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Community Pet Food Drive and Pet Food Pantry

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Author Note

The Content of this paper is done so in affiliation with Boise State University,
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Abstract

My capstone project entailed a community pet food drive held at the Star Albertsons where all the donations were donated to the local food bank in Star. I also was able to create a place for a permanent barrel located in front of the local Star Outreach Food Bank for pet food only donations.

Keywords: pet food pantry, service-learning, innovative thinking

Section 1: Introduction to your Capstone Project

Growing up on a fourth generation farm I had great love and compassion for animals. I never really thought about the fact that there may not be a place where community members could go to receive not only food for their family but food for their pets as well. My capstone project inspired me to do something needed in the community. I noticed the lack of emphasis on pet food at our food banks. After speaking with Diane Simi, Executive Director of the Star Outreach Food Bank, I learned some interesting information. There are places such as animal shelters for pet food donations. However, most of these donations go into the shelter to take care of the animals in their care. Donations are received of some pet food at the Outreach, but it is very limited (D. Simi, personal communication, November 8, 2022). I wanted to create awareness within my community so that pets are having their needs met right alongside human needs when it comes to a food bank. One thing I could do was to hold a community pet food drive. Having a huge love of animals made me passionate about fulfilling a need for pet owners.

In the beginning, my project was to either work with the Star Outreach Food Bank and create a dedicated pet pantry permanent donation barrel location at the food bank or have a community pet food drive at the local dog park or Albertsons in Star. Having multiple stakeholders such as Albertsons, Star Outreach, and my community members who are immediately impacted by my project and showed great interest in my work, kept me motivated to succeed. As my project evolved, I started to modify exactly what I wanted to accomplish during the six-week term. I did hit a few roadblocks about having a permanent pet food section in my local food bank due to their size being so small. I

decided the best way to complete my project was to bring awareness to my community that there is a lack of emphasis on pet food in our food banks and hold a community pet food drive at the Albertsons in Star. In the end, I was able to create new relationships not only with the store manager at Albertsons, but I also was able to meet two directors at the local Star Outreach. After dropping off the pet food accumulated from the pet food drive, the Executive Director and I were able to create a space for a permanent barrel in front of the food bank for pet food only donations. I have been passionate about my project from the start and had a meaningful experience. I am very proud of my work and pleased with how everything turned out.

Section 2: Elements coming together

Innovative Approach

Throughout my project, I wanted to create awareness within the community of the lack of importance regarding pet food when it comes to our food banks. The outcome of my pet food drive was a large donation of pet food to the Star Outreach Food Bank. I also was able to create a specific space for these items for continued donations. I placed a permanent barrel for future donations after my capstone project is completed for the community to use. This approach helped me solve the problem of not enough pet emphasis in our local community food bank. It also gets other community members involved. I have shown confidence in my plan by researching the need for pet food in our food bank, which in turn has encouraged others to help solve the problem as well by donating items. I have built new relationships including networking with businesses, to achieve my goal. When getting out in the community, I had to be self-assured and knowledgeable about my project. Also, having something visual that people could see,

got them interested in my project. Just communicating will help get people aware there is a problem to solve. My approach is innovative because there is no place locally to donate or receive pet food for community members in need. My method enables the pet owners in need to have a safe place to donate or pick up pet food without judgment.

Emotional Intelligence

The work that I performed and completed indicates awareness of others through social awareness. I have become very aware of effective communication about values and beliefs. For example, if I were in need what would I do in this situation? If I try stepping into someone else's shoes, I can see things from other perspectives. I have found that there aren't a lot of places where people who own pets that are in need of pet food can go to get help. However, I am only seeing part of the picture through my own rose-colored glasses. I have found that there are opportunities for creating new relationships with local food banks, but it has been time consuming and takes some hard work. My goal was to engage the ideals and principles of the food bank in a way that is helpful to them and the community members in need. I need to continue practicing my social awareness strategies and improve my relationship management within my community. The research and work that I performed and completed indicates awareness of self by understanding how I feel in different situations. I can describe what is important to me and even identify my biases. I have been able to set goals, implement stress management techniques (when needed), and plan effectively through self-management. I ask for feedback as well. I have learned that patience really is a virtue, and I should sleep on it and give things time to settle. Lastly, I visualize my success.

Creative Thinking

I thought long and hard about how I could have the best results for my community pet food drive. I really wanted to create something that stood out and grabbed the attention of my intended audience, stakeholders, and the community members. I also had to remember my intentions. For example, that I have the best intentions, but I need to think about how my intentions impact others. With all this being said, I got to work thinking about what it was that I really wanted to create for my project. I knew I wanted a bin or box of some sort going into this project for donated items. After talking it over with my husband, he took what I had said and created a two foot by two-foot square box for my donations. This is exactly what I was looking for. Then I got to work thinking about how I could engage my audience creatively. I made sure that my posters were colorful and unique. I made sure that I staged my area with pet products which really helped me start the conversation with individuals in my community about what I was doing and how it affects pet owners who may not be able to afford food. I had a lot of fun decorating my posters for my donation box and setting up my table for my food drive. I had a vision of my creativity and was able to display it exactly how I wanted.

