

Crafts & Conversations

Alyssa Schexnayder, Grady O’Gara, Eric Shepherd

TCU Mentor: Dr. Misha Galaganov

Funded by TCU Prehealth’s Experiential Projects that Impact the Community (EPIC) Grant

1. Project Overview

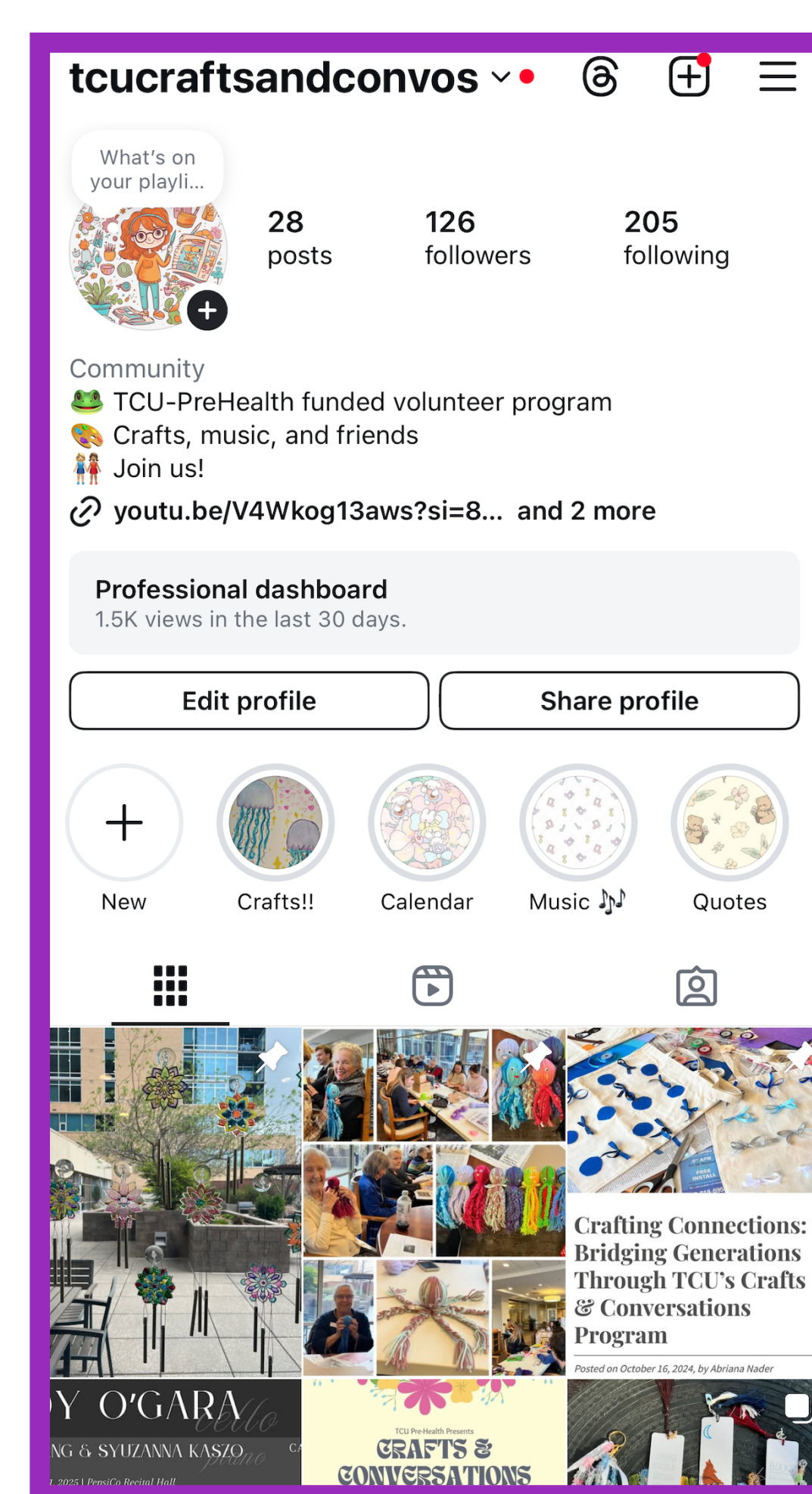
Crafts and Conversations collaborates with Trinity Terrace and Brookdale assisted living facilities to foster a connection between TCU students and the residents living there. Through monthly meet ups with crafts and music, inter-generational relationships are built between students and residents. Crafts such as painting with mini easels or making yarn octopi provide a base talking point that expands into other natural parts of conversation, such as telling stories. Students that volunteer at crafts gain friendships, valuable interactions that combat stereotypes against the elderly, and improved communication skills. Additionally, students have the opportunity to perform music, enabling them to further expand their creativity. Residents at assisted living facilities also gain valuable friendships and interactions that combat the potential loneliness of at a retirement center. Crafts and Conversations strives to enrich the lives of all those involved through engaging activities that bring people closer together.

2. Background

Trinity Terrace and Brookdale Westover Hills are the assisted living facilities we visited over the past year, and the residents living there are who we want this program to impact. We strive to combat the loneliness and monotony that often accompanies living at a retirement facility by bringing people together through engaging crafts and amazing performances. We also want to provide residents with the opportunity to interact with the younger generation, as this is something that may be missing from their lives.

3. Project Description

Crafts and Conversations has been an EPIC program for a number of years, and we wanted to continue its practice of building community with the elderly in a way that benefits both the student volunteers and residents. To do this, we held monthly events at two assisted living facilities. Each event was opened with a fun craft. Having a common craft goal helped start conversations between students and residents, and from there words flowed freely. Eventually, as most people got to a stopping point, the musical performances began. Crafts and Conversations has a number of TCU School of Music volunteers that donate their musical ability. From cello to viola, the performances are always a great way to end the event.



4. Outcomes

- Creative, unique crafts each event
- Development of conversational skills important for the medical field
- Created low stakes performance environments for musical volunteers
- Worked with other student organizations to make cards for residents
- Networking through social media
- Importance of communication

5. Future Plans

- More frequent meetings
- Expand music program
- Combat stereotypes

“Crafts and Conversations allows us to connect with our inner artist, no matter where we are in life.” -Abigail Madrid

