



ELI HART MEMORIAL PLAYGROUND

Business Solutions Project

Olivia Adam and Gabriella Larsen

Mound Westonka DECA
Mound Westonka High School
5905 Sunnyfield Rd E
Minnetrista, MN 55364
United States
April 28-30, 2024



ELI HART
MEMORIAL
PLAYGROUND

TABLE OF CONTENTS

I. EXECUTIVE SUMMARY..... 1

II. INITIATING..... 4

A. Statement of the problem.....4

B. Project scope.....5

III. PLANNING AND ORGANIZING..... 6

A. Project goals.....6

B. Human resource management plan.....7

C. Schedule.....8

D. Quality management plan10

E. Risk management plan10

F. Proposed project budget11

IV. EXECUTION.....12

V. MONITORING AND CONTROLLING..16

A. Monitoring.....16

B. Controlling17

VI. CLOSING THE PROJECT.....18

A. Evaluation of key metrics18

B. Lessons learned19

D. Recommendations for future projects.....20

VII. BIBLIOGRAPHY.....20



I. EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Initiating







The **Eli Hart Memorial Foundation** was created by three Mound Westonka school district parents, Ben Cooliani, Jen Houghton, and Tiffany Beitler, after the tragic passing of young Eli Hart. These parents were devoted to positively changing our community after Eli’s death. The foundation focused on building something unique: The **Eli Hart Memorial Playground**. This playground will be inclusive for children with various disabilities as it is compliant with the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) and includes sensory features.

Overarching Problem	Project Scope	
Raising \$285,000 for the Eli Hart Memorial Playground.	Purpose	Rationale
	The purpose of this project was to support this foundation with numerous activities to help accomplish their fundraising goal.	The rationale for this project is the hope that the tragedy of Eli's death can lead to positive change in our community.
Sub-Problems	Expected Benefits	
Lack of Continued Monetary Support	The expected benefits of this project are that our community will have a new beautiful playground in memorial of the beautiful Eli Hart.	
Approval from the Mound City Council		
Lack of support from communities outside the Mound Westonka School district		

Planning and Organizing

SMART Goals:

E Earn: Fundraise \$285,000 by February 1st, 2024 .	L Learn: Educate 1,000 individuals about the current issues within the foster care system by February 15th.	I Impact: Receive approval from the City of Mound for an inclusive playground by December 31st
---	---	--

Schedule	Human Resources Team		
<p>Listed below are the major milestones that our team completed. These events contributed to the goal’s attainment. A detailed schedule can be seen on Page 8.</p> <p>July Milestones:</p> <p>Spirit of the Lakes Festival (July 12th)</p> <p>August Milestones:</p> <p>Westonka Dog Day’s (August 12th)</p> <p>Corks for a Cause Wine Event (August 12th)</p> <p>Eli Hart Football Game (August 31st)</p> <p>January Milestones</p> <p>Eli Hart Winter Wonderland (January 21st)</p> <p>THE FUTURE (Spring 2024)</p> <p>The Eli Hart Memorial Playground BUILD</p>	DECA Advisors	Project Managers	Founders
			
			 

A detailed team layout can be seen on Page 7

Quality Management Plan

To ensure quality in our project management approach, these key metrics helped us track if our goals were met.

E Earn: Fundraise \$285,000 by February 1st, 2024	Track funds by keeping a strict budget and projected revenue to ensure this goal is met.
L Learn: Educate 1,000 individuals about the current issues within the foster care system by February 15th.	Track the attendance at each of our events and each person that we educate about the issues we are trying to address.
I Impact: Receive approval from the City of Mound for an inclusive playground by December 31st.	This objective will be tracked based on whether or not the City of Mound approves the park at each of our monthly meetings.

Risk Management Plan

Risk	Calculated Risk
Community Push-back	Moderate
Saturated Community Funding	High
Inflation in Playground Price	Low

*A more detailed response to these risks can be seen on Page 10

Proposed Budget

Activity	Price	<u>Rationale</u>
Bracelet-Making Materials	\$34.99	Bracelet Materials: Allowed our team to produce a tangible item to incentivize donations.
Bandanas	\$45.89	Bandanas: Created as a tangible item to sell at Westonka Dog Days.
Cricket Vinyl	\$33.67	Cricket Vinyl: Used to add logos to bandanas and create stickers for football game.
Pizza	\$64.99	Pizza and Hot Cocoa: Provided for children at the Eli Hart Winter Wonderland event.
Art's and Craft Supplies	\$17.99	Arts and Crafts Supplies: Provided materials for a craft project for children to do at the Winter Wonderland Fundraiser.
Hot Cocoa	Donated	
Total Cost of Activities	\$197.53	

Execution

Spirit of the Lakes

Earn: To work towards fulfilling this goal, our team raised **\$2,327** at this festival.

Learn: Taught **349 people** about the rationale and meaning behind the foundation.

Impact: Received strong support from the community to advocate for approval.

Westonka Dog Days

Earn: To work towards fulfilling this goal, our team raised **\$1,980** at this event.

Learn: Taught **307 people** about the rationale and meaning behind the foundation.

Impact: Networked with community members to receive approval support.

Corks for a Cause

Earn: To work towards fulfilling this goal our team raised **\$78,226** at this event.

Learn: Taught **227 people** about the rationale and meaning behind the foundation.

Impact: Networked with well-known community to receive approval support.

Eli Hart Football Game

Earn: To work towards fulfilling this goal, our team raised **\$785** at this festival.

