



UL ENGAGE

Community Briefing

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The Samaritans Awareness Project

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UNIVERSITY of LIMERICK
OLLSCOIL LUIMNIGH

UL Engage

share

enable

grow

Promoting University Community Collaboration

Project Aim

The mission of our project was to raise awareness about the Peer Listeners, a new initiative on campus that aims to bring emotional support to students, by students.

Project Objectives

We set out to design an advertising campaign and to organize an information session to better acquaint the university community with the services offered by the Peer Listeners.

Project Rationale

The Peer Listeners Network is a collaborative effort between the University of Limerick and the Samaritans. The Peer Listeners program, which is based on similar programs at Oxford College and University College Dublin, are a team of students that are trained by the Samaritans to provide confidential emotional support to their peers. With the demand for university counseling services increasing at an alarming rate, the Peer Listening Network is designed to address the University of Limerick's growing needs regarding mental health. Because the Peer Listeners Network is a new initiative, the Samaritans director has asked the UL Practicum team members to raise awareness about the service.

COMMUNITY

Overview of Community Organisation

The Samaritans are a renowned institution in the United Kingdom and Ireland. Established in 1953 by Reverend Chad Varah, the Samaritans is a community organization that aims to provide counseling for those struggling with mental health related issues. Anyone in need of a helping hand can call a 24/7 line and is immediately put in touch with a trained volunteer to talk through his or her experience. There are 20 branches and 2,400 volunteers within Ireland alone.



Community Partners

The primary community coordinator is John Downey, who has been the director of the Limerick & Tipperary Samaritans since 2012. Downey, who began volunteering for the Samaritans in 2010, oversees volunteering, training and fundraising efforts in order to ensure that those in crisis receive the help they need.



STUDENTS



Natasha Kallish
University of Minnesota (United States)

Natasha is a third year student studying Journalism, Anthropology and Psychology at her home university in Minneapolis. She chose to participate in the UL Engage program because of her interest in research and her goal to pursue a career in academia. Her interests include traveling and cooking, particularly vegan cuisine.



Consuelo Knust
Charles University of Prague (Czech Republic)

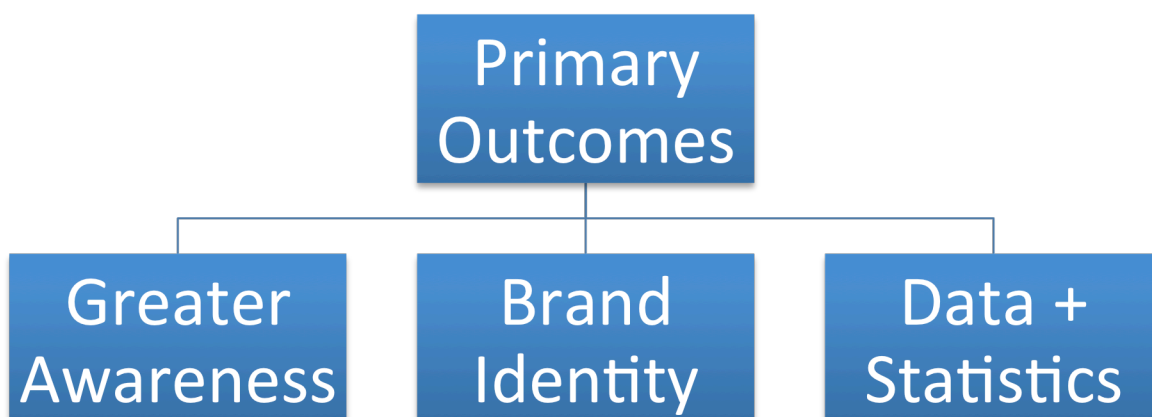
Consuelo is a second year student of Liberal Arts and Humanities at Charles University of Prague. She is originally from Chile and has been living in Europe for the past four years. She decided to participate in the UL Engage program because of her motivation to engage with a local community and to help others in need. She is extremely passionate about sports, conscious living and traveling.

OUTCOMES

The outcomes of the Peer Listeners Awareness Project are multifaceted. They include:

- A greater awareness of the Peer Listeners initiative among the student body
- A foundation for future interactive activities such as information sessions
- Strong advertising campaign tools that include templates for posters, stickers and business cards
- The development a brand identity
 - Slogan: *Confidential emotional support. By students, for students.*
 - Color scheme (red, blue, green, orange)
 - Reinvented logos (such as the ear design)
- An emphasis on the need for the Peer Listeners based on data and statistics procured by Natasha for her academic research on the subject

Overall, we are proud of our work for the Peer Listeners Awareness Project. By working closely with John Downey, we were able to identify problems and develop solutions. In that process, we brought attention to the Peer Listener services, designed a brand identity and identified important research to inform the Peer Listener team moving forward.



TESTIMONIALS

“Natasha and Consuelo were tasked with proposing and initiating a campaign to raise awareness of the Peer Listeners in UL with the aim of encouraging fellow students to engage with the service.

