



Promoting Community Engagement and Activism in High School Students

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Introduction

Service learning has been shown to promote cultural and racial understanding and foster a sense of social responsibility amongst students¹. Additionally, social responsibility is an important facet of community engagement and vital to improving outcomes for marginalized and disenfranchised populations, such as unhoused individuals. Street Medicine Oakland (SMO), a student-run program that provides medical care to unhoused individuals, has partnered with Avondale High School to develop an educational series on homelessness in Oakland County. This project will provide opportunities for high school students to engage in discussions surrounding homelessness in Oakland County and participate in service with medical student leaders from the SMO organization.

Aims and Objectives

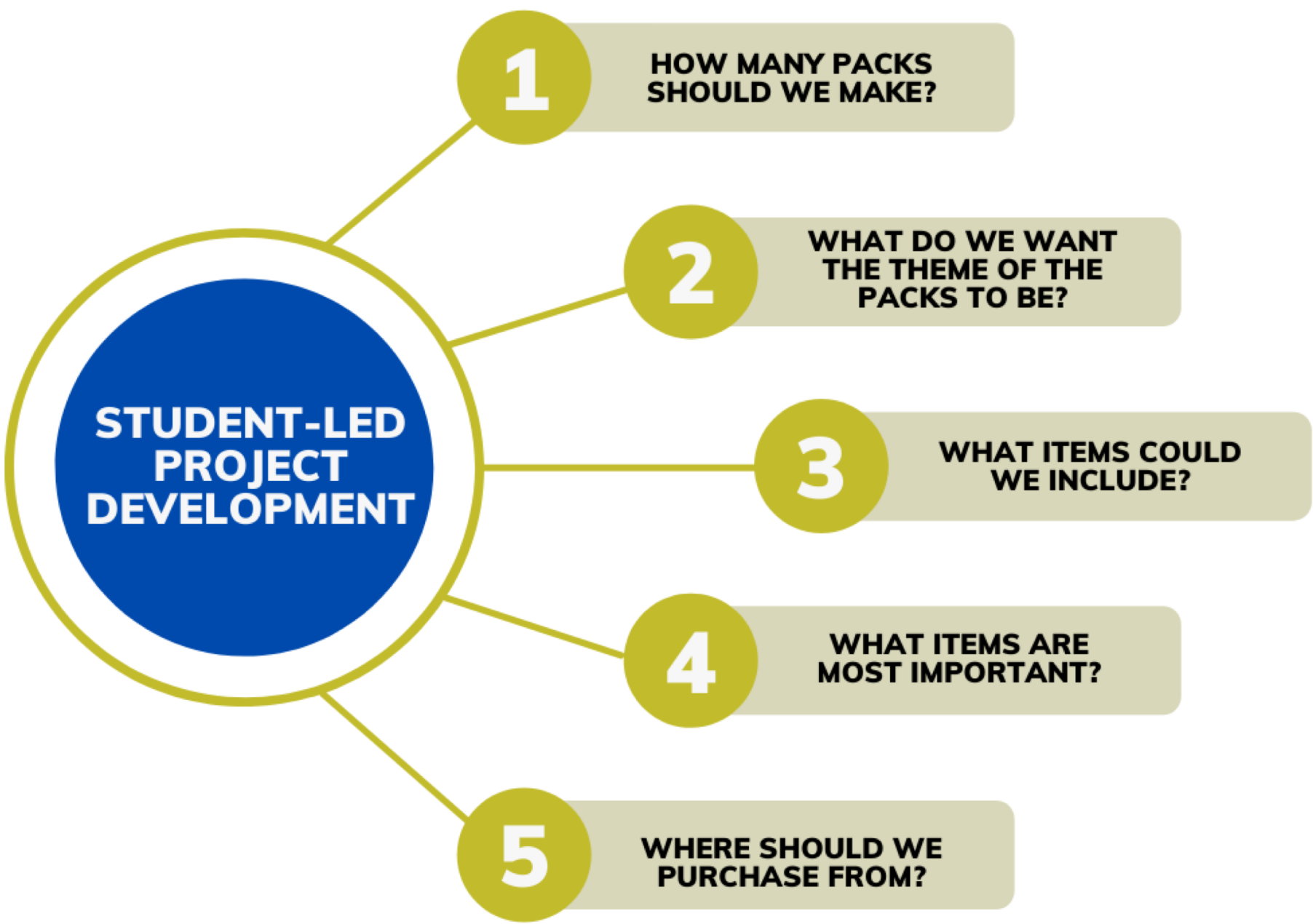
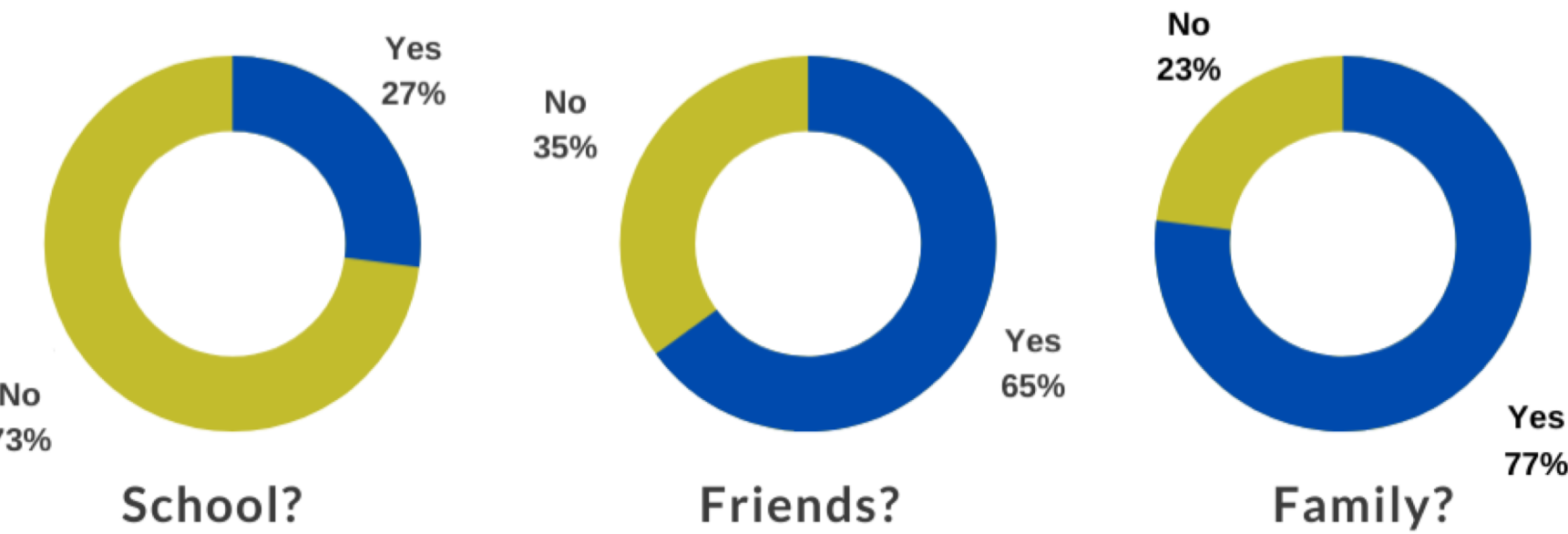
- To provide a model for **community engagement** and collaboration with students in secondary education institutions
- To **foster discussions** on homelessness and street medicine
- To collaborate with high school students as they **develop and execute a service project** to provide essential supply kits to patients seen at SMO outreach events

