

Blitz Day 101 Tutorial

Laura Assade – Salem Summer Meals Program

3 year grant from EOS Foundation – 1 staff member, plus one city rep - City of Salem is not a sponsor

Branding to unify all summer meals programs across city
Salem public schools food service
St Peter's church
Looking to work with other sponsors

Goal: Get more people/children to come out to programs. Increase participation

Open vs closed sites – focusing on open sites
Open sites are mostly outdoor locations

Activities:

Fire Department bringing trucks for tours/demos
Library doing story hour
Police dept doing tours/car tours/information

Blitz – how to get more kids to come out

Remove the stigma about meals

Kick-off events and ceremonies

- They used a former Patriot player to get people to an event, but found it was mainly their parents who were psyched (younger kids didn't know who he was) and they got a lot of people without children just coming to see the Pat's player. So if using a famous person - know who that famous person will attract to your event...
- Learned they needed more bouncy houses/more activities geared towards kids. The parks and rec department was super helpful
- Purposefully had kick-off events near community gardens and had fresh cut fruit from gardens at event. Salem HS has a garden run by students – great to get them involved as volunteers at kick-off events and can use food for free from garden then.
- Used other kid friendly activities at kick-off events like face painting, music, singing groups, cooking demos from project bread, carnival games, bike safety demo people and raffling off a bike.
- Timing – 10am-2pm is good timing for these events. Too early and you won't get the teens (they will only come in afternoon)
- Teens are great as volunteers, will bring their friends to events – if you can get them volunteering credit that they need for school even better.
- Community garden help is huge – the kids who work/volunteer can bring home food so helps more than just the people at the actual event.

Planning for blitz events

Health fair is a great way to recruit students to volunteer at blitz events

Give aways – wrist bands with number to text for where a free meal during the summer is, sunglasses were a huge hit with teens

Canvassing:

- Zone your area – Salem is 8 zones. Zone included a main street area and businesses and surrounding neighborhood.
- Volunteers were given a zone, and lots of information including maps, charts, information about events, stats on hunger for businesses, information in lots of different languages, posters to put up etc
- Telling volunteers to highlight events, not point of events – so highlight activities like bouncy house, games etc, not the meals.

Virtual Blitz – information handed out in session packet – used tweets, press releases and lots of social media to get the word out.

Kim from the Hockomock Area YMCA

3 main branches - target community was in Milford where 44% of students are on free lunch (other towns in area are more like 20%)

A pilot program was already being run entirely by a volunteer group, so YMCA took over and scaled it up

Market your programs – spend the time and money to do so – then people will come. Not helpful to do a program if no one is coming

Pre- Blitz: Getting word out about the blitz – use event already happening

- “Milford Day” already a big thing – so used it as their pre-blitz day: had a booth, gave out apple and cheese sticks for free (surprisingly popular! Even competing with funnel cake) Great way to recruit volunteers
- Recruiting volunteers for just blitz day, not volunteers who will help every week. Capturing the people who want to help but don’t have time to make a weekly commitment. Great one-day event to volunteer at.
- Use the resources you have! They have a board member who works at Patriot Place – able to get the mascot to an event.
- Social Media Blitz: Facebook great for mom’s with kids (not teens – they aren’t on there) Twitter will get elected officials and more local business leaders. Have to keep feeds active. Use things that are shareable – cute pictures of kids, ask questions that warrant a

response. Small giveaways for sharing events on Facebook pages – publicize winners of giveaways. Raffles also good

Official Blitz Day

- Use teens! Great volunteering help and will bring their friends (travel in packs) Also get teen girls to volunteer because they attract teen boys to events, and will get them their eating.
- Use traditional outlets too – local media, local papers, even community access television: gets older generation who has grandkids, and they will spread the word that way.
- Canvas! Script and prepare volunteers who canvas: what to say, how to say it, what NOT to say
 - Focus on reducing stigma – focus on activities not the food: think about how to market to the population you are trying to serve.
 - Prep those volunteers – safety, maps, thinking through all logistics. How will they carry all the materials? Water! Make sure always in pairs, don't put teens with adults they don't know.
 - Happy volunteers come back and do it again! Remember to keep them prepared and feeling secure in their job. Remember that volunteers have social networks – another way to get the word out!
 - Using project bread generic door hangers – stapled their event specific stuff to the hanger in English and Spanish
 - Send English speaking volunteers with Spanish speaking volunteers – remember that even if the adult that answers the door doesn't speak English maybe a child inside does. Hand motions are helpful!
 - Also think about population served also as volunteers as a way to reduce stigma – if they volunteered and then have a meal they may be more likely to eat. “well have a meal while you are here” “bring your siblings to the event!”
 - Great way to engage businesses: they donate \$500 to feed an adult meal for every child meal we are serving – great way for small donations to go far, and for businesses to feel engaged. Also excellent way to feed adults that are coming for their kids.

Luz Holmes

Teen/youth volunteers

Start by already reaching out to those doing this work- americore workers, people/organizations already working on hunger issues

They go all over the state of Connecticut, so keeping good records about every organization/contact in each area is super important.

Reaching out to faith-based groups and organizations – youth engagement at churches can be very large. Its already a place where youth feel comfortable so great way to engage at the church site itself, or great way to get groups of teens/youth involved.

Lots of logistics and organizations before blitz days

Did a big block party on a street in Hartford CT – great way to raise awareness and recruit volunteers

Lots of elected officials came out

Radio station was there playing music and doing giveaways

Venders all came out – raffles and giveaways

They did week long Blitz Days:

Community service hours for teens/youth are huge – have that credit for them ready to go, have certificated. It was harder to persuade parents to get the kids there than the youth themselves. Transportation a huge issue – pick them up! Give them breakfast and lunch! Double-check and reconfirm always.

“LIT” – Let Inclusiveness Thrive: Make the youth that volunteer feel included and part of the work. Make their volunteer work feel meaningful to the organization, and they will feel empowered and care greatly about doing a good job.

Questions:

How to get more low income teen volunteers?

Not focusing on low income at all, just focusing on teens, don't even mention income

Teens travel in clumps, get into their social networks this way. Getting a clump to work with you will attract more clumps

You will get kids who can afford it, and that's ok, you are still getting the low income ones there too. Goal is to have community inclusiveness and not have low-income youth feel singled out

Where do seniors fit into this?

Veterans groups and council on ageing groups are great volunteer help. They have time, they have the inclination, and they love kids a lot. Very reliable group. Will reach a lot of people by using them, they are very interwoven into the community.

What about background checks?

Other organizations you partner with maybe able to do this. Extremely important with volunteers and kids. YMCA does it on all volunteers, city of food service with city will do it as well. They know how to do it, set up for it, very easy.

Laundromats as a great place to recruit and blitz – where people go! Huge community centers. Not a place people think about. YMCA did a table there and got a lot of volunteers and gave out lots of information there. Huge success.