

# Strengthening community bonds: a case study of catalyzing a donation drive to enhance the impact of the UCSD Street Outreach Team

Sami SeungMi Jin, Carine Tamamian, Spencer Chau, Kendall White, Megan Roach, Jim Lovell, Elizabeth Sophy  
<sup>1</sup>University of California, San Diego

## Aims

This study aims to describe the process of forging new community partnerships to address supply shortages and augment the efficacy of the UCSD Street Outreach Team in providing essential supplies to unhoused individuals in a local suburban community. We intend for these insights to serve as a model for enhancing the impact of street outreach efforts in similar communities and to offer guidance for future initiatives.

## Introduction

The UCSD Street Outreach Team was first established in the spring of 2022. Our involvement as managers began on January 1, 2024 along with the help of our dedicated street outreach team members. The current team, composed of 19 UCSD medical students, 3 faculty members, and 1 social worker has been tirelessly distributing basic necessities to the unhoused population in Pacific Beach, San Diego. Through regular "Glows & Grows" reflections conducted after each outreach endeavor, we actively sought avenues for improvement to better serve the evolving needs of this demographic. Notably, a recurring request for backpacks emerged from the individuals we engaged with during our weekly rounds, prompting us to initiate a targeted donation drive to directly address this pressing need. Concurrently, our team endeavored to foster a sense of community among this vulnerable population while facilitating access to medical care through referrals to our free clinic located in Pacific Beach.

## Methods

Street outreach managers reached out to 10 student-led organizations in local undergraduate institutions in both San Diego and Los Angeles. Additionally, one high school in Los Angeles was recruited to participate. The Free Clinic's street outreach coordinator crafted a compelling letter detailing the objectives of the backpack donation drive, logistical details for participation, and the mutually beneficial impact of community involvement in addressing local needs. After the initial communication, two follow-up emails were sent.

To the organizations that expressed interest, the team distributed a Google Form. This form was designed to coordinate the drive, collecting details such as the need for donation boxes, the possible duration of the drive, preferred advertising methods, and whether additional support was required from the outreach team (see Image 1). Furthermore, our form included a link to a flyer that was customized for joint initiatives.

The UCSD School of Medicine sent out an email announcement to all classes and utilized social media platforms such as the Free Clinic's Instagram to advertise and reshare the posts. However, different organizations employed their own methods of organizing and executing the drive. It was crucial that each organization conducted its drive based on its specific student population and its own means of achieving the highest possible exposure.

## Results

Out of the 11 organizations we initially reached out to, 5 responded and donation drives were planned. The following student organizations are actively participating in the drive:

- UCSD School of Medicine (UCSD SOM)
- Students for Public Health at San Diego State University (SDSU)
- UCSD Medics in Armenia (UCSD MIA)
- Ferrahian High School
- Armenian Student Association at UCLA

Data currently presented is from UCSD SOM, SDSU, and UCSD MIA, with a total donation count at 213 items as of 4/24/2024. 79% of items received were from the UCSD SOM donation drive, which is expected given that it is the host organization of the event (Fig. 1). 50% of items were Men's/unisex sizes, while 40% and 10% were Women's and Children's sizes respectively (Fig. 1).