Learn: Taught **349 people** about the rationale and meaning behind the foundation.

Impact: Received strong support from the community to advocate for approval.

Winter Wonderland

Earn: To work towards fulfilling this goal our team raised **\$620** at this event.

Learn: Taught **307 people** about the rationale and meaning behind the foundation.

Impact: Networked with community members to receive approval support.

Eli Hart Park BUILD

Though this event is in the future, it is vital to mention its significance. The park build will occur sometime in the Spring of 2024 depending on when the ground thaws. This playground will be built by members of the community and the Westonka School District.

Monitoring and Controlling

Monitoring

Schedule: Our team met every Tuesday throughout the summer and school year to discuss our progress.

We met once or twice a month with the foundation to discuss the upcoming events and progress.

Project Management Tools: Our team used the platform *ClickUp* to track our upcoming meetings and to-do list tasks

Budget: Our committee kept the funds in a separate personalized bank account, so our team knew exactly how much we still needed to fundraise. Our team and the Eli Hart founders updated an expense tracker regularly.

Controlling

Issue	Response to Issue
Playground approval from the City of Mound	Our team had to complete multiple park renderings to satisfy the council's needs. The playground was eventually passed 3-2.
Inflation of playground pieces	Because of the inflated prices, our team had to change the final budget price to \$279,240 to ensure that enough money would be raised.
Unexpected high shipping costs	Because of the substantial increase, our team had to rethink the playground design so that the total would still be within the budget.
Lack of intangible donations	Our team created Eli Hart bracelets, merchandise, and bandanas for the event fundraising booth.

Closing the Project

E **Earn:** Fundraise **\$285,000** by **February 1st, 2024** **\$320,645 Raised**

L **Learn:** Educate **1,000** individuals about the current issues within the foster care system by **February 15th.** **6,651 Educated**

I **Impact:** Receive approval from the City of Mound for an inclusive playground by **December 31st.** **3-2 Approval**

Lessons Learned

Have a laid-out purpose for the partnership so the company understands your role.

Be open to new and innovative fundraising opportunities for the community.

Ensure equal communication across all platforms and teams to ensure no miscommunication.

Recommendations for Future projects

Ensure that events are in the process of planning at least a month before they occur.

Be passionate about project management for all events.

Determine the strengths of each individual and use them to strengthen the team.

II. INITIATING

Eli's Story

Eli was a bright and happy young child who attended kindergarten at Shirley Hills Elementary School in Mound, Minnesota. Eli had a giant, toothless smile, always filled with laughter and jokes. His favorite colors were green and gold. His classmates described him as a playful and courageous young boy who enjoyed swinging for the treetops, playing tag, and hanging from the monkey bars. Eli had a strong connection with his father, Tory Hart. Together, they enjoyed playing with cars, doing art, reading books, and watching movies. However, they enjoyed exploring the outdoors most, especially playgrounds.

Tory Hart had been previously fighting for legal custody over Eli from his mother, Julissa Thaler. Eli's mother struggled with various drug problems and mental health issues. These issues instituted a custody battle that continued for months when eventually Eli's mother was given custody over her child. On May 20th, 2022, about a week after Dakota County Social Services awarded custody back to Eli's mom, Julissa Thaler violently took the life of her only son, Eli Hart. This death shocked the small community of Mound, Minnesota. It struck the hearts of many parents and educators in the district, particularly three active community members: **Ben Coolani, Jen Houghton, and Tiffany Beitler.**



Overview of the Eli Hart Memorial Playground Foundation



The Eli Hart Memorial Foundation was created by three Mound Westonka school district parents: Ben Coolani, Jen Houghton, and Tiffany Beitler. These parents were devoted to positively changing our community after these recent events. The Mound City council had frequently expressed the much needed rebuild of a popular park at Surfside Beach. Eli loved playgrounds, so the foundation came together to build something unique: **The Eli Hart Memorial Playground.** This playground will be inclusive for children with various disabilities as it is ADA-compliant and includes sensory features.

A. Statement of the Problem

Overarching Problem

The overarching problem this group now had to overcome was raising \$285,000 for the memorial playground. This large sum would cover the costs of materials, equipment, and shipping for this project. To help combat this problem, we assisted the foundation with various fundraising ideas and efforts. Through this journey, we can see the impact on the community and the multiple setbacks in the fundraising efforts.

Subproblems

Lack of Continued Monetary Support

Initially, there was immense monetary support, but many people only contributed once. This led to a need for creative funding ideas. This problem allowed our group to join the foundation and bring in new ideas for fundraising that allowed for more community involvement.

Approval from the Mound City Council

The Mound City Council was initially excited about this new addition to our community. However, as time passed, many council members began complaining about the size, price, and various other factors. It was our job to address these concerns and make the needed changes.

Lack of support from communities outside the Mound Westonka School District

Many communities surrounding the City of Mound needed to learn about the foundation and its fundraising efforts, which must be addressed to raise enough money to meet the project's goal of **\$285,000**.

B. Project Scope

PURPOSE

The purpose of this project was to support this foundation with numerous tasks to help accomplish a fundraising goal of **\$285,000**. We worked to combat the foundation's problems and develop new ways to increase general and monetary support from the community. Our efforts were aimed at building an accessible-for-all playground in the community of Mound, Minnesota, where parents and children can bond and create memories. The long-term impact of this project is the increase in awareness of the currently broken foster care system and, hopefully, the eventual change in policies. We hope this monument will symbolize our community's support and desire to see changes in the foster care system.

