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The Wellbeing Partners' mental health campaign reduces stigma by 10% in Omaha and surrounding communities

First year of the nonprofit organization's Mental Health Stigma Reduction Initiative reaches hundreds of respondents, 2.9M impressions online

OMAHA, Neb. (Oct. 14, 2021) - The Wellbeing Partners, a local nonprofit organization focused on building wellbeing into the way our communities and businesses grow through advocacy, collaboration, and education, has announced the results of its [mental health stigma reduction campaign](#), including a 10% reduction in stigma. The 10-month-long awareness campaign covered the Greater Omaha and Council Bluffs areas, resulting in improvements in beliefs and behaviors toward people with a mental health condition.

October is National Depression and Mental Health Screening Month. According to a [CDC Household Pulse Survey](#), 32% of people across the nation and 26% of people in Nebraska reported symptoms of anxiety disorder or depressive disorder between Sept. 15 and Sept. 27, 2021.

The Wellbeing Partners continues to provide support. The Director of Community, Innovation, and Advocacy, Sheena Helgenberger, led the mental health initiative.

"Mental health conditions are just as important to address as any physical health condition. We need to support each other in talking about how we're really doing, so that people can seek treatment and find positive coping strategies to live their best life," comments Helgenberger.

"Connecting authentically with others and utilizing community resources has become even more crucial during the pandemic, when so many feel isolated and vulnerable. This October, I invite community members to share their mental health stories and encourage others to take a mental health screening if they don't feel right."

Within the digital campaign, about 30% of respondents reported initiative awareness. Compared to people who were not aware of the campaign, campaign-aware respondents reported increased willingness to work with or continue a relationship with someone with a mental health condition, higher confidence in supporting someone experiencing a mental health condition, more positive attitudes toward treatment, increased actions to improve their own mental health, and increased likelihood of disclosing a mental health condition, among other measures. Respondents who were not aware of the campaign reported more stigmatizing attitudes in nearly all of the measures.

The initiative, launched in July 2020, included Spokesimals Midwest and WhatMakesUs, two platforms that cultivate community engagement, receiving a combined total of 412 testimonial and pet submissions, and reaching 2.9 million digital impressions during the campaign period.

"I am inspired by the testimonials of the Omaha and Council Bluffs areas, and the impact of normalizing mental health," states Sarah Sjolie, CEO of The Wellbeing Partners.

"Over the past six months, 85% of campaign-aware individuals shared that they took steps to improve their mental health and 84% supported someone with a mental health condition. These are incredible results and point to this opportunity to replicate this campaign and reach more neighbors across the region."

The Wellbeing Partners collaborated with the public health nonprofit The Public Good Projects (PGP), four working groups, and 130 partners for this campaign. Funding and support come from the Sherwood Foundation, Mutual of Omaha Foundation, CHI Health, Region 6 Behavioral Healthcare, and a growing list of public and private sponsors, including the Douglas, Sarpy/Cass, and Pottawattamie health departments, the Metro Area Planning Agency (MAPA), and the University of Nebraska Medical Center College of Public Health.

Spokesimals Midwest is an education-based platform inspired by the unconditional love and understanding that animals provide. The campaign invites community members to submit pictures of their animals and/or pets, which are then paired with simple messages of encouragement, support, and facts about mental health. These messages are for everyone, not just people who have an interest in mental health or live with a mental health condition. The more people know about mental health, the less society will allow mental health conditions to be stigmatized. Individuals can submit their animal or pet at www.SpokesimalsMidwest.com.

WhatMakesUs is a contact-based platform designed to challenge perceptions and change the conversation around mental health. This campaign is a collection of photo and video testimonials from community members living with mental health conditions and their allies, highlighting what makes them who they are — not defined by a mental health condition. These testimonials are then distributed across multiple social media platforms and by community partners. By sharing stories from real people in the community, stigma is reduced by highlighting shared interests, values and experiences, and showing that WhatMakesUs who we are is about so much more than whether or not we live with a mental health condition. Community members can share their stories at WhatMakesUs.com.

To read the [Mental Health Stigma Reduction Campaign Evaluation](#), view a list of [mental health resources](#), and to learn more about The Wellbeing Partners, visit www.thewellbeingpartners.org. To join a working group or partner with the campaign, email sheenah@thewellbeingpartners.org.

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About The Wellbeing Partners:

The Wellbeing Partners is a 501(c)(3) nonprofit organization that seeks to build wellbeing into the way our communities and businesses grow through advocacy, collaboration, and education. We do this by supporting the growth of a culture of wellbeing within organizations, as well as acting as a convener to address local community health challenges. Relying on expertise and evidence in worksite wellness and public health, The Wellbeing Partners bridges the good work between worksite wellness initiatives and community health collaboration for the greatest impact in our communities. Based on applied practice and partner and community feedback, The Wellbeing Partners combines the eight dimensions of wellness with the social determinants of health model to shape its work so all people and places thrive.

