



REPORT

From the office of the...
SWHAT Coordinator

TO: Members of the Executive Board
FROM: Vithuyan Sugumar
SUBJECT: SWHAT Year in Review Report
DATE: March 30 2023

Yearplan Update

SWHAT was inactive from March 2020 to February 2022, a hiatus that was longer than any other MSU service. During this time, the student body had changed drastically, and many students who knew about the service were no longer at McMaster. This meant that we were now serving a completely new population of students, most of which did not know the service even existed. While the SWHAT team worked hard in 2021-2022 school year to restart SWHAT and reestablish the foundation of the service, I approached this school year with the mindset of building a sustainable team with a high retention rate, and creating a service that students not only knew about, but also viewed as a team full of a fun people who were committed to making the McMaster community a safer place. As my time with SWHAT comes to an end, I am extremely pleased to say that as a result of a fantastic executive and volunteer team, this vision has become a reality.

Events, Projects, & Activities

General Service Usage

SWHAT is currently in its seventh month of operations and as of March 26th, 2023, SWHAT has completed 726 walks for the school year. When I stepped into this role, I had high expectations for what service usage could look like this year. However, the engagement we've had with our service surpassed even my high expectations within the first couple nights.

2021-2022 School Year

Month	# of walks	Walks per night
February	8	0.53
March	28	0.90
April	12	0.46

2022-2023 School Year

Month	# of walks	Walks per night
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September (with Welcome Week)	97	2.93
October (did not operate during reading week)	88	3.87
November (Walkathon)	208	6.93
December (did not operate during holiday break)	65	3.09
January (did not operate during holiday break)	80	3.63
February (did not operate during holiday break)	104	5.2
March (up to the 26 th)	85	3.26

Overall, SWHAT completed 0.67 walks per night in the 2021-2022 school year and 4.15 walks per night in the 2022-2023 school year. This presents a 619% increase in usage from last year to this year. In fact, SWHAT has had as high as 18 walks on some nights!

Projects & Events: Executive Hiring

While this was definitely a fun process for me, I did not anticipate how long it would take to complete everything. I started executive hiring in early June; however, I think it should be done earlier given that volunteer hiring must begin right after, and the fact that there should be many more applicants this time around. Nevertheless though, I think the executive hiring process went well, and I am extremely happy and grateful to have hired such a fantastic and dedicated executive team.

Projects & Events: Walker Hiring

Walker hiring was a very tedious ordeal for me. Since executive hiring started fairly late, I had to come up with the application questions and marking rubric by myself, which was a lot of work on my end. Furthermore, it lacked the executives' perspectives, which would have made the questions that much better. Nevertheless, we received 132 applications across both hiring periods for a team of ~70 volunteers, which was shocking for me. I am expecting much more next year.

The interview structure (two execs interviewing one applicant in a 20 minute interview) worked well for this year's hiring process, but it may be a little bit more difficult next year. It may be beneficial to fast-track previous volunteers or readjust the interview process a little bit more. Additionally, I made a waitlist with 4 applicants this year, and found that to not be enough – in future years it will be critical to have a longer waitlist.

Projects & Events: SWHATted at Mac/Walker Testimonials

SWHATted at Mac was an initiative that SWHAT has done previously and continues this year during walker hiring. For SWHATted at Mac, we used returning volunteers who were already hired during the summer. These volunteers submitted a headshot of themselves and responded to a prompt we gave them. The Walker Testimonials, happening right now are a little bit different. Headshots were taken of volunteers during our photoshoots, and each of them were prompted to share their favourite commuting song, and their favourite SWHAT moment.

Both helped “humanize” the service and show the kind and unique personalities we have on SWHAT. It also showed how fun it is to be on the team and enticed more people to apply or ask about the service. Finally, it helped boost our social media engagement as the students in the photos would share to their story, and their friends would comment. Overall, I believe this is something that needs to be continued for next year.

Projects & Events: Volunteer Socials

We had three volunteer socials this year – a volunteer paint night, a coffeehouse, and an upcoming bonfire. While the bonfire has not happened yet, our socials have averaged about ~20 volunteers, which shows that there is a high level of engagement from volunteers with our socials. Our volunteers have also had a lot of fun with them. Furthermore, our VA Executive (Jenny) did a great job of organizing a variety of socials catered towards a variety of interests, which ensured that volunteers felt included. The SWHAT bonfire has become a SWHAT tradition; however, I am looking forward to seeing the creativity next year's Coordinator exercises towards the volunteer socials.