RATIONALE

The rationale for this project is the hope that Eli's death can lead to positive change in our community. A positive impact will allow community members to look back on his horrific death not only with a negative connotation but also directly see the eye-opening impact that it creates within our community and the change it was able to forge.

In 2021, 585,000 children in foster care experienced some type of maltreatment or neglect.

EXPECTED BENEFITS

Only 13% of Playgrounds are currently ADA compliant. ADA playgrounds ensure that the parks are accessible for everyone regardless of disability.

The expected benefits of this project are that our community will have a new, beautiful playground in memory of the beautiful Eli Hart. This park will establish a safe place for families to come together and make new memories, much like Eli and his dad did. This playground will unify the Mound community and teach people how the foster care and social services system can impact a child's livelihood.



III. PLANNING AND ORGANIZING

A. Project Goals

This Foundation's initial purpose was to honor Eli's life, but its primary goal now benefits an entire community in more ways than one. Fundraising and awareness components were the two primary goals that the Foundation needed help with. They wanted to remember Eli for the boy he was, not how he died. Eli's love for parks shines through the vibrant memories spoken by loved ones, and there would be no better way to honor this young boy than the gift of what he loved and valued most during his time on this earth.



Eli Hart Memorial Playground Foundation Goals:

- ♥ Fundraise to Build a Playground
- ♥ Increase Awareness

P.L.A.Y. for Eli

The goal-setting process is critical since our team is working to raise such an extensive amount of money. Outside of the foundation's overarching goal, our team developed **three SMART goals** (Specific, Measurable, Attainable, Relevant, and Time-Bound) that will help us ensure success in our overall project management. These goals were designed based on our team's research and the concerns the foundation expressed.

E

Earn – Fundraise **\$285,000** by February 1st, 2024.

The fundraising goal for the foundation and our team was \$285,000. This is the money needed to build a community playground in Mound, Minnesota. This money will cover the building, shipping, and playground expenses. Our team worked alongside the Eli Hart Memorial Foundation to devise new fundraising ideas involving community participation and support.

L

Learn – Educate **1,000 individuals** about the current issues within the foster care system by February 15th.

One of our most important objectives is to teach our community about the current issues within the foster care system and how these issues can negatively impact a child's life. To teach individuals about the purpose of this project, we first had to research the foundation and its driving intentions to effectively and accurately educate individuals on the project's rationale. This education also allowed us to drive fundraising and meet our goals.

I

Impact – Receive **approval from the City of Mound** for an inclusive playground by December 31st.

Our team had to advocate for the City of Mound's approval of the inclusive memorial playground to meet these goals. Upon the initial meeting with the city, the council members had various concerns about the size and cost of the inclusive playground. For example, one of the members expressed concern about the teardown of two trees in the area and its environmental impact. This initial meeting caused our team to rethink and reconstruct the playground layout to meet the council's needs.

B. Human Resources Management Plan

Our human resources team was well organized to ensure appropriate communication between our team and the foundation's leaders. After identifying the strengths and weaknesses of group members, we created well-thought-out roles for each individual to strengthen our team structure. Since we were working with an outside foundation, we had to communicate concerns and ideas to reach this foundation's goal of raising \$285,000.

The Eli Hart Business Solutions Team Structure

Project Managers

As project managers, we developed new fundraising ideas that immersed our community. We scheduled weekly meetings with our team and monthly meetings with the Memorial Founders to accomplish these tasks.



Olivia Adam

Frequently communicated with the foundation, community members, city council members, and school district executives. Experienced with leadership and graphic design.



Gabriella Larsen

Frequently used creativity to generate ideas for fundraising and led planning within the fundraising events—strong leadership and conversational skills.

DECA Logistics Team



Alexander Wagner

Mound Westonka DECA chapter advisor and dedicated marketing and business teacher. His purpose was to develop strong research in regards to the project management topic.



Sue Simonson

Mound Westonka DECA chapter advisor and knowledgeable on the Project management topic. Her responsibility is to watch over all aspects of the project to ensure minimal procrastination.

Eli Hart Memorial Foundation Founders

The Eli Hart Memorial founders gave us insight into the inner workings of non-profit organizations and helped us develop our fundraising into profitable events.

Tiffany Beitler



Has knowledge of the marketing and creativity logistics associated with the Eli Hart Memorial Foundation.

Ben Cooliani

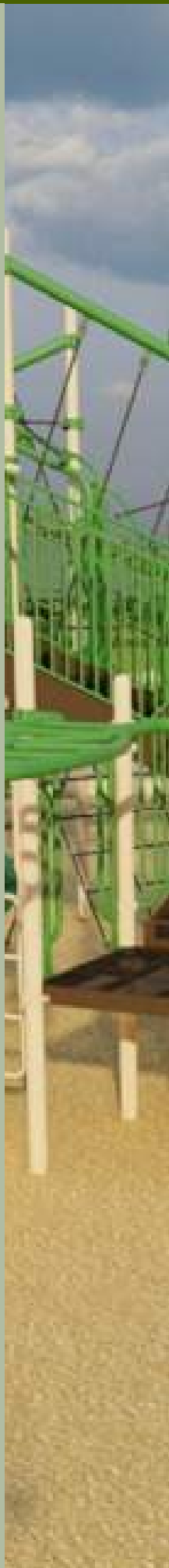


Has strong connections with the Mound City Council and has experience with setting up large events.

Jen Houghton



Has experience with planning and executing events and has developed strong connections to Mound businesses.



