North Penn Mansfield High School
Pennsylvania
2017-18

Partnership With Business Project
# Table of Contents

Description of Partnership ........................................................................................................ 2

Goals and Implementation ........................................................................................................... 3
  - Goals/Strategies to Benefit Members
  - Goals/Strategies to Benefit My Neighbors’ Closet

Responsibility Roles .................................................................................................................. 5

Planning and Development ........................................................................................................ 6

Implementation .......................................................................................................................... 7
  - Project Timeline

Publicity ........................................................................................................................................ 8

Benefits, Concepts and Impacts ................................................................................................. 12

Evaluation of project .................................................................................................................. 13
  - Goals Achieved
  - Student and Staff Feedback
Description of Partnership

This business plan details a partnership between the North Penn Mansfield High School’s Future Business Leaders of America (FBLA) chapter and My Neighbors’ Closet. My Neighbors’ Closet is a branch of Partners In Progress, an organization that provides job-skills training and employment for individuals with disabilities. My Neighbors’ Closet is a non-profit thrift store in the center of our small town. In addition to being a thrift shop, they also sell locally made goods including honey, chocolate, popcorn, and maple syrup.

We decided to pursue this partnership because we strongly support their mission: Teaching job skills and providing employment to individuals with disabilities in order to prepare them for the workforce. Their mission aligns with the FBLA mission, which is to “bring business and education together in a positive working relationship through innovative leadership and career development programs.”

The thrift store was facing a problem: A surplus of donations were piling up in a room in the back. The store just couldn’t keep up; their racks were full, they were understaffed, and items simply weren’t selling quick enough. We wanted to help them regain control of their overflow of inventory as well as create a way to shop online. Through the partnership we planned to use innovative leadership skills to improve the store’s sales, while learning how to run a non-profit.

Our chapter originally planned on only selling the store’s items on Mercari; a simple and safe online platform, that people can use to sell clothing, toys, and furniture. Quickly, we started to identify additional ways that we could help the store. Not only did we start selling their overstock of donations, but we also began volunteering in the store. We also started managing an Instagram account to help increase sales by marketing the store and its products, advertising great sales, and boosting publicity overall. The chapter was honored to be able to give back to a local organization that is committed to helping our community and the people who live here.
In order to truly have an impact, we began this project by establishing our goals. We brainstormed and came up with the following goals and corresponding plans to achieve them.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Goals to Benefit Members</th>
<th>Strategies used for Implementation</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Inform members about how a non-profit is operated</td>
<td>• Host guest speakers from My Neighbors’ Closet</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Take a field trip to My Neighbors’ Closet</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Teach students how to manage their own Mercari accounts</td>
<td>• Teach a workshop that includes photographing, pricing, and posting items</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Teach students to manage professional social media accounts</td>
<td>• Teach a workshop demonstrating how to take appropriate pictures to post</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Discuss what makes a caption professional</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Discuss what should and should not be posted</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Educate students and the community about the environmental and economic impact of clothing waste</td>
<td>• Create posters and infographics that highlight clothing waste and hang them in school/community</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Share clothing waste statistics on the school’s morning announcements</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Create “commercials” spreading the word about the store’s mission, sales, employees, and events</td>
<td>• Teaches members how to film and create commercials</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Teaches members how to work with professional individuals</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Creates publicity for the store with a YouTube channel</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Provide opportunities for students to volunteer in the local community by helping this community business with general daily maintenance tasks, like painting store windows</td>
<td>• Teaches members to give back to their community through community service</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Helps the staff at My Neighbors’ Closet by accomplishing small tasks</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
## Goals and Implementation

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Goals to Benefit My Neighbors’ Closet</th>
<th>Strategies used for implementation</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
| Sell Merchandise online              | • Pick items from the store and post them on Mercari  
|                                      | • Manage sales and shipping of items  
|                                      | • Return profits to My Neighbors’ closet |
| Create Marketing Materials           | • Create a usable logo  
|                                      | • Make advertisements for the store’s events and sales |
| Create Social Media Accounts         | • Create and manage a business Instagram account  
|                                      | • Create a YouTube account to publish the store commercials |
| Gain more volunteers for the store   | • Spread the word that My Neighbors’ Closet is looking for volunteers throughout the high school  
|                                      | • Students can help with tasks that the staff can’t get to in order to keep up with the growing amount of donations |
| Paint the store windows for the change of the seasons/holidays | • Students will go to the store at beginning of each season to create a seasonal/holiday window paint display- drawing attention to the store |
Responsibility Roles

It was important that we established clear guidelines between the roles of the business professionals and our chapter’s responsibilities.

