

Love Out Loud Campaign:  
The Use of Public Relations in a Suicide Prevention Program

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### Abstract

Each year at Cal Poly, the student community loses at least one student to suicide; many more suffer from depression and its effects. The students who started the Love Out Loud Campaign saw a need for awareness about the aforementioned topics. The campaign raises awareness about depression and its effects, as well as attempts to change the stigma associated with the issue. This paper addresses the need for student initiated suicide prevention campaigns on college campuses, as well as the ways in which the field of public relations can be utilized in said campaigns. The importance of depression awareness is addressed, as well as issues that arise with sensitive subjects such as suicide. There is a focus on two-way communication and addressing tough situations in a positive manner.

## TABLE OF CONTENTS

CHAPTER	PAGE
<b>I. Introduction.....</b>	<b>1</b>
<b>II. Literature Review .....</b>	<b>5</b>
Need For Public Relations .....	5
Public Relations Prevention Programs.....	5
Awareness Through Public Relations.....	7
<b>III. Methodology .....</b>	<b>9</b>
<b>IV. Data .....</b>	<b>11</b>
Public Relations Action Plan .....	11
Tactics and Tools .....	12
Communication with Publics.....	14
<b>V. Discussion.....</b>	<b>16</b>
Summary .....	16
Findings.....	17
Conclusions.....	18

## LIST OF TABLES

TABLE	PAGE
I. Exit Survey Results.....	15

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## LIST OF FIGURES

FIGURE	PAGE
1. Facebook Page Screen Shot .....	23
2. Website Screen Shot .....	23
3. Campaign Sticker .....	24
4. Black and White Posters .....	24
a. Depression Statistics .....	24
b. Kevin Hines .....	25
5. Promotional Cards .....	25
6. Poster.....	26
7. Press Release.....	27
8. Photo Booth .....	28
a. Photo Booth E-mail.....	28
b. Sample Photo Booth Photos .....	28
9. Gantt Chart.....	29
10. Initial Logo.....	29
11. Facebook Data .....	30
a. Demographics .....	30
b. Users .....	30



	c. Story Feedback.....	31
	d. Media Consumption.....	31
12.	Website Statistics .....	32
13.	Event Attendees .....	32

## Chapter I: Introduction

According to The American College Health Association, 1,088 students die from suicide each year (as cited in Freeman, 2011). At Cal Poly alone, we experience at least one student suicide per year. These suicides are generally not reported on due to the ethical responsibilities of journalists in regards to death, especially suicide. However, it is the belief of the women behind the Love Out Loud Campaign that with statistics ranking suicide as the second leading cause of death for students between the ages of 15 and 24 (Rouse, 2011), these issues cannot be ignored. In fact, with statistics from the Suicide Prevention Resource Center that state that one in five college students suffers from clinical depression (as cited by Rouse, 2011), the issues of depression, self-harm, and suicide touch each and every college student. Fortunately, the subjects of depression, self-harm, and suicide do not need to be addressed negatively, nor associated with any sort of stigma. Regrettably, many college campuses throughout the United States have not taken the opportunity to address these issues by acknowledging their seriousness while still giving hopeful and supportive outlets of communication. The public relations campaign for the Love Out Loud aims to do just that.

Depression is caused by many different factors including, but not limited to, family history, school stress, fights with friends, or issues with relationships. Depression can also be situational and last for a few weeks, or can be clinical and last for months to years. People who suffer from depression are much more likely to think about or attempt suicide than those who are not depressed (Westefeld, et al, 2006). There are many different methods to treating and preventing suicide including medication and therapy. Sometimes, even activities such as yoga, sports, or reading can help pull somebody out of a deep depression. However, many suicidologists and university authority figures, including Gary Pavela of the University o

Maryland, have determined that one of the most important treatment methods for college age students is having caring friends or support groups of their peers (as cited in Hoover, 2006).

Cami Rouse from Transitions Mental Health explains that this method of peer support breaks down, however, at one of its fundamental building blocks – student's aren't aware of the signs of depression, or how to get help once they have determined the need. Also, even when they know the signs and where to get help, the social stigma associated with depression and mental health is enough to prevent students from going in and getting help from either their friends, a resident advisor, or a school counselor. In order to change these negative views of depression and mental illness, the Love Out Loud Campaign employs the diffusion of innovations theory, developed by Everett Rogers, which suggests "change can be promoted rather easily in a social system through a domino effect" (Orr, 2003).

As addressed upon in many public relations classes and textbooks, public relations manages crisis communication by developing a plan before the issue in concern even reaches the crisis stage. Public relations practitioners are trained and expected to have action plans intact with that expectation that if something does go awry, the practitioner will know how to handle it and keep everybody in the organization as well as its publics calm, relaxed, and informed of the situation. Because the campaign is starting a public relations plan from scratch and is dealing with such tough and provocative subjects, it is essential to develop a plan that is appropriate and as un-offensive as possible.

The Love Out Loud Campaign is a campaign that was started by six Cal Poly seniors and reaches out to the Cal Poly campus and surrounding community. The aim of the Love Out Loud Campaign is to raise awareness about the depression, self-harm, and suicide that affects college students. The campaign encourages communication and creative self-expression as a means of

spreading hope and love to those suffering from the aforementioned topics. In 2010, six Cal Poly students who all have personal connections to the issues at hand started the Love Out Loud Campaign. The original six founders of the campaign wished to share their experiences and stories with other Cal Poly students in an attempt to erase the stigma associated with depression, as well as encourage students who are suffering from depression themselves or may have friends suffering from depression to communicate and help each other in times when they feel they are at their lowest.

Due to the infancy of the campaign, everything from establishing the name of the campaign to raising money and spreading word about its existence had to come from the six women who started it. Although there are similar campaigns that support the same type of awareness, Love Out Loud – at least in its early life – caters specifically to students in the San Luis Obispo area; especially at Cal Poly. The campaign is based off of the national movement To Write Love On Her Arms and has adopted many of its publicity tactics such as a quality and easily navigated website, as well as a Facebook page that is updated consistently. The main goal of the early months of the Love Out Loud Campaign is to raise awareness of the existence of the campaign and make the campaign name, logo, and mission recognizable to Cal Poly students.

Because the Love Out Loud Campaign was started with little to no money beyond minimal donations from friends, family, and some Cal Poly departments, every method of publicity and advertising had to be done in a very cost effective way. Although suicide prevention campaigns tend to be relatively expensive, the cost of establishing the campaign was not nearly as much as the benefits of having one set up on campus. The women who started the campaign perceived a need for awareness about depression and its effects through their own personal experiences and were not influenced greatly by the overwhelming cost-benefit analysis

of suicide prevention campaigns such as the one presented by Sari et al.'s investigation into the socio-economic benefits of suicide prevention campaigns (2008). In order to raise awareness about the campaign and the topics it addresses, the women of Love Out Loud decided a sort of variety show would be a good way to encourage people to address and communicate about serious issues, as well as keeping them entertained and happy at the same time. The public relations done for the event would not only raise awareness about the performers and vendors at the event, but it would also spark people's interest in the Love Out Loud Campaign as a whole. Publicity for the show is publicity for the campaign and vice-a-versa. The event will be highly publicized through the spread of flyers, Facebook events, posters, photo booths, and word of mouth. The event will showcase speakers, poets, dancers, and other performers who have close connections to the issues addressed in the campaign.