Projects & Events: Intramurals

SWHAT had two intramural teams this year – a SWHodgeball (dodgeball) team and a SWHoccer (soccer) team. Intramurals provided volunteers with an opportunity to meet weekly and bond outside the context of the volunteer shifts. This helped build team dynamic and definitely brought the team closer together. Even volunteers who chose not to participate in the intramurals were cheering us on and this increased team spirit. Despite not winning in either league, intramurals were a tremendous success, and should be continued next year.

Projects & Events: Giveaway Months

This was a continuation of an initiative SWHAT did in the past and continued this year. Considering SWHAT had a lot of material left from prior to the pandemic, using this to promote the service was effective. We asked the MSU Communications Officer (Will) to create some product shots for us, and this was extremely helpful in creating an enticing image for the giveaways. Overall, the service received a lot of engagement from these giveaways, and if the products to do so still exist, should definitely be something that is continued next year.

Projects & Events: Walk-a-thon/Can-a-thon

SWHAT's first Walk-a-thon since March 2020 was extremely successful, with the team completing over 208 walks during this month. During this month, for each walk that SWHAT received, we donated \$1 to the Native Women's Centre. We benefitted from the numerous promotional opportunities we received, whether that be promotions on the Archway channel, an Instagram reel that was made in collaboration with the Silhouette, our increased shift stories, and word of mouth. Overall, this was extremely successful, and at least one Walk-a-thon should be completed by SWHAT going forward. This was an initiative that not only brought the SWHAT team together to achieve a specific goal, but also brought the McMaster community together for a good cause.

Can-a-thon, which is currently happening right now is similar to Walk-a-thon, except for every walk that SWHAT receives this month, we are donating a can to the Community Fridge at McMaster. We have been getting decent engagement (85 walks), but definitely less engagement during this campaign, and this can potentially be attributed to a few factors. For example, walker fatigue in sharing our campaign, fatigue from the McMaster community (non-users who may have used the service during the first walk-a-thon to contribute to a good cause), and the poor weather to start the month of March. Additionally, as this was a collaboration alongside FCC, it may have helped to initiate these discussions even earlier to ensure the logistics between both services were finalized in time. Hopefully going forward future campaigns in the winter will utilize different methods of promotions to tackle the lessened engagement.

Projects & Events: Wellbeing Week

Wellbeing Week was one of SWHAT's largest successes this year. This was initially launched as Community Safety Week as a collaboration between

SWHAT, EFRT, MACycle, WGEN, and SCSN. However, it was completely rebranded and restructured to better reflect the needs of the current student body. Rebranded as Wellbeing Week, this was a collaboration between SWHAT, EFRT, SHEC, FCC, and WGEN. This collaboration was initiated and spearheaded by SWHAT, and considering SWHAT does not have a dedicated events team, I am so proud of SWHAT's PR executives for leading this campaign, which had 300 different students across all 5 events. It was also such a great opportunity to work with 4 other fantastic services, and learn about their perspectives of wellbeing! Now that the foundation is made, it would definitely be a good idea to initiate this collaboration earlier in future years to ensure that all the logistics are finalized in time.

SWHAT's specific event this year was a collaboration with the MSU's VP Education, Elizabeth. Our event, Housing Hinge was designed to help students meet potential housemates for their off-campus housing. This event went extremely well and had a turnout of over 70 students. Many students came up to us during and after the event to tell us how much they appreciated this event, and how much it helped them. Furthermore, it was fantastic to see volunteers thrive in situations that fall out of what they are expected to do – this event would truly not have been possible without their help, and they did such a great job. Furthermore, many students were able to see how fantastic our volunteers were.

Projects & Events: Scheduling Changes

Some changes were made to the ways we scheduled walkers that have not been done previously. For example, SWHAT would previously follow 4 walkers on early and 4 walkers on late pattern despite demand and day of the week. I decided that it would be more dynamic with this and approach the month with demand in mind. For example, we decided to schedule less walkers on weekends, and more on weekdays, which better helped us keep up with the demands of the service.

