Ready, Set, Go! Increasing Awareness about Recreational Programs for Individuals with Special Needs

Dr. Raymond S. Greenberg Presidential Scholars Program - Underserved Communities
Grace Elsey, Steven Holshousher, Harmony Hudson, Kristin LeMatty, Amy Moon, Ji Seo Ru, Nicole Soulsby, Courtney Tutterow, Lauren Wysocki
Faculty Scholars: Dr. Angela Mund and Dr. Sarah Miller
Fellow: La'Toya James

Introduction
During the 2016-2017 year, the Presidential Scholars Program group partnered with Mount Pleasant Therapeutic Recreation. Their mission is to help children with special needs find physical and emotional strength by participating in sports. The prevalence of children born with disabilities has been greatly increasing throughout the years. As these numbers continue to rise, the need for awareness of programs such as Mount Pleasant Therapeutic Recreation is at an all time high. The organization has approximately 400 participants each year and is actively recruiting more participants. Program options include: swimming, basketball, golf, soccer, kickball, and social and other special events. Although there are a large number of participants already involved in the program, greater involvement and participants give rise to further opportunities such as local and government grants to support future funding, a larger exposure to donors, and also help spread the word about the program, to increase participant count.

Objective
To increase awareness of Mount Pleasant Therapeutic Recreation and reach out to the Charleston community to facilitate recruitment.

Approach
The Scholars attended a practice at Mount Pleasant Therapeutic Recreation to film and interview parents, athletes, and volunteers. Consent was obtained prior to the interviews. Interviewees were asked the following questions:
1. How long have you been with the organization?
2. What are the benefits of participating in this organization?
3. What has been your most memorable moment?
4. Do you have any advice to those considering participating?

Impact
The Scholars created a marketing video that can be distributed widely via social media and targeted to potential stakeholders. The target demographic is parents, potential volunteers, and participants. Increased enrollment in Mount Pleasant Therapeutic Recreation is expected due to these videos being interactive and involved. The testimonials and footage of volunteers and athletes provide a public relations product that incorporates a multimodal aspect that may be more engaging to future parents and enrollees.

Future Directions
The organization plans to establish a social media presence. Increased exposure to the programs offered, through distribution of this video, may increased utilization of these programs. Future work may focus on identification and procurement of large-scale funding opportunities.

REFERENCES
1. Special Olympics-South Carolina
2. www.so-sc.org
3. Town of Mt. Pleasant- tompsc.com
4. https://www.disabilitystatistics.org/reports/acs.cf m?statistic=1