C. Schedule

i. Milestones



Initial Research - May 20th-28th

Upon discovering the Eli Hart Foundation, our team began to dig deeper to understand the story and the purpose of this new memorial project. This research equipped us with an in-depth understanding that allowed us to reach out to the Eli Hart Memorial Foundation leaders. After this research, we contacted Tiffany Beitler and scheduled a meeting on May 10, 2023, in the Mound Westonka Business Center to discuss the foundation's needs and expectations from our partnership.

Official Meeting with Founders - June 31st

Once we connected with Tiffany, she introduced us to the rest of the founders, and we started planning the next steps. At this meeting, they started integrating us into their organizational processes and discussed the details of their upcoming events. This initial meeting allowed us to foster the start of a long-lasting connection.



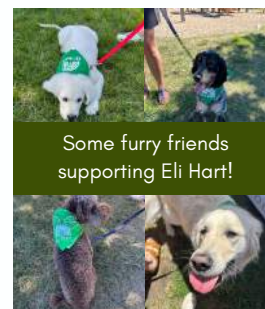
Spirit of the Lakes Fundraising - July 12th

We planned and executed our first event with the Eli Hart Memorial Foundation!

The Spirit of the Lakes parade and booth fundraising occurred on July 12th from noon to 4:30 at Surfside Park (the location of the upcoming playground). At this event, we made and sold green beaded bracelets with Eli Hart's name to raise awareness for the cause and fundraising efforts. When people at the festival were seen wearing these bracelets, they had a chance to discuss this fantastic foundation. This event allowed us to discuss the importance of changing the foster care system with community members and teach them.

Dog Days Fundraising - August 12th

Next was our Westonka Dog Days event at Surfside Park. For this event, our team designed and created over 200 dog bandanas with the Eli Hart logo to sell at this event. The dog owners loved to support this foundation with stylish new bandanas! After reaching out to the Dog Days council, they agreed to donate all the funds raised at this event through a dunk tank, doggy dig activity, etc., to the Eli Hart Memorial Playground Foundation.



Some furry friends supporting Eli Hart!



Corks for a Cause Wine Event - August 12th

Our Corks for a Cause sponsored wine event was held on the night of August 12th from 5 pm-9 pm. This event was held at Minnetonka Apple Orchards and was a night spent with wine tasting for adults, a silent auction, and homemade oven-cooked pizza. This event brought us most of our donations because the ticket cost, silent auction, and merchandise sales helped boost our fundraising total.

Eli Hart Football game - August 31st

Our goal was to spread Eli Hart's message to as many people of all ages as possible. To reach high schoolers and, more importantly, our classmates, we coordinated the Mound Westonka High School football home opener to have the theme "Green out" in honor of Eli Hart. Students wore green in support. Tiffany, Ben, and Jen spoke about Eli during halftime, and the Eli Hart booth was displayed at the front of Haddorff Stadium. We sold merchandise and educated students, staff, and parents of the Eli Hart Memorial Playground project in hopes of generating further donations.



Winter Wonderland - January 21st

As our last fundraising effort, we wanted to involve children. This led us to host a "winter wonderland" event, including activities Eli Hart was known to have loved. We hosted this event at Shirley Hills Primary School in Mound, Minnesota. The same elementary school Eli attended. We had ice skating with varsity hockey players, a hot cocoa bar, coloring, arts and crafts, and sledding, with all ticket proceeds going to the Eli Hart Foundation. This event was a unique way to get kids involved, especially some of his former classmates.








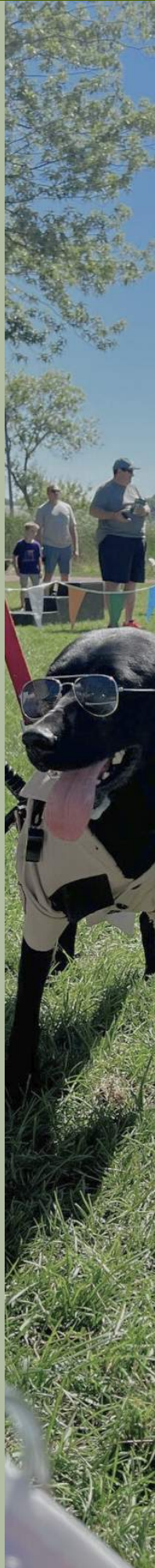
FUTURE MILESTONE - Eli Hart Community Park Build - April-May 2024

The main goal of this foundation was to raise money to fund a park built in honor of Eli Hart. This park is going to be constructed at Surfside Beach, Mound, Minnesota, replacing a current, small, rundown, and outdated park. MidWest Playscapes will be collaborating with the foundation to build this park. After giving testimony to the city council, the park passed on a 3-2 vote. It will include a community build this spring with many features for children with disabilities.



ii. Timeline

2023	May	August	
	 Initial Research May 20th-28th	 Westonka Dog Days Planning July 21st - August 9th	 Eli Hart Football Game Sticker Making August 30th
	June  First meeting with the Foundation June 31st	 Westonka Dog Days Set-up and Bandana Making August 9th-11th	 Eli Hart Football Game August 31st
	July  Spirit of the Lakes Planning July 1st-10th	 Westonka Dog Days August 12th	2024 January  Winter Wonderland Planning January 1st-21st
	 Spirit of the Lakes Setup July 11th	 Corks for a Cause Planning July 11th - August 9th	 Winter Wonderland January 21st
	 Spirit of the Lakes July 12th	 Corks for a Cause August 12th	Upcoming April-May  Eli Hart Memorial Playground BUILD



D. Quality Management Plan

By keeping these key metrics in mind, our team was able to accomplish our goal of fundraising \$279,240 to build a playground in Surfside Park in honor of young Eli Hart. These metrics allowed us to measure the success of our project management numerically.

