

Making a Lasting Impression

Goals

The Chattahoochee Valley Libraries, headquartered in Columbus, Georgia, are well-known locally for organized and efficient marketing initiatives that work. Their effort with Geek the Library was no exception. Fund Development/Marketing Coordinator Linda Hyles empowered her small marketing staff and the staff at seven library locations to get all eyes in the community on the library. “Our library system needed a shot of adrenaline,” she said. “I think we’ve become very complacent doing the same programming over and over again. I wanted to do something that would make a fast yet deep impression, and at the same time get people to focus on the library.”

In just three months, Hyles and her team featured nearly 180 local people on posters and billboards. They also negotiated advertising that spanned the complete period and provided coverage in every major media outlet, and took part in many local events. While the time period was much shorter than recommended for a Geek the Library campaign, Hyles’ team planned intensely prior to launch and put the campaign as the number-one priority from beginning to end. “We did meet our goals, but it was hard. If I had to go back and do it again, I would stretch it out a little longer. It really did occupy our lives.”

AT A GLANCE

- Service area: Muscogee, Marion, Stewart and Chattahoochee Counties
- Service area population: Over 214,000
- Staff: 75 full-time, 25 part-time

Campaign

Hyles considers planning an important element of the campaign’s success—especially a carefully considered localization and media strategy. “Without the appropriate planning process, you can easily get off track and lose focus. Outside of the campaign, there’s a lot of work to do, so when adding additional work, you have to plan. If libraries incorporate the campaign into what they’re already doing for the year, they will be more successful, but it needs to stay at the forefront at all times.”

Timing was also important. Internal discussions began at the same time Hyles traditionally conducts full-year program planning and promotional budgeting. Her approach was to take a broad view of



Juanita Lanoux, IT Manager,
Chattahoochee Valley Libraries

“Our library system needed a shot of adrenaline. I think we’ve become very complacent doing the same programming over and over again. I wanted to do something that would make a fast yet deep impression, and at the same time get people to focus on the library.”

— Linda Hyles, Fund Development/Marketing Coordinator

Making a Lasting Impression *Continued*

everything that needed promotional support and find ways to maximize impressions per dollars spent. With possible plans in mind for how one media purchase might help her negotiate a package of opportunities, Hyles invited all of her media contacts for private meetings. “Building relationships with the media is so important. It is a year-round effort. I have a lot of friends in the media because it’s something I nurture. We just support each other.”

According to Hyles, media negotiations weren’t difficult in the case of Geek the Library as the campaign is so visual. She did note, however, the importance of taking ample time to explain the community focus—she found creative ways to help her media contacts envision local leaders and well-known people in the community as the focal point, and included specific examples when appropriate. She played up the idea that the media would be part of the buzz by also featuring local people from within their organizations. It helped to have a solid list of community leaders—from school teacher of the year to the mayor—who had already agreed to take part.

In the end, Hyles stayed within her allocated budget (she didn’t have any additional dollars to put toward the campaign), but negotiated over \$10,000 worth of free advertising for the Geek the Library campaign—mostly in additional newspaper ads and digital billboards. (At the same time, she found sponsors for another program taking place

that year in the amount of \$45,000.) “You have to make it a win-win situation. Even though you may not have a lot of money, you can leverage what you have by giving them some visibility or opportunity to sponsor a different program or event. In return they may be willing to give you something for free that doesn’t cost them anything, like the digital billboards.”

Outcome

Heading into the campaign, Hyles was resolute in using this opportunity to expose the library to new audiences, include as many library supporters as possible and, in the process, expand media relationships. Her team accomplished all of this,

but they were careful not to push the boundaries with trying new approaches too far since they were involving the community—and many important people—in such a big way. “Whatever we did, we wanted to make sure that we did it well.”

Hyles was confident that with the right planning, Geek the Library could skyrocket the library into the public consciousness and stimulate

positive community conversations about the library. And it did!

“During the campaign, everyone was talking about it. They said that they couldn’t wait to see who was going to be featured next. People were literally stopping and backing up to see the billboards. People are still talking about it!”

“During the campaign, everyone was talking about it. They said that they couldn’t wait to see who was going to be featured next. People were literally stopping and backing up to see the billboards. People are still talking about it!”

***— Linda Hyles,
Fund Development/Marketing Coordinator***

For more information about Geek the Library, visit

| geekthelibrary.org