Fig. 1: Donations by Intended Recipient and Partnering School

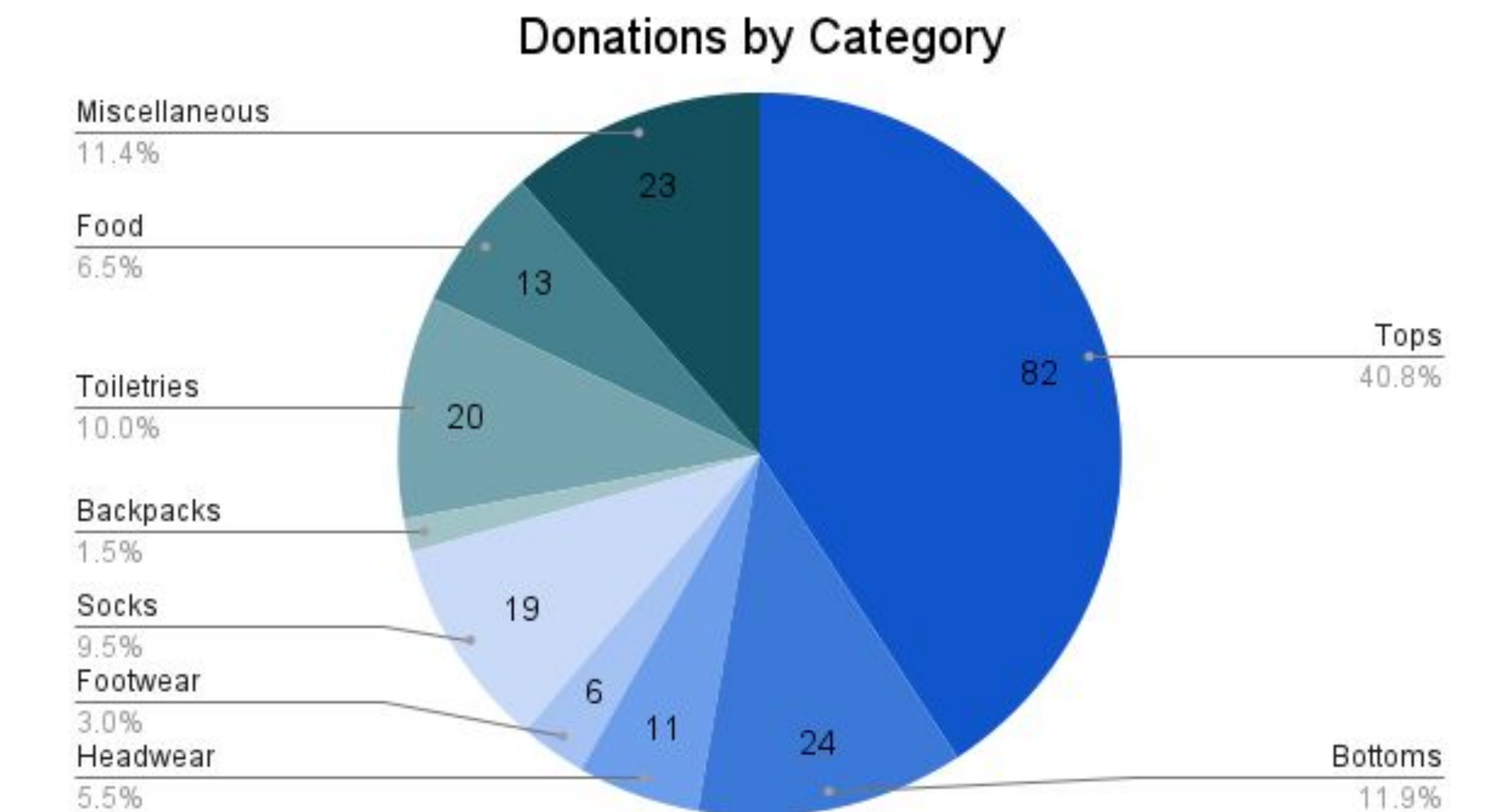
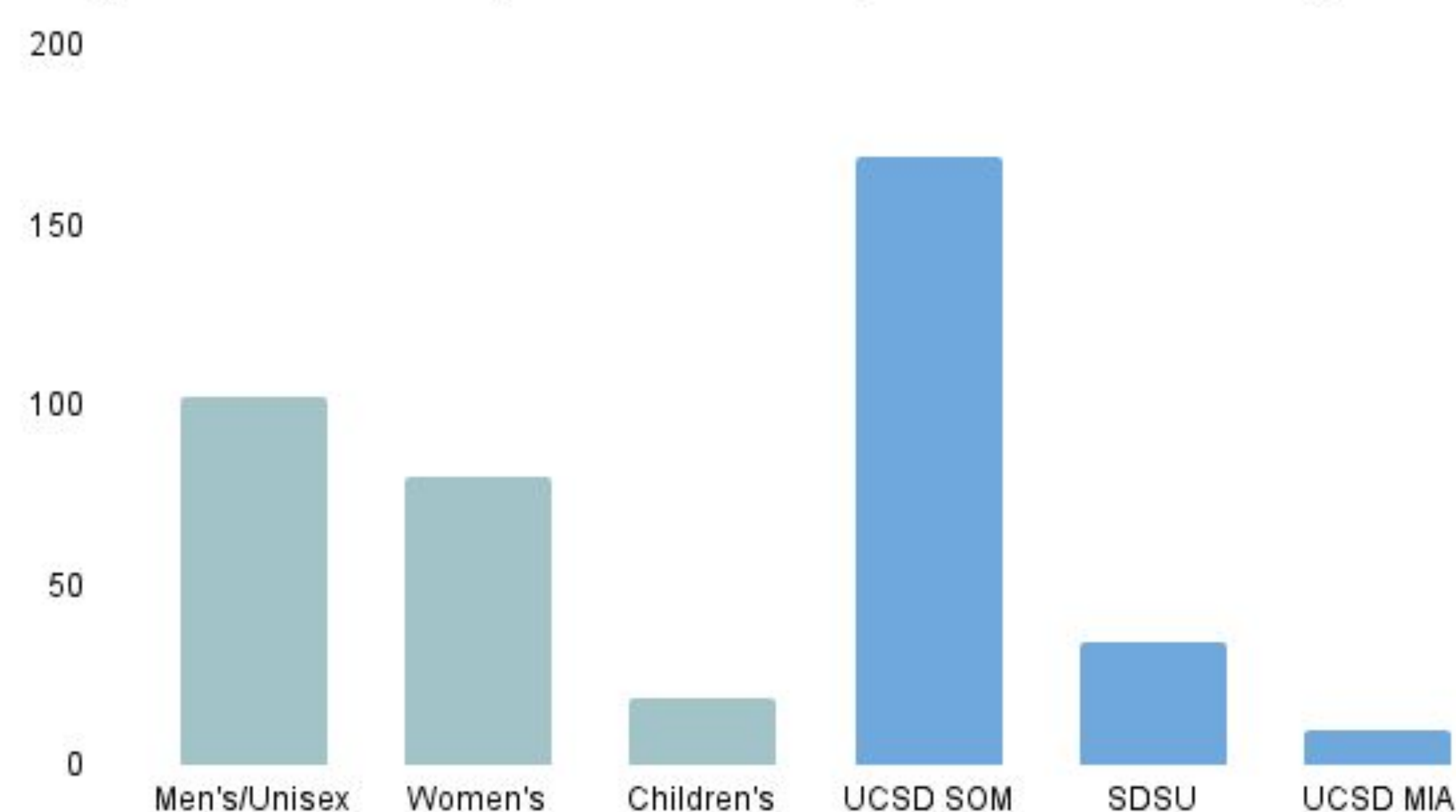


