

Leaving a Positive Footprint in Rural Communities:

Buckle Up Phone Down (BUPD) Engagement Strategies



One month. Five counties. Dozens of conversations.

A regional movement built through personal connections.



Who We Are

- NWMO RCOG is one of 19 regional planning organizations chartered by the state of Missouri.
- A rural 5 county area - Atchison, Gentry, Holt, Nodaway, and Worth
- Transportation, economic/development, grant writing and management as well as solid waste management
- Thriving and growing Roadway Safety program

How Rural are we?

Jurisdictions we work with range from a town with a population of five to a city with a population of 10,600

Average population density is 15 persons per square mile

Region contains 2,645 square miles of land combined



What's in store

- Getting Started – Finding Your Why
- Understanding the Rural Landscape
- Public Engagement Activities
- Results and Regional Impact
- Pivot Points: Strategic Decision-Making
- Effective Strategies and Lessons Learned



“Your playbook for how to turn small efforts into meaningful impact.”

Define Your Project / Set Goals

Decide on your goals and then brainstorm how to get there.

What is your “Why?”

Take some time to think about the why behind the initiative.

Motivation through a Meaningful Connection/Personal Story

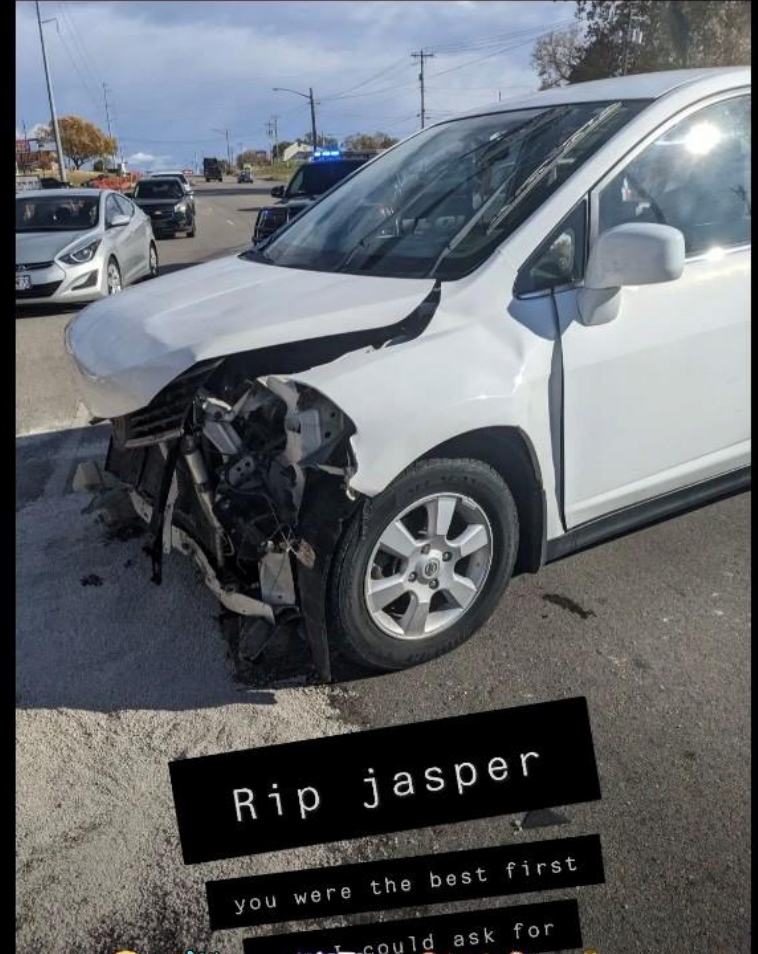
If the cause doesn't mean something to you, it won't mean something to them. Borrow a story if need be.

Consider Challenges, but Don't Get Stuck There

Sometimes you need to pivot. Be flexible!



A Personal Story



◇ 《Emily Pearce hah...
4h ago from Camera Roll



— Understanding the Rural Landscape

Challenges and Opportunities in Rural Outreach

Dispersed Populations

Spread-out, low-density populations across wide distances complicate consistent and timely message delivery.

Limited Media Access

Traditional and digital media reach is limited in rural areas, making it harder to deliver messages through conventional channels.

Strength of Close-Knit Communities

Tight community bonds enable effective word-of-mouth communication and foster strong local support.

Tailored Rural Strategies

Understanding rural dynamics helps tailor safety campaigns for meaningful community impact.



Public Engagement Activities



Engagement Touchpoints

Roadway Safety Palooza Kick-off

Event on September 27, 2025, attracted 200 personal encounters to raise awareness before the campaign push in October.

Toolkit Deployment

Released before October 24, providing customizable graphics and materials empowering local partners to creatively contribute.

Social Media Blitz

A full-day campaign highlighted events with videos and social media content to increase engagement and visibility.

BUPD Day Activities

October 29 featured a 'Northwest Pledge Flash Mob' collecting 40 pledges and a community art project from pledge cards.





Boots on the Ground Approach

Building Local Pride through Personalized City Visits

Face-to-face engagement fostered ownership and pride among officials, leading to increased social media followers and advocacy.

