

THE AIDIA

ONE THOUGHT TO CHANGE THE WORLD

One word. One hope. One | ī'dēa |.

*A sample grant-seeking proposal
written by Alan J. Dore*

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DISCLAIMER

This proposal was developed by a professional and technical writing student for the ENGL-320 course, Grant-Seeking and Proposal Writing, at Saginaw Valley State University.

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Every year millions of people die of diseases that share a simple cause: no access to safe drinking water. To combat this, the international nonprofit organization Water.org aligns partners' resources so that a single donation of \$25 can give someone sanitation and clean water for life. This proposal requests the seed money for two projects: developing a student organization called The Aidia at Saginaw Valley State University and starting its first major venture — T-shirt sales whose net profits would go to Water.org. From there, the marketing formula is simple: buy a T-shirt, spread the message, and help save lives.

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INTRODUCTION

This document proposes the development of a new student organization at Saginaw Valley State University, one that would advocate and help fundraise for people across the world who lack access to clean drinking water. The details contained herein outline the new organization's goals, mission, and first major project.

That project's purpose has three objectives: sell T-shirts, increase awareness of the people of the world who lack access to drinking water, and raise the financial support needed to provide that water to 100 people. Meanwhile, the organization will also advocate on behalf of Water.org, with plans to collect donations and inspire others to see the power they possess to make a difference.

The pages that follow outline the logistics for our plan. First comes a problem history, which demonstrates the grand scale of the global water problem and how localizing it to one university can benefit people in need. The proposal then progresses into a discussion of logistics and execution strategy.

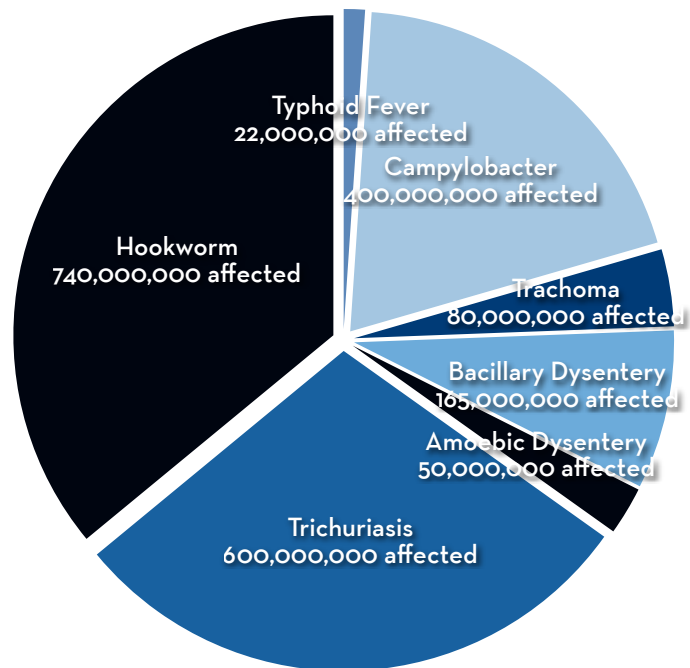
PROBLEM HISTORY

ACCORDING TO THE UNITED NATIONS, more than 884 million people—approximately one in eight people on this planet—lack the basic necessity of water.¹

From a biological perspective, this is the formula for system failure, for water plays a pivotal role in function of the human body. Constituting more than 75 percent of its total mass, H₂O helps regulate vital function in nearly every organ system. A person without food can be expected to survive for weeks, but for a person deprived of water, it's just days.² But many people have access to water, but not to any that is safe for drinking. As a result, at any given moment, the pathogens that inhabit this water hold responsibility for filling half the hospital beds in the world.³

These pathogens, unfortunately, can quickly turn lethal, and most commonly, it's due to diarrhea — this symptom alone causes 43 percent of water-related deaths.⁴ Diarrhea, which turns the stool watery and often has the body defecating more than three times a day, increases the water outflow from the body and quickly depletes its reserves. Some 1.4 million preventable deaths are caused by diarrhea⁵, attributable to unclean water

FIGURE 1. ANNUAL INCIDENCE OF WATER-RELATED DISEASES



This pie chart shows a number of the most common afflictions caused by water impurity. Several not included are **Hepatitis A** (1 million cases annually), **cholera** (3 million cases a year), and **rotavirus** (2 million hospitalized and 500,000 killed annually). Two others — the most common of all and not depicted here — are **ascariasis**, which affects 1 billion people and results in 60,000 deaths a year, and **cryptosporidiosis**, an intestinal infection that has infected 10 percent of all people in developing countries.

