**Formative Research**

**Analyzing the Situation**

In our Public Relations class, we were group together to plan an event, each group assigned an organization in our community. My group consisted of myself, Bethany Baldwin, and Julia Molnar. Added to the group we were partnered with an HPAC Representative, Laina Serrer and Jessica Saunders from Dayton Children’s Hospital, which was the organization we were assigned to work with. Early in the meeting phase, we discovered Jessica Saunders was available via email, but so busy she was days behind when trying to work on researching a plan of action. Laina was able to move the point of contact to Franki Meier, a Donor Engagement Specialist for Dayton Children’s Hospital.

Dayton Children’s Hospital (DCH) helps thousands of children each year, with a newly remodeled hospital, to the several satellite spaces for parents to bring their children from time to time. One program newer to the organization is their music therapy program. DCH started the music therapy program in 2017, where after researching, we discovered Sam’s Fans is a 501(c)(3) organization dedicated to bringing music and art therapy to children facing life-threatening illness (https://samsfans.org). This wonderful organization located in Columbus, Ohio has donated $10,000 to the program which is what caught our attention. With the love of music in all three of us, we decided we would have an event for DCH that is designed around or involving music in some capacity. By planning this event, we will help get the community involved and become better educated about the program, highlighting the fact that it is donor funded.

Many individuals and organizations have helped DCH in the past, and many will continue to support them in the future. My group wanted to be a part of that community service, and find a way to make the greatest impact possible. We discovered very early on that the hospital has great support in the community, but they have so many areas where the money funneling through can go, we wanted to specifically help one little corner of the hospital, the music therapy program. Since first discovery the program, we wanted to make a big impact on the program. The three of us, Bethany, Julia, and I all found we have a love for music, and we wanted to incorporate that with the event we have. What better way to do so, than have a benefit concert!

**Analyzing the Organization**

DCH has an amazing reputation in our Dayton community, with the way they care for the children, to the way they reach out to other organizations, they are a well-oiled organization. Their reputation means a lot to them, and they do all they can to make sure they continue with keeping it that way. With them being such a wonderful part of Dayton, the community is constantly giving back to them. Many organizations both nationally and locally have gifted them donations, created events supporting the hospital, and involved the children going to DCH as well. DCH has clearly made great relationships with a great number of companies who share the same interest, helping kids.

One thing we learned from DCH is that they take their brand very serious and they protect it very well with restrictions when working with outside partners in creating events or fundraisers. When we created the event, we were not able to say we are with DCH, the wording was pretty specific. We found a way to easily avoid messing up our promoting by simply stating we were students trying to raise money to donate to the music therapy program at Dayton Children’s Hospital, versus originally thinking we could use their brand to get people to notice us. Although the latter would have been a great strategy, just being able to partner with such a great organization was good enough. And nothing we promoted was false, we all really did want to raise money for the program. The same rule applied to their logo. We had to keep it exactly how it was, no changing it what so ever. We didn’t have any problems with that though, we didn’t even have to use it much, considering most everyone in our community knows who they are.

**Analyzing the Publics**

After learning a lot about DCH, we wanted to create an event that hasn’t been done, or at least not recently. Since we were raising money for the music program, we had a lot of ideas based around music. All great ideas, but the majority of them would take at least a little funding and a lot of time to plan. We had less than a semester to plan, create, and have the event, so a lot of those good ideas flew out the window. The one idea that kept resonating with us was a concert, but we knew that would be a challenge as well.

Now we just had to find a place to have the concert, bands to play at the concert, and hope there wasn’t much else to it, but doubted it would be so easy. We started a new research for the event, finding local bands. Some of us had friends and family that played in bands, but we were trying to find a group that had a great following and would be able to generate a big audience. Our original thought was to just piggy back off a local band’s show and promote our project during their set, and see if they would let us have a percentage of the ticket sales, but soon enough we would meet someone who would help us make this an even bigger night of success. We would also start promoting by doing a Facebook fundraiser and talking about the music therapy program at DCH, and inviting everyone to the benefit concert we had planned.

