

Storyworks

Client Report



#emBARKwithNSD

Monday, July 25

Cristiano De Matos
Danica Natassja Austria
Danjay Anthony Minott
Maria Salome Olaya
Rajvi Raju Shukla

CENTENNIAL
COLLEGE

Campaign Summary

Introduction

We are a team of Centennial College PR students who developed a communications strategy on behalf of NDS for our Storyworks course. Our objectives included raising awareness of the outstanding work the National Service Dogs organization does for people coping with PTSD.

By fostering an emotional connection with the target audience, we strived to develop the public's understanding of the importance of having Certified Service Dogs accessible to those who need them, and ultimately drive an increase in volunteers and donors to help NSD's mission.

The campaign theme revolved around PTSD, the effects of NSD on those who experience it and on June 27, National PTSD Awareness Day. In our work, we tried to inform about different aspects, such as the characteristics of PTSD, how it affects individuals and how the Certified Service Dogs help people who experience it, including the specialized, rigorous training they go through to be certified. We also wanted the public to understand how service dogs help their owners live fuller and happier lives.

We executed the campaign from June 6 to June 27, and our deliverables included:

- An Instagram story post every Monday leading up to June 27, National PTSD Awareness Day. We also created promotional posts leading up to the TV appearance and initially proposed an Instagram Live event on the same day.
- Development and execution of a media relations strategy targeting local and regional media outlets, specifically morning shows that air across GTA and southern Ontario on weekday mornings.
- Blog posts to inform the public about the training process of NSD's certified dogs and its cost, as well as the vital role of volunteers. The blog posts contained strategic calls to action to direct readers to the volunteer/donations page.
- Questions for volunteers during Instagram Live on June 27.



Objectives


- a. To increase awareness about the importance of service dogs in the lives of individuals with PTSD.
- b. To increase following and engagement rates on Instagram.
- c. To increase public understanding about the training process of service dogs and why it is costly.
- d. To drive people to visit the website and consider donating or volunteering.

Key messages

- **Service dogs greatly improve the lives of individuals with PTSD.**
Service dogs help people with PTSD by promoting integration and activity, suppressing hypervigilance and providing reality affirmation and redirection.
- **Service dogs are expensive, which may cause them to be inaccessible to some.**
A service dog in Canada can cost \$40,000 on average over their eight to 10-year working life. In comparison, NSD only charges clients \$50 for an application fee and \$250 for an equipment fee. This PTSD Day, donate to help make service dogs accessible to the ones in need.
- **NSD encourages its audience to donate resources and/or volunteer their time and service at the organization.**
Since NSD is a non-profit organization, it greatly relies on donors and volunteers to operate and meet its clients' needs.

The Challenge

The most significant challenge we faced during the campaign was scheduling. We delivered our communication pieces to our professor on Thursdays, got the feedback the same day, and after edits, we sent it to Emma Bluhm, NSD's Communications Coordinator, on Fridays. This gave us a small window of time to work on any corrections required to go up on social media on Monday.



To overcome this challenge, we worked as a team, supporting each other in making the necessary adjustments and putting into practice the good time management skills we developed through the program. Having a strict critical path and tasks assigned also helped. As a result, we never missed any deadline and had the rewarding experience of seeing every post up, each Monday on NSD's Instagram.

Execution

Throughout June, we prepared weekly Instagram posts to promote the engagement of NDS's audience in our campaign and potentially reach prospective volunteers. We initially created three images for the multiple-image post. However, Emma advised us to use four, as it is NSD's traditional format, already proven to promote more engagement.

We delivered each post each Monday, from June 6 to June 27. This sequence of weekly posts culminated on June 27, National PTSD Awareness Day.

Each post highlighted the journey of a service dog and the benefits they provide to people with PTSD. The posts followed a defined structure:

- Slide 1 - introduced the service dog,
- Slides 2-3 - presented important information about the service dog's journey and skills/responsibilities.
- Slide 4 - showed our uniform key messages and call to action, appealing to volunteering at NSD.

An accompanying caption complemented each post to provide more detailed information and always included the hashtag #embarkwithnsd.

The purpose of these posts wasn't only to attract new volunteers, but also to raise awareness of how important service dogs are and why one should support NSD's noble cause. A key tactic used was to write the posts in the featured service dog's narration. This would help grab the attention of the viewer/reader.