SOURCE: Water Advocates. "They aren't the only ones who don't get safe water." 2009. Retrieval at <http://www.wateradvocates.org/media/nytimesads/Water%20Advocates%20New%20York%20Times%20Ad%202009%20Final.pdf>.

¹ World Health Organization/UNICEF, 2010 Report. 2010. Joint Monitoring Programme for Water Supply and Sanitation. Retrieval at http://www.wssinfo.org/download.php?id_document=1289

² The Discovery Channel. 2009. <http://dsc.discovery.com/survival/faqs/food-water.html>

³ 2006 United Nations Human Development Report. 2006. Retrieval at <http://hdr.undp.org/en/media/HDR06-complete.pdf>

⁴ World Health Organization. 2008. "Safer Water, Better Health: Costs, benefits, and sustainability of interventions to protect and promote health." http://whqlibdoc.who.int/publications/2008/9789241596435_eng.pdf

⁵ World Health Organization. 2008. "Safer Water, Better Health: Costs, benefits, and sustainability of interventions to protect and promote health." Retrieval at http://whqlibdoc.who.int/publications/2008/9789241596435_eng.pdf

and poor sanitation. In fact, every day, it kills more than 4,000 children,⁶ estimated at one child every 20 seconds.⁷

The agents responsible for this are insidious. The problems they cause include trichuriasis, a parasitic intestinal infection; hookworm, a worm that attaches itself to a person's gut wall and feeds on blood; bacillary dysentery, an infection that can cause bloody diarrhea; campylobacter, an infection whose symptoms include cramps, fever, and pain; and trachoma, an infectious disease that has become the most common cause of blindness.⁸ (For disease incidence rates, refer to **Figure 1.**)

Fortunately, many organizations have banded together against the problem. Water.org is a nonprofit that partners organizations to build new wells or connect villages to existing water supplies. In doing so, it offers clean water to people who had never had it. What's most intriguing about this organization, though, is one of its promised results: for every \$25 donated, Water.org can provide a human being with clean water for a lifetime. That figure, astounding in itself, presents a powerful opportunity for any investor to become involved. For the purpose of this proposal, it also represents the seed of our problem, which needs further defining.

The problem's scope is global and requires worldwide support. But any grand-scale solution needs a beginning, however humble, and this proposal will attend to it as such. By every appearance, a terrible issue is being addressed by an agency that enacts a plausible solution. The real problem to address, therefore — the one we face here — are the reasons it is not yet thriving. Essentially, it breaks down into two parts:

- (1) **Lack of public awareness** and, as a consequence,
- (2) **Lack of financial support**

The first half of the problem is simply that people do not know the problem's seriousness. It is one of the United Nation's Millennium Development Goals, created in 2000, to "halve, by 2015, the proportion of the population without sustainable access to safe drinking water and basic sanitation."⁹ But in the typical American's eyes, water is an everlasting resource, accessed anytime at any nearby sink. Many assume the miracles of modern plumbing can be found everywhere.

⁶ End Water Poverty. 2009. "The Issue." Retrievable at http://www.endwaterpoverty.org/the_issue/

⁷ Water.org, "One Billion Affected." 2009. Retrievable at <http://water.org/learn-about-the-water-crisis/billion/>

⁸ Water Advocates. "They aren't the only ones who don't get safe water." 2009. Retrievable at <http://www.wateradvocates.org/media/nytimesads/Water%20Advocates%20New%20York%20Times%20Ad%202009%20Final.pdf>.

