Chapel Hill Community Post

Combating the "infodemic"
& connecting neighbors
in a time of crisis

Situation

On 3/12, my little sister found out that the following day would be her last one at Chapel Hill High School for at least three weeks. Immediately after the school district released the notification, we noticed a surge of Nextdoor and Facebook posts…everything from vulnerable neighbors who were afraid to go out but needed groceries to students home & able to offer help, to neighbors directing each other to reliable local COVID-19 pages when misinformation started to spread.

She asked, "Why isn't there one place for all of this?" I replied, "Why don't we create one?"

Insight 1

Local info was *increasing preparation*, global and social updates were *increasing panic* and leading to the spread of misinformation.

Insight 2

People weren't taking breaks from 24/7 news unless there was a sufficient *distraction*.

Insight 3

Neighbors wanted to *come together to support* each other & their community.

Our Solution

...so we turned *helping each other* into the *distraction,*

focusing on local community members who were *needing or offering assistance,*

& compiling all relevant, reliable local and state *COVID-19 resources in one place*.

CHAPEL HILL
community
post

A community support site for the greater Chapel-Hill Carrboro area.
www.chcommunitypost.com

1. Compile local, reliable COVID-19 information

Prevent the spread of misinformation by making all relevant COVID-19 info easy to find.

2. Organize community member support initiatives

We were proud to be part of a community so eager to support each other & wanted that to be accessible for all.

3. Create a space for anyone to access or offer help

Make connecting with a neighbor simple enough that the process won't prevent anyone from reaching out.

Evolution

We realized that by only sharing on our socials, offering the site in English & accepting submissions online, we were likely missing a large segment of our community that was in need due to this crisis, so we tried to fix that with:
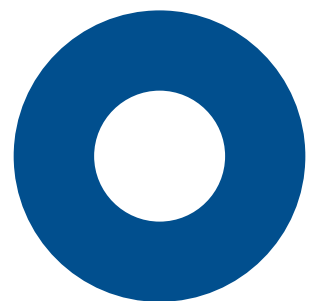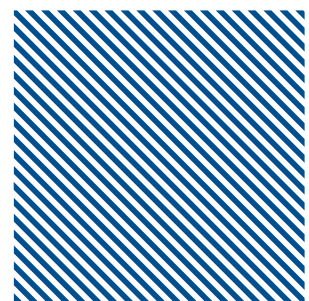
Submission Voicemail Line

With instructions in both English & Spanish so that internet access & language were not barriers to connecting with a neighbor for help

Website Translation & Bilingual Flyers

Enabled plugins to auto-translate from English into Spanish & Chinese based on user's default browser language

Promotion

Print

We put a few flyers up in areas still receiving foot traffic: *pharmacies, local businesses, and major bus shelters* as well as around nearby neighborhoods.

Digital

We utilized social media (mostly personal) by posting on *Nextdoor* & in local, relevant *Facebook groups*.

Earned

We decided to not pay for any online promotion, but were grateful for articles & *features by local media outlets & community builders* (pictured on the right).
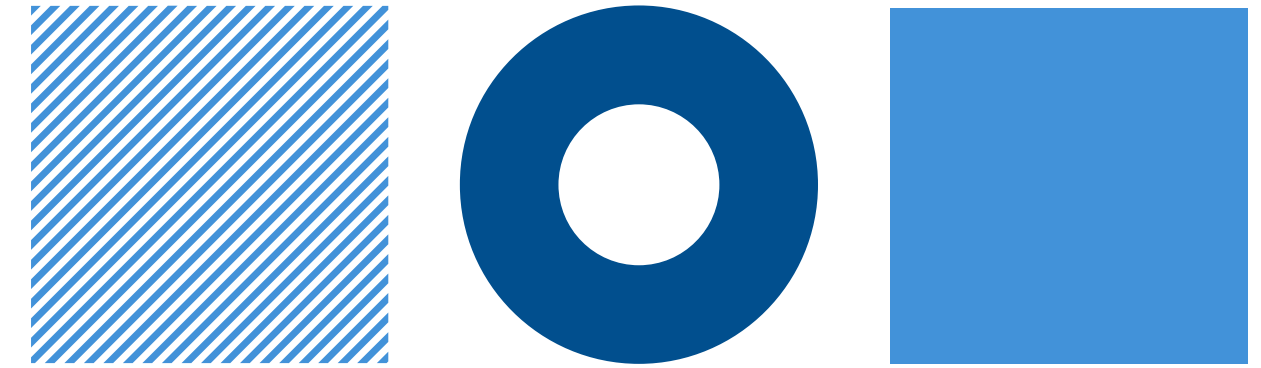
Outcome (so far)

Results since our March 13 launch

2,075+ users

unique visitors to Chapel Hill Community Post

6,800+ views

of posts & pages on the site

355+ connections

with a resource beyond our site, including 150+ clicks to donate to a local support initiative

Things that worked for us

Distracting from fear & anger unites a community

When we saw a spike in argumentative threads as tensions surrounding COVID-19 were rising, we reposted the site on Nextdoor to try to rekindle the compassionate spirit of our community & saw public apologies from people previously arguing, deciding to instead come together.

Keeping it local

The local aspect helped foster connection between neighbors, and this could easily work for any locality!

My dad showed our site to his former med school classmates in Brazil & we saw a similar site pop up there! I also discussed applying our framework to the Richmond area with some classmates at the VCU Brandcenter.
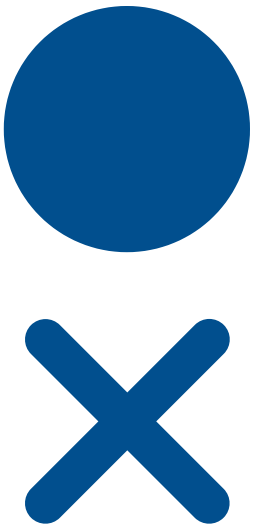
Check out the site!

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