

**Raising Awareness of Team Buffalo on Behalf of the Kidney Foundation of WNY**

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## Executive Summary

The Kidney Foundation of WNY is a local non-profit organization that educates the community on kidney disease and organ donation through a variety of services. Every two years, the Kidney Foundation of WNY assembles a group of participants, known as Team Buffalo, to send to The Transplant Games of America which is a series of events hosted by the Transplant Life Foundation where transplant recipients and living donors have a chance to compete and celebrate life.

To help the Kidney Foundation of WNY promote Team Buffalo, we have created a plan with a goal to raise awareness of Team Buffalo and the work of the Kidney Foundation of WNY. The key publics in this case include working adults ages 22-60, healthcare professionals/organizations, and community-based non-profit organizations. Specifically, the campaign's objectives seek to increase current Team Buffalo members' promotion of the Games on their social media accounts, recruit Team Buffalo members, and increase general inquiries pertaining to the Kidney Foundation. To accomplish these objectives, we've created a variety of proactive and reactive strategies that will help develop Games participants into social media "influencers," turn general Kidney Foundation of WNY supporters into Team Buffalo supporters, and raise awareness for what the Kidney Foundation does by sharing the individual stories of Team Buffalo members. A provisional budget of \$300 has been allocated for boosting social media posts, \$250 for t-shirts, and an estimated \$5,600 in staff time over the course of the campaign. The campaign's success can be evaluated through the achievement of objectives and by anonymous surveys where Team Buffalo members can submit feedback about the campaign.

## **Formative Research:**

### ***Situation Analysis***

#### **Background**

The Kidney Foundation of WNY is a local non-profit, independent 501(c)(3) organization. It was established in 2015 to address areas of need related to awareness of kidney disease, and the support needed for affected patients and their families. The Kidney Foundation of Western New York, in its connection to organ donorship, hosts a program called Team Buffalo. Team Buffalo is an active participant in The Transplant Games of America. The Transplant Games of America is an event that occurs every two years and brings together recipients, donors, and their families to celebrate the success of transplantation in a multi-sport festival event that is produced by the Transplant Life Foundation. Along with generating awareness of the significance of transplants and donorship, The Kidney Foundation of Western New York has a goal to collectively increase local awareness of Team Buffalo's participation in the Transplant Games of America.

#### **Organization Mission**

The Kidney Foundation of WNY is dedicated to increasing community awareness of kidney disease and other related diseases while educating and improving the lives of those we serve.

#### **Consequences**

The Transplant Games of America is a niche event that will more commonly be identified by those within the transplant community. Though the event is widely known throughout a specific community, local audiences who are not within this community will not be readily informed or know where to access this information. As well, there is a possibility that there may be individuals within the transplant community who are not aware of the Games. The Transplant Games of America houses a connecting message that unites its purpose with The Kidney Foundation of Western New York. Current social media efforts from Team Buffalo are medically driven, and provide information on transplant medical advancements, soft stories on the benefits obtained from the “gift of life” and messaging that is connected to the upcoming Games. Though information is shared on multiple social media platforms, limitations are found in staffing which is mostly composed of volunteers. This can hinder the ability to centralize messaging with consistency in posting and gaining traction for the upcoming Games. Currently, the organization has no connections to high-profile individuals or community/business donors that are specific to Team Buffalo. Our client has also expressed that not much attention has been given to social media due to time constraints and staffing limitations. Current existing partnerships are with Taste of Buffalo and Hofbrauhaus Buffalo. Limited visibility coupled with limited community relationships has a part to play in current awareness levels and poses barriers to increasing audience attention. With the central goal of increasing awareness of Team Buffalo and the work of the Kidney Foundation of WNY, identification of these potential limitations is imperative to begin creating a plan to increase awareness, visibility, and calls to action for the appropriate publics.