⁹ WHO/UNICEF Joint Monitoring Programme for Water Supply and Sanitation. 2006. Progress on Sanitation and Drinking Water. World Health Organization and UNICEF. Retrievable at http://whqlibdoc.who.int/publications/2010/9789241563956_eng_full_text.pdf

People also don't know about Water.org. Co-founded by noted actor Matt Damon, the organization has received some media attention. Yet informal inquiries among SVSU students have revealed that very few on campus are aware of the project. What's key here, however, is that as soon as they do hear about it, respondents often show a remarkable interest; many responded by saying they would love to help out with the project. They simply never knew.

This can be rectified.

The second half of the problem derives directly from the first but has a more tangible goal: financial investment. People unaware of this issue cannot help in its solution, and the only way to fix that is to reach an audience and explain what must be done. What the project should also show is how easily they can touch another's life. People may also hesitate to donate to a cause online. Users turned off by an unfamiliar website may be more likely to donate if they heard the facts from a friendly face.

This dual problem presents a unique opportunity, one that can and should be met with creativity and enthusiasm. At Saginaw Valley State University, we have a fertile field for development. Here, the rate of success in students' philanthropic fundraising merits note. In the Battle of the Valleys every year, the university competes against rival school Grand Valley State University, and consistently beats or comes close to beating the opposition, despite constituting a student population about half its size.¹⁰ When a massive earthquake struck Haiti in 2010, the student population responded and donated more than \$7,100 toward the American Red Cross relief efforts.¹¹ These instances are just two of the events that take place and succeed here, and they speak to the power of altruism on this campus, to the vision that students here have for an improved tomorrow.

The project at hand must therefore match the needs of an organization fighting for human rights, and meet them halfway with the giving spirit of SVSU, empowering and mobilizing students with a way to support the cause. The solution described herein would provide precisely that.

OUR SOLUTION

The solution here is simple: a grassroots organization dedicated to involving students in the solving of a world problem. In short, we'd like to start a group that would operate, in some ways, as a small company. The team would sell a line of T-shirts, designed with messages to spread awareness, as well as the idea that everyone can get involved, that we all can help bring change.

¹⁰ Dore, Alan. "Battle Trophy Stays Put." *The Valley Vanguard*. September 14, 2009. Retrievable at <http://www.svsu.edu/clubs/vanguard/stories/1997>.

¹¹ Hoag, Andy. "Saginaw Valley State University students raise more than \$7,000 for Haitian relief." *Saginaw News*. March 20, 2010. Retrievable at http://www.mlive.com/news/saginaw/index.ssf/2010/03/saginaw_valley_state_universit_46.html.

In this project, our objectives are twofold:

- *To raise the money needed to give clean water for life to 80 people in need by selling 250 T-shirts and donating the \$2,000 profit to Water.org by December 31 next year.*
- *To spread awareness of Water.org's movement and as a result, fundraise \$500 in individual donations.*

The operation would also function as an exercise in economics for students to learn from, as well as a lesson in responsibility, in making themselves aware of the implications of existing in the world. As human beings, each of us has far more power than our culture would have us realize, and we have the responsibility to spread the realm of our influence to make a change for the better.

Project Objectives

I. TO SELL 250 AWARENESS-RAISING T-SHIRTS

Students recruited as “Aidia Advocates” would work to spread word of the shirts, carrying photos of the shirt designs and request sheets for student orders. The shirts themselves would bear bold designs, pithy sayings, and statistical evidence of the need for change.

II. TO DONATE THE FUNDS TO WATER.ORG

The collected funds would be pooled and then donated online at Water.org. The objective is to raise the money needed to give clean water for life to 80 people in need by selling 250 T-shirts and donate the \$2,000 profit to Water.org by March 31, 2011.

III. TO RAISE AWARENESS OF THE GLOBAL PROBLEM

Aside from the project's initial objectives, one of the key missions of The Aidia is advocacy: speaking for a group whose voices are often too far away to be heard. The shirts, on one hand, help spread the message. So, in turn, do the people buying and wearing them. An additional objective here is to spread awareness of Water.org's movement and as a result, fundraise \$500 in individual donations—enough to save an additional 20 people, bringing the total of lives changed abroad to 100.

IV. TO INSPIRE THE INVOLVEMENT OF OTHER STUDENTS

The Aidia would be able to function as a team of 10 dedicated individuals, but one hope of the organization is growth. To this end, The Aidia will recruit new members and increase its realm of influence in order to help as many in need as possible.

