

# Social Storytelling: Making Homelessness and Homeless Services Real to a Broader Community

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# Introductions and Housekeeping

- Welcome and evaluations
- Introductions
- An example: [Calvin's story](#)
  - Reactions?
- Storytelling for advocacy and advancement
  - Builds on past presentation



# Learning Objectives, or #Takeaways

- Describe the role that storytelling can play in destigmatizing homelessness and illustrating homeless services.
- Name three tactics for incorporating storytelling in social media.
- Describe common challenges and concerns in storytelling.
- Widely applicable, and not just to social media

# What Is Storytelling, and Why Is It Important?

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# Storytelling...

- Is everywhere.
- Takes many forms, including multimedia:
  - Photos
  - Copy for social media
  - Videos
- Provides a critical means to tell the story of our field
  - Hugely important for health centers and homeless service organizations in our field
- Can sometimes be more impactful than stats, facts, and figures

# Illustrating Homeless Services

- Helps show our value to funders and donors, our community, potential consumers, etc.
- Give life to data and statistics



# Storytelling as Advocacy

- Helps destigmatize homelessness and make experiences of homelessness real.
  - Counteracts dominant narrative of homelessness in U.S.
  - Makes the crisis of homelessness real
- Helps empower consumers

# Why Is Social Media Important?

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# Social Media

- Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, YouTube
- Great storytelling vehicle
- Fluid, direct, and immediate
- Unlike advertising, it's not a "loudspeaker", but a conversation
- Engagement
- Way to be part of a community

# Social Media

- Pervasive
- Frequency
- Reach
  - Including consumers
- Cost effective
- Part of your integrated communications
- Protection and accessibility

# Methodology: Storytelling Examples and Techniques

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# What Will I Need?

- The best place to start is by looking at the work of others.
- Social media is highly accessible
- No advanced equipment is necessary
- Social media is highly diverse

# Backbones of Good Stories

- Stories should be
  - Credible and relatable to an audience
  - Make an emotional impact
  - Convey some sort of transformation of journey--from rising action to climax to resolution
  - Empower their storytellers

# Copy

- The simplest building block of stories is the written narrative.
  - Facebook posts
  - Tweets
  - Links to longer-form content; blog copy

# Impact of Services



## Illumination Foundation



**Illumination Foundation**

Like This Page · November 11, 2017 · 🌐

Meet Don. A veteran and a father. He struggled with homelessness for decades, losing touch with all his children and family members. One day he found himself waking up in a hospital room. Illumination Foundation helped Don break the cycle of homelessness, and after being stably housed for over two years he has also been reunited with his children after 18 years long years.

Read his full story at <http://bit.ly/DonaldMStory>



Like



Comment



Share



👍❤️😬 65

Most Relevant ▾

5 Shares

5 Comments

- Humanizing
- Follows through with [link](#)
- Makes a call to action
- Awareness AND fundraising


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# General Awareness and Advocacy



## Boston HCH


- Syndicated article intro and linked to the full story in the Boston Globe
- Highlights advocacy
- Informs AND raises public profile
- Human, heartfelt with direct consumer focus

 **Boston Health Care for the Homeless Program** April 9 · 🌐

"Jennifer Brody was working inside her office at Boston Health Care for the Homeless Program when a familiar voice floated down the hallway. The patient, just years earlier battling an advanced AIDS diagnosis and heroin addiction, was in recovery thanks to the multi-pronged help the Albany Street agency provides. He was a success story in the face of two of the country's most ferocious epidemics, said Brody, the center's director of HIV services. And on this day, he looked like he was about to collapse.

"He stood there in the hallway, hands gripping either side of the door frame, as if to hold himself up," said Brody. "And he said, 'My son just overdosed. He's gone.'"

Read more about why [U.S. Senator Elizabeth Warren](#) was at Jean Yawkey Place in the South End on Friday.



**Warren proposes \$100 billion to fight overdoses - The Boston Globe**

Senator Elizabeth Warren said a new bill, dubbed the CARE Act, applies a framework championed in 1990 to stop the wave of AIDS and seeks to apply it...

BOSTONGLOBE.COM

👍 Like    💬 Comment    ➦ Share

👍👎👤 69    Most Relevant ▾

15 Shares    4 Comments





# Impact of Services



Outside In

- Simple, yet effective
- Implies story of transformation



# Storytelling in Social Media Copy

- Work with CAB to engage a willing consumer
- Take portrait and conduct interview
- Quote news coverage that illustrates a story
- Pull factoid and tweet
- Should always be about people
- Keep it simple and relatable
- Remember, Facebook for longer posts and Twitter for short and direct
- **Always** include a call to action.