## **Resolution**

The organization would benefit from strategic communication efforts that are considerate of staffing and budget limitations, community relations, and donor relations that include the creation and implementation of a manageable social media strategy with an approach tailored to current and potential stakeholders. Identifying key performance indicators such as overall measures for success, targets, time frames, and financial considerations are key components in constructing the resolution for the current awareness-building objectives. Consideration of the target audience, social media strategies to attract the target audience, and attention to relationship-building opportunities to create stakeholders such as community organizations and potential donors would assist in generating and increasing awareness in a timely, cost-effective manner. Our client is currently in need of strategies that are public-facing, financially modest, and manageable for volunteers and staff.

### **Analyzing the Organization**

The Kidney Foundation of WNY was established in 2015 to address relative areas of need including awareness of kidney disease, and the support needed for affected patients. The Kidney Foundation of WNY is active in raising awareness within the community about kidney disease, as well as providing educational opportunities within the community on risk factors, prevention, and treatment. The organization positions itself as a small pillar in the community for the individuals and families affected by kidney disease in Western New York. For those with kidney disease, the organization provides numerous support options including health education, financial assistance, and support in nutrition and transportation needs. The organization also creates informational links to awareness of organ donors. The Kidney Foundation of Western

New York services areas throughout Western New York including Cattaraugus, Allegany, Chautauqua, Erie, Genesee, Niagara, Orleans, and Wyoming Counties.

### **Internal Environment**

Currently, the organization has two full-time staff members, Jeremy Morlock, Program Director and Katie Allen, Community Resources Director. The Kidney Foundation of Western New York is an affiliate of the New York Center for Kidney Transplantation and Donate Life New York State. The organization receives its primary support from ConnectLife, a blood and organ donor for Western New York. ConnectLife provides office space and administrative services to the The Kidney Foundation of WNY. While ConnectLife is a separate non-profit from The Kidney Foundation of WNY, the two share a corporate board of directors. The organization currently utilizes its volunteers to assist in events and communication efforts for the organization. Included in the volunteers are the Team Buffalo members, which consist of 60 total allowed members; however, according to the client, approximately 35 members responded to event participation and 15 participated last year. We do not have an exact number of participating volunteers but were informed by the client that there are enough volunteers to be able to manage the proposed plan. The client informed us that explicit direction in the social media plan would be beneficial to volunteers.

### **Public Perception**

The organization does not have any current or past communications plans in place to connect with the media and the public; however, based on current research, there is great potential to establish relationships with community partners and key publics. A social media

search uncovered posts including The Kidney Foundation of WNY by Buffalo State University, YMCA Buffalo-Niagara, and the National Kidney Foundation. Post responses were heartfelt, people were proud of donors and very vocal about the gravity of their “gift of life,” and posts ranged between 3-40 shares. Generally, there is a positive perception of the organization and its mission.

### **External Environment**

The Kidney Foundation of WNY’s office is located in the city of Buffalo, off Main Street on Bryant and Stratton Way. It is surrounded by community organizations, shopping centers, car dealerships, and restaurants. According to information provided in the census for this area, there are approximately 53,555 people living within this zip code location, with 47% male and 53% female. The median age in this area is 46, counting the majority of the local public as fitting within the age range desired by the client for this campaign. There are 2,450 businesses within this zip code. In the city of Buffalo, there are approximately 6,902 non-profit organizations; however, in the target area of the client, there are less than 50. As one of the few non-profit organizations in this area, the ability to establish and secure donor and community partnerships appears very promising.

### **Identification of Publics**

The appropriate publics for the client are individuals who are interested in sports, health, philanthropy, and non-profit organizations.

### **Key Audiences**

- Working adults ages 22-60

- Individuals interested in sports and/or healthcare
- Healthcare professionals
- Local healthcare organizations
- Health-related non-profit organizations
- Community-based non-profit organizations

To increase awareness of Team Buffalo and the upcoming Transplant Games of America, understanding the population and how engaged they are in the client's area of non-profit work is important. Based on the research conducted in the immediate and surrounding area, there are many hospitals, local healthcare organizations, and working adults within the target age range that are reachable. Not to discount the fiery spirit of the Buffalo population in sports, there is a potential to access this characteristic in the target audience to inspire curiosity and a willingness to learn more about the organization.