Fig. 2. Donations by category; miscellaneous items include undergarments, gloves, and sunglasses.

## Conclusion

Our case study highlights the importance of community collaboration in bolstering the efficacy and success of street outreach initiatives. Utilizing tools like Google Forms and social media as well as local institutions, we made a significant impact in our community by meeting the identified needs of our clients.

Establishing community partnerships has equipped the outreach team with additional resources, enabling us to better assist our clients. Four of the collaborating organizations will sustain their donation initiatives until the start of summer, aiming to establish a recurring pattern of donation drives biannually.

Additionally, ideas of partnering with local businesses such as Bombas and West Side Clothing offer exciting opportunities to further engage our community and increase our fundraising efforts (1, 2). By fostering collaboration and innovation, we are well-positioned to surpass our goals and leave a lasting legacy of compassion and generosity.

## Acknowledgements

We would like to thank Elizabeth Sophy, MD, Jim Lovell, MSW, and Michelle Johnson, MD for their continued support in addition to our Pacific Beach UCSD Street Outreach team for allowing our organization to function. Special thank you to all of our partnering schools for hosting their respective drives.

## References

- [1] <https://shop.bombas.com/pages/giving-back>
- [2] <https://westsidelove.us/pages/about-us>

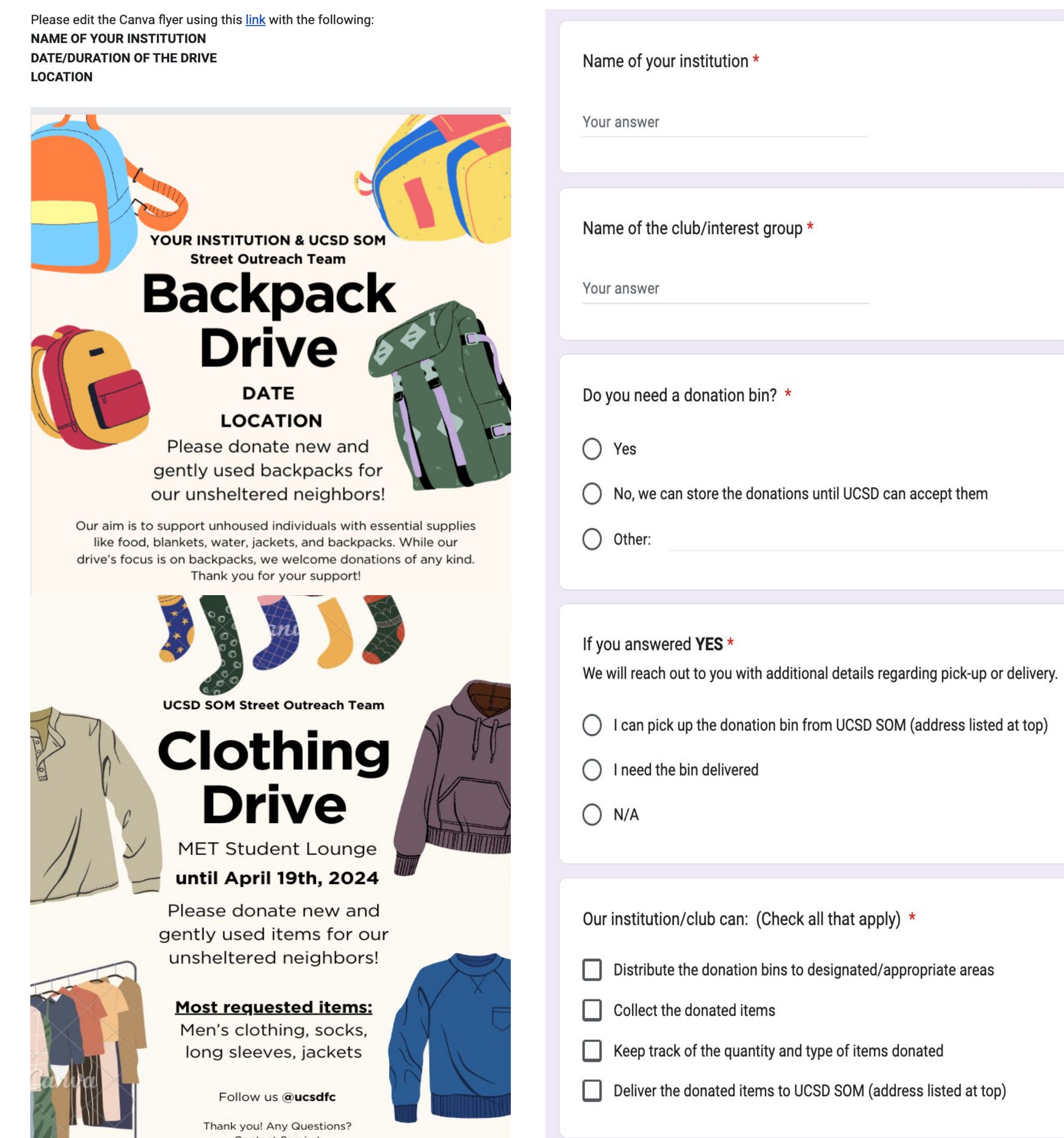


Image 1: A preview of the Google form and flyer sent to interested organizations

