

Mental Health Monday: Bracelet Kits with Kids Initiative

Bill Pollack

This is Show Me Today, the Voice of Missouri. I'm Bill Pollack. Our Mental Health Monday segment sponsored by Show-Me Hope, a crisis counseling program to help people through the pandemic. And, you know, where we've been, at least for the last couple weeks. We've been talking about adults, but the kids have been affected by the pandemic.

Kylie Linberger, a crisis counseling team lead at Preferred Family Healthcare up in north central Missouri in the Kirksville area, joins us. She teamed up with, a sorority at Truman State, and they did some really cool things for grade school kids at the onset of this pandemic. It's been hugely popular. Kylie, welcome to Show Me Today, it's Bracelet Kits for Kids. Explain that.

Kylie Linberger

Yeah. So, my department or my group at Preferred, we teamed up with a sorority that actually I was in when I was in college at Truman called Alpha Sigma Gamma. And pretty much what we did was we asked them to create these kits for kids. They're a service sorority, and so they do a lot of service within our community. And one thing that we found during Covid is kids were getting really bored in our community because they couldn't hang out with each other they were pretty much glued to their tablets or smartphones or whatever they had. And so we tried to think of a way that they could kind of create something on their own, maybe send it to a friend.

And so we partnered with Alpha Sigma Gamma to create these bracelet kits. And they have a piece of paper in them, and it has a QR code that goes to a video of how to make certain bracelets that they can use if they want. And then it has all the materials for the bracelets inside of these kits and we encourage them to send them to friends, to give them to a family member, a sibling, stuff like that, or to keep it for themselves.

So that's pretty much generally what it was. And the way we distributed them we gave them to the YMCA, and they put them in a lot of their food packets that they were distributing. And then we also had a lot of schools call us up and they wanted them for a lot of their kids as well.

Bill Pollock

So how many bracelet kits were made and sent out to kids?

Kylie Linberger

Oh, I want to say upwards of 750 maybe.

Bill Pollock

So this caught on and this was pretty popular?

Kylie Linberger

It did. We actually had to reach back out to the sorority pretty recently to ask if they could make more bracelets for us. So I think we're going to have more in the foreseeable future as well. Yeah.

Bill Pollock

And so when did this all get started?

Kylie Linberger

It started summer of 2021.

Bill Pollock

And so how many schools and how big of an area around Kirksville are you working with?

Kylie Linberger

Yeah, so we actually serve a lot of different counties. We serve 20 counties surrounding Adair County. Our goal is to reach all of them. Most of the bracelets have stayed in Adair or some have gone to Shelby County. But yeah, they're kind of all in that surrounding area.

Bill Pollack

What do the bracelets look like?

Kylie Linberger

Yeah. So there are a lot of different colors, and Alpha Sigma Gamma, does all of those details, but we try to make some so that some are girly colors, some are neutral colors, and some are kind of boy colors. And, they are the string bracelets and it looks like really thin string. You use like a paperclip to tie it all together or you can like put a piece of tape on the table and then go from there. Yeah I don't think they included any buttons in these last ones, but it's pretty much just a string. All different colors. And if the kids are able to pick, they can pick what colors they want.

Bill Pollock

And tell me about Preferred Family Healthcare and how you guys team up with Show-Me Hope.

Kylie Linberger

Yes. So I am specifically in the prevention department, and we are a pretty small department in Kirksville, Missouri, and we actually have the Crisis Counseling Program grant from Show-Me Hope Missouri. And so this grant is pretty much a Covid relief fund grant, that has been extended a few times.

And so we just have a team in our prevention team that is focused on helping the community to build resilience to help them with any other needs that they have as well. With Covid, kind of slowly going away and how we're getting used to Covid, we're focusing a lot on just helping individuals to get maybe rent assistance. We're really trying to help kids in schools to build I don't know if you've heard of 40 developmental assets, but we're trying to help them to pretty much get assets in order to create positive outcomes in their lives.

We have a very broad partnership because we do love to help a lot of the other grants in our prevention department out and so our main goal of our CCP grant with Show-Me Hope is to build our community up as much as we can, really.

Bill Pollock

How many people are reaching out for the service? Pandemic related? Still quite a bit?