We also made a post to promote NSD's appearance on CP24 Breakfast, as well as an Instagram Live, at 5 p.m. on PTSD Awareness Day, featuring live brief interviews with volunteers during a

class. This Instagram Live would also act as the main event of that day in case our media efforts didn't come to fruition. Unfortunately, it had to be cancelled, due to NSD experiencing technical difficulties beyond their control.



Grid showcasing every weekly post and respective caption



Media Efforts

To increase public awareness about National Service Dogs, and the work they do and try to drive more volunteers and donors, securing a TV appearance would be an ideal strategy to pursue. A service dog, with its friendly and very appealing image, is extremely suitable to help capture the attention and emotion of the viewers, making it easier for our key messages and call to action to be more successful. We envisioned either Emma and/or Danielle Forbes, NSD's Founder and Executive Director in the studio as spokespersons, to deliver our key messages to our target audience.


We focused our efforts on morning TV shows (national and regional) as their audience matched our target demographics. Using standard PR tools, we searched for relevant media contacts in the target outlets and created a media list, developing media individual, personalized media pitches for each.

Media outlet	Program	Reach	Audience
CP24	CP24 Breakfast	Southern Ontario	1 M daily viewers
Citytv	Breakfast Television Toronto	GTA	1.7 M weekly viewers
CBC Radio	Metro Morning	GTA	400 K daily listeners
CTV News	Your Morning	Canada-wide	2.3 M weekly viewers
Global News	The Morning Show	Canada-wide	1.2 M weekly viewers

TV Interview

We secured a 5-minute interview on CP24 Breakfast with Danielle Forbes and host George Lagogianes on June 27 at the 7:50 a.m. slot. The coordination between NSD and the channel was done by us and with CP24 Breakfast' producer Michael Chu. We prepared the client, host and producer through the following process:

1. Requested the producer for interview details - time, length, potential questions of the interview, parking instructions.
2. Submitted videos, photos and links materials from NSD and our campaign, to be displayed on screen, as requested by the producer.
3. Prepared the client for the interview, by creating and delivering the following resources:
 - A profile on the host.
 - Questions and theme for the interview.
 - Parking instructions for the client.
 - Media training document with interview tips and suggestions.
 - A document on key messages advising the client on the key messages and calls to action that were important to mention during the interview.



Key messages for CP24 Breakfast interview Monday, June 27

PTSD Awareness Day / NSD.ON.CA

Today is **PTSD Awareness Day** so we want to raise awareness of PTSD and how National Service Dogs help people with PTSD, from first responders to veterans and others experiencing PTSD.

PTSD can take over a person's life; it can range from nightmares, heart palpitations, panic attacks and more.


NSD Certified dogs are trained to help their handlers manage symptoms and situations.

Examples/stories:

NSD Chartwell can tell when their handler is experiencing heart palpitations or a panic attack; they can 'block' or prevent others from getting too close to their handler when they are experiencing a PTSD episode.

One of our clients has expressed how their personal hurdles were making an invisible injury - PTSD - visible. But with the help of the service dog that NSD has matched with them, they have been able to build the courage to talk about PTSD. They've said that their service dog has greatly changed and enhanced their life and the lives of their family.

Producer name: Michael Chu
Host name: George Lagogianes



Arrival time: **7:30 am EST sharp**
Address: **299 Queen Street West**
Length of interview (probs 4-7 minutes)
Questions -

1. What the program is about
2. How it helps people with PTSD
3. How the dogs are trained
4. where they come from

(Samples of the key messages document for client and interview details received from the producer)

NSD Chartwell made his television debut and helped the audience see a Certified Service Dog live. Our key messages were displayed on screen and reached a broad audience. Danielle Forbes, experienced in media opportunities, was a great interviewee, giving excellent replies to the questions and effortlessly delivering our key messages and call-to-action.



(Our key messages displayed during the CP24 Breakfast interview)

Owned Content

For the owned content portion of our work, we produced two blog posts, published on NSD's website. These blogs, though different in content, shared the main goal of reaching the eyes of prospective volunteers. If you wish to persuade people, you need to not only show them what's in it for them but why they should care. We did so by raising awareness and understanding of not only the service dogs' importance in the lives of those who need them, but how impactful and noble NSD's mission is, hence why they need funds and volunteers to keep their organization running.

NSD

ABOUT PROGRAMS NEWS GET INVOLVED SUPPORT DONATE

DONATE | CONTACT | BLOG | TEAMS LOGIN

BLOG

Please read the latest news and events info here.