Additionally, something that was newly implemented in November was the Walk Buddy System, which was created as a result of concerns by volunteers who expressed that they would feel more comfortable getting home after a shift if someone lived near them. While this was piloted this year, and had success in making the volunteers feel more comfortable coming to shift, it did cause a lot of logistical complications for our Volunteer Logistics and Dispatch execs. As a result, in future years, it may be helpful to find a way to modify these.

Outreach & Promotions

Summary

Promotions has been a strong point of success for SWHAT this year, and our social media and substantial in-person promotional efforts to start the year have

done a lot to bring the service where it is today. As for in-person promotional efforts, SWHAT promoted themselves at the SSC Welcome Week Event, Clubsfest, and Meet the Services Fair, and the opportunity to hand out promotional items like stickers and rave cards to start the year were effective to get the word out.

Online, our promotions executives Vivien and Celina, worked extremely hard to boost our following and engagement. While we continued previous promotional efforts that were done prior to the COVID-19 pandemic, such as our giveaways and SWHATted at Mac. However, a few new initiatives were implemented on our social media to boost engagement. The biggest success for SWHAT on social media this semester has been the shift stories. While this initially started as an interesting way to promote fall walker hiring, we realized how effective this was at showing how fun and kind the SWHAT team is. Service users and other students often reply to our stories and say how much they love our team and enjoy watching them. I'm hoping this is something we can continue next year. Additionally, our team photoshoots afforded us many "stock" images, which provided us with more social media content to use – the team also really enjoyed taking them.

Outside of social media, we used additional channels of communication to promote the service, which helped. For example, we promoted our hiring on Discord, which helped boost applicants, especially of first-year students. Additionally, for Walk-a-thon, we reached out to Archway to promote the graphics. Furthermore, having many Community Advisors on the SWHAT team helped extend outreach to students in residence. Given that SWHAT has a large, diverse team, we were able to extend our outreach to many different groups within the student body. Finally, there is no way to gauge how successful the window banner facing the MUSC-Mills Plaza was, but I think it did help as well.

Our campaigns had also unintentionally boosted service engagement. For example, after Wellbeing Week, we had a huge surge in service usage. While this campaign was done with the intention of collaborating with other services to help students, it also made students more aware of our service.

Overall, SWHAT's PR team has had a huge impact on SWHAT's success. Furthermore, I am extremely grateful for having a passionate volunteer base who are always willing to talk about their involvement with SWHAT to their peers.

Promotional Materials

Here are some of our most successful posts and stories this year.



Post Stats (as of March 27 2023)

- Instagram
 - Likes: 399
 - Comments: 10
 - Shares: 18
 - Saves: 1
 - Accounts Reached: 2900



Post Stats (as of March 27, 2022)

- Instagram
 - Likes: 299
 - Comments: 258
 - Shares: 128
 - Saves: 11
 - Accounts Reached: 3488



Post Stats (as of March 27, 2022)

- Instagram
 - Likes: 217
 - Comments: 9
 - Shares: 110
 - Saves: 28
 - Accounts Reached: 3555



Post Stats (as of March 27, 2022)

- Instagram
 - Likes: 215
 - Comments: 7
 - Shares: 197
 - Saves: 66
 - Accounts Reached: 3122

Instagram Follower Growth from Report-to-Report

Start	R1	R2	R3	R4	R5	R6	R7	Now
1814	1879	1904	3123	3215	3245	3434	3629	3620

Finances

Budget Summary

Budget wise, SWHAT did not have too many worries this year. I was initially concerned about the promotional budget. However, we were creative with our budget this year and repurposed many of our old graphics, which gave us more money to pursue other avenues of engagement. Overall, I think SWHAT is in great financial position. While some purchases still remain, I plan to fill in all the

purchases and update them all by the time it is time for the new Coordinator to transition.

