

**2018 Florida Public Relations Association Golden Image Awards**  
**Division C: Digital Tools for Public Relations**  
**Category 2: Procession of the Species**  
**Erick Gill – St. Lucie County Communications Director**

**Research/Situation Analysis:** For nearly 15 years, the staff from St. Lucie County's environmental education center, the Oxbow Eco-Center, hosted an annual Earth Day Festival, incorporating a Procession of the Species parade into the event, where visitors dress in animal costumes and march around the Oxbow's trails. In early 2017, staff decided that this event should be expanded into something bigger. Modeled after the Procession of the Species created by a group celebrating the Endangered Species Act in Olympia, Wash. in 1995, the Oxbow staff wanted St. Lucie County's Procession to be part of the third annual Indian River Lagoon Science Festival on Oct. 14, 2017. The Lagoon Festival had already built an audience of roughly 8,000 people (mainly families of elementary and middle school students) celebrating the estuary, science and the environment in downtown Fort Pierce. Since there was no budget to promote this Treasure Coast Procession of the Species event, staff asked the county's Communications Division to help promote this new community event. In 2015, Facebook retooled the way Events show up in people's News Feed. Facebook Data Scientist Ben Bregman told *Wired* in a November 2015 article – that the company made design tweaks that doubled the average number of people who view public events. In addition to creating the standard press release, the Communications staff wanted to focus the promotional activity to Facebook Event page where staff and participants can post images and information about the event.

**Objectives:** 1) Create a unique logo for the first official Procession of the Species 2) Create a Facebook event page to post information about the Procession, reaching at least 10,000 people (families with elementary & middle schoolers) at a time when the county's Facebook audience was roughly 6,000 followers 3) Register at least 50 people to participate in costume in the Procession of the Species (this number was based off the attendance from previous Earth Day Processions) 4) Recruit at least three public schools and five local artists to help with the event 5) Secure at least five community partners.

**Implementation:** The Oxbow staff provided the Communications staff with a logo/flyer with the basic information for the event. The Communications staff redesigned the logo, making it more unique to St. Lucie County's native animals and incorporated images of people inside the animals to invoke the feeling of the event. Once the main design was finalized; the Communications staff created a Facebook event page toward the end of August with the goal of posting at least once a week about the Oct. 14 event. Rather than just create individual posts about the Procession event, staff wanted to create a Facebook event page for the Procession so that they could build a relationship with those planning to attend. Additionally, by creating an event, when Facebook users marked that they were "interested" or "attending" the event that action would automatically create an additional organic push to that person's friends and followers. To create a buzz for the Procession, the Oxbow hosted Advice from an Artist workshops each Saturday for six weeks, giving participants a place to create their costumes. Each week the Communications staff would post photos from the Advice from an Artists as a reminder of the upcoming event. Staff also created two video PSAs about the Procession event. Since this was technically the first Procession event and there was not previous video, staff used still images from past Earth Day parades, animating the still image of people in costumes making them "jump" off the screen. An electronic billboard was created for the Procession. A billboard company for the donation of the space on US 1 in Port St. Lucie, generating roughly 57,000 impression at no cost. The Facebook event page was the main source of promotional activity with the exception of two press releases and a digital billboard.

**Evaluation:** 1) The artwork created for the Procession of the Species earned a 2018 Treasure Coast Advertising Federation Addy Award for campaign materials 2) the Procession of the Species Facebook event page reached more than 11,000 people with 305 responding (nearly double the amount of followers to the county's Facebook page at that time) 3) The Oxbow staff registered 200 participants for the inaugural Procession of the Species or a 300 percent increase over what was expected. 4) The Oxbow's Advice from an Artist event drew 22 local artists or a 340 percent increase over what was anticipated 5) 20 different community partners assisted in the Procession – four times what staff had hoped for.

**Budget:** The only cost was staff time, which totaled 40 hours or roughly \$1,120