

Final Case Study: Paint Love

Organizational Background

Paint Love is a non-profit organization located in Decatur, Georgia, working with youth experiencing trauma and poverty, artists who share a love for serving different Atlanta communities, and Title I school systems that lack arts funding and art experiences for children. Founded in 2014 by Julie Ann McKeivitt, Paint Love has grown to partner with numerous organizations with similar missions, cultivated a strong Board of Directors, and infiltrated many communities around the metro Atlanta area. Paint Love works closely with the Dekalb and Cobb County school systems. The two counties are among the top five largest in the state. Cobb county serves approximately 113,000 students, and about 41% of their students qualify for free or reduced lunch (Dixon, 1). Dekalb county serves approximately 98,000 students, and approximately 64% of them are eligible for free or reduced lunch (Malekebu, 1). These numbers are an indication, and just a brief snapshot of the economic levels of the families Paint Love strives to serve. A majority of the work Paint Love does focuses on social and emotional learning, shared family experiences, body regulation through movement, and exposing underserved children to positive art experiences.

Mission Statement

Paint Love brings extraordinary arts programming to youth facing poverty and trauma.

Vision Statement

We envision a world where all young people have access to creative experiences that empower them to imagine a future not limited by adverse experiences.

Organization's Current State

Paint Love hosts joint partnership programs with Wilderness works, an organization that works closely with neglected children and plans enriching experiences involving outdoor activities. We also host monthly programs with Kate's Club, a non-profit organization working with children who have experienced the death of a parent or loved one and are experiencing the cycles of grief. Lastly, Paint Love works with Wellspring Living, working with young adults at risk or victimized by sexual exploitation. Paint Love is actively working with all three of these organizations for the month of May and has been doing so for the last six months. Through programming, Paint Love has been able to carry out its mission of supporting children who have been in compromising circumstances and providing them with safe and healthy outlets for expression. A large population of the children Paint Love serves are African American. The Paint Love staff is predominantly Caucasian and works hard to familiarize themselves with the cultures they serve in a non-savior way. We recently concluded a three-month book club, reading the book *The Fire This Time* by Jesmyn Ward. The book shares an extensive collection of stories written for and by Black people sharing the many experiences of what it is like to be Black in America. We have had guest speakers, opening and closing activities, heavy dialogue discussing our impact on the communities we serve, and self-reflection on our potential biases.

SWOT Analysis

Strengths:

- Our curriculum director was just named Cobb County's Social Worker of the Year.
- We are in the process of moving to a larger office space located in Legacy Park, a new up-and-coming arts hub.
- Recently hired new staff members.
- We have recently received a \$15,000 grant from a donor who in previous years has awarded us with a contribution of \$5,000.
- We just celebrated seven years of operation.
- We are very active on Instagram and Facebook, allowing us to track who is visiting our page and showing interest.

Weaknesses:

- We have a smaller part-time staff making it difficult to always have coverage for planned programs or events.
- Program attendees tend to come in small numbers. Generally, we have approximately ten children join our programs.

Opportunities:

- There is a growing market for social and emotional learning activities.
- Atlanta, Georgia, is continuously growing. More businesses are starting to form, which inherently means more people are coming to reside in the city.

- We are moving into offices within walking distance to Talley Street Upper Elementary School, and there may be potential donors within that particular community.

Threats:

- We have to find a way to enter back into in-person programming due to COVID. We have to gauge whether or not our audience is ready to come back in person or if we have to continue with online programming.
- We often receive sponsorships from smaller organizations, but we are finding that we need to start doing more partnerships with larger corporations if we want to obtain larger funds. If we can't find more considerable funds, that will affect our programming for Fall 2021.

Key Challenges and Opportunities

Paint Love has done an excellent job of partnering with other smaller organizations and providing programs that meet the needs of our population and the population of other organizations with similar missions. Partnerships allow the organization to expand within the community and reach a community of children that could benefit from our resources. The underlying benefit of having a multitude of organizations to work with is the ability to cater a program towards a specific issue. Paint Love strives to meet the needs of underserved communities, children in Title I schools, and children who have experienced trauma at a young age. Working with Kate's Club allows us to create a tailored program specifically targeted towards managing trauma or expressing hard feelings compared to working with an organization such as Jesse's House, serving young girls experiencing homelessness. Programming with

Jesse's House could look very different and could be tailored to incorporate art with some of the values Jesse's House tries to instill.

Paint Love is a younger organization and has been in operation for less than ten years. The sustainability of the organization still varies from year to year. Our sponsorships tend to rely on smaller businesses, and a majority of our donations come from friends and family members of Paint Love employees and volunteers. While having such a loyal base for donations is always helpful, also having external contributors would create more room in our budget for more extensive programs and events. Paint Love also has little to no large sponsorships from major Atlanta corporations. We work with small businesses to spread the word about Paint Love, but to have a few larger organizations with more significant funding would help tremendously.

Suggested Strategy

The big picture goal is to keep Paint Love performing at a high level by bringing in more prominent contributions that aid our success in the community. If we can bring in donors from corporate organizations and increase the number of individual donors each year, we will reach a level of positive sustainability. As a strategy, I would encourage Paint Love to partner with The Decatur Arts Alliance. Not only could this potentially be a great partnership within the community, but The Decatur Arts Alliance is a significant contributor to the arts in Atlanta and the City of Decatur. This monetary contribution to the Paint Love arsenal could mean more visibility for the organization and access to a larger population of children that we have yet to discover. Since Paint Love is a smaller organization, we have a unique opportunity to grow and connect with larger community-based organizations, which may allow us the opportunity to grow exponentially.

Lessons Learned/Links with Arts Administration Studies

I chose this organization because I have learned so much about the nonprofit sector, working with children living under challenging circumstances, grant writing, programming, and so much more. Since December, I have been working with Paint Love, and I genuinely love the work that my coworkers and I have done thus far. I admire Paint Love's ability to partner with others. Building relationships with individuals and neighboring organizations allows for active participation and a stronger ability to help those who need it positively. Earlier in the semester, we discussed how to plan a program and walked through creating a solid program with a clear goal and objectives following a logic model. The Americans for the Arts states that "Teaming with public or private agencies that have expertise in working with at-risk youth can help make an arts program more effective and increase its credibility in the community (Hulett 10)." I believe Paint Love does a fantastic job of voicing the organization's message and finding others who believe in the mission to wholeheartedly back it up to make a difference in the lives of many children.

References

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