Although operating on little to no budget is unfavorable and tough to work with, one of the important things to remember about public relations plans and campaigns is that they don't need to use a lot of money in order to succeed (Smith, 2009, p. 265). With modern technology and social media sites such as Facebook and Twitter, print media does not need to be relied upon as heavily as before said media outlets. By implementing the use of online media outlets, as well as utilizing connections made through departments such as Graphic Arts and Journalism, different public relations tactics are modified in order to "keep the original plan intact and still meet the budget" (Smith, 2009, p. 265). Through the use of diffusion theory, word of mouth, and as much mass media as freely possible, the Love Out Loud Campaign hopes to reach many students throughout the Cal Poly campus and get them talking about mental health issues as a means of staying mentally healthy.

## Chapter II: Literature Review

### *Need for Public Relations*

The use of research-based public relations in non-profit campaigns is vital to the survival of the organization as well as to reaching its publics in a productive manner. According to Austin (2009), it “enables managers to solve complex problems, set and achieve or exceed goals and objectives, track the opinions and beliefs of key publics, and employ program strategies with confidence that they will have the intended results” and allows the organization to do so in a relatively low cost way (p. 2). More than that, public relations allows for non-profits to create lasting relationships with their publics and to prepare for and manage crisis situations in a productive way (Smith, 2009, p. 151).

Public relations implements a method of two-way communication in which the organization receives information from and delivers information to its various publics (Bobbitt, 2009, 2). By utilizing public relations campaigns, non-profits regarding medical conditions are able to educate their publics on the various effects and warning signs of the illness, as well as various prevention methods and behavioral changes (Bobbitt, 2009, p. 141).

### *Public Relations Prevention Programs*

Different universities throughout the United States have already started imparting awareness campaigns about suicide prevention during times of high stress for their students. Many suicidologists, counselors, and medical journalists believe that a major issue regarding suicide prevention is that students do not know how to spot depression and suicidal tendencies in their peers (Strader, 2008). These campaigns, however, cannot stem from nowhere, nor can they simply present information without engaging their students. There are three different stages that

suicide awareness and prevention campaigns should take (King, 2001). Suicide awareness campaigns must begin at a basic prevention level and, when prevention methods fail, must extend and help those affected by suicide. The campaign must be maintained – there is a “need for permanent depression awareness action” (Dietrich et al., 2009).

The first stage is called primary prevention and aims to raise awareness throughout the campus about “suicide warning signs, risk factors, and referral steps” (King, 2001). This stage must be implemented before there is an immediate threat of suicide. A large portion of primary prevention and spreading awareness is erasing the stigma associated with depression and mental health issues (Clemmitt, 2009). These primary prevention programs can also include ‘therapeutic breaks’ that include shoulder and back massages during final examination weeks; workshops on consequences of sleep deprivation, stress management, respectful relationships, and responsible drinking” (Lamberg, 2006, *Fostering a Caring Community*, para. 1). This is where schools can develop support programs conducted by other students in the community. These programs lead to an “increase in students knowledge about warning signs and help resources, as well as greater likelihood to refer at-risk peers to counselors” (King, 2001, *Primary Prevention*, para. 1).

Secondary prevention is the second stage of the suicide prevention campaign and must be implemented when there is an immediate threat of danger – in this case, suicide (King, 2001). This stage, considered the crisis stage (King, 2001), is when the public relations director must step in and implement crisis communication. At this point, there must already be a crisis communication plan in place that would include controlling the way in which the media gets involved and promoting communication about the subject. Secondary prevention can be helpful not only to the person who attempts to commit suicide, but also to those they are close with including family, friends, and fellow students.

Finally, the third step is tertiary prevention or “postvention” – the recovery stage of a suicide or attempted suicide (King, 2001). This stage occurs either when there is a failed suicide attempt and the person in question is recovering from their actions, or when there is a successful suicide and the impacted community is dealing with the remaining effects (King, 2001). Helping survivors of the deceased to move on from the question of why the student committed suicide can pre-vent them from feeling trapped in their grief (Westefeld et al., 2006). According to Petretic-Jackson et al., overall, postvention programs are vital to campus communities because they can help in preventing copycat suicides, returning affected campus members to pre-suicide levels of functioning, and providing models of how to regroup after a significant tragedy (cited in Westefeld et al., 2006).

#### *Awareness Through Public Relations*

Many suicidologists agree that more should be done in regards to raising awareness about suicide prevention methods on college campuses and informing students about the warning signs of depression and suicidal thoughts (Schute, 2007). Furthermore, raising awareness through public relations campaigns is a strong step in terms of increasing awareness and reducing the stigma associated with depression in college students (Westefeld, et al, 2006). When figuring out how to raise awareness about suicide prevention, the public relations specialist must choose a strategy on which to base the awareness campaign. According to Donatelle (2009) an appropriate strategy is the Health Belief Model (HBM) that explains how perceptions and beliefs affect a person’s willingness to change their mentality or actions (p. 19). This model implements these three stages that must be addressed before noting any sort of



change:

1. Perceived seriousness of the health problem – how severe the implications of the health problem would be if the problem went untreated
2. Perceived susceptibility to the health problem – what is the likelihood of developing or being affected by the health problem
3. Cues to action – reminders or alerts about the potential health problem

The HBM helps explain the ideas that people associate with depression and suicide, as well as with the stigma associated with taking the step to personally get help or to assist a friend in getting the correct type of support – whether that be counseling, medication, or yoga.

The HBM includes different factors that a person considers when changing attitudes and actions including: how severe the health problem will become if one does not seek help, the “likelihood of developing the health problem,” and how often they are reminded of the health problem and offered solutions of said health problem (Donatelle, 2009, p. 20).

Once the public relations strategy has been established, the next step is to evaluate theories and tactics. In the case of the Love Out Loud Campaign, the theory that is most relevant is Diffusion Theory. This theory addresses how information is spread throughout a community and by what means it travels fastest and is most effective. According to Smith (2009), “people who are quick to try new ideas or products are influential with latecomers to the innovation” (p. 55). In order for the Love Out Loud Campaign to be effective in its mission, it must follow the diffusion of innovation theory’s five steps in order for the correct publics to acquire and adopt the ideas presented. According to Orr (2003), those five steps are as follows:

1. Knowledge – person becomes aware of an innovation and has some idea of how it functions

2. Persuasion – person forms a favorable or unfavorable attitude toward the innovation
3. Decision – person engages in activities that lead to a choice to adopt or reject the innovation
4. Implementation – person puts an innovation into use
5. Confirmation – person evaluates the results of an innovation-decision already made.

### Chapter III: Methodology

The Love Out Loud Campaign is a brand new movement that means that spreading the name and nature of the campaign is imperative to its survival. In order to do so, the members of the campaign must develop different ways of reaching out to the Love Out Loud publics. Although the campaign will continue to grow over the next few years, the initial reach of information is imperative to the success and survival of the campaign. Because the main goal of the campaign at this point in time is to raise awareness about the existence of a campaign such as Love Out Loud, the board of directors must turn to data sources such as Facebook as a means of finding out how many people are aware of the campaign. Also, the audience members at the big event the Love Out Loud Campaign is hosting in February will provide a good source of data in order to determine the spread of information in regards to the topics addressed by the campaign.

By looking at the numbers and demographics of the people who “like” the Love Out Loud Campaign on Facebook, we can curb our campaign in order to cater to their needs. The people who are fans of the Love Out Loud Campaign Facebook page are likely to be more aware of the nature of the campaign, as well as different events taking place in order to promote it. Facebook provides an easy way of viewing information such as how many people like the page, an age and gender breakdown of fans, how many comments have been left, etc. This tool is

called “Insights” and is available only to the administrators of the page. There will also be a few events targeted towards awareness through Facebook.