**Producers**

- Volunteers
  - Individuals who are actively engaged in managing events and other tasks related to the organization.
- Staff
  - Individuals who are responsible for administrative duties and management of volunteers.
- Partners
  - Organizations that assist the client in business operations (office space/administrative/board of directors).



Each group has an important role in the client's operations and upkeep. As well, each group within can contribute to the success of the organization's goals of increasing awareness and implementing the communication strategies. As a smaller organization with the majority of the group consisting of volunteers, the organization has the benefit of having static ambassadors who can effectively implement the communication plan's tactics.

### **Enablers**

- Local community organizations (businesses and non-profit)
  - Partnership and donor opportunities.
  - Awareness building outlets.
- Traditional and non/traditional media
  - Facebook - Caters to and is the preferred social media platform used by the target audience for the campaign and is the most used platform by local businesses.
- Past and Current Donors and Donation Recipients
  - Intimate connections to the organization can provide an opportunity for ambassadorship and outreach efforts that can appeal to emotion through lived experience and testimony.
- Families of Current and Past Donors
  - This group can also engage key publics and become ambassadors for the organization, adding to the efforts in fostering collaborative community partnerships.

### **Limiters**

- No limiters are projected for the client’s organization.

### **Opinion Leaders and Influential Connective Publics**

- Health professionals
- Transplant recipients
- Transplant donors
- Transplant Games participants

Each public is integral to the organization’s goal of building awareness of Team Buffalo and the work of the Kidney Foundation. Identifying collaborative publics is key in structuring awareness of first, the client organization and second, the program of Team Buffalo. External publics are an extension of the organization that resides within its immediate community and as such, identification of key publics will assist in the direction of tactics that are outward-facing to increase awareness.

## **Strategies and Tactics**

### **Vision for Success/Goals and Objectives**

Success for our campaign is an increase in awareness of Team Buffalo and the Kidney Foundation of WNY’s work toward improving the lives of those with kidney disease throughout the region. We have created strategic, measurable objectives that will help The Kidney Foundation of Western New York achieve its goal of increasing awareness.

The first measurable objective is to have 50 percent of Team Buffalo members post a minimum of seven times about their participation in the Games on their social media accounts between March and July 2024. The methodology behind this objective is to essentially turn the Games participants into social media “influencers” and leverage their personal narratives to

promote the message of organ donation and transplantation. The second measurable objective is to recruit five new supporters or competitors to Team Buffalo by July 2024 who were not involved in previous Games to promote the growth of the team. The third and final measurable objective of this campaign is to increase the general inquiries pertaining to the Kidney Foundation of WNY and the Games by five percent in June-July 2024 compared to the same time frame in 2022.

### **Proactive Strategies and Tactics**

In order to help the Kidney Foundation of WNY encourage Team Buffalo competitors to share their transplant journey, we have devised a series of proactive strategies and tactics for the team to utilize over the course of the next several months.

**Strategy One:** Develop Team Buffalo members into social media influencers.

To help Team Buffalo members become influencers, a key tactic is the development of an influencer toolkit. This kit will include a form for each Team Buffalo member to sign and list the social media account(s) they are pledging to be a Team Buffalo influencer on. The kit will provide topics for posts, suggested wording, and a theme for posts each month. To help incentivize them to be influencers, the kit will also encourage them to reach levels of social media participation in order to earn badges, t-shirts, and recognition at team meetings for hitting these influencer milestones.

Content ideas for the influence toolkit include Team Buffalo members sharing their organ and transplant journeys, posts that outline their favorite training routines or physical milestones they would like to reach, photos from previous Transplant Games they've participated in, or foods they like to eat when training. Event and engagement challenge hashtags can also be a

great way for the Kidney Foundation of WNY to organize content and monitor engagement throughout the campaign.

Interpersonal communication tactics will be key to introducing the influencer idea and toolkit to Team Buffalo members. We recommend an initial meeting with the team to unveil the concept and get their commitment. Then, we recommend regular follow-up meetings to keep the team engaged as influencers and to celebrate when they reach social media engagement milestones.