Sustainability

The true beauty of the system is that, after an initial investment, the operation becomes completely self-sustaining. Saginaw Valley State University has a special account with the Saginaw Knitting Mill, a locally owned T-shirt provider and specialty clothing shop. Josh Webb, manager in the Purchasing Department at SVSU's South Complex, can secure a T-shirt with two or three colors at a cost of \$4 each. With \$1,000, The Aidia would order 250 shirts and sell them for \$12 apiece, netting a profit of \$8 with each sale.

The money provided by the initial grant would pay the cost of the 250 T-shirts. In this system, the shirt becomes the vehicle for the donation: the customers buying the first 250 shirts would pay for the next 250. Therefore, each T-shirt purchase does two things: (1) pays the cost of producing another T-shirt and (2) collects money for Water.org. The operation could function in this manner, in theory, until the organizers decide to end it. In short, the circle remains perfectly sustainable.

Total price of shirt – production cost of shirt = donation to Water.org.

\$12 – \$4 = \$8 donation, roughly one-third of Water.org's life-saving \$25 donation

250 shirts at \$8 donations = \$2,000: Enough to supply a lifetime of water to 80 people

Notice that with the first generation of shirts alone, the initial investment would have doubled. If the \$1,000 had instead been directly donated, it would have helped Water.org offer water to 40 people. As a result of the first round of sales, The Aidia will have served twice as many.

Figure 2. Cash Flow During Shirts' First Batch	
Number of shirts	250
Cost to produce T-Shirt	\$4
Total invested	\$1,000
Customer price of T-Shirt	\$12
Return per shirt (Single donation)	\$8
Total Return (Funds Raised)	\$2,000

As **Figure 2** indicates, the flow would always contain 250 shirts' worth of assets, either in the form of a T-shirt or the \$12 price. Thus, the funding invested in the project would be continuously maintained.

First Batch's Outcome

Note that, through this model, donations beget more donations. The first batch of T-shirts will collect twice the original \$1,000 — twice the number of lives changed compared to how many would have been if the seed money were instead given directly to Water.org. What's more, the model is sustainable, allowing for one investment to continue to forever increase exponentially.

In addition, shirts could come in generations: each batch of 250 would have a different look, so buyers could repeat their purchase without accumulating many of the same product.

Marketing Strategy

Marketing for this project could come through a variety of venues, including YouTube videos, Facebook groups, Twitter posts. (The advertising would primarily be paperless, to be friendlier to the environment.) But the beautiful thing about marketing in this campaign is that, once the project is underway, the products and customers carry most of the advertising for us. When people see a product they like, especially one that possesses some sense of intrigue, they're likely to ask about it to the person that has it. That person — energized, we hope — would tell the inquirer about our mission and thus spread the idea. This is at the core of The Aidia strategy.

Outcomes

By the end of the T-shirts' first one, the sale of 250 shirts will

- Deliver \$2,000 to Water.org, offering clean water to 80 people
- Increase awareness of problem raised in local community
- Collect additional donations for Water.org

THE ORGANIZATION

Who We Are

The Aidia is a budding student organization currently comprising 10 people (for contact information, please see the listing below). As members of an institution of higher education, we recognize the privilege that that education offers and dedicate ourselves to using it to better the lives of those without it.

Our Mission Statement

Our mission is to use our talents and innovations to raise awareness of social problems and involve our communities on campus and around the state to participate in the solutions.

We seek also to

- empower youth to take responsibility as global citizens,

- raise awareness of the global need for safe drinking water, and
- inspire a connection to the human community to which we all belong.

The Name “Aidia”

The name *Aidia* is layered with meaning. The word itself is pronounced like the word *idea* because, at our core, that’s what we are: agents of change who find empowerment by believing in the thought of our potential. We would be a student organization dedicated to an ideal, to a thought that inspired a change. The word doubles as a palindrome, reading the same backward and forward — in which the word *aid* comes in from both sides. In addition, the word *dia* is Greek for English’s “through” or “across”: we as an organization are a channel *through* which ordinary people can give the gift of life *across* the world.