The event will also have exit surveys put together by our graphic communication directors. Because we know that it is important to let the audience experience the event for themselves rather than feeling like they are being studied and recorded for a research project, we do not want to provide more than one survey for the attendees to fill out. Although each board member would like to develop a survey with her own questions in order to fulfill her senior project requirements, this is simply not reasonable. The survey that will be at the event will be put together by the graphic design directors, but will also have questions that will cater to the public relations aspects of the campaign. The survey will have questions including the following:

- Are you a Cal Poly student?
- Which gender are you?
- Which year are you?
- How did you hear about Love Out Loud?
- Have you seen the Love Out Loud website?
- Have you seen the awareness video?
- Have you seen the Facebook profile page?
- Have you seen any Love Out Loud profile pictures?

As previously stated, the data collected via Facebook and from the surveys at the Love Out Loud Show will be used in order to improve the campaign as a whole, as well as events in the future. By utilizing the tools available on Facebook, Love Out Loud can address issues important to its participants. The Love Out Loud Campaign is still in the start-up phase that

encourages and requires growth and evolution. The data collected from Facebook and exit surveys will be invaluable to the development of the campaign as a whole.

Unfortunately, because of the nature of the campaign and the tools available to the students running the campaign, there are certain delimitations to the reach of the campaign and the data collected from different sources. One of the most important limitations to the campaign at this stage is that all the students working on the campaign are Liberal Arts students. This means that their ability to reach other colleges and majors is rather limited. Not everybody has a Facebook and Facebook is oversaturated with information and event invitations which means that people are less likely to respond to or even read the invitations sent to them. Other limitations include time for planning, monetary restrictions, as well as restrictions in place by Cal Poly in regards to how an event can be set up, where, how many people can attend, and who can attend events on campus.

## Chapter IV: Data

### *Public Relations Action Plan*

The main strategy of the Love Out Loud Campaign at its current stage is centered around raising awareness about and encouraging people to attend the Love Out Loud Show on February 26, 2011. The show will begin at 6:30 p.m. and will consist of speaker Kevin Hines, who jumped off the Golden Gate Bridge and survived with full mobility, as well as the bands Lakes, The Honey Trees, and The Ragged Jubilee. In addition, the show includes acts by Cal Poly students in Smile and Nod, poets, speakers, and dancers. There will also be an awareness fair with resources that cater to Cal Poly students and the local community, as well as vendors.

The purpose of the show and awareness fair is to raise awareness about the issues of depression, self-harm, and suicide, as well as provide a means of expression and resources for rehabilitation and support for those in need. By implementing a public relations plan centered on the Love Out Loud Show, the program's creators will also be able to begin moving towards their next goal of raising awareness about the Love Out Loud Campaign as a whole.

### *Tactics and Tools*

The public relations plan for the Love Out Loud Campaign consists of multiple strategic communication tactics. Smith breaks strategic communication tactics into four categories with varied impact and audience reach. The tactic categories are as follows: interpersonal communication, organizational media, news media, and advertising/promotional media (2009, p. 186). The Love Out Loud public relations tools will include social media sites such as Facebook and Twitter, print media, and word of mouth.

The members of the Love Out Loud Campaign initially started publicizing the campaign through word of mouth and Facebook. See Figure 1 for screen shot of the Love Out Loud Facebook page. The Facebook page will be the main source of contact between the Love Out Loud Campaign and its supporters/followers. All events hosted by the Love Out Loud Campaign will be posted on the Facebook page. The Facebook page will also reflect the Love Out Loud Campaign Website – a screenshot of which can be seen on Figure 2. The website includes information about the vision of the campaign, the creators of the campaign, the concert/show, a calendar of events, sponsors, and resources available for people looking for help dealing with depression or thoughts of suicide.

Although Facebook is the main source of contact between the Love Out Loud Campaign and its publics, the directors also utilized other online media outlets such as a blog and Twitter account. Unfortunately, these tools were not employed as much as initially hoped. It was determined that the blog and Twitter accounts were not the best way to reach the intended publics, and therefore had little to no impact on publicity.

In addition to online media, the Love Out Loud Campaign used print media to reach its publics who may not be members of Facebook, or who ignore Facebook event invitations. Print media was used throughout the weeks prior to the February 26 event as a means of promotion. These print media outlets included a free Love Out Loud Campaign sticker (see Figure 3), black and white flyers which drew attention to the nature of the event (see Figure 4a and Figure 4b, respectively), promotional cards with the event information (see Figure 5), and posters which were posted around campus in every department and on every public access bulletin board available to students (see Figure 6). A press release (see Figure 7) was also sent out to all local media stations via the Cal Poly Public Affairs office; a story was printed in the Mustang Daily following its release. At the event the women also sold Love Out Loud t-shirts as a means of earning revenue; each time somebody wears the t-shirt they purchased at the show, the campaign gains a little bit more recognition from those who see it. A few of the women also presented the campaign and show to Panhellenic and Inter Fraternity Council, as well as to a handful of sororities that requested their presence at certain chapter meetings.

Another form of publicity for the Love Out Loud Show and the cause supported by the campaign included a booth at Farmers Market, a fundraiser at Applebees, presentation at Change the Status Quo, and a photo booth that was set up in the Cal Poly University Union Plaza and on Dexter Lawn. The booth had a backdrop as well as props such as mustaches, hats, and signs for

people to pose with. Each person had three pictures taken of them and their friends. The photos were then edited into an InDesign layout and e-mailed to the address provided at the time of the photos. Participants were encouraged to post the photomontage as their profile pictures on Facebook as a sign of support and awareness about depression, self-harm, and suicide. The e-mail and a sample of the photos can be seen on Figure 8a and Figure 8b, respectively. A full list of events and dates can be viewed at Figure 9.

### *Communication with Publics*

Graphic communications majors at Cal Poly designed all promotional material, including the websites, flyers, and logos. According to Smith (2009), a logo for an organization is most effective when it is memorable, appropriate, and unique to the organization (p. 174). The Love Out Loud Campaign logo went through a variety of changes from its origins at the beginning of the campaign (see Figure 10), but eventually evolved into a tree with a heart; these symbols represent love through the heart, the strength of trees, along with branches that reach out in support. In order to gauge the effectiveness of the branding of the Love Out Loud Campaign, a survey was conducted at the end of the Love Out Loud Show. Even though the survey only reached a small handful of people, it gives a rough idea about the success of the promotional material used throughout the campaign. See Table 1 for the results of the survey.

In addition to the exit survey provided at the show, the success of the show and the progress of the campaign will be gauged based on how many people attend the event, comments sent via e-mail, and the activity on the Facebook page after the event. The Love Out Loud Campaign will not end after the event on February 26; it will continue on as senior projects and will, eventually, reach beyond the Cal Poly community. The response the campaign receives

Table 1:

*Exit survey results from Love Out Loud Show*

<i>Question</i>	<i>Results</i>	<i>Numbers</i>
Cal Poly Student	Yes	25
	No	20
Gender	Male	8
	Female	37
Year in School	High School	1
	Freshman	4
	Sophomore	7
	Junior	10
	Senior	11
	Super Senior	2
	Other	10
How did you hear about Love Out Loud?	Creators	21
	Word of Mouth	10
	Club	6
	Department	2
	Facebook	4
	Signs	1
Have you seen the Love Out Loud Website?	Mustang Daily	1
	Yes	35
Have you seen the Love Out Loud awareness video?	No	10
	Yes	18
Have you seen the Facebook profile page?	No	27
	Yes	28
Have you seen the Love Out Loud profile pictures on Facebook?	No	16
	Yes	28
	No	17

during and after the Love Out Loud Show will help determine what changes will be made in the future and how to improve the overall campaign and future shows of a similar nature. As Dietrich et al. (2009) stated, there is a “need for permanent depression awareness action” and Love Out Loud hopes to fulfill that need (Abstract).