**Strategy Two:** Turn general Kidney Foundation of WNY supporters into Team Buffalo supporters.

The tactics for this strategy begin with the Kidney Fountain of WNY's website. To raise the profile of Team Buffalo, photos and captions of Team Buffalo should be added prominently to the homepage. This will be in addition to the current Team Buffalo tab. The sub-page under that tab can showcase team member stories and additional information about Team Buffalo.

A second tactic for this strategy is to merge the Team Buffalo Transplant Games of America social media accounts into the main Kidney Foundation of WNY accounts. Showcasing Team Buffalo on the main organization accounts rather than separate team accounts can help increase visibility for the team.

Interpersonal communication tactics will be key for this strategy. We recommend Kidney Foundation of WNY staff identify supporters of the organization who have not been involved with Team Buffalo in the past and meet with these supporters to encourage them to get involved with the team. To encourage new participation with Team Buffalo, current team members or volunteers can be paired with new members/volunteers to help them feel welcome, and be a

resource for questions new members/volunteers may have. This mentorship should be mentioned in social posts to make the idea of joining more appealing to newcomers.

Another tactical recommendation is a series of Team Buffalo recruitment-focused social media posts. These posts can include messaging that highlights the reasons why qualifying individuals should join Team Buffalo. These posts can include testimonials from previous and current Team Buffalo members to make the recruitment process more personal.

**Strategy Three:** Raise awareness for what the Kidney Foundation of WNY does by sharing the individual stories of Team Buffalo members

To assist in the implementation of this strategy, it's important that a content calendar is developed. This calendar should include when content updates will be made on the website, when testimonials or stories from Team Buffalo or other content will be posted and on which platform, which posts will be boosted and when, as well as when emails to supporters will be sent out. The content calendar can also include publishing blog posts that elaborate on the social media posts or to address frequently asked questions about organ donation/transplantation to generate traffic to the website.

Storytelling testimonials from Team Buffalo members is a key tactic for this campaign. These stories can be captured on video, or through words with pictures. The stories are a great way to add an emotional and personal component to the campaign that can involve transplant recipients as well as donor families to expand the reach and get more people involved. We recommend using these testimonials as a major part of the content strategy on the website, in social posts, and in email campaigns, all planned using the above-referenced content calendar. We recommend developing and sending press releases to local media outlets, as well as targeted pitches to reporters, based on Team Buffalo members' stories and having members be

interviewed by interested reporters. News articles or features about Team Buffalo members and the Transplant Games will help the Kidney Foundation of WNY to reach new audiences outside of its existing following on social media and email lists.

An additional interpersonal tactic to spread the word about Team Buffalo and the Kidney Foundation of WNY is developing partnerships with local healthcare organizations to build an informal referral program.

### **Reactive Strategies and Tactics**

The nature of this campaign requires more proactive strategies than reactive strategies, but the responses to the campaign are difficult to anticipate. This is especially true in the social media world where reactions are instantaneous. Therefore, we've added the following reactive strategies and tactics which may be useful along the way.

#### **Utilize Tracking Tools**

Instagram and Facebook offer post insights for organizations set up as business pages. With these insights, the Kidney Foundation of WNY can measure metrics such as profile visits from certain posts, how many shares the posts are getting, the number of followers vs. non-followers who are viewing the post, and more. This will provide insight into which posts are receiving the most engagement to help determine if the content strategy needs to be adjusted to maximize reach.

#### **Negative Feedback**

We do not foresee any negative feedback with a cause like this, but if for some reason a message should be misinterpreted, do not hesitate to respond with accurate information that reinforces the positive message of Team Buffalo and the mission of the Kidney Foundation.

### **Add Incentives**

There may be unexpected challenges that arise when attempting to expand Team Buffalo. Flexibility is key and adjustments may need to be made as the campaign is running. If recruitment posts aren't generating interest, it may be necessary to adjust the strategy and offer incentives. Monitor the post engagement and the responses generated to determine if there are questions that need to be addressed.