To achieve this end, we met regularly to discuss and plan an advertising campaign across a number of different media. Natasha & Consuelo also attended some of our training sessions with the Peer Listeners offering them the opportunity to meet and chat with the trainees and to understand more about the role of a ‘Listener’.

The advertising campaign was widespread and included the use of social media including Facebook. Customised artwork, for use on posters, stickers and across social media, was developed. Posters were placed throughout the university in both public and residential areas, email notifications sent to students and internal University social media utilised as much as possible to boost awareness of the service.

An event for students to meet with the Peer Listeners was organised in the UL Pavilion. Attendance at the event offered the opportunity for students to meet with the Peer Listeners in a comfortable environment. The evening offered free food, music and questionnaires allowing for feedback from students on the stresses of student life. This allowed students to engage in a fun and relaxed way but also managed to get them thinking about and highlighting the importance of their own emotional health.

Samaritans were delighted with the work of both Natasha and Consuelo, in particular the customised artwork and plan for Instagram.

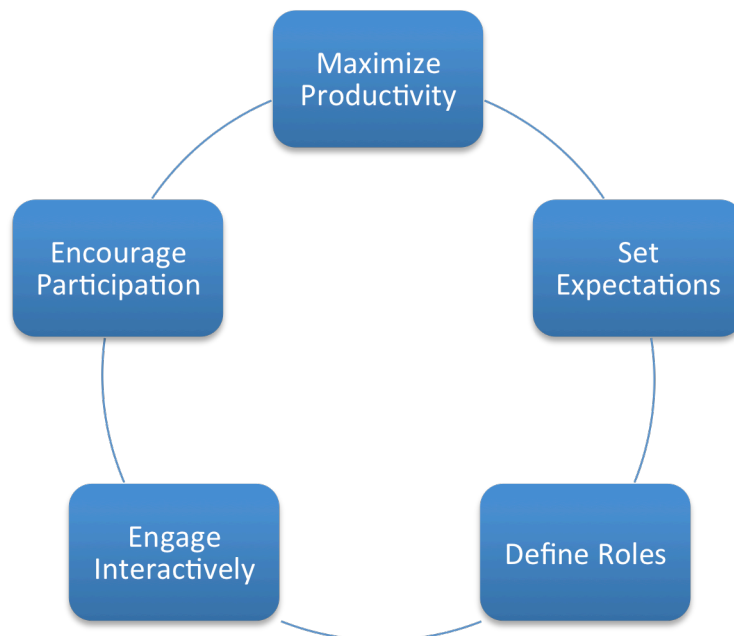
The artwork created is especially eye-catching and makes people want to find out more about the service. It takes into account the type of posters regularly seen on campus and seeks to be a contrast by being simple, different, recognisable and most importantly, effective.”

- John Downey, Director – Samaritans Limerick & Tipperary

RECOMMENDATIONS

Moving forward, we recommend that future teams focus on increasing awareness of the services offered by the Peer Listeners. To do this, we recommend that UL Engage practicum participants:

- Meet with the Samaritans director at least once a week to develop a strong idea of what is feasible early on, therefore ensuring maximum productivity throughout the semester
- Define their role within the Samaritans project during the *first two weeks* to avoid confusion about expectations and time management
- Organize monthly information sessions that allow students to become increasingly familiar with the Peer Listener team
 - In this context, “information session” is a loose term used to define any situation in which the Peer Listeners advertise their services by interactively engaging with the community, such as by hosting a pizza party or a movie night
- Conduct a constant advertising campaign to further gain student interest, such as hanging up posters, handing out stickers, etc.
- Operate an Instagram account that attracts student attention by featuring an aesthetically pleasing design and encouraging a fun and active lifestyle within the university community