## Chapter V: Discussion

### *Summary*

The Love Out Loud Campaign was developed by six Cal Poly students who saw a need for more communication about mental health on campus. The six women behind the campaign have each been personally affected by the painful effects of depression, self-harm, or suicide and felt as though it was time that the aforementioned issues were not associated with negativity, but instead, were greeted with love and support. The purpose of the study and campaign conducted over the past six months was to raise awareness about the Love Out Loud Campaign and the topics it addresses, as well as to encourage students to attend the Love Out Loud Show in the hopes that the performances would remove some of the stigma associated with depression.

As previously mentioned, the women in charge of the campaign used different forms of social media as well as other promotional tactics in order to raise awareness about the campaign and the show. By using Facebook and observing the number of people who attended the show, as well as their response to the show they are able to make informed decisions about how to improve in the future.

As a means of providing feedback to page administrators, Facebook provides an application called Insights which displays information about demographics, post feedback, and impressions on Facebook uses. Because Facebook Insights are not available for individual events we must base our observations on the main Facebook page. Based on the Insights provided to the page administrators, 44% of Facebook fans are between the ages of 18-24. This age demographic matches the overall demographics of the Love Out Loud Campaign. See Figure 11a for the overall age breakdown of Love Out Loud Campaign Facebook fans. Figure 11b, Figure 11c, and Figure 11d also display different data such as the number of fans the page has, number of

responses received on different posts, as well as which type of media was most utilized (video/pictures/discussion topics).

### *Findings*

Through viewing the data provided by Facebook and website statistics (see Figure 12), it can be inferred that a campaign such as Love Out Loud is mostly appealing to women between the ages of 18 and 24 and that most of the views of the website happened during our heaviest advertising/publicity times – February. However, because of the nature of the campaign and the desire to reach to both sexes, it is important to cater the campaign so that it is an attractive cause to everybody – not just women. Developing a plan that reaches out and appeals to the male population as well as the female population would be beneficial to the expansion of the campaign. Also, Facebook does not reach everybody; even people who do have Facebook generally click “not attending” to event invitations, even before reading what the invite is for (see figure 13). The best responses we received in regards to the campaign were those people we spoke to face to face whether it be at a sorority meeting, the photo booths, or just in a passing conversation with a classmate.

Because of the delimitations that prevented expansion of the campaign to other colleges at Cal Poly beyond Liberal Arts, the campaign was confined to a rather small population of students. The Love Out Loud Show and campaign as a whole might have benefitted from reaching out to other areas of studies – especially those that have suffered from the loss of students, such as the Landscape Architecture department that lost a student at the end of 2009. The women of the Love Out Loud Campaign already started reaching out to other people who

have been directly affected by suicide when they spoke at a Gamma Phi Beta meeting – Gamma Phi Beta lost a sister, Frances Chang, to suicide in November of 2008.

In addition to the issues faced with gender and reaching out to other areas of the Cal Poly community, religion posed to be a problem when addressing prevention before a suicide attempt, or rehabilitation after one. Love Out Loud is in no way associated with any specific religion or spiritual belief system. Although rehabilitation from depression, self-harm, and after an attempted or successful suicide is a religious experience for many people, Love Out Loud is not religiously affiliated and would like to make every person on campus feel welcome, appreciated, and loved simply for being who they are – not for their religious beliefs or lack there-of.

### *Conclusions*

As discussed in the second chapter of this project, the need for suicide prevention programs on college campuses is not just recommended, it is a necessity. By using two-way communication (Bobbitt, 2009), the Love Out Loud Campaign was able to get its message out to its publics, as well as receive feedback on topics to address and ways to improve in the future. A large problem with regards to suicide prevention programs and informing college students about warning signs is that college students do not know where to find counselors or support groups (King, 2001). The Love Out Loud Campaign collected information about different resources available to at risk students and put all the information gathered on the website, making it available and easy to find for any student who may need help.

Many suicidologists agree that peer intervention may be the most important prevention method available to at risk students (King, 2001). The Love Out Loud Campaign is a suicide prevention campaign, similar to a few other campaigns scattered throughout the United States,

which uses peer intervention as a means of giving hope and preventing self-harm and suicide. By sharing personal stories and displaying different ways with which to express emotions – whether the feelings be happy or sad, or the expression be painting, dancing, or writing – the Love Out Loud Campaign is changing the stigma associated with depression, self-harm, and suicide (Westefeld, et al, 2006). By using the Health Belief Model, the women behind the Love Out Loud Campaign have begun to raise awareness about the prevalence of depression and mental illness as a whole, addressing the first and second steps of the HBM (Donatelle, 2009).

By using public relations practices as a means of reaching the target publics for the Love Out Loud Campaign, the preliminary message sent out was well received. College students are the main demographic who use Facebook and by sending messages and posting events on the popular social networking site, the members of Love Out Loud were able to quickly spread the word about the campaign and different events. By using connections within each woman's department (English, Journalism, and Graphic Communications), as well as adopting different public relations models, the women of the Love Out Loud Campaign were able to spread the message of the campaign in a cost-effective and beneficial way.

Although there are different strategies that public relations practitioners have deemed beneficial to different types of campaigns, the most beneficial type of campaign is the one that is catered to a specific business or organization. In a world where technology and communication is always changing, it is increasingly important to pay attention to your publics and the way they receive their information. Even though Facebook seems like an easy way to get people's attention in regards to raising awareness about different events and organizations, as addressed in this project, Facebook doesn't reach everybody. When one stands up in front of a group of people and shares their story or discusses their connection to an important campaign or

organization, people are more likely to listen. By sticking to traditional public relations and using media tools that feel comfortable, the public relations practitioner may miss out on vital publics and communication opportunities. Instead, public relations becomes much more successful, when one combines different public relations strategies and develops new and innovative ways of communicating with publics.