Play for E.L.I.

E Earn: Fundraise **\$285,000** by **February 1st, 2024**

Track donated funds and keep a strict budget to ensure this goal is met.

Throughout raising funds for the Eli Hart Foundation park build, keeping track of donations was crucial to staying organized and on track. It was essential to maintain a strict budget within the foundation's means for spending at each event and ensure an outcome of positive profit rather than losing money and, by default, donations.

L Learn: Educate **1,000 individuals** about the current issues within the foster care system by **February 15th.**

Track the attendance at each of our events and each person that we educate about the issues we are trying to address.

When the park building is completed, the foundation will continue in a new way. The foundation's new goal will be to educate and raise money for children within the social service system, just as Eli was. To increase awareness of abuse and corruption within the system and track how much we've impacted people attending our events.

I Impact: **Receive approval** from the City of Mound for an inclusive playground by **December 31st.**

This objective will be tracked based on whether or not the City of Mound approves the park at each of our monthly meetings.

At each of our monthly meetings with the board members, updates on park approval were given. At these meetings, we brainstormed innovative proposal options for City Council members until their eventual approval.

E. Risk Management Plan

To efficiently measure risk we developed a **Risk Calculator** accurately displayed below.

Risk	Calculated Risk	Response to Risk
Community Push-back	Moderate	Consult with community members, discuss their concerns for this project proposal, and make needed changes based on frequent concerns. Discuss the benefits of the new playground.
Saturated Community Funding	High	Expand reach to communities outside of the Mound area through newspaper and news segments. Apply grants and other large community donations for other funding sources.
Inflation in Playground Price	Low	Have a system to keep track of the updated prices as they change. Frequently meet with the committee to address these concerns and update the budget when needed.

F. Projected Project Budget

Playground Proposed Budget

To accurately develop our budget, we first had to lay out the expenses of the Eli Hart Memorial Playground to understand better the amount of money that needed to be fundraised and what materials we would need to purchase to reach this goal.

Playground Item	Item Price
Pour-in-Place grounding	\$24,831
Wood-Chips	\$6,582
One large shade installment	\$7,535
Playground Equipment and Installation	\$240,292
Current Playground Tear-Down	\$10,000*
Total Cost to Fundraise	\$279,240**

*Not included in total cost as it was funded by the City of Mound. **Doesn't include a contingency of **\$5,760**

Our Team's Proposed Budget

To ensure clear communication on budget and other monetary costs, our team provided the foundation leaders with a rough budget (subject to minor changes) to prepare them for the expected costs of our events. We tried to keep our prices as low as possible to ensure a profit in each category.

Rationale

Bracelet Materials: Allowed our team to produce a tangible item to incentivize donations.

Bandanas: Created as tangible items for Westonka Dog Days.

Cricket Vinyl: Used to add logos to bandanas and create stickers for the football game.

Pizza and Hot Cocoa: Provided for children at the Eli Hart Winter Wonderland event.

Arts and Crafts Supplies: Provided materials for a craft project for children to do at the Winter Wonderland Fundraiser.

Activity	Price
Bracelet-Making Materials	\$34.99
Bandanas	\$45.89
Cricket Vinyl	\$33.67
Pizza	\$64.99
Art's and Craft Supplies	\$17.99
Hot Cocoa	Donated
Total Cost of Activities	\$197.53

The Return

The return on investment (ROI) of these expenses cannot be measured in monetary value but can be estimated by its impact on the community. These activities and the memorial playground will impact the Mound community for years. These milestones have further increased the awareness of issues associated with the current foster care system. We are honored to know that we played a vital role in the success of The Eli Hart Memorial Playground.



IV. EXECUTION

Description and documentation of the project plan implementation

Pre-meeting – Research

Before we could engage in approaching the foundation and establishing our plan, we had to gain in-depth knowledge about their purpose and expectations for our partnership.

Conclusion #1

At the time of our research, the foundation had just started fundraising for this playground and raised about **\$20,000 out of its new \$285,000** goal through GoFundMe, an online fundraising platform, within the first two weeks of establishment. This immediately led us to conclude that the foundation and its ideals had strong support from the Mound community.



Conclusion #2

Another conclusion that we noted was the lack of social promotion that the foundation was sharing. We concluded that if they expanded their reach across social media and other forms of digital marketing, they could significantly impact the amount of community funding.

Conclusion #3

Our third conclusion was the negative connotation associated with Eli Hart's name across digital media due to the news reports and details surrounding his death. This online representation needed to be quickly shifted to a more positive view with the establishment of this new foundation.

First Official Meeting with Founders

On June 31st, our team officially met with the Eli Hart Memorial Foundation Founders, Tiffany Bietler, Ben Cooliani, and Jen Houghton. The primary topic of this meeting was the upcoming Spirit of the Lakes Fundraiser at Surfside Park, where the playground would ultimately be built. The founders updated us on planning for this event (times, meeting area, and expectations).



Once we were done perfecting the plan for the Spirit of the Lakes parade and booth, we discussed the needs of our partnership and how both groups would collaborate. At this meeting, we developed the **Play for E.L.I. plan** from the three main goals the foundation needed help fulfilling.



