

PSLinLights | Division A | Category 12A Virtual Special Event | Entry

Research/Situation Analysis | When it comes to bringing the holiday spirit, no event is more anticipated than the annual holiday bus tour that takes Port St. Lucie residents on a guided tour to the most dazzling lights in the City. This annual event began in 2016 with a simple interactive map. The following year, the Communications Department introduced a one-night bus tour which carried 75 residents, on three buses to view holiday lights. With this event growing ever more popular, the Communication's Department was instructed to elevate the event once again! In 2018, a second night was added, and 200 residents signed up within the first 30 minutes of launching the registration form. With more and more residents wanting to hop on the holiday bus tour, Communications introduced 12 coach buses in 2019 with 700 tickets sold out in hours. 2020 introduced many more challenges with COVID-19 posing a health risk to all parties and Communications was still expected by residents and City Council to deliver something magical. Informal research included scanning social media groups like Nextdoor and local Facebook groups where residents were encouraging one another to bring holiday cheer with more holiday lights during the COVID-19 pandemic. This qualitative research, as well as many articles and headlines about the upcoming holiday season in a pandemic led to the decision of moving forward with an online event. Making this online event happen required additional research in which we reviewed comment cards taken from past PSLinLights events. The feedback proved the hour-long, or even 45-minute tour, was deemed too long, which helped in the decision of creating a 30-minute long show to premiere on Facebook. We also research how best to incorporate interaction during this online event and were quick to include trivia and sing-alongs as they proved to be popular in the feedback and comment cards.

Planning | The goal of PSLinLights Virtual show, titled 'Tis the Season Holiday Extravaganza, was to provide residents with the guided tour they have loved for years but conducted in a safe manner for everyone. This fits well with the City's strategic goals: goal 1: Safe Clean & Beautiful and goal 6: Culture, Nature & Fun Activities. To promote this online event and inform residents of these changes we set the following **objectives**: 1) Inform residents of the new online event premiering on Dec. 22 reach 1,000 people on Facebook with 100 people participating during the virtual event and to complete the video one day before the event. 2) Increase our landing page visits by 10% than last year's visits of 8,573 during the holiday season. 3) Have 20 more participants than 2019's 60 entries in contest by Jan. 3. **Strategies** included using the Facebook premiere feature to share the video as if it was happening live by using a prerecorded video. Use internal staff to bring holiday cheer and continue to work with partners from previous years in prerecorded online cooking segments and performances. Additionally, the team wished to engage with our audience and enlisted our Social Media Coordinator to watch the live stream and answer any questions and comments. **Tactics**: Create a 30-minute-long video that provides residents with a tour of the best lights entered in our online contest. Create teaser videos that promoted this online event and contests. Create mailable postcards that linked to the website with more information about lights. **Target Audience**: Port St. Lucie's residents have a population of 202,000 with 51% being female, median age of 43 and median household income of \$60,000. Many residents that attended past events are primarily multigenerational families who enjoy viewing holiday lights. Our Facebook page does well in targeting women between the ages of 25-55, as well as an older demographic that would very much appreciate not having to leave their homes to view holiday lights.

Implementation | The Communications Team developed a four-part plan was to 1) increase engagement on social media measured by the use of the #PSLinLights hashtag, 2) identify and showcase homes and City facilities in all four corners of PSL, 3) replace the Holiday Bus Tour with a fun interactive virtual show and 4) create a holiday lights map that residents can use on their own. 1) The City incorporated a hashtag contest featuring nine holiday photo-op displays in six prime picture spot locations. Residents were encouraged to snap a photo and add #PSLinLights to their social media posts (Instagram,

PSLinLights | Division A | Category 12A Virtual Special Event | Entry

Facebook & Twitter). Three winners were chosen at random to receive a \$25 gift card. Four families visited all nine photo-ops and uploaded their pictures with the #PSLinLights; one lucky winner was randomly drawn to receive a \$50 gift card. 2) The contest started two weeks earlier than previous years to extend the holiday cheer and capture those who put up their lights around Thanksgiving. The City advertised it was looking for homeowners, tenants or lessees who have the spirit of Christmas to participate in the City of Port St. Lucie's seasonal contest. There were three categories for the "New Kid on the Block" and "PSL Showstopper" prize category. The public voted on the winners, judging began 8 a.m. Jan. 5, 2021, to midnight Jan. 7, 2021. Gold winners received a decorative yard sign and a \$100 gift card. Silver winners received an honorable mention certificate and a \$50 gift card. Bronze winners received a \$25 gift card. "Light Up the Neighborhood" prize category, each participating household from the winning neighborhood received a winner's certificate and a \$25 gift card. A trophy with the winning neighborhood name is displayed at City Hall. All winners were announced publicly on the City of Port St. Lucie's website and social media accounts, Twitter and Facebook, on Friday, Jan. 8, 2021. The winners also were congratulated and acknowledged at a City Council meeting in-person or via Zoom. 3) The show required a lot of preproduction work which included visiting seven private residences whose owners went over the top with their holiday lights display. The Social Media Coordinator joined in on the on-site locations to advertise the upcoming show. The virtual event also featured four City-owned facilities that were adorned with lights. The interactive, pre-recorded show included holiday trivia and a brief cooking segment with the help of a happy elf from Human Resources as cohost of the show. 4) The map utilized on the virtual show was housed on the website, so residents could tour the sites themselves on their own time. Since people could admire displays from their car windows, holiday lights were a family, COVID-friendly activity. And even those who were sheltering in place could see the lights on the City's website, social media or government channel.

Evaluation | The 'Tis the Season Facebook Holiday show had 862 Facebook comments, 90 Facebook shares, 3,485 Facebook engagement and 19,075 Facebook reach, which far exceeded our expectation of 1,000 views. The www.CityofPSL.com/PSLinLights landing page had 14,003 number of visits from November 2020 to January 2021. That is 63% more views than last year's count of 8,573. The landing page housed information on the winner, multiple contests, deadlines, holiday lights map, how to vote, contest rules and for the first year City light displays. Twice as many residents entered the PSLinLights outdoor yard decorating contest than in 2019. There were 120 contestants for the 2020 Outdoor Yard Decorating Contest and 88 of those were first time entries. We doubled the number of contestants from 2019 which had approximately 60 entries.

Budget | We budgeted a total of \$11,500 for the #PSLinlights as we initially expected to have to order even more buses at \$6,200, promotional items and giveaways at \$3,300, and hot cocoa and candy canes budgeted for \$300 for an in-person event. We also allocated, \$1,700 for print materials and advertising. With a virtual event we didn't need to spend as much as we initially budgeted and only spent \$2,000 on print materials, purchasing additional holiday light displays and targeted Facebook ads. More than 100 hours of staff time was dedicated to creating the contests, developing the map and website, social media and producing the virtual show, with more than 70% of our time dedicated to filming and editing the show. We spent half the amount of time producing an online event versus the previous year's in-person bus tour which included more staff and longer hours to complete. Staff time this year is valued at \$3,500 and the City did not use any outside marketing or PR agencies to complete this project, which came well under budget because of the effective use of staff time and adjusting the event from in-person to virtual. The return on investment of reaching 19,075 individuals on Facebook with this online video far exceeds the number of participants that could have attended an in-person event which is limited to the number of seats available. We could very well be challenged to offer both in-person and a virtual event in coming years.