In Spanish-speaking countries, *Aidia* is also a girl’s name. And we were delighted to discover its meaning — *Aidia* means *help*.

Why Our Goals Complement Those of the SRCI

This project fits SRCI’s goals for a number of reasons. These include

- **Affecting the community beyond SVSU.** This project carries the potential to save dozens of lives.
- **“Something More, Something Better.”** SVSU’s branding statement seems to encapsulate the spirit of this project. A relatively small grant would pack the power to offer new lives to dozens of families overseas, all the while providing an education to the people involved in the project.
- **Students’ experience.** Budding entrepreneurs have their hands in the running of this small business and effectively gain experience in many aspects of business, including teamwork, marketing, finance, leadership, sales, and project management.
- **Public relations potential.** The success of this program would be a success for SVSU. The university could use it to advertise the ingenuity of its students and their readiness to get involved. Product sales could be expanded to the community surrounding it, and perhaps provide an interesting news story that would work well to portray SVSU in a positive light.

The Aidia's Executive Board

Currently, the Aidia comprises the time, passion and talents of 10 people at SVSU.

Alan Dore

President and Founder
ajdore@svsu.edu

Jodi Radcliff

Vice President
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Bridget Bressette

Co-Treasurer
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Thad McGonagall

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Jennifer Dore

Creative Marketing Director
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Danilo Serias, Ph.D.

Faculty Advisor
dserias@svsu.edu

PROJECT TIMELINE

MONTH 1

- Send out informational e-mail alerting campus community to new opportunity to save lives.
- Host informational meetings at which pizza will be served and a brief presentation will be given.
- Begin T-shirt design process.
- Produce multiple mockups.

MONTH 2

- Hold an official first meeting of all interested. Recruit members to become Aidia Advocates, who will participate in the selling of the T-shirts.
- Send letters of interest to involve other organizations in the operations.
- Vote on and confirm final T-shirt design.
- Develop a staff roster.
- Train Aidia Advocates.
- Finalize “The Aidia” website. Launch advertising campaign (paperless and environmentally friendly) via new media, including Facebook, Twitter, the organization’s website and campus-wide e-mails. Send out press releases to local news agencies.
- Log any advance shirt purchases.

MONTH 3

- Send T-shirt order to Saginaw Knitting Mill.
- Receive shirts.
- Continue collecting advance shirt purchases.
- Begin Aidia Advocates’ sales.
- Submit report to Student Research and Creativity Institute.

MONTH 4

- Continue sales. Monitor cash flow. Determine whether another batch of shirts is needed.

MONTH 5

- Formally evaluate the project. Host a team success celebration. Plan to present findings at SVSU’s Association of Professional and Technical Writers’ annual mini-conference, where the project was originally presented as a proposal. Disseminate information via press releases to local news agencies.

MONTH 6

- If previous run proves to be successful, prepare for next round. Submit report to Student Research and Creativity Institute.

PROJECT BUDGET

Below (**Figure 3**) is an itemized list of necessities we'd like to procure to achieve our objectives:

Figure 3. Itemized Project Budget			
Item	Quantity	Cost/Unit	Total Cost
T-shirts	250	\$4	\$1,000
Pizzas for two informational recruitment meetings	20	\$5.99	\$126.99
Extra T-shirts, for use in advertising and size-checking (not for sale)	10	\$4	\$40
Estimated printing costs (Aidia Advocate education packets, flyers, etc.)	—	—	\$30
Total			\$1,196.99

PROJECT ASSESSMENT

The Aidia's Project will be formally evaluated after every four months, following the fall and winter semesters, by a team consisting of the organization's president, vice president, treasurer and advisor. Evaluation will consist of a records review of finances, of products sold, and of all donations sent to Water.org. The team will use that evaluation to determine whether operations should in any way be changed.

CONCLUSION

The Aidia is a student organization dedicated to eradicating the global issue of drinking water scarcity. Through a T-shirt sale, the group would engage the campus community in raising awareness and help generate financial support for Water.org, a national organization that continues to make a difference. Hopefully, the work will help others to see the power that each one of us has, and inspire us all to stand up for our values and take the chance to change the world.

For that, at its heart, is truly the Aidia.

