

2015 The Humane League Site Visit: San Diego Warped Tour

Jon Bockman, ACE's Executive Director, volunteered to leaflet with The Humane League's San Diego office and Vegan Outreach at a Warped Tour event in San Diego on August 5, 2015.

Jon met Beau (THL's San Diego Director) at the Animal Rights Conference. Beau told Jon that they would soon be leafleting at the Warped Tour in the San Diego area, and later sent him a Facebook invite to the event. The Facebook event (for leafleting) had 30 people signed up to attend and 10 maybes, so Jon wrote back with his phone number in case Beau needed more help on the day.

On the day of the event, Beau texted Jon, saying that a lot of people who had RSVP'd didn't show up, which is standard for Facebook events. Since they could use the help, Jon went out. He arrived at the event around 7pm.

On the Warped Tour, the highest traffic time for people leaving the event is around 7-9 pm. There were two big exits; it was easy to find the THL group at the exits, because of the music and the people exiting the venue.

At the exits they were set up with boxes of leaflets. Volunteers were also wearing vendor wristbands. Jon thinks that these were obtained from an AR group with a booth inside the venue, and that they're used to reduce the likelihood that security will bother leafleters. It means volunteers can stand right near the exits of the event without any problems.

The main exit had about 7 leafleters covering it. They had boxes of booklets at the side, and a wall of leafleters along the exit so that it was hard for people to get by without being exposed to a booklet. Vic Sjodin from Vegan Outreach was there giving people tips on how to leaflet based on his experience. Jon thought Vic's advice to newer leafleters was good; it was fairly standard advice, such as making sure to extend the hand with the leaflet and always smiling. Jon was leafleting in the secondary exit, where there were usually 3 leafleters.

Jon found that the take rate was very high; about 90% of the people he offered a leaflet to took one. The Humane League and Vegan Outreach put out a special leaflet for the Warped Tour that has pictures and quotes of vegetarian band members from the groups playing the tour. When they pass out the literature they say "message from the bands" instead of "flyer to help animals" or something similar, because some of the material in the leaflets is from band members and because it makes people more likely to take the booklet.

Jon estimates that they distributed 5,000-7,000 leaflets. (According to THL's Facebook post after the event, the actual number was 7,383.) Around 9pm, after people stopped leaving, they did a sweep around the parking lot to pick up discarded leaflets so they could be re-used. Jon estimates that in total they picked up about 200 leaflets from the parking lot area and trash/recycling.

The demographic at the event matched the demographic that seems to be most persuadable regarding diet change; it was primarily 14-20 year old, somewhat rebellious kids. Some people say they've had a bunch of these fliers before, but these are a small minority and Jon thinks these are the people who come to the tour every year.

Jon talked to some more people who were following some part of the tour leafleting every event. Jon's not sure which group they were employed by (THL or VO). He didn't have time to chat with more of the volunteers.

Usually when leafleting Jon has some Guides to Cruelty Free Eating or similar. These weren't available at this event, but no one came back to Jon to talk about the leaflet they got, so maybe that was because there's never any need for them in this situation, where people are leaving an event, as opposed to on campus where they might come back at the next class change.

Jon had a call with Beau to address some questions about the experience: a summary of that call follows.

Leaflets on the Ground

Some leaflets end up on the ground or in trash cans at leafleting events, like at Warped Tour. THL doesn't keep count of these leaflets, mainly because that number would be hard to interpret and keeping a count would be difficult for leafleters. It's unclear how many people who drop or throw away the leaflets read them, and it's hard to count these because they are often torn up, trampled, wet, or otherwise damaged.

People Who Leaflet

Warped Tour leafleting events involve both THL and Vegan Outreach (VO) staff and interns as well as local volunteers. At the San Diego event ACE visited, five leafleters were THL/VO staff and interns who follow Warped Tour and two leafleters were local volunteers. The followers tend to be roughly an even split from VO and THL. The number of local volunteers varies. For example, at an Atlanta event there were around fifteen local volunteers compared to five of the event followers. These local volunteers mostly hear about the events through word of mouth from local offices as well as social media. THL and VO create Facebook events, invite local community members, and share details on those events such as contact numbers, directions to the event, and parking instructions.