Approach/Process

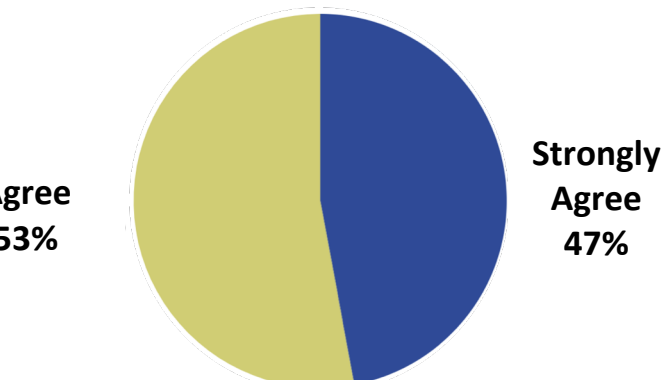
SMO hosted a series of interactive workshops to discuss the challenges faced by individuals experiencing poverty and homelessness, explain the importance of street medicine efforts, and create opportunities for students to actively engage in community service.

Workshop 1: Discussion on poverty and homelessness in Oakland County; student-led development of supply kit project (kit quantity, item list, and theme), and budget planning
Workshop 2: Medical student facilitated small group discussions about homelessness in addition to high school students’ interests and goals while making scarves for supply kits
Workshop 3: Packing of supply kits and large group discussion about the intrinsic value and importance of community engagement and the impact individuals can have

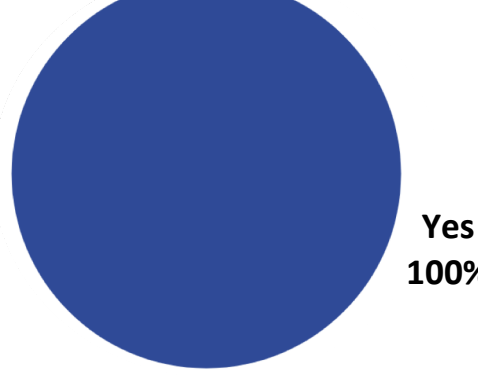
Have you talked about homelessness before with your...



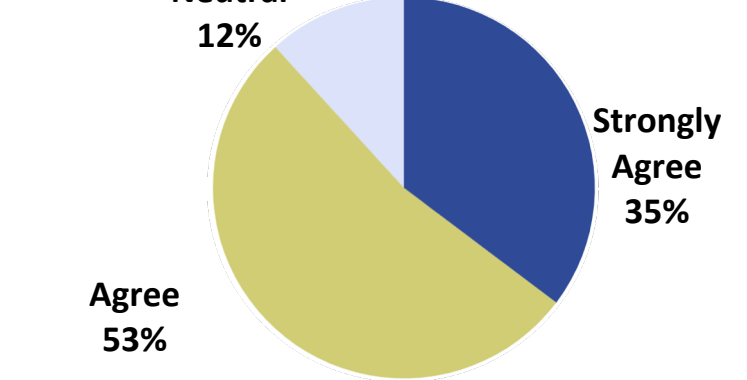
Learned about homelessness



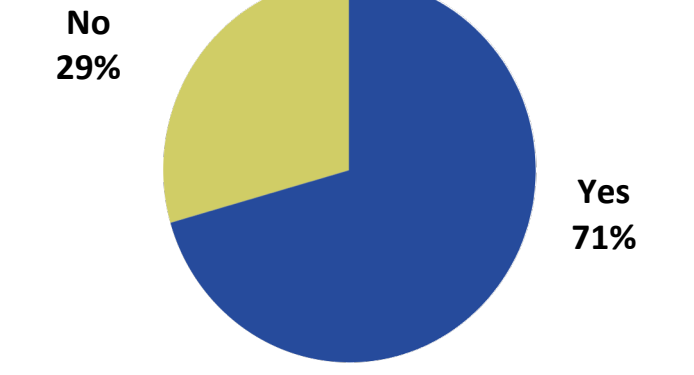
Would you like more workshops like these?



Learned how to organize service projects



Are you more likely to do a service project now?



The Avondale Kindness Kit:

- 25 packs valued at \$20 each
- Items identified as most important:
 - Underwear
 - Toothbrush/ Toothpaste
 - Reusable water bottle
 - Feminine hygiene products
 - Soap
 - Wipes
 - Deodorant
 - Socks

Evaluation Plan

Students will participate in polls to initiate conversations and gauge past exposure to these topics. Program effectiveness will be evaluated based on student feedback regarding the quality of the workshops and suggestions for future initiatives.

Expected Results

Following completion of these workshops and analysis of feedback, we expect that students will have learned about homelessness, the significance of street medicine, and the process of organizing service projects.

Discussion

By the end of the series, students will be better equipped to discuss homelessness with peers and community members. A more widespread implementation of this program will help students feel more empowered to take action and advocate for the community.

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References

¹ Buch, K., & Harden, S. (2011). The impact of a service-learning project on student awareness of homelessness, civic attitudes, and stereotypes toward the homeless. *Journal of Higher Education Outreach and Engagement*, 15(3), 45-61.

This project was reviewed by the Oakland University IRB: IRB-FY2022-321.