E

Earn

L

Learn

I

Impact

The foundation discussed the donations they have received, and our team suggested various grants that they would qualify for. They gave us an in-depth rundown of the proposed park plans, and the founders told us that **Midwest Playscapes** was the company that would be supplying and building the playground. This company gave the foundation a significant discount as a donation to support this memorial. Due to this donation, the foundation no longer needed to fundraise for equipment.



Spirit of the Lakes – Parade and Fundraising Booth

The first significant appearance of the Eli Hart Memorial Playground was at the Spirit of the Lakes Festival in Mound, Minnesota. On Saturday, June 12th, the foundation's team participated in a parade and fundraising booth to teach people about this foundation and its purpose. The festival hosted an array of individuals from outside the Mound area, allowing our team to further educate on the importance of foster care awareness.



When speaking with the foundation, our team concluded that their fundraising processes would be better structured if there were tangible items the donors would receive after a donation. Because of this conclusion, we decided to create Eli Hart beaded bracelets and sell them for a substantial profit to raise additional funds. These bracelets were a HUGE success among parents and children and helped the funding process by raising **\$1,421 from just bracelet sales.**



Eli Hart Bracelet Making!

E Earn: To work towards fulfilling this goal our team raised **\$2,327** at this festival

L Learn: Taught **349** people about the rationale and meaning behind the foundation

I Impact: Received **strong support** from the community to advocate for approval

Westonka Dog Days Fundraising Event



An appearance at local events was crucial to incorporate the Eli Hart Foundation further within the community. Westonka Dog Days is a local Mound, Minnesota tradition. It's a festival all for dogs located on Surfside Beach, where Eli Hart Playground will be built. We contacted Westonka Dog Days about arranging an Eli Hart booth to fundraise. They happily obliged and offered to donate all the extra proceeds raised at this event to our cause.





The festival includes **pet parades, a dunk tank, costume contests, doggy dune dig competitions, agility courses, and dock jumping contests.** Various vendor booths with pet-related products and services are set up around the park.

Puppies supporting Eli Hart

At this festival, the foundation's booth educated locals about the park build and materials used, answered any questions, and networked. Our team also developed merchandise for this event, including **200 handmade Eli Hart bandanas** to fit in with the Dog Days theme and attendees.



Doggy models



E Earn: To work towards fulfilling this goal our team raised **\$1,980** at Dog Days

L Learn: Taught **307** people about the rationale and meaning behind the foundation

I Impact: Networked with community members to receive support for approval

Eli Hart – Corks for a Cause

Corks for a Cause is a non-profit organization hosting various wine-tasting events supporting local foundations. Based on our donor target market, we knew our foundation would be perfect for one of these events. The Eli Hart Foundation hosted a Corks for a Cause event at the Everley Farms Winery at the Minnetonka Apple Orchards. This event was in collaboration with many local wineries across Minnesota, including **Schram Vineyards, Sovereign Estate, Parley Lake Winery, Everly Farms Winery, North Shore Winery, Mousse Sparkling Wine co, Crow River Winery, and Alexis Bailey Vineyard.**



With these companies' collaborations and donations, there was wine tasting for adults, where they could try various wines from all across these companies. There was also homemade oven-baked pizza for dinner, with many different side foods and desserts. The main attraction was the live and silent auction, which had seven donated items worth over \$5,000 and various other silent auction baskets. These auctions raised substantial money for the Foundation. Many strong foundation supporters donated weeklong vacations or house rentals, which was a hit among the attendees.

E Earn: To work towards fulfilling this goal our team raised **\$78,226** at this wine event.

L Learn: Taught **227** people about the rationale and meaning behind the foundation.

I Impact: Networked with **well-known** community members to receive support.

Eli Hart Mound Westonka Football Game



Our team assessed the engagement among the middle and high schools, and because of its lack of impact, we decided to host an Eli Hart Foundation-themed night to engage the students with the foundation and its goals. This football game was a huge success, and after some minor planning with the school administrators, the football team named the three foundation founders as honorary captains for this game. Our team made customized stickers with Eli's name to prepare for this event. This small act ensured that students understood the meaning behind the game's theme. We set up a booth for this event where students could come and get glitter, stickers, and other green accessories for the theme.

E Earn: To work towards fulfilling this goal our team raised **\$785** at this game.

L Learn: Taught **186** people about the rationale and meaning behind the foundation.

I Impact: Networked with **Mound Westonka students** to raise awareness for the foundation.

Eli Hart Winter Wonderland Fundraiser



As one final fundraising push, our team met with the Mound Westonka school administrators to develop a plan to integrate the elementary schools into our fundraising. We created the Eli Hart Winter Wonderland from this idea at Shirley Hills, Eli's elementary school. The kids could ice-skate, make arts and crafts, go sledding, and eat pizza at this event! The fee for **one child was \$25, \$35 for two, and \$45 for three** or more. Each parent could drop their child off and leave if they would like. At each station, 5-10 high school volunteers would assist the children and hang out with them! This event was a great way to get K-12 students involved in the foundation and fundraising!

E Earn: To work towards fulfilling this goal our team raised **\$620** at this event.

L Learn: Taught **82** students about the rationale and meaning behind the foundation

I Impact: Engaged with **Mound Westonka students** to raise awareness for the foundation.

FUTURE –The Eli Hart Memorial Playground BUILD

Though this event is in the future, it is vital to mention its significance. Depending on when the ground thaws, the Eli Hart Memorial playground build will occur between April and May. It will be a community build to signify the importance of group support through challenging times. Our team is excited to see the final playground as a symbol of our accomplishments and hard work, as we are so honored to say that we played a part in its establishment.



