

2019 Florida Public Relations Association: Golden Image Awards
Division A: Public Relations Programs
Category 5: Special Events: Treasure Coast Wine & Ale Trail Festival
Submitted by: St. Lucie County's Communications & Tourism Divisions

Research/Situation Analysis: In August 2016, the St. Lucie County Tourism office partnered with its neighboring destinations, the Indian River County and Martin County Tourism offices, to create the Treasure Coast Wine & Ale Trail – a public/private partnership comprised of local craft breweries and wineries on the Treasure Coast for the purpose of attracting niche markets and wine & craft beer enthusiasts to the region. A local winery owner and brewery owner had the vision of starting a local wine and ale trail modeled after other popular destinations in areas such as Asheville and Jacksonville. They brought this idea to the Martin, Indian River and St. Lucie Tourism Offices. With one winery and eight breweries, it was evident that this could appeal to craft beer and wine enthusiasts from outside the area and generate room nights. The trail officially launched in March of 2017 and has successfully increased awareness of the Treasure Coast region and has generated customer traffic and sales to the partners on the trail. As the trail continues to grow, it has been crucial to maintain awareness and continue to provide printed marketing materials along with other marketing support such as digital and social media marketing, public relations, advertising, etc. The tourism offices took the lead on all marketing efforts of the trail. The Treasure Coast Wine and Ale Trail has a designated Facebook page, Instagram page as well as a website, which includes a calendar of events which all partners on the trail have access to. In the beginning, the tourism offices absorbed the costs associated with starting the trail, including: The design and production of the official Wine and Ale Trail Maps (which earned NACIO, FPRA and PRSA awards last year), pint glasses for the end prize, design of the website, social media promotion and any other miscellaneous costs. In early 2018, it was determined that there needed to be funds allocated specifically for the marketing, growth and sustainability of the trail. The first-ever Treasure Coast Wine & Ale Trail Festival was created as a way for the partners to contribute towards the marketing efforts.

Objectives: 1) Create a one-day Treasure Coast Wine & Ale Trail Festival to attract at least 500 guests with at least 150 buying advanced admissions 2) generate at least \$5,000 in revenue to be donated to the tourism offices for the future marketing/advertising of the Treasure Coast Wine & Ale Trail; 3) Raise awareness of the Treasure Coast Wine & Ale Trail and attract visitors to the Treasure Coast Region by digitally reaching at least 20,000 people throughout the Treasure and Space Coasts.

Implementation: The planning and implementation of the Treasure Coast Wine & Ale Trail was a collaborative effort between the partners on the trail along with the tourism offices. St. Lucie County's Tourism & Communications offices took on the role of marketing the event, including purchasing the tokens, (which can be reused next year), tasting glasses, signage, entertainment, public relations and social media collateral for the event. The partners on the trail (9 breweries, 1 cidery and 1 winery) all

donated their time and products for the event. Marketing efforts included: Paid Facebook advertisement, organic Facebook advertisement, road signs, event posters, inclusion on a number of community calendars and digital ad on the website, www.tcwineandaletrail.com. The event was held on Nov.17, 2018 from 1 to 5 p.m. at the Summer Crush Vineyard and Winery, which is the only winery on the Treasure Coast, as well as a stop on the trail. The site was selected because it is the largest site with a capacity of 700 at one time and it is centrally located on the trail. Admission was free to the event, but it was \$20 to purchase 20 tokens in advance or \$25 the day of. One token afforded you one, three-ounce sample. Guests could also just directly purchase a pint without having the tasting sampler cup. The day before the event, more than 200 people purchased the \$20 package. The festival not only boasted craft beer and wine sampling, but also arts & craft vendors, food trucks and live entertainment.

Evaluation: Objective 1: The event was an overwhelming success with roughly 700 people in attendance (40 percent above goal) throughout the day and more than 200 pre-sales (33 percent above goal). Several of the breweries brought as several kegs of various brews and ran out before 5 p.m. 2) On Jan. 22, 2019 the partners of the Wine & Ale Trail donated \$8,506.79 to the designated fund for the Treasure Coast Wine & Ale Trail at the St. Lucie County Board of County Commissioner's meeting. A total of \$12,913.79 was raised, but \$4,407 was subtracted to reimburse the tourism agencies for the upfront costs to promote/put on the event. The Treasure Coast Wine & Ale Trail Festival had a 93 percent return on investment in its first year.; 3) At the registration table the day of the event, staff verbally surveyed the attendees and approximately 50 percent of the people who came to the event weren't aware of the trail prior to the event. We had a great return on investment and increased awareness of the trail to as far south as Palm Beach and as far north as Palm Bay based off social media engagement and staff interaction at the registration table. The Facebook Ad reached 20,650 people while thousands of people drove by the 80 road signs that were strategically placed around the region. Attendees were not only introduced to the trail and the local beverages offered, but they were introduced to the Treasure Coast destination thereby increasing exposure of the region as a unique place to visit.

Budget: Staff budgeted \$5,000 with a goal to raise at least twice the amount to cover the cost of the event and create a marketing fund for the trail. The tourism offices split the initial expenses, which totaled \$4,407 and consisted of: Tasting cups (\$1,132); tokens (\$1,350); token bags (\$155); signage (\$720); sign permit (\$50); Facebook advertising (\$500) and entertainment/live music (\$500); Staff time between the Tourism & Communications offices (five people) was roughly 75 hours total at the median rate of \$25/hour. All staff members are salary, so no overtime costs were incurred. Staff time totaled roughly \$1,875. Added to the materials costs – the entire event cost \$6,282, while raising \$12,913.79 – a return on investment of almost 100 percent. The members of the Treasure Coast Wine & Ale Trail didn't provide details on the amount of product or staff time that was donated for the event.