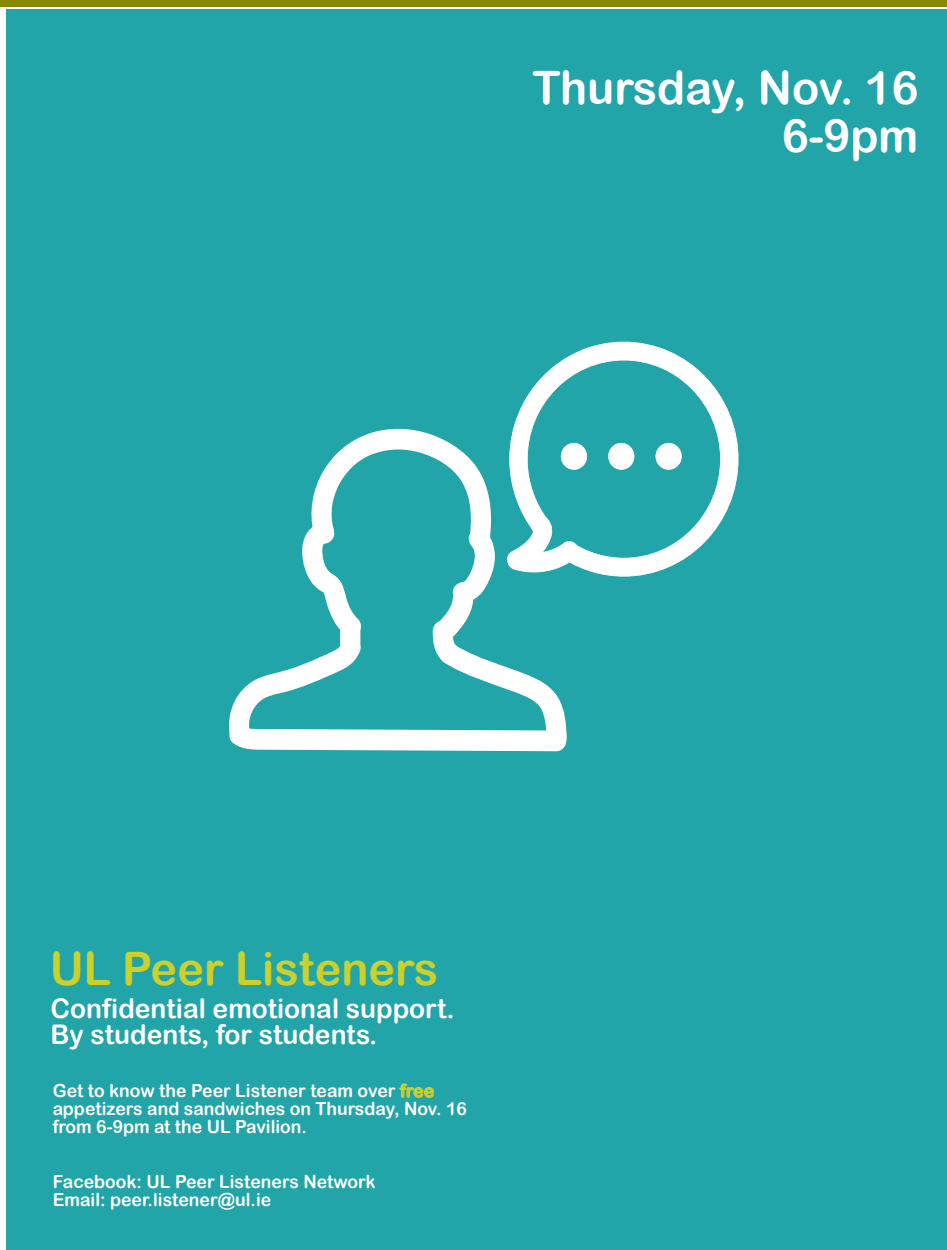


GALLERY



The above images were taken at the Peer Listeners information session, which was held at The Pavilion on the evening of 16 November. Top left: students were invited to come to the information session to meet the Peer Listening team and to mingle among one another over free food (Guinness sold separately). Top right: students were asked to respond to questions written around the room related to school, stress and mental health. Bottom left: responses all demonstrated that students feel quite a high level of stress and that they are looking for ways to deal with the subsequent effects on their mental health. Bottom right: questions encouraged students to reflect on their own experiences while also normalizing those same experiences for others by writing them down for all to see.

APPENDICES



Above is an example of one of the posters designed for the advertising campaign. During the creative process we decided to adopt a minimalist approach to the design that mimics currently trends in advertising toward millennials. High contrast colors were used to further attract attention, particularly to the more important information on the poster (i.e. free food). Other poster varieties were made in red, orange and green.

COMMUNITY VIDEO

This semester, we were assigned to work on the Samaritans Awareness project. The Samaritans is an emotional support organization located across Ireland and the United Kingdom. Citizens who are suffering from crises related to mental can call a 24/7 hotline to talk through their experiences with a trained volunteer. The Limerick & Tipperary Samaritans was approached by the University of Limerick two years ago to create an emotional support program for students that would also be run by students in order to mitigate the large demand for counseling. In other words, a peer support program. After lots of research, the University of Limerick Peer Listeners Network was finally established this year.

Because the Peer Listeners is a new initiative, Limerick & Tipperary director John Downey expressed concern that there seemed to be a lack of awareness on campus about the service. Consequently, our focus this semester was to find a way to draw attention to the Peer Listeners in a fun, innovative way. After some discussion, we decided to run an advertising campaign and host an information session to better acquaint students with the service. Throughout this process, we split the work equally and did not necessarily have independent roles. Rather, we worked together at all stages in order to bring the project to fruition.

Our first objective was to design an advertising campaign. We hired a Minneapolis-based graphic design student to create a series of posters that had a modern, minimalist aesthetic. The idea was that these colorful posters would stand out among the multitude of other posters on campus that seem crowded and often feature way too much text. Our second objective was to host an information session to introduce the community to the Peer Listeners team. We rented a room at the Pavilion and offered free food to anyone that was interested in dropping in and learning more.

The Peer Listeners offer confidential emotional support to students in need. With demand for university counseling on the rise, the Peer Listeners play a critical role in mitigating mental health issues on campus. Thus, running an advertising campaign and organizing an information session was critical in order to spread awareness about the Peer Listeners. Going forward, we hope that the Peer Listeners continue to use the poster templates in order to run continuous advertising campaigns that further spread awareness about the presence of the service on campus.

Video link: <https://media.heanet.ie/page/648a4782f2af9e1d6d596cadda7ed184>



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