Visible Community Campaign

City halls, courthouses local businesses displayed signs turning the campaign into a celebrated and visible event across the region.



Social Media Strategy and Metrics

Community Engagement Growth

The BUPD Palooza Facebook Group launched and grew to 61 members featuring daily interactive posts and videos.

Page Activity

Over a 100 posts across platforms generated 452 reactions, boosting page interactions by 36% in under a month.

Authentic Local Content

Sharing real community experiences and challenging their neighbors and friends fostered stronger connections and higher participation.

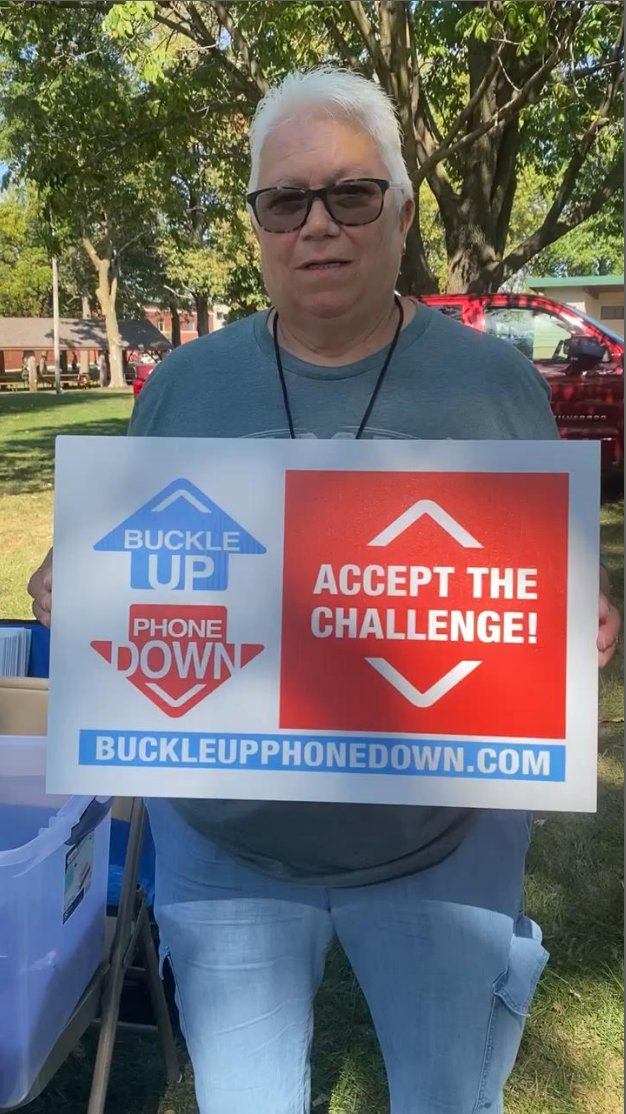
Follower Growth

The initiative also produced 12 new page follows for our main NWMO RCOG page.



— Results and Regional Impact

Performance Area	Metric	Target	Actual	Outcome
Community Engagement	BUPD Palooza Facebook Followers	10	61	Created an active online community with daily engagement
Content Production	Daily Posts Leading up to BUPD Day	24	72+	Exceeded goal by at least 200%
BUPD Challenge Videos	Videos made	10	40+	Partners really helped this number soar
Page Performance	Page interactions in less than one month's time	--	36%	Audience activity
Organizational Growth	New NWMO RCOG Followers	--	12	Expanded the reach of the NWMO RCOG Facebook Page



Hey Missouri,

Keep your eyes on the road,
not on your phone.

#BuckleUpPhoneDown
#BUPD
#PutItAwayOrPay



NORTHWEST MISSOURI
REGIONAL COUNCIL
OF GOVERNMENTS



Pivot Points: Strategic Decision- Making

Adapting Plans for Greater Impact

Collaboration Over Competition

The team chose to support a statewide art contest instead of competing, highlighting collaboration benefits.

Evaluating Event Engagement

Team analysis showed parade participation had lower engagement opportunities guiding the team to lean other strategy components.

Focused Resource Allocation

Resources were directed to decorating the pocket park to maximize visibility and impact.



Effective Strategies and Lessons Learned



Key Takeaways

Engage Where People Are

Leverage face-to-face interaction to connect directly with community leaders and residents.

Blend Digital and Personal Engagement

Combine online tools with attendance at local events and community spaces to effectively amplify engagement efforts.

Empower Local Champions

Support local leaders like City Council members, business owners and campus partners to sustain momentum and expand reach.

Celebrate Participation Publicly

Document achievements through social media and events by giving a shout out and acknowledging their support.

Key Takeaways

Keep a List

File away all strategies, brain dump docs, ideas – not just the ones you used.

Reflect

Sit down with your team and talk about what worked and what didn't.

Celebrate Small Wins

No win is too small – acknowledge it.

Refine and Rework

For recurring events use what you learn to make next time even better.



Final Thoughts

Leaving a positive footprint means more than signs and pledges – it's about building relationships that make safety part of our local identity.

And ...

Never underestimate the power of showing up in person.





Get in Touch

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