SWHAT				
<i>EXPENDITURE</i>				
<i>ACCOUNT CODE</i>	<i>ITEM</i>	<i>BUDGET / COST</i>	<i>PO SUBMITTED (DATE)</i>	<i>PO APPROVED</i>
5003-0117	SWHT - OFFICE SUPPLIES	\$1,000.00		
	Food basics - september	\$70.00	September 8 2022	128275
	Food basics - october	\$80.00	October 21 2022	128454
	Food basics - december	\$50.00	November 28 2022	128585
	food basics - january	\$100.00		
	food basics - february	\$150.00		
	TOTAL SPENT IN LINE	\$450.00		
	REMAINING IN LINE	\$550.00		
6102-0117	SWHT - ANNUAL CAMPAIGNS	\$300.00		
	Walkathon	\$208.00	December 15 2022	128674
	TOTAL SPENT IN LINE	\$208.00		
	REMAINING IN LINE	\$92.00		
6494-0117	SWHT - VOLUNTEER RECOGNITION	\$1,500.00		
	Intramural Team	\$110.00	September 8 2022	128276
	snacks for Volunteer social	\$60.00	October 21 2022	128454
	intramural team - winter	\$75.00	November 14 2022	128530
	starbucks gift card	\$30.00	November 28 2022	128584
	pizza	\$100.00	November 28 2022	128594
	Holiday Cards	\$33.66	November 18 2022	128556
	sweaters	\$1,100.00		
	thank you cards	\$22.00		
	TOTAL SPENT IN LINE	\$1,530.66		
	REMAINING IN LINE	-\$30.66		

6501-0117	SWHT - ADVERTISING & PROMOTION	\$1,000.00		
	Silhouette Ad	\$50.00	November 14 2022	128529
	Clubsfest Booth	\$20.00	July 29 2022	128131
	Stickers + Rave Cards	\$317.00		
	Window Banner	\$99.00		
	wellness graphic	\$120.00		
	walkathon	\$15.00		
	Giveaways	\$100.00		
	Walkathon graphic	\$55.00		
	TOTAL SPENT IN LINE	\$776.00		
	REMAINING IN LINE	\$224.00		
6633-0117	SWHT - TEAM UNIFORMS	\$800.00		
	sweaters	\$800.00		
	TOTAL SPENT IN LINE	\$800.00		
	REMAINING IN LINE	\$0.00		
6804-0117	SWHT - VOLUNTEER TRAINING	\$500.00		
	TOTAL SPENT IN LINE	\$0.00		
	REMAINING IN LINE	\$500.00		
6901-0117	SWHT - TRAVEL & CONFERENCE	\$500.00		
	uber	\$500.00		
	TOTAL SPENT IN LINE	\$500.00		
	REMAINING IN LINE	\$0.00		
TOTALS				
TOTAL BUDGETED DISCRETIONARY SPENDING		\$5,600.00		

TOTAL ACTUAL DISCRETIONARY SPENDING	\$3,764.66
REMAINING DISCRETIONARY SPENDING	\$1,335.34

Executives & Volunteers

Executives: I am genuinely so grateful and lucky to have such a dedicated, passionate, and committed group of executives. SWHAT would not have had the success it had this year if it was not for their hard work and willingness to bring the service to new heights. Our Volunteer Affairs Executive (Jenny) went above and beyond in her role to plan four socials for SWHAT this year, as well as leading (and captaining!) both SWHAT intramural teams. Our PR Executives (Vivien and Celina) surpassed my lofty expectations for promotions with their social media ideas, as well as spearheading an entire campaign in Wellbeing Week. Our Volunteer Logistics (Nicholas and Shannon) as well as our Dispatch Executive (Bailey) got the schedules ready on time and ensured we were adapting to the new scheduling changes (volunteer #s on shift adjustments and Walk Buddy System). Most importantly, they made the volunteers on shift feel comfortable, and made SWHAT an experience that many of our volunteers truly pleasure. They truly made my job so much easier, and it was an absolute pleasure being able to witness their growth over the past year. It is going to be extremely hard knowing I will no longer be working alongside some of the best leaders McMaster has to offer.

I usually held executive meetings once a month; while this may not be a popular method of going about things, I personally felt that for a service like SWHAT it was not necessary to meet too often. The executives were independent in their roles for the most part, and I worked with them individually to support them as needed. The monthly meetings were to act as an operations check-in to consolidate any observations and keep the team up to date on what each executive group was planning.