Kylie Linberger

Yeah, yeah. And it's mostly due to rental assistance or utility assistance with all the bills going up. And we even had a funeral fund for Covid. So, if someone's relative or someone that they knew passed away due to Covid, they could reach out to us we could give them the assistance that they need and everything would be paid for by the government.

And so we pretty much have more people reaching out to us due to financial concerns right now. We have pretty much all the resources that you could ever need. As long as people are in our county, those in the counties, there's other CCP teams that cover those counties as well. So pretty much wherever anyone is in the state, we can direct them to any CCP services and resources that we have.

Bill Pollock

You know, they always say kids are resilient, but how have you seen kids handling this pandemic?

Kylie Linberger

I actually work part time at a hospital in Saint Louis, and so I see a lot of different sides of kids handling the pandemic. Initially when I was back in Kirksville, I realized really fast that kids, and I'm also going to school for Child Life so I'm getting my master's in that so I kind of see things in a different perspective, but kids need that social ability in their life. They need hands on activities. If you put a screen in front of them, it'll give their attention for a little bit. But at the end of the day, they need face to face interaction with other kids.

And so especially under ten those kids from the start of the pandemic I think there's a lot of confusion from them. They didn't really understand why they couldn't go out, why they couldn't go see friends, why they couldn't really even go to the grocery store. And that was really hard on them.

So as a CCP response, we've tried to make coloring books, we tried these bracelet kids. We've tried so many things just to help kids to not be so bored at home because they might not, I realize that a lot of them didn't understand the pandemic, and they were just relying on their parents to kind of explain to them how the entire world is going in a shutdown, which didn't make sense to a lot of parents either. And so for these kids, it was just a lot of confusion. And what I eventually saw later, too, with the pandemic even coming to a little bit slower of a spread, kids were still really frustrated because it all depend on the parent too. If one parent's lenient and the other one's a little more strict, the child with a strict parent is just they don't understand. They still are frustrated.

Bill Pollock

No I mean that's you know, that's really an interesting point that you, you bring up and parents are trying to do what's best for their kids. And some have different views. And so you see your, your friend doing something or being allowed to do something that maybe you're not. Yeah. That can cause a lot of stress.

Kylie Linberger

Yeah. Exactly. So these kids, even though they might not have realized how stressed out they were from it, just they're subconscious in their subconscious and, like, not, I don't know what what I'm trying to think of, but without realizing how stressed they were, the pandemic had a huge effect on kids. Their social abilities, even their like gross motor skills, their physical abilities. They couldn't go outside and play sports with other kids anymore. They couldn't go to the playground like play playgrounds were put up with caution tape. It hindered children's ability to be kids, which is really, really sad. At the end of the day.

Bill Pollock

Well, let's talk about your, sorority sisters at Truman State at Alpha Sigma Gamma and how have they benefited from being a part of this and helping kids? Did you see any growth from them?

Kylie Linberger

Yes. So every time I've reached out, they've always been so excited. All those girls in that sorority have some of the biggest hearts that I've ever seen. And so initially when we reached out, it wasn't even a question of if they were going to help or not. They were ready to go to the store and get supplies, and start making these bracelets as soon as possible. And I have noticed a few of them actually work at the YMCA where we were giving the bracelets to, and they were able to see some of the actual impacts that the bracelets were making, like that, along with the food that these families were getting. The kids are so excited because now they had an activity to do. And so with this partnership, they were able to really see the difference they were making in the community, and they were the behind the scenes of it all. They spent

hours making these bracelet kits, and they need service hours at the end of the semester. But a lot of them do it just because they want to. And so through this project, they love that they were really able to see the difference they were making, the smiles that they were putting on children's faces. We tried to share, one of the schools that we gave them to locally, they sent us a lot of pictures, and so we tried to share the pictures with them. It was really good for them to really see the difference that they were making because it's easy to not see the difference with a lot of service and community activities, but this one with the kids I think when you mentioned kids that pulls on a lot of heart strings. And so they were amazing. They jumped in immediately and were willing to help us with absolutely anything with these kids.

Bill Pollock

Yeah. What a great feel good story to have college kids reaching out and helping younger kids through this, and just therapy for everybody. Kylie Linberger, crisis counseling team lead at Preferred Family Health Care. Thanks for joining us here on Show Me Today, the Voice of Missouri.