

# Rethinking The Samaritans

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**Task:** Our assignment was to work with the Limerick Samaritans to “explore the use of the venue to raise awareness of the organization and offer an entertaining venue for people to meet”. What John Downey, the director of the Limerick/Tipperary branch of the Samaritans, wanted from us was to try and utilize the room they had to change the public perception and stigma that surrounds the organization. To do this, we scheduled four events at the Samaritans during the month of March: a movie night, a paint party, a cookie exchange, and a speaker night. Not only were these events that could draw people into the space, they did not focus on the negative stereotypes that the community associates with the group; this allowed members of the Limerick community to come into the space with an open mind.



## Cookie Swap

### Preparation

- Developed Advertising for the event
- Distributed advertising via various Limerick Facebook pages and Meetup.com
- Informed University of Limerick Students through email

### Execution

- Prepared 10 dozen various baked goods to ensure a positive experience for attendees even if the turnout was low
- Arranged the space to allow for casual group conversations
- Opened the doors and allowed people to come and mingle for about an hour while exchanging treats

### Outcome

- Low attendance at 4 people
- We are hesitant to dwell on this number due to the bus strike and low taxi availability due to student race day
- Playing music at the event may have made the space more inviting
- We realized more aggressive advertising may be necessary to engage people in these events

## Paint Party

### Preparation

- Selected a paint tutorial
- Developed advertising materials
- Created a google form to get RSVP's and ensure proper quantity of supplies
- Advertised on Facebook and Meetup.com
- Emailed University of Limerick students event information
- Prepared necessary supply lists

### Execution

- This event was cancelled the day prior due to a specific paint being unavailable at the art store
- All individuals who had responded with positive RSVP's were notified of the events cancellation

### Outcome

- Event was very well received with 20 positive RSVP's
- The event will be hosted at a later date as it had such a positive response
- May consider closing the RSVP sooner to ensure that there is enough time to retrieve the necessary supplies

## Movie Night

### Preparation

- Contacted local movie club to get tips and tricks for hosting a movie
- Developed advertising materials
- Distributed advertising via Meetup.com and The Samaritans' Facebook
- Emailed University of Limerick students the information

### Execution

- Set up the space to cater to movie viewing
- Distributed Samaritans' promotional items throughout the space
- Provided snacks and drinks
- Played a free domain movie

### Outcome

- 8 people attended the event
- Attendees were all informed through Meetup.com
- Despite over 50 shares on Facebook, this method of advertising did not produce any attendees
- Learned that it would be best to facilitate a casual pre and post viewing environment by playing music and setting out refreshments

## Mental Health Speakers

### Preparation

- Suggested by community partner John Downey
- John downey provided a list of several local mental health speakers
- Potential speakers were invited, and three were ultimately scheduled to present
- Local mental health stakeholders were invited
- Event was advertised on Samaritans' Facebook

### Execution

- Set up the space to cater to speaker presentations
- Provided tea and cookies
- Facilitated the three speakers presentations as well as Q & A sessions after each speech

### Outcome

- Approximately 20 people attended the event
- Attendees were informed through direct contact
- While the talks were not focused on the broader goal of mental wellness, they provided a space to discuss more mild mental health issues and coping mechanisms
- Discovered a large community interest in these topics

## Outcomes

Nearly 50 people entered the Samaritans and became familiar with the space

The Samaritans facility was used for a broader

We learned that additional advertising or at least more clever forms of it are necessary to engage people in the event

People were especially eager to attend a novel event such as the paint party

## Recommendations

Continue outreach to the community (events, offering the space to be used by other groups and organizations) to increase familiarity with the Samaritans and decrease stigma.

Develop advertising that is more positive in nature to challenge negative stigmas and beliefs about the organization.

Set up more social media accounts

- Twitter and Instagram could broaden the Samaritans' outreach towards younger people.
- Could be useful platforms for shifting public opinion and advertising events.

- Continue advertising events on Meetup.com since most attendees were informed on this site.
- Collaborate with similar organisations in order to develop strategies to decrease stigma surrounding mental health which prevent individuals from making use of their resources.