TALES FROM VOLUNTEERS WHO EMBARKED WITH NSD'
June 27, 2022

TRAINING TO BECOME A NATIONAL SERVICE DOG
June 13, 2022

THE IMPORTANCE OF HEALTH AND WELLNESS
May 29, 2022

TRAINING TO BECOME A NATIONAL SERVICE DOG
June 13, 2022

TALES FROM VOLUNTEERS WHO EMBARKED WITH NSD'
June 27, 2022

Our blog posts featured on NSD's website


The [first blog](#) gave the step-by-step training process to become a service dog, which was done in the narration of NSD Fallon. This blog was posted June, 13. It featured a step-by-step look at what is involved in turning a puppy into a Certified Service Dog, specially trained to help someone diagnosed with PTSD.

TRAINING TO BECOME A NATIONAL SERVICE DOG
BY NSD FALLON, THE GOLDEN RETRIEVER

Hi everyone! My name is Fallon, and I'm delighted to meet you. I want to tell you about my life so far and my training journey to become a National Service Dog. Today, I help an amazing human live their life to the fullest. Many of my human friends are brave first responders and veterans and I help relieve the symptoms of Post Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD). My training took two years from the time I was a tiny, happy puppy to a proud Certified Service Dog. I love my job and I'm always ready to help – I'm like a fluffy superhero!

I have lived with many awesome humans throughout my training and each one helped me learn something new:

The Whelping Home



It all started with a volunteer breeder caretaker who nurtured my pregnant dam (or, as I call her, momma) and me after being born. The volunteer provided us with a loving home to whelp for about seven and a half weeks. This was just the beginning of my journey.

Puppy Raiser

After the Whelping Home stage, I moved on to the next exciting chapter that my friends at NSD call 'the Puppy Raiser' phase. As the name says, this was when I went to live with another type of volunteer that provided me with a loving home and started to develop my training and skills until I was around 14 months old. The volunteer was fully supported by NSD's Training Team and their Health Coordinator. It was so exciting, just like the first day of school. I loved it!

The [second blog](#) was focused on testimonials for volunteers and clients who have benefited from NSD. This blog was uploaded June 27.

The testimonials in this blog would entice them to want to be a part of the welcoming NSD family. If those working there all seem to love it, then it is worth the time to volunteer as well!

TALES FROM VOLUNTEERS WHO EMBARKED WITH NSD

Monday, June 27 is National Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder Awareness Day and National Service Dogs has been helping and supporting those diagnosed with PTSD – from first responders to veterans and others – for many years.

We provide these service dogs free of charge and, thanks to our current volunteer team, our program continues to empower people to achieve their full potential.

We are a non-profit organization and we rely heavily on our amazing team of volunteers to continue training NSD dogs and helping Canadians in need. You can embARK on NSD's journey too by volunteering today!


What is PTSD?

Post-traumatic stress disorder is a psychiatric illness caused by exposure to one or more traumatic events. The Government of Canada reported that an estimate of 10% of war zone veterans will experience PTSD, while others might experience at least some of the symptoms associated with PTSD.

The PTSD Awareness Day colour is teal, and we are showing support by wearing the colour in recognition of those who are diagnosed with PTSD.

Why volunteer at NSD?


Each volunteer plays a role in helping first responders and veterans who have PTSD through the various volunteer opportunities available at NSD.



Client Relations

Throughout the campaign we had open and frequent communication with our client, Emma Bluhm. Every Friday, we emailed weekly update reports to keep her informed of our progress, work done that week and our focus on the coming weeks of our campaign.

Rajvi Shukla was the designated client liaison and created weekly update reports, also communicating with Danielle Forbes, NSD's Founder and Executive Director, about the details of the TV interview.



Story works Weekly Update Report

Week of: June 13 – June 17

General report:

This week we met as a team to review our critical path, client feedback and instructor feedback and produce the next posts. We also initiated the media relations campaign.

Social Media Campaign:

- The second post went up on the NSD Instagram on Monday, June 13
- We have incorporated the feedback on post#1 and #2 into post #3 which is attached for your approval.
- We would like to post #3 on Monday, June 20 as per the critical path.

Blogs for the website:

- The first blog has been posted on the website as per the critical path
- The idea of the second blog about volunteering and volunteer testimonials has been discussed with the client and approved, it's in the works.

Media Relations Campaign:

- Started media outreach on June 15 as per the critical path. We will keep you updated when we hear back re: interviews.