Playground Renderings

V. MONITORING AND CONTROLLING

A. Monitoring

Our Schedule

To properly monitor our event planning, our team planned a meeting every Tuesday during the summer and school year. These meetings ensured that our planning for each event was adequate and that our coordination was strong.

At each of these meetings, we would add to our to-do list, including the completion date and the task specifics. This ensured that everything on the list was clear and on track to be completed for each event.



ClickUp

ClickUp, a productivity platform specifically made to combat team communication, was used to monitor this progress. On this platform, we could individually assign tasks and establish a time frame for completion. ClickUp would send notifications to users to remind them about their upcoming tasks, which ensured limited procrastination.

Eli Hart Foundation Meetings

To maintain clear communication with the Eli Hart Foundation, we met once or twice monthly, depending on the events occurring that month. These meetings helped ensure the foundation understood our plans for the project and events. Our primary method of communication with the foundation was iMessage, which allowed us to discuss matters quickly and collaboratively.

Budget

With the help of the foundation members, monitoring the budget became a simple task. Our committee kept the funds in a separate personalized bank account, so our team knew exactly how much we still needed to fundraise; keeping track of our progress and how far we were from our goal money was crucial in determining different fundraisers to host and how much more money we needed to raise for the park build. In monitoring our schedule, we made it essential to spread out significant events in different months to try and reach as many people as possible to incentivize more donations. Our schedule consisted of events strategically placed during optimal summer months to ensure more significant outcomes for guests, such as our Winery nights at Minnetonka Apple Orchards. We even placed our children's event in the winter to make a unique activity related to Minnesota weather for children.

Event	Money Raised
Spirit of the Lakes	\$2,327
Westonka Dog Days	\$1,980
Corks for a Cause	\$78,226
Eli Hart Football Game	\$785
Winter Wonderland	\$620
TOTAL: \$83,938	

Expense Tracker

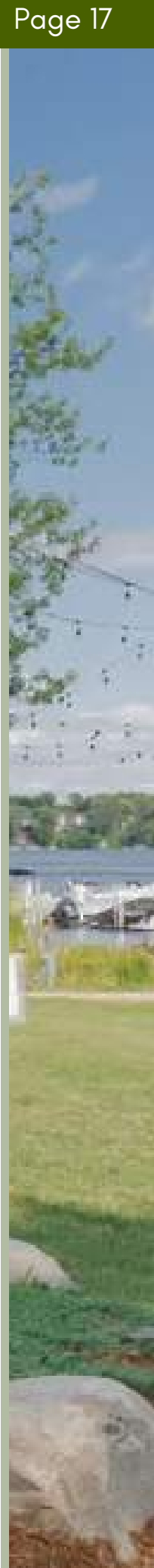
We could accurately determine and track how close we were to the end fundraising goal by keeping an up-to-date expense tracker. Our team and the Eli Hart founders updated this tracker regularly.



B. Controlling

The table below shows the issues that arose throughout the collaboration with the Eli Hart Memorial Playground Foundation and our response to these issues. Our four main problems were the approval from the City of Mound, inflated playground pieces, unexpectedly high shipping costs, and lack of intangible donations.

Issue	Description	Response
Playground approval from the City of Mound	Our Eli Hart Foundation team went back and forth with the City of Mound over the Eli Hart Playground. Three out of the five council members debated approving the park because of various concerns, such as the park's size or the materials used.	Our team had to complete multiple park renderings to satisfy the council's needs. Two of the council members stood strong in their beliefs that the park was unnecessary; however the park plans were successfully passed on December 12th, 2023 , by a vote of 3-2
Inflation of playground pieces	Throughout our fundraising period, due to global transportation disruption there was a sharp increase in the prices of certain pieces of playground equipment. Certain pieces had an over 200% inflated price, so our team had to update our budget and change accordingly.	Because of the inflated prices, our team had to change the final budget price to \$285,000 to ensure that the primary goal of building the park would be met. Our team also had to accurately communicate to the community the reasoning behind the sudden influx in pricing to ensure continued support.
Unexpected high shipping costs	In addition to the influx in playground pieces due to supply chain issues, the shipping price has also significantly increased. The original invoice stated that shipping would cost around \$10,000, but after the recent supply chain issues, it grew to over \$80,000 for the materials to ship. These changes were complicated to navigate as the playground was expected to cost over \$460,000, which was way out of the fundraising budget.	Our team had to react quickly to this change to still have the playground built in Spring 2024. Because of the substantial increase, our team had to rethink the playground design so that the final price would be closer to the original budget. First, we lowered the amount of pour-in-place, recycled rubber flooring and switched to woodchips, a cheaper alternative. This sudden change lowered the final price by \$64,000, which was closer to the original budget.
Lack of intangible donations	Our team experienced a reduced amount of repeat donors within our community. Due to this, our team had to devise new incentives for individuals to donate to the cause once again. The response to this problem allowed our team to reach the final budget quickly.	To create a tangible incentive for donors, our team created Eli Hart bracelets, merchandise, and bandanas for the fundraising booth and specialty wine glasses for the Corks for a Cause event. All of these items played a part in reaching the final budget.



VI. CLOSING THE PROJECT

A. Evaluation of Key Metrics

We are excited to report the success of our partnership with the Eli Hart Memorial Playground Foundation. Below are the impressive statistics that we accomplished in the last few months.