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## FIGURES

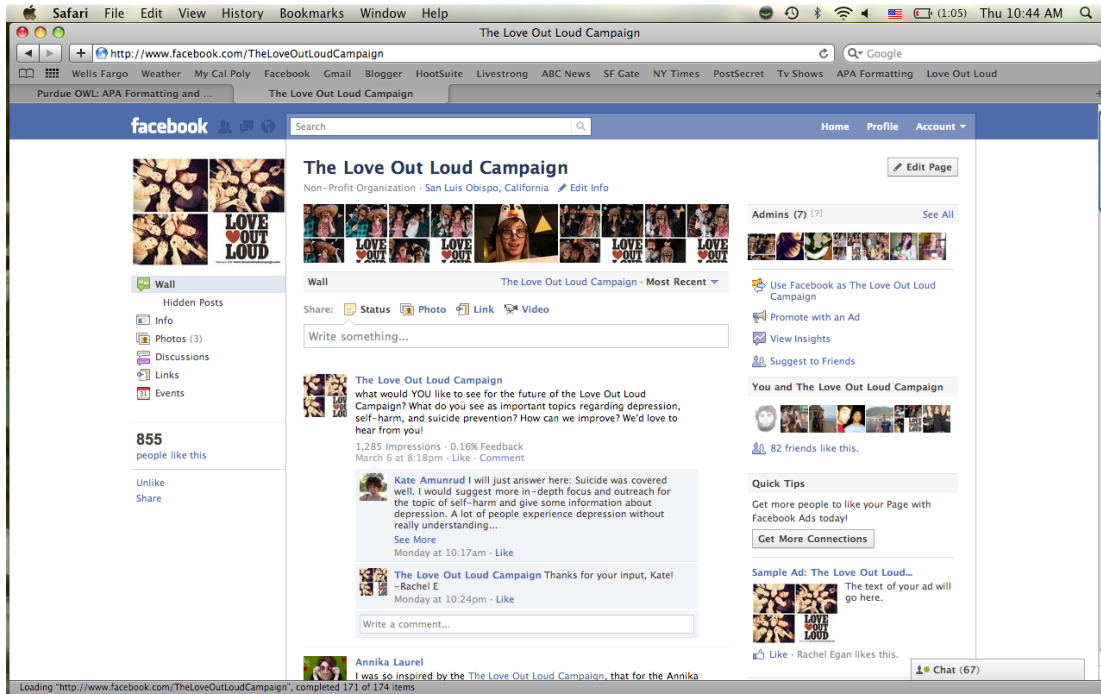


Figure 1: Love Out Loud Facebook page

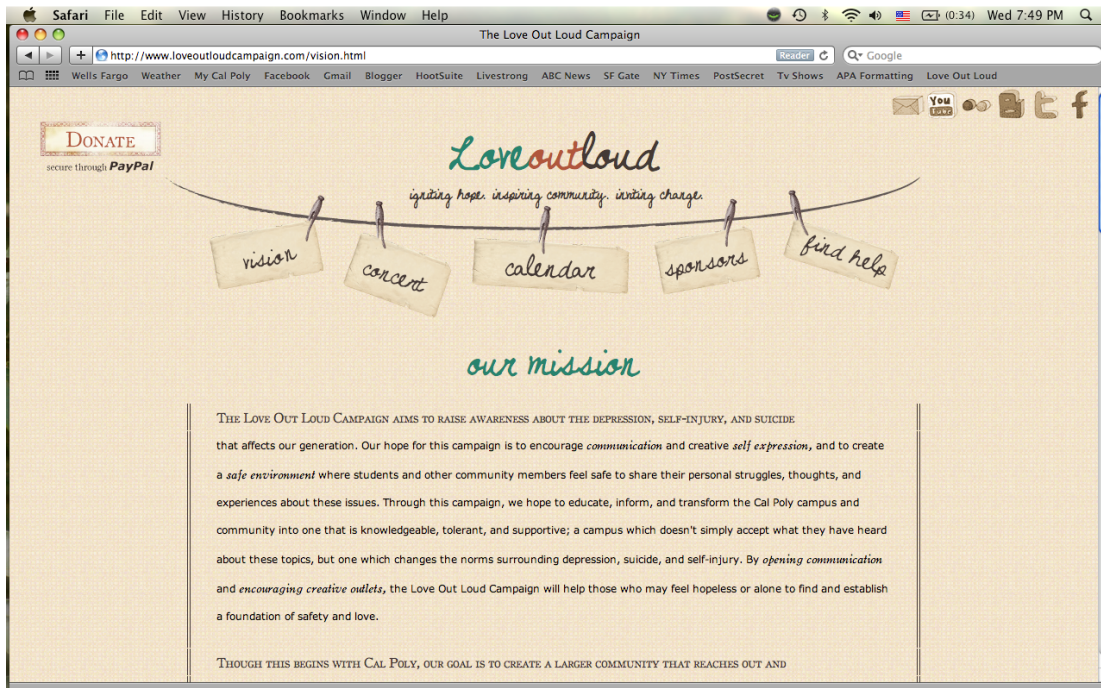


Figure 2: Love Out Loud website



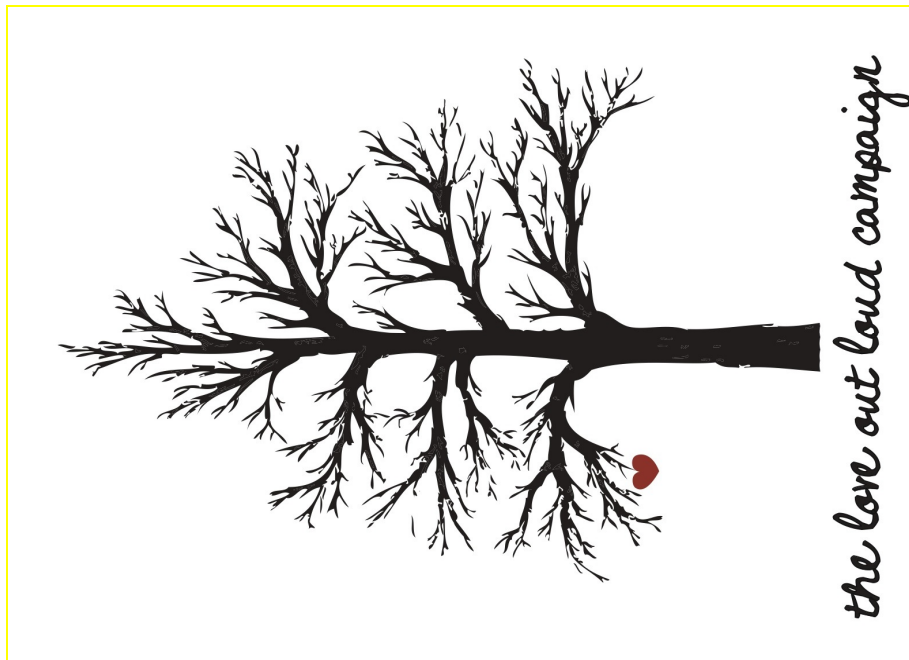


Figure 3: free Love Out Loud Campaign sticker



Figure 4a: Black and white flyer - statistics

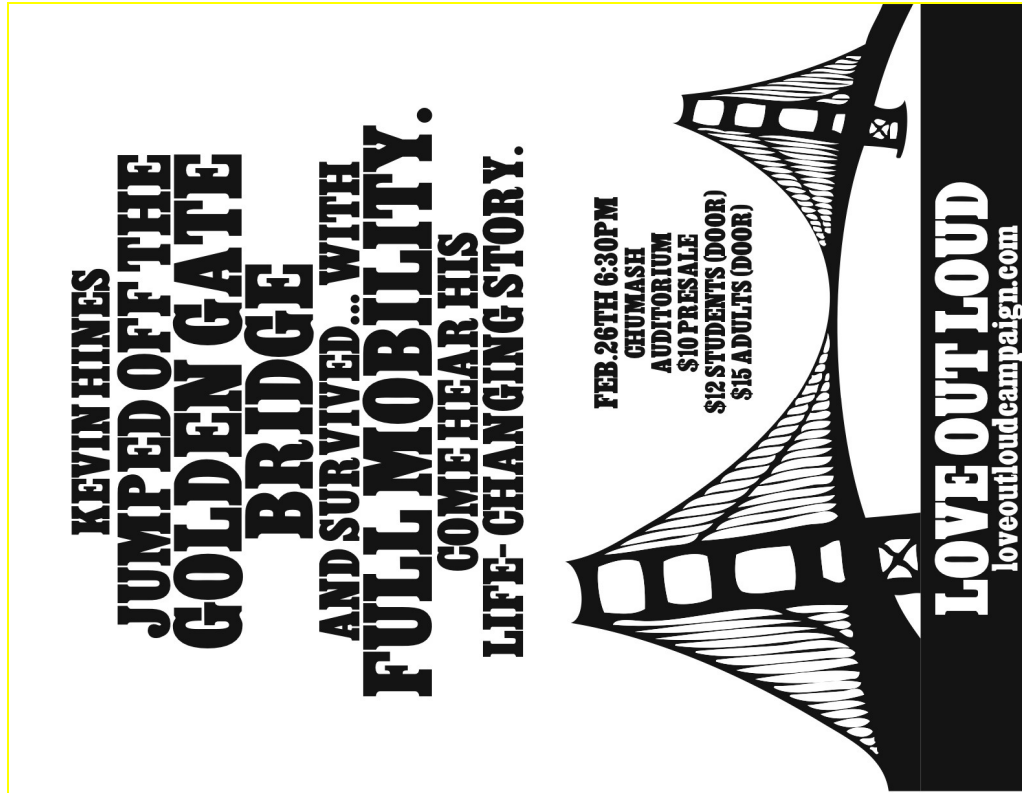


Figure 4b: Black and white flyer – Kevin Hines



Figure 5: Promotional cards



Figure 6: Poster for Cal Poly campus



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**Cal Poly Students Plan Feb. 26 Show to Raise Awareness of Depression and Suicide Prevention**

*Event will feature Kevin Hines, who survived a jump from the Golden Gate Bridge*

SAN LUIS OBISPO, CA – Kevin Hines, who survived a suicide attempt in which he jumped off the Golden Gate Bridge, will speak Feb. 26, 2011 at Cal Poly as part of a student-coordinated event aimed at raising awareness about depression, self-harm and suicide prevention.