Business Professionals

Rikki Schmelzle- Ms. Schmelzle is the store manager at My Neighbor’s Closet. Her role in the partnership is to communicate with members via phone call and email in order to set up dates for events. She also delivers clothing to the school for the Mercari account. She spoke at a meeting about the store’s mission and emphasized the importance of volunteering with the students. She helped us brainstorm ways that we could help the store as well as ways that the store could help us.

Chapter Members

Chapter members assisted in the partnership by creating marketing materials, posting and selling items from the store, and volunteering at My Neighbors’ Closet. Members worked to create a logo, business card, and Instagram advertisements to announce deals and events going on throughout the store. A group of FBLA members managed the store’s Mercari account. We decided on Mercari because it is user friendly, affordable, and makes shipping items easy. Management include sorting, photographing, posting, pricing, and selling items. Some members volunteered at the store and did community service work which including painting the store’s windows.

Social media post made by Cassie Brooks

Members posing after painting the windows for winter
Selecting a Partner

We selected My Neighbors’ Closet as a business partner because they are a small, locally operated non-profit that provides employment for individuals with disabilities. Additionally, this business also provides financial assistance to local families and/or organizations in need, such as our local food bank. All proceeds at My Neighbor’s Closet go back into the community. Rikki Schmelzle, the store manager, reached out to our chapter adviser and shared with her that the store was overflowing with donations. Although this may sound like a good problem to have, the store was understaffed and the items weren't selling quickly enough. A storage room in the back was piled up with mountains of clothes. We knew that collectively we had the knowledge and skills needed to help. We could help promote the store through social media, decorate the windows, and volunteer our time. This “problem” actually offered the perfect opportunity for our chapter to start a partnership. We would sell their items online in an effort to conquer the surplus of donations. However, the members of our chapter realized that we could do more than just sell their clothes online. We ultimately partnered with them because we wanted to assist them in return for all they do for our community.
Implementation

To keep the project on track and accomplish all of our goals, we knew we needed to create a timeline for our project.

September
- 9/6- First meeting with Rikki to discuss a Partnership
- 9/26- Start store Instagram account
- 9/30- Paint store windows for fall

October
- 10/1- Start listing items on Mercari

November
- 11/9- Rikki is speaking to the class about volunteering
- 11/21- Paint store windows for winter
- 11/25- Small Business Saturday

December
- 1-15- Food drive and Chinese basket raffle (benefits food bank)

January
- 1/9- Publicize (in the school) the issues of clothing waste with an infographic
- 1/16- Spread awareness (in the school) that people with disabilities can be part of the workforce using posters

February
- 2/6- Teach a workshop on posting items online
- 2/13- Teach a workshop on running professional social media

March
- 3/20- Paint store windows for spring

April
- 5/25-Give a “thank you” gift to My Neighbors’ Closet
Publicity

**Business Cards**

We created a new business card for My Neighbors’ Closet that included a clear logo and marketed their Facebook, Mercari, and Instagram accounts. The card is simple, bright, and professional, and includes the smiling face of an employee named Jeremy.

![Business Card Image]

**Custom Thank You Tag**

We created a tag to include in our packaging for online sales. The tag includes the business card on one side and a custom “thank you” on the other side.

![Thank You Tag Image]
Publicity

Mercari

We created a Mercari account as a platform to sell the store’s clothing online. The great thing about the site is that it advertises our items for us. We post the items to a category such as “women” than the item will come up on potential customer’s screens when they search in the category. This is a nice feature because it allows our items to reach people anywhere in the world! However, we needed a way to allow locals to access our account, so we posted a link on our Instagram and spread the word by advertising the account on our business cards.

