Out of the Shadows

San Diego Public Library

Teens

|

Young Adult

|

Adults

|

Intergenerational

Out of the Shadows

Feb 8, 2018

$5,000+

$$$
Byline

Eileeen Labrador, Supervising Librarian, San Diego Public Library

After staff had an encounter with a possible sex trafficking victim, the San Diego Public Library took action and won a grant that funded the Out of the Shadows program.

Staff acknowledged that disseminating sex trafficking information to raise awareness was essential, as was joining forces with the community and experts to ensure the program’s success and effectiveness.

The program consists of six components: mandatory sex trafficking awareness training for library staff; marketing and outreach plans; Teen Peer Advocates volunteer group; Sex Trafficking Resource Centers at nine library locations; community conversation meetings at each location; and creating community events.

Advanced Planning

Planning began in 2014 with the main goal of raising library staff and the public's awareness of sex trafficking in San Diego, and collaborating with community members and stakeholders, local organizations and experts. The program aimed to provide possible victims access to resources through the resource centers, community events and library outreach that staff performed.

To create a program that could reach these goals before our launch date of September 2015, we enlisted the help of many parties, including the library director, a former public information officer, the director of corporate and foundation relations of the San Diego Public Library Foundation, youth services librarians, teen volunteers, branch managers, marketing staff, the executive director of the Bilateral Safety Corridor Coalition and the operations manager of Project Concern International.

We then worked on finding resource centers and creating the event logo, artwork and promotional materials such as informational brochures, bookmarks, posters, program fliers and the teen peer advocates program application.

Marketing

We launched our marketing plan in August 2015 once most of the advanced planning was finished.

Key library staff worked together to purchase locations at bus stops, benches, transit shelters and billboards to display the Out of the Shadows program information for five months.

Library staff delivered presentations at professional library conferences, numerous community outreach events, the community conversations and regional human sex trafficking meetings. Teen peer advocates performed presentations at their schools and at outreach events, talking with peers on their level.

Community conversations started in December 2015 and continued with community events. These events were promoted in digital displays at library locations. Program fliers were distributed through an email network that the library generated and email distribution lists from other partners and organizations. Posters, bookmarks and informational brochures were also distributed system-wide.

A web page for the program was created and staff engaged in many radio, television, podcasts and print interviews with local media in San Diego and Mexico.

Budgeting

The budget included costs for all books and audiovisual materials for the resource centers; refreshments served at the community conversations and events; outreach swag that was created by Teen Peer Advocates such as buttons and bracelets; marketing materials such as program fliers, bookmarks, informational brochures and posters; and costs associated with posting program information on billboards, bus stops, benches and transit shelters.

Day-of-event Activity

Our staffing needs varied depending on the type of event. For instance:

- Community conversations usually needed two staff members — one to be the meeting facilitator and another to take notes during the meeting.

- Community events needed two to three staff members to help with room set-up, purchasing refreshments, hosting/emceeing the event and organizing onsite

events. This usually took two to three hours.

- Community outreach needed two to six staff members or TPA volunteers. Teams were needed to cover an information booth at a local event and to deliver a presentations at schools, parent meetings or regional human trafficking/sex trafficking meetings and events.

- Live staff trainings needed two to four staff members to assist with being the host and co-presenter, and distributing and collecting pre/post-test surveys.

Program Execution

The program was a success. Goals related to marketing, staff training, building collections at each resource center and outreaching to and informing the public were achieved, and community conversations and events were well attended. There was a low of 10 participants and a high of 40 at the conversations.

This program did consume a large amount of staff time since they had to prepare the meeting agenda, identify community stakeholders and experts to attend, promote and invite the community to participate, purchase refreshments, set up the room, lead discussions, take notes, distribute the meeting minutes to all participants and keep the momentum going.

Other challenges included retaining TPA volunteers due to their busy school schedules, parental concerns and cultural taboos; a lack of participation at some community conversations and events; and an inconsistency in staff participation due to a lack of time, a shortage in staff, an issue with the topic of sex trafficking or a shy disposition.

Community events were not initially included in the program scope, but instead evolved organically from the conversations. Participants wanted library staff to not drop the ball after initiating the program and to further develop ways to raise awareness. Because of this, library staff continued conversations and meetings for the participants to work collaboratively with staff to create, identify and execute a program or event that fit the community while raising awareness at the grassroots level.

After the program, library staff were viewed as valued community partners to help raise awareness and to access vital resources, and staff improved their connection with the communities they served and with external organizations. To evaluate the effectiveness of the program, we had participants take pre- and post-tests. Surveys were also distributed to library staff to gauge the effectiveness of trainings, and to the TPA volunteers to identify what the teens gained through their experience.

Advice

Initiate more formal surveys in a variety of formats.

Invest staff time to build and maintain rapport and partnerships with outside organizations by encouraging staff to consistently attend regular task force or regional meetings dedicated to human and sex trafficking. This is a great opportunity to network and to stay informed on new policies and legislation as well as what other organizations are initiating.

Perform community outreach consistently, and be willing to host an informational booth, deliver a presentation and host community conversation meetings and events.

Did you try this program at your library? Share your experience using this form.

Supporting Materials

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Audiences:

Young Adult (17 - 20)
Adults (21 and up)
Intergenerational