The event is being coordinated by the Love Out Loud Campaign, a group of six Cal Poly students passionate about encouraging communication and creative self-expression as a means of coping with depression, self-harm and thoughts of suicide.

The Feb. 26 event will include a free resource and awareness fair at 4:30 p.m. followed by a 6:30 p.m. paid show that will include Hines speaking about his experience and how to live “Mentally Well.” The show will also include musical performances by Lakes, The Ragged Jubilee and The Honey Trees, along with Cal Poly speakers, poets, dancers and improvisational performers.

The event will be held at Chumash Auditorium on the Cal Poly Campus at 1 Grand Avenue. Admission to the 6:30 show will be \$10. Tickets are available on the Love Out Loud website, [www.LoveOutLoudCampaign.com](http://www.LoveOutLoudCampaign.com). Donations are also welcome.

Student organizers began the Love Out Loud Campaign for their senior projects and as an attempt to raise awareness about issues of depression and suicide affecting their age demographic. The campaign uses word of mouth and social media to reach students and the local community and has hosted events such as an open mic night, a fundraising breakfast and a booth at San Luis Obispo’s farmers market.

“Each of the six women involved in the campaign has a personal connection to the topics we address,” said project coordinator Carly Smoot. “Whether we have personally struggled with depression and suicidal thoughts or have a friend or family member who has, these topics affect each one of us in a very real way. We want to spread the word to other students that they are not alone.”

Recent statistics show that suicide has become the third leading cause of death among college students and that one in seven people between 15 and 24 suffer from depression, self-harm or suicidal thoughts. At least two students have taken their own lives at Cal Poly in the past three years.

Proceeds from the Feb. 26 event will be used to help continue and expand the Love Out Loud Campaign and to benefit the national program To Write Love On Her Arms – a campaign with a vision similar to Love Out Loud.

For more information about Love Out Loud, to obtain a full list of events, to talk to one of the board members, or to find available resources for depression, self-harm, and suicide, visit [www.LoveOutLoudCampaign.com](http://www.LoveOutLoudCampaign.com) or e-mail Rachel Egan at [loveloutloudcampaign@gmail.com](mailto:loveloutloudcampaign@gmail.com).

###



## Photobooth Photos

Love Out Loud campaign to [REDACTED]

[show details](#) Feb 23[Reply](#)

Hello!

Thank you for being a part of our Love Out Loud Facebook Profile Takeover! We encourage you to use the attached picture as your Facebook profile picture for the next week in order to show your support of this wonderful cause.

So, I bet you are wondering what Love Out Loud is, and what, in fact, you are promoting. Love Out Loud is a campaign that aims to raise awareness about depression, self-harm, and suicide prevention. The campaign encourages communication and creative self-expression as a means of spreading hope and love to those suffering from the aforementioned topics.

In order to celebrate expression, we are holding a concert, show and awareness fair this Saturday, February 26<sup>th</sup>! At the show will be the life-changing speaker Kevin Hines, who jumped off the Golden Gate Bridge and survived with full mobility. Performing will be the bands Lakes, The Honey Trees, and Ragged Jubilee. Not only that, but we will have Smile and Nod, rapper Paul Rogers, slam poetry readings, dancers, and much more! Beforehand, we will also be having an awareness fair with information booths, artists, and many incredible vendors.

The awareness fair begins at 4:30, and the show will start at 6:30.

Please visit our website at: [www.loveoutloudcampaign.com](http://www.loveoutloudcampaign.com) to buy tickets presale price at \$10, or for more information on our project.

Hope to see you there!

The Love Out Loud team



photo105.jpg  
798K [View](#) [Download](#)

Figure 8a: E-mail included with photo booth photos



Figure 8b: Sample photo booth photos.

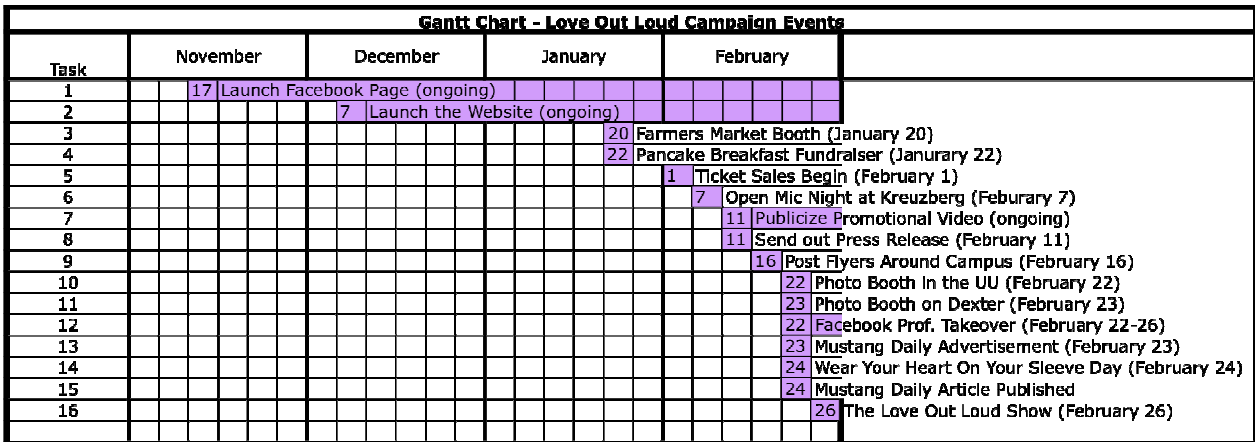


Figure 9: Gantt chart of events.



Figure 10: Initial logo.