Next Week:

- Publish the third post on Instagram on June 13
- Efforts for media outreach continues
- Work on the fourth post for June 27
- Complete the second blog for internal approval

Find the contact information of our client liaison below:

Rajvi Shukla
(437)991-4990
rshukl15@my.centennialcollege.ca

A sample of a weekly client update report sent to NSD



Project management

At the start of our execution of the communications plan, we made a [critical path](#), where we broke down tasks and assigned deadlines for each activity. This helped us to organize and keep a track of all required things needed to execute our campaign.

The team attended regularly scheduled meetings with NSD's Communications coordinator Emma Bluhm on Mondays for feedback and adjustments for the update report and campaign materials. These meetings were especially helpful to convey any new changes to our tactics or strategies and get them approved on the spot. This allowed us to be time-efficient and keep lines of communication open.

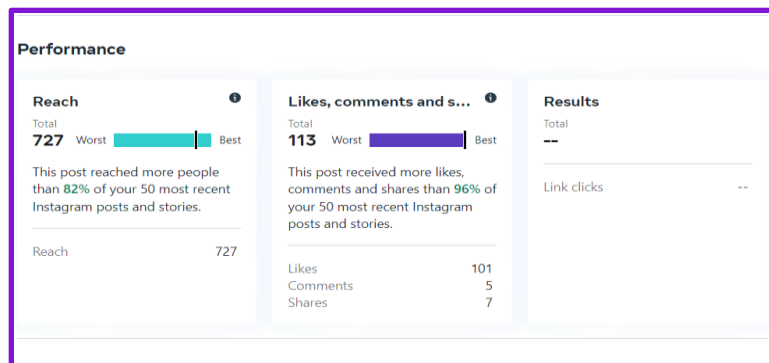
Every Friday, Storyworks instructor Laurie Hall guided and coached us regarding our communications plan and next steps for the week. We sent Laurie every deliverable for an initial evaluation and approval. After any needed adjustments or corrections were made, we submitted the materials for Emma to also provide input and executed another round of revisions if still required.

Results

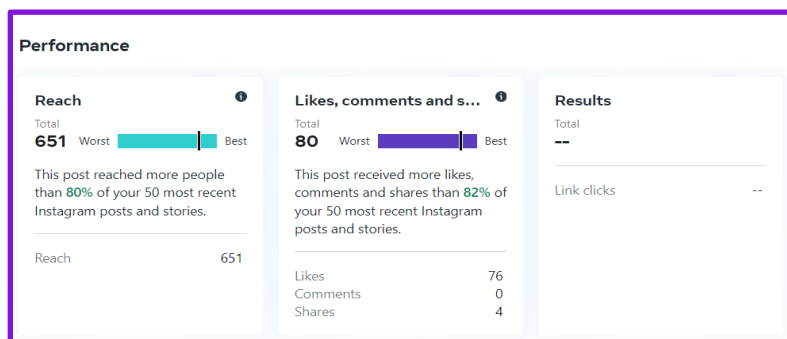
Social Media Engagement

As in any campaign, measuring the success of our efforts was essential for us. We received metrics data directly from the client's page and have made use of Facebook Analytics to evaluate the outreach and engagement for our campaign.

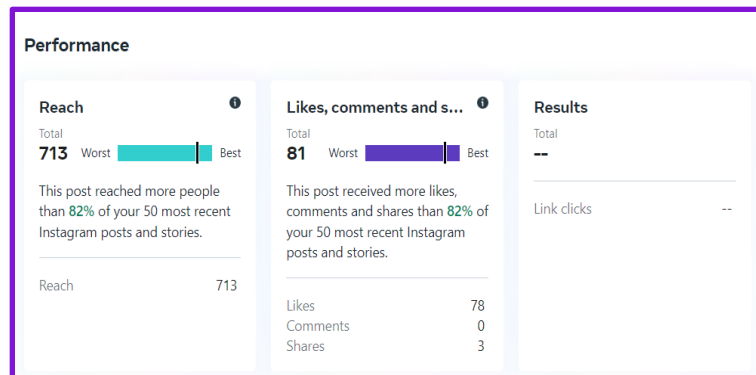
- Below is data for the Instagram post for NSD Fallon posted on June 6. We saw an increase of 82 per cent in reach and a 96 per cent increase in engagement compared to NSD's previous 50 most recent Instagram posts and stories, reaching 727 viewers and getting 101 likes.



