothbrushes, shampoo,
razors, etc.), clothes, shoes, blankets,
non-perishable foods**

 **follow us on instagram
@ucsd_compassion_in_action**



How to Get Involved

at UCSD!

Houselessness Service Club at UCSD

The purpose of this organization is to raise funds for our local houseless community, and build connections with these people, organizations that support them, and the students at UCSD to make this a community relational process.

UCSD Houselessness Service holds GBMs, clothing drives, fundraises and distributes mutual aid

Instagram @ucsdhouselessnessservice

Homeless Health and Empowerment Across Learning (Homeless HEAL)

The purpose of Homeless HEAL is to identify and research the unique health challenges surrounding the San Diego Homeless Community, design an educational curriculum addressing those topics, and teach this information to homeless clients in monthly/bimonthly presentations led by UCSD students. The goal is to empower the homeless clients through education to make better decisions and improve the health outcomes of this community, while also providing opportunities of service and leadership by developing student educators.

Email homelesshed@gmail.com

Instagram @homelesshed

Website <https://homelessucsd.wordpress.com>

Participate in courses at UCSD!

<https://homelessnesshub.ucsd.edu/>

USP 142A. Urban Challenges: Homelessness in San Diego Core Fundamentals (4)

USP 142B. Urban Challenges: Homelessness in San Diego Fieldwork (6)

Community

Homelessness Programs in San Diego

Greater San Diego People Assisting the Homeless (PATH)

<https://lepath.org/>

Alpha Project Shelters

<https://www.alphaproject.org/>

TURN Behavioral Health Services

<https://www.turnbhs.org/> (for general population but especially helpful for PEH)

Homelessness Program for Engaged Educational Resources (PEER)

<https://www.sdhc.org/homelessness-solutions/peer/>

Community Care Coordination

<https://www.sandiegocounty.gov/content/sdc/hhs/a/programs/ais/Services/Care--Coordination.html>

Father Joe's Villages

<https://my.neighbor.org/>

Think Dignity

<https://www.thinkdignity.org/>

Luck Duck Foundation

<https://www.luckyduckfoundation.org/>

Jewish Family Services

<https://www.jfssd.org/>

City of San Diego Homelessness Response Center

1401 Imperial Avenue San Diego, CA 92101

The City of San Diego Homelessness Response Center provides a broad range of services to help individuals and families experiencing homelessness on their path to permanent or longer-term housing

Email : hrcsd@sdhc.org

Call : (619)880-8810

Website : sdhc.org

Hours

Mon-Thurs 8am-4pm

Fri-Sat 8am-2pm

Sun closed

Compassion in Action: UCSD Students for Homeless Mental Wellness



"We put compassion into action by building a community of UCSD students who are educated about mental health in San Diego's homeless populations."

Did you know?

- At least 8,427 people were experiencing homelessness (PEH) in San Diego County according to the 2022 Point in Time Count (a 10% increase from 2020).
- According to the DSM-5, **serious mental illness is marked by pervasive episodic or cyclical impairment of a person's life and daily activities.**
- PEH have a harder time accessing mental health care in comparison to the general population.
- The top 5 primary diagnoses for PEH who were discharged from a San Diego ED included **alcohol-related disorders, suicidal ideation/attempt/intentional self-harm, and schizophrenia spectrum/other psychotic disorders.**
- According to the 2022 Point in Time Count, **41% of homeless youth in SD County reported having a psychiatric condition and 14% reported having an impairment from drug or alcohol abuse.**
- Over 1/3 of people experiencing homelessness struggle with alcohol misuse (American Addiction Centers)

Psychiatric Emergency

Response Team

What is PERT?

PERT is a team of licensed mental health physicians that are paired with specially trained law enforcement officers and paramedics. They work together to help people with behavioral health crises that are brought to attention by public safety agencies.

PERT trains public safety agencies on crisis intervention and de-escalation. The goal of the training is to “facilitate understanding of effective and compassionate response to persons in crisis while ensuring safety”

What to do when you are seeing someone having a potential behavioral health crisis?

Contact 911 (or listed numbers for Police Departments) **and request the PERT unit.**

Explain to the operator that you believe or are concerned that this person(s) is/are having a mental health crisis.

For PERT services, please call 911 or your

local law enforcement agency.

Carlsbad PD 760.931.2100
Chula Vista PD 619.691.5151
Coronado PD 619.522.7350
El Cajon PD 619.579.3311
Escondido PD 760.839.4722
Harbor PD 619.686-6272
La Mesa PD 619.667.1400
National City PD 619.336.4411
Oceanside PD 760.435.4900
San Diego PD 619.531.2000

You can find more information here:

<http://www.comresearch.org/pert.php>

About US

We believe that change comes from individuals, and that individuals can't enact change if they're unaware that a problem exists or if they don't understand the specific causes and manifestations of the problem. As college students, we are more connected to campus resources than someone experiencing homelessness, and therefore have a unique advantage when it comes to connecting with students.

Currently, students on our campus are aware that homelessness exists in San Diego but are unaware of the complex relationship between homelessness and mental illness. This lack of understanding contributes to the stereotyping and stigmatization of people experiencing homelessness, making it so that students don't want to nor feel like they need to get involved in addressing it.

We want a future where those experiencing both homelessness and mental illness aren't stigmatized, stereotyped, or blamed for their illnesses. We want UCSD students to set an example for the San Diego community regarding how to treat people that are struggling. We want our fellow students to be aware of the complexity of homelessness in San Diego so that they feel prepared and motivated to be part of the solution. When students see people, they suspect of being homeless on campus or using campus services, we want their words and actions to reflect their knowledge, empathy, and compassion.