Southeastern Pennsylvania Coast Day

Shhh...Don’t tell them they are learning!
Did you know PA has a COAST?

• Generally, people in PA do not know this
• 57 shoreline miles from the PA/DE border on up to Trenton, NJ & Morrisville, PA, influenced by the Atlantic’s tides
• Viewed mainly from I-95 (limited access)
• Land/water connection unclear and not experienced by most local residents
What is ‘Coast Day’ in PA?

• A family-oriented “edu-tainment” event
• Interactive environmental education booths tied into Treasure Hunt /Prizes
• Music & Entertainment
• Oyster tasting
• Kid crafts
• Boat Rides (new in ’07 & ’08)
Connecting people to the “Coast”

- Purpose of Coast Day is to increase public awareness and involvement in coastal issues, and build stewardship.

- Targets families & youth, but all ages attend.
The PA Coast Day To-Do List (condensed)

Establish funding (annual agreements)

January-Site agreement & payment

Spring-Exhibitor & volunteer outreach to app. 200 organizations

June- Flier / bill stuffer design & production, Order shuttle buses & boat rides

July-Coordinate advertising for print & radio, Reserve DJ & other entertainment

August-Reserve tables, tents, chairs, Order prizes & craft supplies, Follow up with all contractors, inc. food vendors, Coordinate with caterer & supplier for oyster tasting,

Purchase raffle item, Update banners, Obtain exhibitor activity info, reply with exhibitor instructions, Distribute fliers in vicinity of event, Arrange for bathroom & police services if necessary

• September-Call in final numbers for tents, tables & chairs, Email blast Coast Day Ad, Draft & print program & event map, confirm shuttle bus & boats

• Day before -Pick up oysters, pack all supplies

• Week after – Send thanks to exhibitors, volunteers & staff
So if you advertise it, will they come?
In the beginning-

Started with a solid plan, and had all the right elements in place...

Location: Fairmount Water Works - Tidal Schuylkill

- Healthy budget
- Heavily advertised in newspapers
- Live entertainment - multiple artists
- Great exhibitor participation

A couple hundred people came....
Realizing events can take a while to catch on, we tweaked the approach in ‘03.

- Worked with WXPN in advertising and Kid’s Corner segment (& other radio stations)
- Printed ads on SEPTA rail passes
- Continued newsprint ads

...and a few more people came
Other strategies ’04 thru ’06:

• Added PWD’s “Philly Fun Fishing Tournament (combined advertising)
• Partnered with Fairmount Park Commission for “Park Fest” in ’06 (combined advertising)
• Eventually dropped expensive radio and increased print advertisement venues
• Sent brochures to schools w/ 2 for 1 prize coupons
• Budget pretty much the same each year, funds moved around to find the ‘right’ vehicle to reach the public

…and each year, attendance stayed about the same…
But then... PA Coast Days 2007 & 2008 - several thousand attended!

How did that happen?!?
Lesson #1: Location, Location, Location

Moving to Penn’s Landing = Better public access, parking, transportation

...and made it possible to offer boat rides! (more on this later)
Lesson #2 – realizing & utilizing the full power of your partnerships

- PWD water bill ‘stuffer’…reaching 480,000 homes, businesses, etc.
Lesson #3 –
The POWER of the word “FREE”
Lesson #4 – The omission of the words “Educational” and “Environmental”…

…replaced with words like “FUN”

(Choose your adjectives wisely!)
Language that ‘preaches to the choir’ will never reach or attract a general public audience. See the event through your targeted audience’s eyes, and use language that will entice them.
Lesson #5 – The POWER of the DUCK (and other FREE value-added offers)!
Like the motivational power of a T-shirt and other inexpensive prizes
And the experience of trying something for the first time! (like oysters)
What we know...

Public outreach is a challenge. Finding the right combination of effective partnerships, location, language, motivation, value-added attractions, and creative educational tools is the key to event success.
Join us at the
Southeastern Pennsylvania Coast Day
in September 2009!

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