### **Develop an FAQ Page**

If the campaign leads to an influx of common questions, we recommend developing a Frequently Asked Questions page for the website that answers the most common FAQs. This page can be linked to in social posts on Facebook as well to expand its reach.

### **Responsiveness to Inquiries**

Designate a specific person or persons from the Kidney Foundation of WNY to monitor and respond to inquiries quickly. We recommend that questions be responded to within 24 hours.

### **Highlight Exciting News as it Develops**

As the Transplant Games approach, there could be developments that weren't part of the initial content strategy but should be addressed. When this happens, posts should be created and uploaded to social accounts. The website should be updated with the latest developments as well.

### **Message and Media Strategy**

Within the message strategy of this campaign, the Kidney Foundation of WNY needs to be able to communicate both the mission and values of the organization in a way that also conveys the importance of the Transplant Games and Team Buffalo. The type of messaging used should be appealing with a sense of purpose that attracts supporters as well as potential

participants. The phrasing could include statements like, “It’s not just about athletics when you join Team Buffalo; it’s about personal growth and a chance to start over” or “Join Team Buffalo on our journey of inspiration.”

### **Budget**

- \$300 for boosted Facebook posts
  - We recommend selecting three or four of the most appealing posts as the ones that will be boosted, and spreading the \$300 budget across these posts.
- \$250 for t-shirts
  - The shirts are an incentive item for Team Buffalo members who reach influencer milestones.
- staff time - \$5,600 over the course of the campaign, based on approximately ten hours per week.

### **Timeline**

#### **January 2024**

- Update website homepage.
- Merge social media accounts.
- Develop monthly email calendar of themes.
- Begin developing social media content for organization’s posts.
- Begin work on influencer toolkit.
- Design and order t-shirts
- Develop list of supporters to meet with to get them on board with Team Buffalo.



## **February 2024**

- Complete influencer toolkit.
- Complete social media content plan for organization's posts.
- Meet with Team Buffalo members to introduce the influencer concept and get their buy-in.
- Send first monthly email promoting Team Buffalo.
- Begin meeting with supporters about Team Buffalo.

## **March 2024**

- Meet again with Team Buffalo and get them posting as influencers on their social media account.
- Begin monthly Team Buffalo social media posts for the organization.
- Send monthly email to supporters.
- Meet with supporters about Team Buffalo.
- Develop Team Buffalo participant stories to highlight on website.

## **April 2024**

- Encourage Team Buffalo influencers, reward those who've reached milestones.
- Post this month's Team Buffalo social media post for the organization.
- Send monthly email to supporters.
- Meet with supporters about Team Buffalo.
- Develop Team Buffalo participant stories.

## **May 2024**

- Identify Team Buffalo participant stories to be boosted social media posts.
- Pitch stories to local news media outlets.
- Encourage Team Buffalo influencers, reward those who've reached milestones.
- Post this month's Team Buffalo social media post for the organization.
- Send monthly email to supporters.
- Meet with supporters about Team Buffalo.

## **June 2024**

- Encourage Team Buffalo influencers, reward those who've reached milestones.
- Update influencer toolkit with guidelines for posts at the Games.
- Post weekly Team Buffalo social media posts for the organization.
- Send monthly email to supporters.
- Meet with supporters about Team Buffalo

## **July 2024**

- Encourage Team Buffalo influencers, reward those who've reached milestones, provide them with guidelines for posts at the Games.
- Post weekly Team Buffalo social media posts for the organization.
- Send thank you email to supporters after the Games.
- Post wrap up of the Games with photos on organization's social media and website.

## **Evaluation**

The success of the campaign will be evaluated based on whether the three measurable objectives listed above are achieved. Other areas that should be considered during the evaluation phase are whether the campaign achieved news coverage, and whether Team Buffalo members embraced the idea of being social media influencers for the cause. One method for evaluating this beyond their participation is a survey allowing them to submit feedback about the campaign anonymously. All of these evaluation steps can be useful for learning what worked well and what didn't, and that information can be helpful in shaping future campaigns.