My approach was unique because most pet food donations go to animal shelters and Humane Societies where in turn the food goes to the shelter animals and not pet owners in need. I was able to take all my donations and give them to the local food bank to give back to my community. I was also given the opportunity to have a space dedicated to pet food only donations in front of the Star Outreach Food Bank. Hopefully, this will spark other community food banks to have their own pet food area for donations.

Your Innovative Solution

My project is all about helping pet owners in my community who are in need of pet food. It also calls to attention awareness of the lack of pet food in our local food bank. I was able to put together a community pet food drive at my local Albertsons where all the proceeds went towards purchasing pet food to donate to my local food bank and all donated items would go there as well. The process of my project demonstrated innovation because I was able to take the initiative to think about where the best place for my pet food drive would be and have the most potential for community engagement. My project is beyond black and white, yes or no, type of situations. I had to have innovative thinking to come up with a new creative solution to the problem. The realized outcomes demonstrate innovation because I was able to show that there is a need for pet food in my local food bank for community pet owners in need. It also was innovative for the fact that I saw an issue in my community and I chose to resolve the problem.

Having been able to speak with one of the executive directors of the Star Outreach, I was able to place a permanent pet food only donation barrel out front for the community to donate. I have posted on my community social media platforms that it is available and add pictures for effectiveness. My solution is more innovative than other approaches because there are no other local food bank solutions. Yes, there are pet pantries in other areas that have been successful. However, there are none in Idaho, specifically my community of Star. Yes, the Star Outreach takes pet food but not on a regular basis. Another approach I have done is donating at least two bags of pet food each week, which I will continue through the rest of the year in person to the food bank. This will increase what they have on hand during our holiday months. Once the barrel

has been in place for a while, I will periodically check on it a couple times a month and check-in with the organizers and directors about how it is working for them.

Section 3: Results

The benefits of my project to my stakeholders are to create awareness within the community so that pets are having their needs met right alongside human needs when it comes to my community's local food bank, Star Outreach. The outcome has been a large donation of pet food and continued small weekly donations to my local Star Outreach Food Bank. I was able to place a barrel in front of the Star Outreach Food Bank for pet food only donations during my capstone project for the community to use creating a dedicated donation area. The benefit of my project to Albertsons is that my fundraiser was something new to this community and store. The outcome has been mostly monetary donations with a few individuals dropping off pet food. I have also created an Amazon gift account for pet food only to send to those individuals that want to donate who may not live in my area. So far, two bags of pet food have been received for donation and the reaction of others has been very positive and supportive.

My stakeholders will be impacted from my capstone project by adding a valuable resource to the community that is lacking emphasis, our pet owners in need. I know that there are other non-profit organizations that do functions for pets. However, it will be great to have a permanent fixture at my local Star Outreach Food Bank for those individuals who own pets that may not be able to afford food. This way people of the community know where they can go to drop off donations for other pet owners in need.

The impact of my project to my stakeholders has been positive. I marketed my community pet food drive fundraiser on a couple of Star community Facebook groups. I

am thrilled to announce that my results are monetary donations of \$255, a few bags of dog food and cat food, and some pet supplies which I was able to donate to another capstone student working with an animal shelter in need. I also received a \$50 donation from Zamzows for pet food. I am truly honored and blessed to live in such a giving community! I know there will be a lot of happy animals in the future!

On a side note, the results of the permanent barrel have been very good, and I have received comments from community members who are excited for the addition.

Section 4: Conclusion

I anticipated my results of the community pet food drive would be maybe a couple bags of pet food and maybe some supplies. I was completely shocked, amazed, and thrilled to receive \$255, a few bags of pet food, and supplies which I got to donate to another capstone student in my class to help with their project. I was absolutely humbled by being able to complete my entire project of having the fundraiser for donations to the food bank and being able to place a permanent barrel in front for future pet food only donations. I was overwhelmed by the support I received and have been very thankful to my community.

Something I would have done differently was approached my project to enhance innovation by contacting my stakeholders in person as my first contact instead of over the phone and email. This would have given me that personal touch and face-to-face interaction needed to connect with them up front before my project even got started. Having that connection would have helped me see what is really needed to provide the best outcome, not only for my project, but my stakeholders, and intended audience.

I would have also volunteered first at my local food bank to see what impacts and benefits having more pet food available would make on my community. Focusing more on community conversations via social media as well to get feedback and suggestions, researching exactly how my project would bring more emphasis to those individual pet owners in need. Bringing forth more community involvement earlier, somewhat like collaborating with the masses.

My capstone project has made me resilient, helped me enhance my critical thinking skills, public speaking and communication skills, and my ability to help families with animals within my community. I have been passionate about my project from the start. I have had a meaningful experience that I am very proud of how everything turned out.

Section 5: Appendix

<https://drive.google.com/drive/folders/1kaSh1Vj2iFuiTaz1gKThP62oV0L3wm9f?usp=sharing>

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