We knew we wanted to gain interest in as many people as possible, but more importantly, people with money in their wallet to give. Since we all go to watch live bands, we know it is a great opportunity to have our event a concert. With the help of live music, a bar, and a casual environment, we counted on the fans to bring us a good amount of money. The typical demographic we were reaching out to would be men and women between the ages of 21 and roughly 45. The music scene in Dayton really has no topping out on age, so it really wouldn’t be a surprise if there were even older fans coming to check out the live band. We figured also that our demographic would be using social media considering kids in diapers know how to use YouTube and everyone from babies to grandparents seem to have multiple social media accounts these days. The great thing about social media though, is the algorithms that do into their site. When you create an event on social media, mainly Facebook, it takes key words you use and shows to Facebook users in the area that have shown interest in similar things. Not only would we be sharing this concert with friends and family, but other local Facebookers will be alerted of the event as well. We just had to make the events message an appealing one. Creating a good flyer was key, making it visually appealing and full of great key information was a must. Plugging that all in and posting on the other sources of social media was also key. Twitter and Instagram were great sources to share the link to the event and also the Facebook fundraiser.

We not only wanted to use social media to promote this benefit concert, we also planned to use the newspaper outlet, and since Julia worked in the school marketing department, we wanted to utilize that as a source as well.

**Strategy**

**Establishing Goals and Objectives**

When we started working on this project, we had no funding. We were working with HPAC, who offers grants upon approval, but in past experience, those funds take forever to get. Therefore, we had to figure out a way to have this benefit concert without costing us anything. That was our first goal.

Tackling the rest of the goals seemed daunting, but it became clear early on, we were a group that liked the challenge. We wanted to set the goals realistic, so we decided on setting them at $500 raised by the Facebook fundraiser, and $500 for the benefit concert. We also wanted to have a promotional flyer made and spread all over social media and hanging up in local hot spots by April 1st.

With the introduction to Bethany’s brother, Ian Baldwin, we found some great connections. Ian, a music promoter in Dayton, had a long list of not only bands, but even venues. He suggested we reach out to two of the venues first and foremost to see if either were willing to donate the venue to our cause at no charge. It was a big reach, but ultimately, after meeting Shay Tibbs, we had our venue free of charge! The only set back we had was their calendar was booked solid on weekends. We decided free is free and we will take what we can get, setting a date for Tuesday, April 30.

Ian also introduced us to several bands. Bethany and Julia set out to see who was available to play our benefit concert, and willing to do it without getting paid. Our approach was simple. We let the bands know we were students trying to create a benefit concert to raise money for DCH’s music therapy program and we had no budget to use for any of it. This would be something they could use as an example of giving back to the community, and also having a good time on a Tuesday night. We originally had a band Julia booked, which had a great following, but there was a mess up in their schedule and it fell through. Bethany was able to get a musician, Libby Dietrix, whom she went and watched to agree to our concert and she even added a keyboard/singer to join her. It helped that Bethany went and watched her perform and broached the subject after her performance. After Julia’s first attempt failed, she was able to book not one, but two performers, Isicle, a local DJ/rapper/singer, and Bird Brain Breakfast, a singer/song writer who played solo with his guitar. Lastly, when we had the original band fall through, I reached out to Libby Ballengee, also a music promotor for Dayton and she sent me a list of bands to look into as well. Not only was she a big help there, but it turns out, she is the one that runs the music portion of the venue we booked, so we were able to work with her through the remainder of the project in a different role as well. After looking into the bands Libby suggested, I found a band that I loved and also was able and willing to join the lineup we built for the concert, Todd the Fox, a rockabilly type of band that will be great to close the show. All the musicians loved the idea of putting on a show for the music therapy program and had no issue of donating their time.

**Formulating Action and Response Strategies**

Although a lot of our group work was done through text, messenger, and email with the other parties, but our small threesome met multiple times to check off things we had completed and talk about things that still needed done, or go over any issues we each had with our tasks. We created a timeline to help list what needed done, and when we could do them.