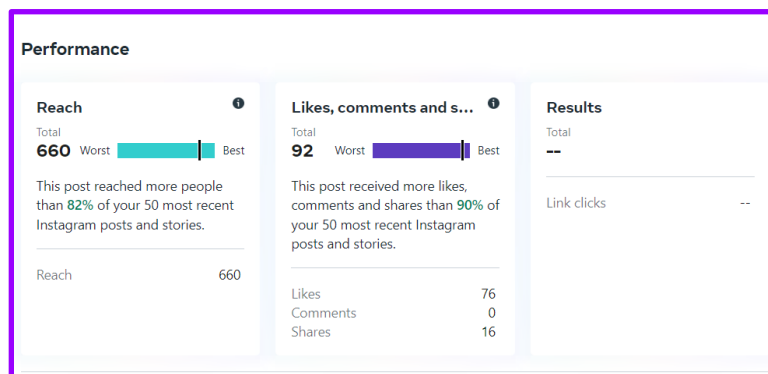
- Below is the data for the Instagram post for NSD Onix posted on June 13. It notes an increase of 80 per cent in reach and an 82 per cent increase in engagement compared to NSD's previous 50 most recent Instagram posts and stories, reaching 651 viewers and getting 76 likes.



- Below is data for the Instagram post for NSD Verbena posted on June 20. We saw an increase of 82 per cent in reach and an 82 per cent increase in engagement compared to NSD's previous 50 most recent Instagram posts and stories. It reached 713 people and got 78 likes.



- Below is the data for the Instagram post for NSD Forbes posted on June 27. We saw an increase of 80 per cent in reach and a 90 per cent increase in engagement compared to NSD's previous 50 most recent Instagram posts and stories. It reached 660 viewers and got 76 likes.



In conclusion, our social media campaign was successful, achieving a significant increase in engagement and reach on NSD's Instagram. We followed NSD's style guide and used their very visually appealing dog photos, which helped us with viewer engagement. In addition, we followed a pattern of consistent posting which also skews the algorithm to be favourable for us and boost the posts.

Increase in volunteers

As one of our primary objectives was an increase of volunteers, we measured success by comparing applications from June - the month of our campaign, with previous months. Based on the tabular data we received there was an effective increase in volunteers in June. The two-month streak of four applications was broken, and June is one of the top performing months regarding volunteer applications.

We wanted to further measure the number of applications after the TV appearance, but that data is not available yet, as July is still ongoing by the time we complete this report.

Jan	12
Feb	2
Mar	10
Apr	4
May	4
Jun	9


New NSD volunteers since January 2022. Official data from NSD

Conclusion

With our efforts following a defined timeline that culminated on a specific date, National PTSD Awareness Day, we were successful in planning and executing this semester-long collaboration with National Service Dogs. The campaign was closed on a high note with NSD Founder and Executive Director Danielle Forbes appearing on one of the highest rated morning shows in Southern Ontario.

We would like to acknowledge Emma Bluhm for her continued support throughout the campaign. Her excellent communication skills, timely feedback and replies to our queries for information regarding National Service Dogs were essential to the success of our campaign, especially considering that due to the pandemic, our collaboration was remote.

Initially, our objectives were to reach both potential donors and volunteers, but in a meeting with Emma, we learned that there were already other fundraising efforts by NSD underway, so



we adjusted our plan and strategies to focus on raising awareness of the work done by NSD to train dogs certified in helping people who experience PTSD and attracting volunteers. We believe this adjustment in our objectives improved our campaign, by allowing us to focus and having a more effective and unified message to the audience of potential volunteers.

Our process followed a strict timeline, with social media materials sent for approval on Fridays and edits/changes on the same day, to be posted by Emma on Mondays, the next work day. This circumstance sometimes presented a challenge, but in the end, this challenge became an opportunity for our team to put into practice time management skills, delivering our materials and edits on time. Having a defined critical path and a clear delegation of tasks also contributed to the success of our efforts, along with regular meetings and open communication channels between the team.

This was a very gratifying project for our team to work on, as National Service Dogs provides life-changing help for those that need the support of their Certified Service Dogs. We hope our collaboration has made a lasting positive impact and that in future Storyworks cohorts, other teams of students have the opportunity to work with NSD.

Our recommendations

Moving forward, we suggest that NSD's social media efforts could try focusing on running fewer simultaneous campaigns/initiatives and try a more sequential approach. This approach may promote better audience engagement and by having more separation time, create the opportunity to develop more "momentum" and lead-in time to the most important ones, eventually raising even more awareness and bringing more volunteers and donors.

A special thank-you

As a final note, we, as students working with a client on their first communications and public relations campaign, would like to thank Emma, for being a great client to work with, always helpful, timely and responsive to our inquiries. It was a pleasure working with you.