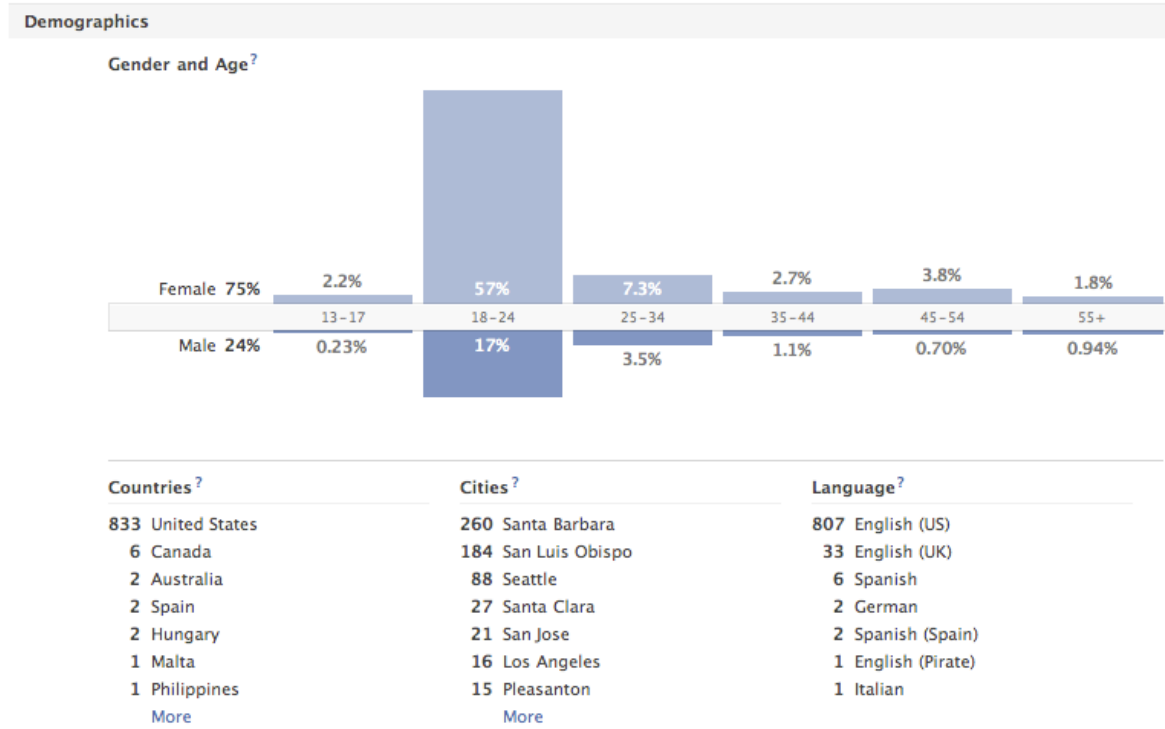


Figure 11a: Facebook demographics.

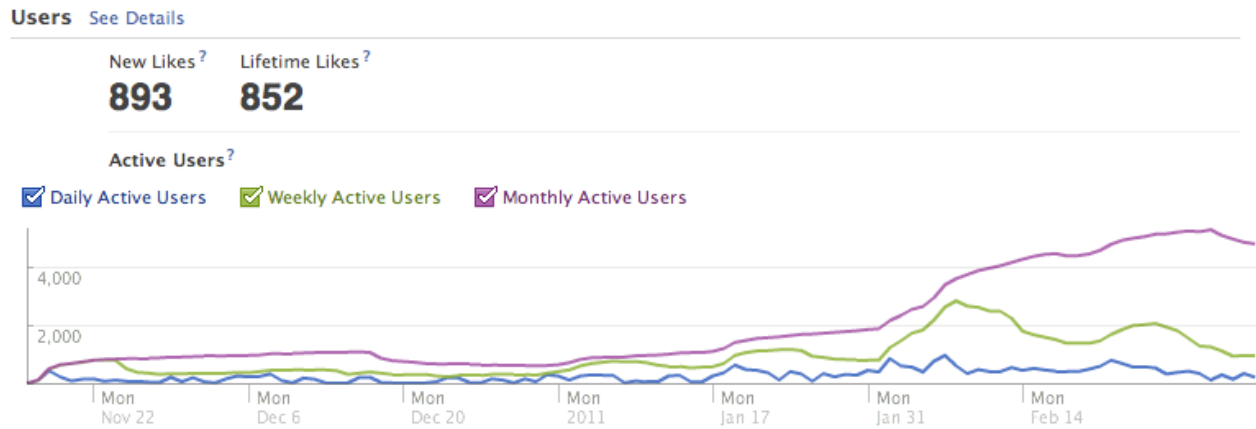


Figure 11b: Facebook Users.

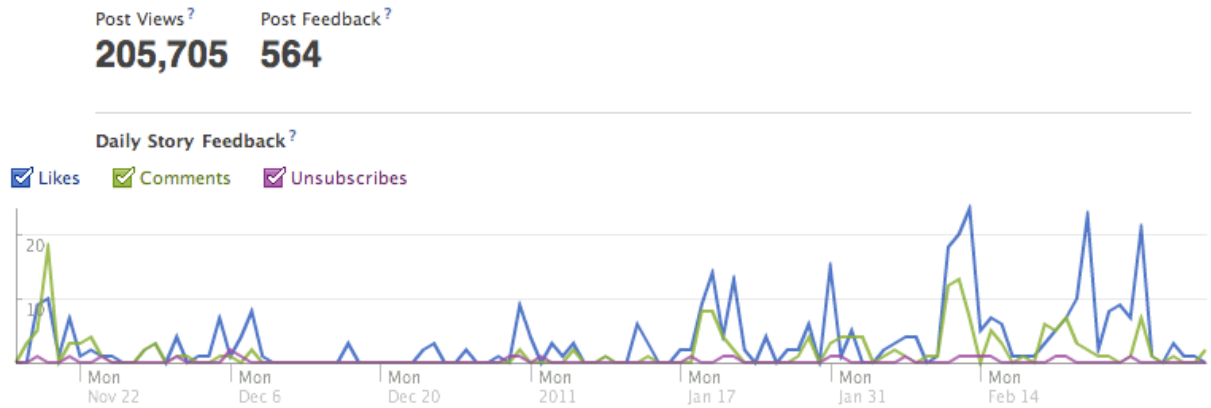


Figure 11c: Facebook story feedback.