Volunteers: As great as the executive team was, the volunteer team was just as fantastic! I was kind of nervous to see how the volunteer team turned out. However, I am pleased to say I had such a great volunteer team. Something I really enjoyed about the volunteer team is how diverse it is. While this helps with service representation and comfortability of service users, I personally really liked this because it offered me so many different perspectives. Coming to shift was so much fun because I have always walked out learning an abundance of new lessons and perspectives which have not only helped me to improve the service but has just really helped me outside of SWHAT. Beyond this, I really appreciated how dedicated the volunteer team is. They would often pick up extra shifts without expecting anything in return, they would always be quick to support one another, celebrate our accomplishments, always be willing to record a shift

story for our Instagram (no matter how wild the idea) and go above and beyond in volunteering for initiatives like our in-person booths and Wellbeing Week. They have showed up consistently, and many service users have expressed to me how fun our volunteers are. This team has bought into SWHAT's mission, and I hope to see many of them on the service next year.

Despite this I did see some volunteer burnout near the end, where volunteers are starting to miss shifts and are not responding to executives or myself on email or Facebook. The lack of communication has been frustrating at times, and while morale remains high for most of the team, it should be a priority to ensure that retention remains consistent so we can continue to serve the McMaster community.

Successes

1. **Executive Team:** I have elaborated on this in great detail in the previous section, but I just wanted to reiterate that SWHAT's executive and volunteer team were absolutely fantastic. I have never seen a group of people so dedicated to a common cause.
2. **Social Media:** A lot of our social media efforts did not go unnoticed by members of the McMaster community. Many service users, as well as our followers have applauded us on our social media. In fact, many students have personally told me how SWHAT is one of their favourite accounts to follow. On the social media front, our shift stories have been one of our largest successes; not only do people love watching them, but our volunteers love also making them.
3. **Culture:** To any team, culture is one of the most important ingredients to success; however, in my experience, this is something that has often been overlooked. However, setting a fun, but committed culture was a top priority for me. I believe this is something we accomplished this year. Having many opportunities for our volunteers to interact with each other and the executives dismantled many of the implicit power dynamics that existed between the executives and volunteers. While volunteers still respected the executives and their roles, they also felt comfortable bringing up any concerns or ideas to the executive team. This is a big reason many initiatives such as the Walk Buddy System was implemented. I also wanted to set a culture that was fun, and something volunteers can identify with. While our phrase of the year, "having that dawg in us" started as a joke, it is something that our volunteers have embraced, and makes the volunteer team feel like a family. This culture has also resulted in many friends of the volunteers expressing how much they want to join SWHAT. I am so proud of the culture we have built within this team.

Current Challenges

1. **Long-Term Location:** Something that was a goal of mine early in the year was finding a long-term location for SWHAT. Ultimately, my desire to do so was derailed by the need to reestablish the foundation for the service to thrive. However, having a long-term, permanent location will not only aid with our promotional efforts, but would also allow us to have a space that our team can decorate and identify with. Unfortunately, Karen from MAPS was unable to make a guarantee that SWHAT could use this space in the long-term. This is a reason I started to look into the possibility of occupying the Campus Connect space; however, after collecting opinions of my volunteers and executives, it seemed that they would be more content staying in MAPS. However, trying to find more of a long-term space is something that is a goal of next year's SWHAT Coordinator. I am hoping they can make progress on this.
2. **Volunteer Retention and Burnout:** Slowly, we have had numerous volunteers resign for SWHAT as the demands of school and life took precedence. Furthermore, many volunteers have not shown up for shifts, or have shown up extremely late. While this is definitely understandable, the lack of communication has been difficult at times and has put a strain on the service and the volunteers who do show up. It should be a priority of next year's PTM to ensure that volunteer morale can remain consistent throughout the entire year.

Miscellaneous

It is shocking for me to think about the fact that this will be the last time I will be writing one of these reports. I am so grateful to all the staff within the MSU who have worked hard to help support SWHAT in our goals this year. Your efforts have not gone unnoticed, and I am truly grateful. This role has challenged me in many ways, but also has provided me with many more opportunities and has allowed me to grow as a leader. As the time to pass on the role of SWHAT Coordinator nears, I just want to say I am truly honoured to have had the opportunity to work with such a fantastic group of people. Thank you so much!