



GREAT AMERICAN MERCHANDISE & EVENTS™

Events: They're More Than the \$\$\$

A Case in Point: Derby Duck® Races

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"We have achieved a tremendous level of success, reaching the profit goal last year, which was a full six years before we had projected to reach that level when we began this process seven years ago. (additionally) ...we have averaged about \$100,000 in free positive media exposure for our organization, transforming our recognition virtually overnight.

~ Jim Ross, Crosswinds Merritt Island, FL

Keeping your message visible is increasingly challenging, yet the key to continuing growth is to keep your message visible. Even the savviest marketers are asking themselves how to do this effectively. More and more, the answer to increased revenue, visibility and exposure is events "There's no question that the event market is expanding on an almost exponential basis," says Don Sayter, president of the International Special Events Society. "And the dollars that corporations are willing to spend on events continues to increase." (Event Marketer Magazine, August 2004)

Consider the phenomena of Derby Duck racing – this event is known primarily for its fun reputation and adorable icon. In addition to being fun, this event is an extremely successful tool for development and sponsorship professionals. In fact, since its inception Duck Races have raised over \$70 million in the US alone and the phenomenon has expanded to over 11 other countries! Even with impressive ROI like that, the success of this event transcends dollars raised. Regardless of what country the event takes place in, nonprofits and sponsors alike appreciate the event for the opportunity to increase community awareness while providing a multitude of opportunities to



Media Reps Query Cincinnati Race Organizer

raise money and activate sponsorships. Duck Races feature a unique balance between corporate partnerships, media and the non-profits while grassroots opportunities provide the additional benefit of increasing volunteers or membership. The following are some real-life examples of utilizing Derby Duck races to achieve a variety of objectives in a variety of locations around the US.

Raising Awareness: The Community Flocks

"No event in our community, outside of a University of Tennessee home football game, gets greater media coverage than the duck race. From a marketing standpoint, we gain far more than what we net on the race itself. We're on the front page, and you just can't buy that kind of coverage."

~ John Lee, President and CEO of the Boys and Girls Club of the Tennessee Valley in Knoxville

- Even more important, get people to test-drive a vehicle - if they do, he continued, "I've just greatly increased my chances to sell."

Olympic Hospital Foundation knew that they could develop a sponsorship that addressed his marketing objectives. Together, the foundation and the dealership established a promotion in conjunction with the Duck Race, in which people came by the dealership and guessed how many ducks were in the back of a Toyota pickup. Wilder then increased the show floor interest by adopting a duck for each person who test-drove a vehicle.

Ads for the promotion were placed with two local media sponsors, the Peninsula Daily News and Radio KONP, which gave the media sponsors additional revenue. The Foundation received more publicity for the race, and the dealership received more traffic. And the best news of all? This Toyota dealership had its best month in history. Now, without fail, the Foundation organizers hear from the owner of the dealership who asks "We will get to be the car sponsor next year, won't we?"

Successful Duck Races also lead to creating or expanding community partnerships. Ross credits the Derby Duck Races for transforming his organization into one of the best known organizations in Central Florida. "The Boeing Company has given us \$250,000 and one of the reasons is because many of their employees got involved in the race and learned more about our cause." Ross says that the event has also enabled the organization to strengthen its relationship with government officials. Tom Feeney, the Speaker of the House of the State of Florida, came to his event.

"He's now a great friend and the U.S. Congressman serving our district, he even went on the floor of the House praising our organization recognizing Crosswinds Youth Services as the best of its kind in the nation."

The Duck Calls

Charitable organizations are always looking for more volunteers. Volunteers donate time and energy, and from a marketing perspective, they are the voice of a cause in the community. Volunteers do what an organization's staff can't do and that's cover a lot of ground. For this reason, volunteer recruitment is an important element of success.

Lee has volunteers selling at Kroger stores and at Knoxville's two largest malls. He takes his sales team on the road to festivals, demolition derbies - anywhere that he can sell ducks and gain exposure for the Boys and Girls Club.

Duck races have become serious business and serious money.

"One of the great things about the race is that it is truly fun for volunteers," he said.

Duck Races are also a great way of tapping the local employment force with corporate partnerships that include the employees. "We have 90% of the banks in our community sponsoring the event," said Ross. "When you go into almost any bank in Brevard County, a teller will ask you, 'do you want to support Crosswinds Youth Services and adopt a duck?'" Including employees is a great way for corporations to support the community, while offering

its employees a fun way to get involved. The benefits are extraordinary: employees appreciate employers who support their volunteer efforts, employers benefit from community visibility and the nonprofit benefits from increased fundraising capacity.

Yellow Equals Green

Raising money is ultimately the end goal with the Derby Duck Races and they perform swimmingly in that category. Duck Races have become serious business, and serious money. "We're not nickel and diming any more," said Paul Spain, race coordinator for the Eugene, Oregon race (52,842 ducks sold), put on by the combined 10 Rotary clubs in that area. "All of our Rotary Clubs have come together and made a major impact on the community," said Spain

Since 1998 Duck Races have raised over \$70 million and helped fund and bring attention to cancer organizations, children's causes, animal welfare, museums and zoos- just about every charitable cause that you can name. Not only that, but Duck Races are a fundraiser of choice in cities of all size, because they are the most effective way to tie in all the components of a successful event: media, sponsorship and promotion. By working with GAME and utilizing the Duck Races, these communities show what is possible, one duck at a time!

- Cincinnati, Ohio, (Population 2,000,000), \$500,000 raised (2005)
- Knoxville, Tennessee, (population 700,000), \$245,000 raised (2005)
- Eugene, Oregon, (population 322,000), \$210,000 raised (2005)
- Merritt Island, Florida (population 33,000), \$162,000 raised (2005)
- Grants Pass, Oregon (population 23,000), \$125,000 raised (2005)