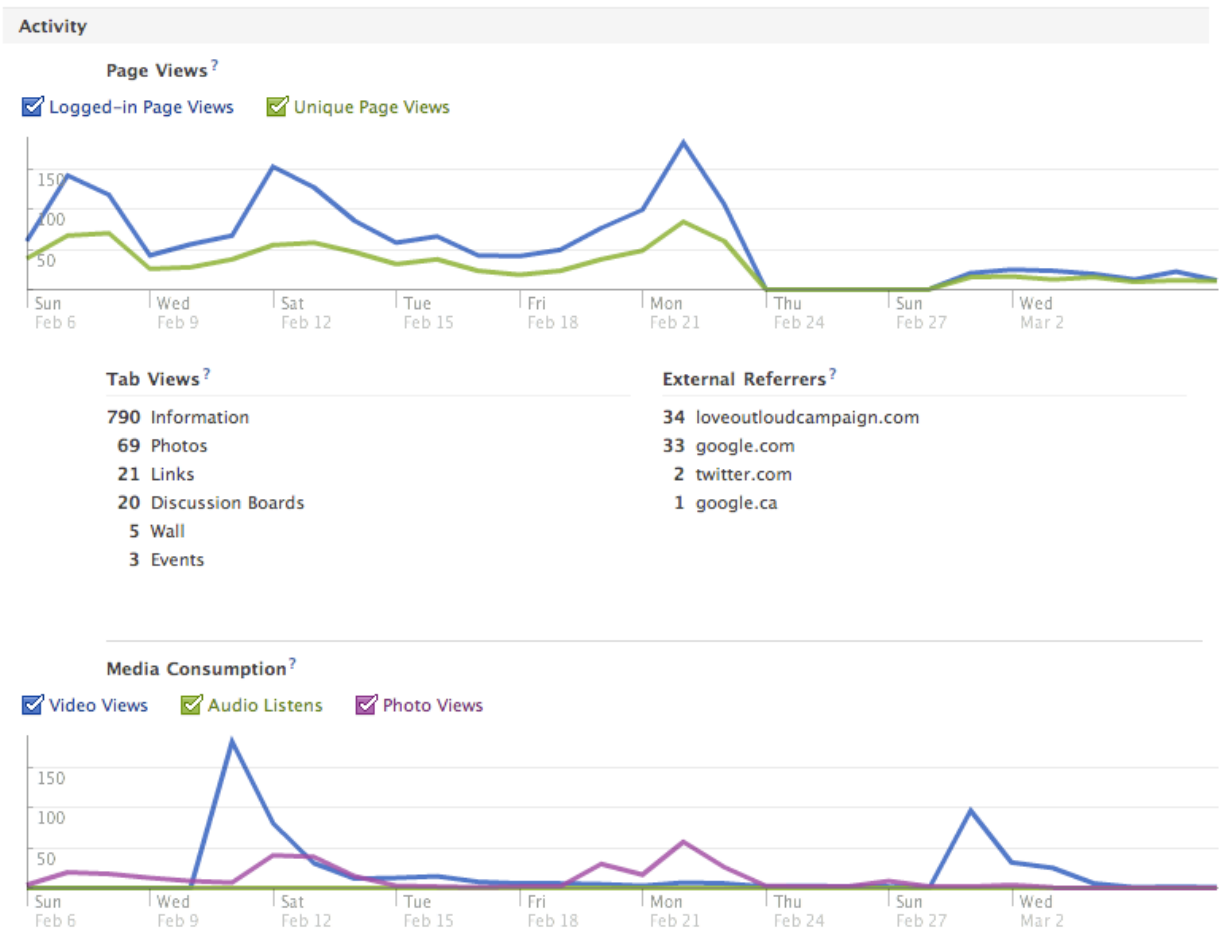


Figure 11d: Facebook media consumption.



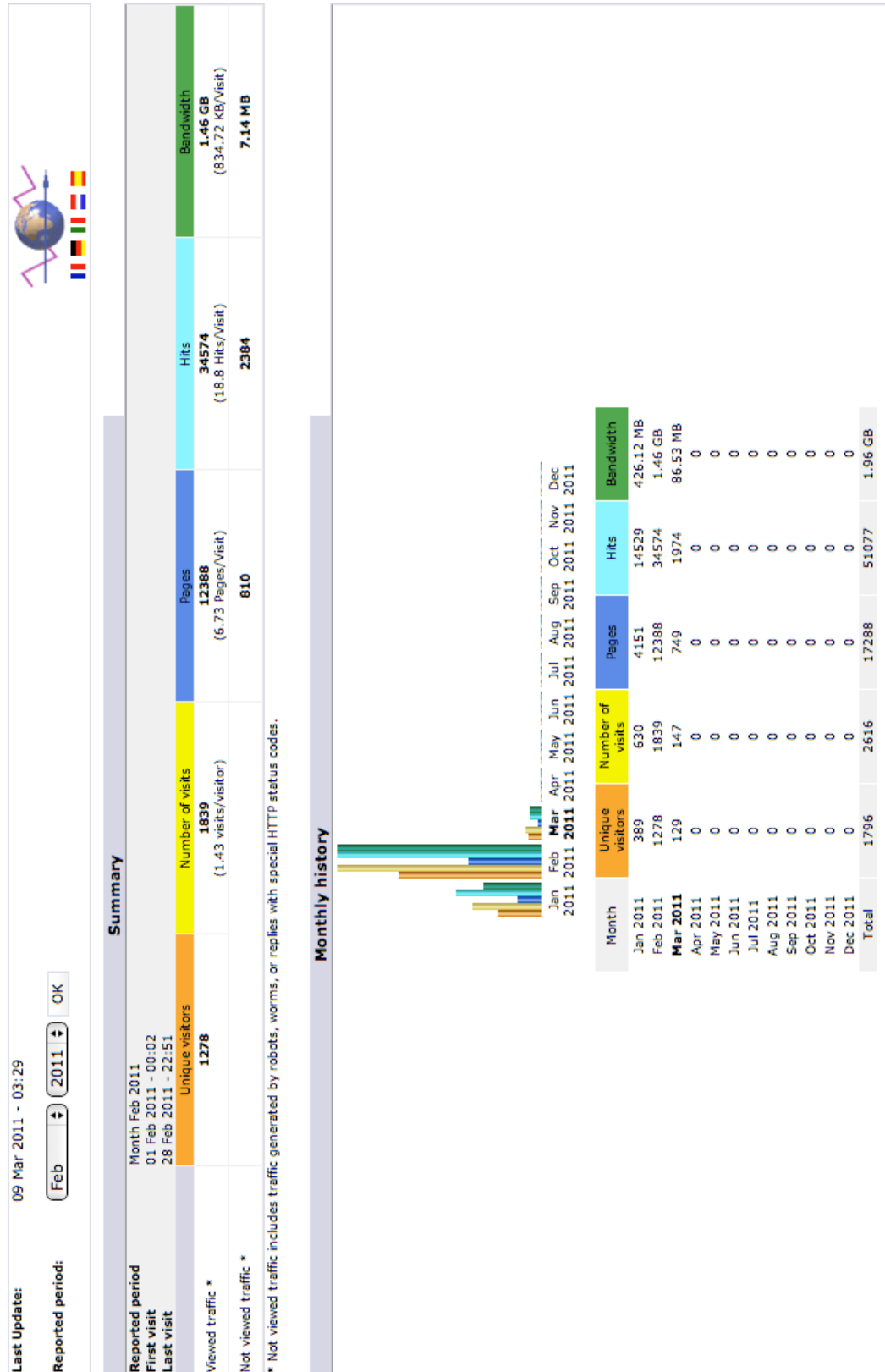


Figure 12: Website statistics

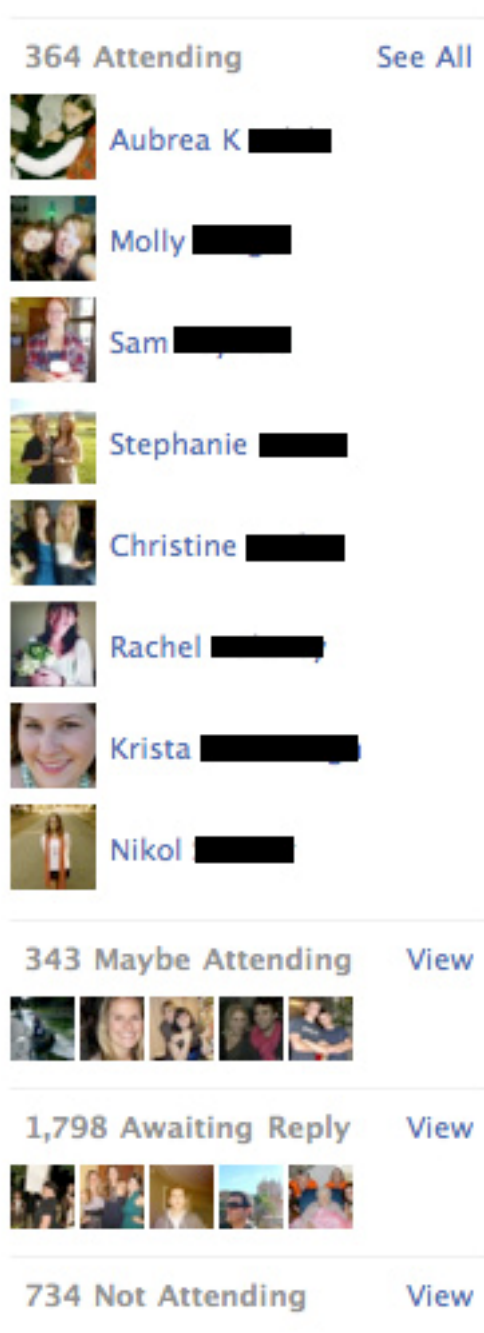


Figure 13: Love Out Loud Show attendees according to Facebook