# Photos and Images

- Images increase engagement
- Always use images if possible
- Adds element of visual storytelling

# The Human Element



## Central City Concern

- Photo humanizes Kassy
- Links to call to action
- Caption builds on image

# Illustrating Services



 lotushouse1 • Follow  
Lotus House

lotushouse1 mini yoga 🙏  
miamifudgecakes Omg this is adorable  
tinymontanafanpage Amazing!  
officialshif.t 🙏🙏  
playy2day Lit! 🙌🙌  
kelel 😊🙏😊



131 likes

APRIL 12

Log in to like or comment.



## Lotus House

- Simple, visual
- Implicit story
- Minimal caption

# Capturing Event to Illustrate Services



Open Table  
Nashville, Inc.

- Simple, powerful
- Consumer success story
- Promotes engagement



Open Table Nashville, Inc.

Page Liked · April 11 · 🌐

💖💖 Sparkle! 💖💖💖

We're over the moon about moving Thomas into his new apartment! You can read his Truth and Wisdom columns in the Faith Unity paper. Welcome home, dear friend! #opentablenash #housingendhomelessness #housinghealinghope

👍 Like

💬 Comment

➦ Share



👍❤️ 97

Oldest ▾

6 Shares

3 Comments



Nelia Kimbrough Hurrah for Thomas & OTN!

Like · Reply · 4w



Joshua Michael Yay, Thomas!!! 🙌🙌

Like · Reply · 4w



Cynthia Huston



Like · Reply · 4w



Write a comment...



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# Donor Solicitation



## Circle the City

- Consumer success story
- Promotes engagement
- Highlights role of organization

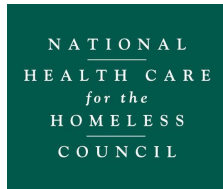


# Customize!



## NHCHC

- Make your own!
- Use stock photo or one of your own
- Customize your message





# Telling Stories in Images & Photos

- Pay attention to metrics
- Use any camera or smartphone
- Think about what you want to capture
- Be creative with photo opportunities
- Be respectful
- Use basic photography principles
- Consider engaging consumers



# Videos

- Very effective
- High engagement
- Work across all social media platforms
- Require the most work and time

# Consumer Testimonials

## Carmon Ryals



- Powerful in her own words
- Immediate impact
- Show direct impact of ABQ HCH services

# Consumer Testimonials

## Rodney Dawkins



- Simple slideshow with audio
- Rodney's story in his own words
- Demonstrates services

# Institutional Overview

## Albuquerque HCH



- Highlights services
- Vividly illustrates what ABQHCH is as an organization

# Direct Appeal

## BHCHP Sox for Socks



- Creative and clever
- Engages and informs
- Makes a direct ask

# Video Storytelling

- Don't always need professional equipment
- Find a quiet space and use a lavalier microphone if possible
- Have a plan
- Coach interview subject
- Gather more material than you need
- Consider Facebook Live or Periscope
- Be mindful of the time investment.

# Challenges and Concerns

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# The Storytelling Experience

- Avoid re-traumatization
  - Homelessness is traumatic
  - Telling these stories can itself be triggering.
  - Rehearse and be patient--avoid triggers
  - Always proceed with informed consent--be clear to storytellers about who might see their story.
- Avoid reinforcing negative stereotypes--consider your audience
- Stay on-message with stories

# Informed Consent & Respect

- Storytelling should not merely inform but empower
  - Consider working directly with your Consumer Advisory Board
- Allow people to tell their own story
- Be sure to use releases
  - Inform storyteller of purpose, use, and protect from liability
  - Require signatures and dates
- A release isn't enough--respect is.

# Now Go Tell Your Story!

## Further Resources and Examples

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# Tell Your Story!

- Now that you know these techniques, put them to use!
  - Not just applicable to social media
  - Remember the key tenets
  - Be measurable! (Where you can)

# Further Resources

- Storytelling resources
  - [NCAB Storytelling Guide](#)
  - [Activating Your Inner Aesop](#)
  - Digital Storytelling: [Stony Brook University](#) and [StoryCenter](#) both have great resources
- Social media resources
  - [HCH2017 Presentation: Amplify Your Voice in an Accessible Medium: Social Media 101 for Health Centers](#)
- [More examples and resources](#)

# Discussion and Questions

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