Instagram

We were brainstorming ways to gain store publicity and we quickly realized that the store didn’t have an Instagram. Instagram has around 800 million users, so we decided to create a profile. This was a great way to advertise sales and events such as the annual Chinese basket raffle that benefits our local food bank. Instagram allowed us to spread the word quickly and efficiently.
Publicity

**Facebook**

Although My Neighbors’ Closet already manage their own Facebook account, we had our principal create post using our school’s Facebook account to spread the word about the partnership. The page has 1,312 follower, so we felt this was a great way to spread the word to community members. Since the community members are the store’s most frequent shoppers, it was important that they could have access to the online account.

**Local Publicity**

We did an interview with *Bigfoot County*, a local radio station. We discussed our partnership and the impact it has had on both our members and the store. Additionally, the partnership was covered our story in the local *Tioga Publishing* newspaper.
School Publicity

In order to maximize the project’s impact we had to get the student body involved. We hung posters and infographics in the halls that spread word about our partnership and the store’s mission. FBLA members also organized and ran a three-day student workshop. Participants learned how to manage professional Instagram and Mercari accounts.

Two examples of the ways we promoted the store’s mission to our student body
Many of the North Penn Mansfield FBLA members were impacted by the 2017-2018 partnership with a business project, but the project went deeper than just impacting our members. We created a partnership that benefited and impacted the community we call home. We were able to help a business whose work often went unnoticed and learned the importance of volunteering. This partnership allowed members to learn and experience how a non-profit is run. One student said she, “...I loved the people that you help and their face of amazement when you accomplish something. “The partnership opened our members’ eyes about how one small business can impact a community in a big way. We now have a greater appreciation for all of the work done by My Neighbors’ Closet.

Both the store and the staff at My Neighbors’ Closet were impacted by the work of our chapter members. As of May 1st, we had over 120 items posted for sale and the number of Instagram followers is increasing by the day. The store’s window fronts have proven to be a huge hit that all of the customers and staff appreciate. The back storage room has slowly but surely made improvements on getting organized. The store manager said, “By creating an account for the store it potentially reached people that would not have otherwise known about the store, what we do, and who we serve.” Overall we were happy to benefit not only the chapter during this partnership, but our partner as well.

Students volunteered by sorting clothes and painting windows.
We met all of our previously set goals. However, if we were to do this again in the future we would try selling on Ebay to reach a larger market, and we would create a store Snapchat to gain store publicity. Our chapter is proud of all that we have accomplished so far and can’t wait to see what the future of this partnership holds.

**Goals Achieved**

- **Teach students to manage a Mercari account**
  - There are currently 130 items photographed and posted

- **Sell merchandise online**
  - A Mercari account has successfully been created and sales have been made

- **Teach students to manage professional social media accounts**
  - We have maintained a professional account by posting sales, milestones, and event

- **Provide opportunities for students to volunteer within the community**
  - Students have decorated the store’s windows for fall and winter

- **Create Marketing Materials**
  - All of the marketing materials throughout this report were created by chapter members

- **Successfully manage student workshops**
  - All of our participants learned valuable social media skills that they can apply to life
Evaluation of Project

We reached out to both members and the My Neighbors’ Closet staff to ask how the partnership has impacted them. All of the people that were involved in the project were very satisfied, and they enjoyed being part of the partnership.

“It has **impacted** me by making me appreciate all that My Neighbors’ Closet does for the community. I was happy to help paint the store’s windows and I **felt good about helping** a place that helps people so much.”

-Sierra Farrington

“I **learned** a lot about the role in the community that My Neighbor’s Closet plays; I really like how My Neighbors Closet is meant to **help** people who are struggling or have been through some sort of tragedy like a house fire.”

-Lexa Brown

“My Neighbors' Closet has taught me that **no matter how different people are, they are capable of** achieving things within their community.

–Lexa Brown

“I feel **inspired** to get more **involved** with my community, and I am definitely very interested in **volunteering** at My Neighbors Closet sometime in the near future!”