35

High School
Volunteers

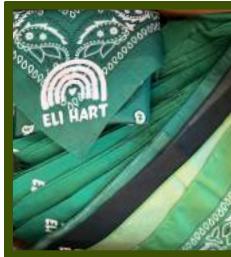


4 Newspaper Articles
Viewership of 5,500 homes



203

Bracelets
Sold



127

Bandanas
Sold

SMART Goal Completion

E Earn: Fundraise **\$285,000** by
February 1st, 2024.

\$320,645 Raised

Through five events, online donations, and state and community grants, our team **raised \$320,645** to build a playground in Eli's memory in the heart of Mound. We are proud of this milestone and excited about the playground build this spring. For each event above, a written fundraising amount is listed. We added these amounts to the online donations through GoFundMe or the Eli Hart website donation platform. The extra funds raised will continue to fund changing the system.

L Learn: Educate **1,000 individuals**
about the current issues within the
foster care system by **February 15th.**

6,651 Educated

We completed our goal through five events, newspaper articles, news segments, and other digital promotions and educated over 1,000 individuals. For each of the five events above, there is a projection of people educated at each event, including the outreach from the newspaper articles and news segments. It totals over **6,651 people** educated about the foundation's purpose and goals.

I Impact: Receive approval from the City
of Mound for an inclusive playground by
December 31st.

3-2 Approval

Our team used the connections we had built through our fundraising to show the council the impact this foundation has had on our community. This support helped the City of Mound vote 3-2 on the approval of the playground.

B. Lessons Learned

Many lessons were learned throughout our collaboration with the Eli Hart Foundation, and skills were developed that can be used well past our project's scope. We hope future project management teams can be more effective by sharing these lessons.

Initiating

What worked

- ♥ Successfully initiated contact with the foundation.
- ♥ Laid out clear project goals between our team and the foundation.

What we could improve

- ♥ Our team struggled to distinguish our roles and responsibilities from the roles and responsibilities of the founders of the Eli Hart Memorial Foundation.

Planning and Organizing

What worked

- ♥ Devised a plan based on the long and short-term goals of the foundation.
- ♥ Established strong communication with the founders.
- ♥ Created strong key metrics based on the foundation's proposed goals.

What we could improve

- ♥ Proactively look for new fundraising opportunities that could tie in with summer activities.
- ♥ Create a detailed timeline at the initial meeting with timing so everyone is on the same page.

Execution

What worked

- ♥ Communication with the community about upcoming events was simple and effective due to the high engagement of newspaper articles and news segments.
- ♥ The booth set-up was efficient as everyone had experience in the preparations.

What we could improve

- ♥ Keeping track of the people educated about the purpose of the foundation in an effective and efficient way.
- ♥ Ensuring that the entire committee communicated about their schedules and could make it to every event.

Monitoring and Controlling

What worked

- ♥ Communication with the community about upcoming events was simple and effective due to the high engagement of newspaper articles and news segments.
- ♥ The booth set-up was efficient as everyone had experience in the preparations.

What we could improve

- ♥ Ensuring that everything was communicated across all committee members so everyone can remain knowledgeable about the updates.
- ♥ Ensuring that the entire committee communicated about their schedules and could make it to every event.



C. Recommendations for Future Projects

Schedule

To ensure that all events are planned effectively, ensure that the events are in the process of planning at least a month before they occur. This ensures that the team can react and transition effectively if there are any last-minute changes.

Data Collection

Before every event, make sure to have a plan on what data is needed and how it is going to be effectively collected. This will ensure that the team remembers to gather the data when they are wrapped up in the execution of the event.

Use the Strengths

It is essential to determine the strengths of each individual in your team and use them to the best advantage of the team. This ensures that the project creates the most impact and allows each group member to contribute.

Passion

We would recommend that you are passionate about the project topic. We strongly supported this foundation, allowing us to immerse ourselves in the projects and events. Being passionate will ensure that you are excited about the tasks and events that are executed.

VII. BIBLIOGRAPHY

Eli Hart Memorial Playground. (2023, August 6). Eli Hart Memorial Playground. <https://elihartplayground.com/>

General 3. (n.d.). Eli Hart Memorial Playground. Retrieved February 21, 2024, from <https://elihartplayground.com/about-eli>

KARE 11 Investigates: Red flags ignored, warnings disregarded, a boy murdered. (2023). Kare11.com. <https://www.kare11.com/article/news/investigations/kare-11-investigates-eli-hart-child-red-protection-failures/89-a0878e1a-f655-48bc-96ce-b25114aef1ac>

McGuire, M. (2022, May 21). Family of boy killed in Mound says state didn't do enough to protect him "They ignored us." FOX 9. <https://www.fox9.com/news/eli-hart-mother-arrested-in-case-of-boys-body-found-in-trunk-mound-orono>

Minnesota woman convicted of killing her 6-year-old son just days after regaining full custody of him. (n.d.). Wwww.cbsnews.com. <https://www.cbsnews.com/news/julissa-thaler-convicted-killing-6-year-old-son-eli-hart-minnesota/>

NPR Reports On Accessible Playgrounds & Maps More Than 1,300 Around The U.S. (2013, August 27). NPR. <https://www.npr.org/about-npr/216127699/npr-reports-on-accessible-playgrounds-maps-more-than-1-300-around-the-u-s>

The Annie E. Casey Foundation. (2022, May 16). Child Welfare and Foster Care Statistics. The Annie E. Casey Foundation; The Annie E. Casey Foundation. <https://www.aecf.org/blog/child-welfare-and-foster-care-statistics>