

2015 Florida Public Relations Association Golden Image Awards
Division C: Audio/Visual Tools of PR / Category 7: Video, Public Service / one minute or less
Entry: 2014 Indian River Lagoon Science Festival / Submitted by: Erick Gill, St. Lucie County

Research/Situation Analysis: In July 2014, staff from the Smithsonian Marine Station contacted the Public Information Manager for the St. Lucie County Office of Media Relations seeking assistance in promoting a new event that the group hoped would become an annual community occurrence – The Indian River Lagoon Science Festival. Since St. Lucie County was a major sponsor of the event and the event was taking place at a county-managed facility, the Smithsonian staff requested that the Media Relations staff assist by creating a 30-second video Public Service Announcement (PSA), which would air on the county’s government access channel (SLCTV), as well as be promoted through websites and social media outlets. Several other groups were handling other promotional duties such as tradition and social media venues, but the Smithsonian staff lacked the expertise to create and produce a video PSA/commercial. Since this was a family event and the County Commissioners have expressed deep concerns and passion for the lagoon, the Smithsonian staff felt a short video PSA created by the county would help target residents in St. Lucie County, who regularly follow the government access channels. If residents are passionate enough to tune into local government channels, then surely they would want to attend this new environmental event. Additionally, SLCTV has several original monthly programs that focus on the environment (Lecture Hall) and the outdoors (Postcards from Home), which the PSA could be packaged with. SLCTV is available to all Comcast subscribers in the unincorporated areas of St. Lucie County and in the city of Fort Pierce, and on all U-Verse subscribers from Indian River to Palm Beach counties (cable providers won’t disclose those number for competitive reasons).

Objectives: Staff wanted to produce a professional looking PSA that would create awareness of the event and help the organizers reach their attendance goal of at least 4,000 visitors. The target audience for the event was primarily families with young children.

Implementation: Even through this was the inaugural Indian River Lagoon Science Festival, St. Lucie County’s Media Relations staff had plenty of local video of researchers from the Smithsonian, Harbor Branch

and other environmental educational facilities that were scheduled to be at the Sept. 27 event. Staff also had footage of children and families at other environmental events featuring groups scheduled to be at the Science Festival. Given that the Smithsonian staff only requested the PSA to be created less than two months prior to the event date, staff had to move quickly. A script was crafted using the press release provided by the Smithsonian with a focus on the activities that matched existing file footage. The Media Relations staff also used its new video drone to capture HD aerial footage of Harbor Pointe Park, which served as the location of the Science Festival, with camera moves that showed the site's proximity to the Indian River Lagoon, since that was the main focus of the event. Once the script was approved by the Smithsonian staff, the Media Relations staff created graphic, colors and music that complemented the logo designed for the festival as well as the message of the event. The final 30-second PSA was posted on YouTube about a month prior to the Sept. 27 event. Additionally it aired in heavy rotation on St. Lucie's government access channel, as well as the government access channels in the cities of Fort Pierce and Port St. Lucie. Volunteers working on the Indian River Science Festival shared the video on social media sites such as Twitter and Facebook. Prior to the event, the county's YouTube posting of the video received more than 150 views.

Evaluation: Organizers of the 2014 Indian River Lagoon Science Festival hoped to have at least 4,000 participants throughout the day-long event. Tickets were not sold, as admission was free, but officials estimate that between 8,000 – 10,000 people attended the Sept. 27 event. This was calculated by the more than 4,000 vehicles that were parked by volunteers working with the Fort Pierce Police Department. Volunteers believe each vehicle averaged at least 2.5 people. Plus there were many residents that walked/rode their bikes to the event from nearby neighborhoods.

Budget: Staff did not spend any money on the production of the spot other than roughly 30 hours of staff time (less than \$900 total) used to build graphics and edit the PSA. Two staff members were involved in putting the PSA together.

St. Lucie County Office of Media Relations

Organizational Overview

The St. Lucie County Office of Media Relations is a division of County Administration. The division is co-managed by Erick Gill, public information officer, and Shane DeWitt, technical operations manager, and consists of two additional full-time employees (a media specialist and a webmaster). Established in 2001, the Office of Media Relations is responsible for the internal and external promotion of all St. Lucie County departments and offices that are managed by the Board of County Commissioners.

The office is responsible for all of St. Lucie County's press releases, brochures and other promotional materials, the county's website, social media and government access channel, which operates 24 hours a day, 7 days a week airing live meetings and original programs.

The overall budget for the St. Lucie County Office of Media Relations is \$545,264 for the 2014-15, including salaries.