* 2/12 - Met Laina our HPAC representative and brainstormed ideas for event
* 3/01 - Met with Dayton Children’s rep and HPAC rep to discuss ideas
* 3/13 - Met with entertainment manager, Ian Baldwin to find venue and bands
* 3/19 - Created Facebook post to begin promoting event & bringing awareness to the Music Therapy Program at Dayton Children’s Hospital
* 3/18 - Toured Brightside Music & Events and booked space for event
* 3/22 - Went to shows of potential bands and booked for show
* 3/30 - HPAC Scholar’s Day Poster & Oral Presentation at UD
* 4/01 - Repost Facebook for promoting event/raising money & awareness
* 4/02 - Meet with Clarion Newspaper to promote event
* 4/09 - Make flyer and add to social media
* 4/16 - Made marketing/promo video
* 4/16 - Meeting with all four performers to discuss event set up
* 4/25 - Meet with volunteers to prepare for what needs to be done at event
* 4/30 - Concert Benefit!

**Designing Effective Communication**

Once we had the flyer designed to strategically get the viewers eye to see the most valuable points, the concert, it’s date and time, where it is, and the cost to get in, we began hanging them all over the Dayton community. The flyer also got loaded and placed on all our social media, the band shared it on theirs, The Brightside Music & Events Venue shared it as an event on their Facebook, and Dayton Children’s Hospital even shared it on their Facebook. When I initially started the fundraiser portion of our promoting at the end of March, I got an overwhelming response from my family and friends. I added the flyer to that link in hopes that many would see it and join us at the concert as well.

I was able to talk with Andrew Schafer from the Guitar Lab at Sinclair, who generously donated an electric guitar, amp, and accessories to our cause. They loved the idea of students taking the initiative to give back, and in such a grand way. We decided the guitar would get everyone’s signature involved in the project and we would then donate to the music therapy program.

The Clarion did a wonderful write up on our project, the journey we took while creating the benefit concert, introducing us and those who joined us in the making of this event (the venue, promotors, the bands, and the Guitar Lab), and most important, who it was helping (the kids at Dayton Children’s Hospital).

Our marketing department was able to interview me and help promote the event, who we were having the event for, and a little about DCH music therapy program, to add to their social media.

**Tactics**

**Selecting Communication Tactics**

With the project we were working on, all communication tactics would work in our favor as long as we use it in a positive and strategic way. Most everyone has Facebook, Twitter, and Instagram on their smartphones, so that is where we want to put most our effort. We also plan to have The Clarion write an article talking about us and the event, and the marketing team has offered to do a little piece on our cause as well.

**Implementing the Strategic Plan**

When it came to communicating our event, we were lucky enough to be able to use this in many ways. Not only that, an opportunity came to us while planning our event that was too good to turn down. Our HPAC representative, Laina, asked if we would be interested in registering to the Scholar’s Day event that showed students working to spread awareness to the health disparity in Dayton and its surrounding cities. This was a great way to bring more awareness to the music therapy program, and also promote our benefit concert. Although we didn’t get awarded for our poster presentation or the oral presentation, it was still a great experience and a great way to spread the word.

Using social media was our biggest reward. We had more views from Facebook, Instagram, and Twitter than we did any other way we promoted. Friends and family shared on their pages, the bands promoted on both their personal pages and band pages, plus the promotors, venue, Sinclair’s social media, and DCH themselves promoted.

The marketing department and The Clarion were also great ways to get the word out, although we had them scheduled a little late in the process, I think it was a great learning experience more than anything, giving me a better grasp on what the process would gain in this type of project.

**Evaluative Research**

**Evaluating the Strategic Plan**

When it came to planning our benefit concert, we found that all ways of promoting it were positive. With the high traffic where our flyers were displayed, we were able to engage with the demographics we were seeking out. The flyer was also uploaded and shared with hundreds if not thousands on social media. The Clarion and the marketing team were able to share on their social media platforms and did a great job. The only problem we can say occurred was that we didn’t get the last two out soon enough.

I’ve realized in planning an event like this, you should really plan months if not a year in advance. The time that it takes to work out the issues and lock down a final draft of an event takes months. You also need months to create a great strategy to put out in your promoting, scheduling meeting with those you want to promote it, and then another few months to actually spend on promoting the event itself.

Overall, I think we did amazing with the time we had to work on the project, and the fact that it was all done with no overhead cost was short of a miracle! The Facebook fundraiser and the event itself raised $1880! That was definitely above and beyond reaching our goal, and not only that, hundreds of people in our community are now aware of the donor funded music therapy program!