

Running Head: COMMUNITY ENGAGED

Community Engaged Work Towards Equal Opportunity

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Colorado is a state known for its breathtaking landscapes. Incomprehensibly, a state that attracts people from around the world into the great outdoors, sometimes has trouble getting native Coloradoan's immersed in the natural beauty that defines this state. Growing up in Colorado myself, I was surprised to hear that communities right here in the Denver Metro Area lack a relationship with the nature that surrounds them. These communities all face different specific barriers that complicate their ability to take advantage of our natural resources. These specific barriers include, financial hardships, transportation to the outdoors, and lack of safe outdoor spaces. All these barriers combine to diminish the opportunities all Coloradoan's should have to explore their backyard.

The mission of Great Outdoors Colorado (GOCO) is to remove these barriers in order to re-create an equity of opportunity for all Coloradoan's. This organization hopes to help facilitate relationships between Coloradoan's and nature. GOCO has three primary goals. First, "protect more urban and rural land for people and wildlife, notably once-in-a-lifetime, large-scale projects," second, "connect people to the outdoors by increasing bike and pedestrian access in communities across Colorado and filling gaps in important trail systems," and third, "inspire more kids and their families to explore and take care of our great outdoors by addressing the growing disconnect between youth and nature" (GOCO). To follow through with these goals, The Inspire Initiative was born. The Inspire Initiative provides grant money to communities in need. Metro DNA's mission is to help transform, "within one generation, the Metro Denver area into a thriving place for both people and nature" (GOCO). GOCO next step is to share the stories of the impact the grant money has had on these Inspire Communities.

To truly understand this campaign, it is important to be aware of the rhetorical situation. Both the University of Denver and GOCO are members of the Metro Denver Nature Alliance (Metro DNA). This is a network that includes multiple organizations striving towards a common goal. The mission of Metro DNA is, "to address the growing disconnect between youth and nature" (GOCO). Through Metro DNA, our writing class partnered with GOCO to share the Inspire Initiative to embody the goals included in the DU Impact 2025 mission. The mission of DU Impact 2025 is for University of Denver to become, "an anchor institution dedicated to the public good, we will collaborate and innovate as we become one with our community. And we will accelerate the ways research can be used to address society's most pressing problems" (Chopp). For this campaign we are focused not only on DU Impact 2025's mission, but also on GOCO's third goal, to inspire community members through re-connecting them with nature. We are trying to convey GOCO's impact on the Longmont Inspire Initiative (LII). The mission of the LII is to, "Engage Latino communities in nature-based experiences that are integrated into children's lives from birth to adulthood through outdoor experiences, neighborhood restoration and improvement projects, participation in city-wide restoration efforts after the 2013 floods, and leadership programs" (Environment For The Americas). Our audience for this campaign includes two different groups: the first, local Coloradoan's; the second, other states. For both audiences we are looking to inform them about how lottery money is re-invested in Colorado. Our hope is that; local Coloradoan's will have a better understanding of the positive impact lottery money has on our state. Other states may use our story telling campaign as a framework to do their own. Our goal is simple, to educate through sharing stories.

For this campaign we were given a narrative story format as the genre. These narrative stories will be featured on GOCO's Facebook page, a "Story Map" on GOCO's website and also

on the future Metro DNA website. These will bring the facts of the Inspire Initiatives, back to the real world. The guidelines for these narratives was simple, share the narrative of a youth ambassador, in 900 characters or less. It was after our twenty-minute interview with youth ambassador Jonathan Carrillo Castro that we discovered the true challenge within the guidelines. Our challenge was conforming to the 900-character limit for the narrative, while still embodying Jonathan's whole story and impact that LII has had on him and his community. It became imperative for us to provide both the big picture and include lasting details, all while remembering the context for our story telling and rhetorical situation.

To manage all this, we started by identifying key themes. We chose the theme of leadership and community building. Throughout the interview Jonathan mentioned numerous times how LII has equipped him with tools to become a leader in his community. As our story stated: "By participating in these nature activities, Jonathan has discovered his strong leadership skills, and these skills have made him a positive role model for the kids." The second key theme we focused on conveying throughout the message was the impact LII has had on building up the community in Longmont. The best way to convey this was through an example. So, we included, "Reflecting on his experience with Longmont Inspire, Jonathan emphasized his gratitude towards this organization for creating a close knit community. Jonathan recalled a recent snowshoeing adventure in Keystone where the Inspire community truly came together to face this new challenge." The 900-character count is limiting. We had to be very precise with our language. Word choices like, participating, strong, positive, emphasized, etc. helped portray the positive change LII has facilitated. Unfortunately, the 900-character count limit also inhibited us. Jonathan's experience snowshoeing had many interesting details that would have added depth to the narrative. Yet, this limit forced us to sacrifice further details of his story in order to add in all the other necessary components.

We made decisions enabling us to integrate logos, pathos, and ethos. We employ logos at the beginning of the narrative. The narrative states: "Longmont Inspire has created opportunities for Longmont locals to experience the beautiful nature around them." We researched LII in order to understand their mission statement. Then, we condensed it and restated it in our own words. We chose to be direct with this information, providing only the facts. Longmont Inspires mission statement includes more goals than we cover in the narrative. As the 900-count is limiting, we only included the information that would best set our story up. To gain pathos, we included Jonathan's personal experience with LII. By describing his growth, and his gratitude, our hope is that our audience will feel the impact LII has had on the community. Finally, we gain ethos by how our campaign is displayed. It is displayed on GOCO's website. This placement, builds our credibility even before our audience has read Jonathan's story. We maintain our integrity throughout the story by maintaining a narrow focus including what is true to the mission title of the, Longmont Inspire Initiative.

The best decisions our group made for this narrative was finishing with foreshadowing. Our last sentence states: "Jonathan looks forward to creating more great memories and continuing to build relationships while exploring the great outdoors." Our hope, is that finishing with a future oriented sentence will leave our audience with the understanding that this is just the beginning for this program, and that the members of this initiative are optimistic towards the potential the future holds for the growth of this program.

Partaking in this project, became a perfect opportunity to follow through with the goals laid out in University of Denver's, DU Impact 2025. DU Impact 2025 is a phenomenal outreach by the University of Denver and one that motivates our university community. Community

engaged work requires planning and focus. In order for us to complete our assignment, it was necessary that we engage with the Inspire Communities. We encountered many road blocks. One of the road blocks we encountered was scheduling. We were not able to have a majority of our group available for the interview with the youth ambassador. Both the Youth Ambassador and the members of my group have hectic schedules. Which further complicated our ability to meet with him. In the end, only two members from our group were able to meet with Jonathan.

Works Cited

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