



2018 AAPA
COMMUNICATIONS AWARDS PROGRAM
CLASSIFICATION 12: SPECIAL EVENTS

YOUTH GREEN NIGHT 2017



PORT OF
GULFPORT
MISSISSIPPI

YOUTH GREEN NIGHT AT LYNN MEADOWS DISCOVERY CENTER 2017

SUMMARY

Environmental education is a key component of the Port of Gulfport's overall community outreach strategy. Since the Port joined Green Marine in September 2014, which is an environmental certification program for the North American marine industry, the port has worked to advance environmental education among the community especially among youth.

Each year the Port of Gulfport budgets part of its revenues to sponsor events and activities that enhance the mission of the Port of Gulfport. On September 29, 2017, the Port partnered with Lynn Meadows Discovery Center, a local children's museum in Gulfport, to host a "Youth Green Night" that attracted over 680 people. The event allowed families to visit the children's museum for free and featured port inspired activities that focused on environmental education.



2017

1. COMMUNICATION CHALLENGES AND OPPORTUNITIES

As one of the State of Mississippi's most important economic engines, one of the goals of the Port of Gulfport is to improve the quality of life for all who reside and do business in the surrounding community and region. Ongoing community engagement, education and relationship building efforts are vital to ensuring that all stakeholders are fully invested in the Port's success and understand the role that the Port plays in helping the community grow, thrive and prosper. The Port of Gulfport is proudly committed to supporting community events, school programs, and raising public awareness about port operations with all ages in mind.

The Port of Gulfport is continuously working to develop environmental programs that foster employee, tenant, and community awareness surrounding the importance of environmental stewardship. Through these efforts, the port has a great opportunity to engage in conversations with stakeholders, allowing for open communication surrounding ways the port can employ responsible and sound methods of pollution prevention further reducing the environmental impact of the port's operations.

The challenge for the Port of Gulfport's External Affairs team is to establish the Port as a leader in environmental awareness. This can be hard to fulfill because ports are typically not known for being at the forefront of environmental stewardship due to emissions from port operations. According to the EPA.gov, port operations can lead to environmental impacts on air, water and land. By taking concrete actions to improve the Port's environmental impact, the Port of Gulfport believes over time it can be seen as a leader not only in economic development but also in environmental stewardship.

Hosting the "Youth Green Night" not only brought our young community stakeholders together for an evening of fun but also allowed the port to engage with them on topics surrounding marine life, environmental protection, and how to keep our waters and land free of trash.





2. COMPLEMENTING THE PORT'S OVERALL MISSION

The Port of Gulfport's mission is to provide world-class maritime service to our customers while facilitating economic growth and good jobs for the people of Mississippi. The External Affairs department engages the public throughout the year using multiple avenues such as social media, educational workshops, community sponsorships, advertising, publicity in traditional media outlets, as well as outreach to key stakeholders at special events.

With our mission in mind, it is vital that our community stakeholders, young or old, have the opportunity to learn about the port's operations and the role it plays in the community. The "Youth Green Night" provided families who reside in the three coastal counties surrounding the Port of Gulfport (Hancock, Harrison, and Jackson) to enjoy a free night at the museum with special port activities that focused on environmental education.



3. PLANNING AND PROGRAMMING COMPONENTS

Goal of the Youth Green Night:

Establish "Youth Green Night" as a premier event for the community.

Objectives:

- Partner with Lynn Meadows Discovery Center and provide free admission to the museum for families on the Mississippi Gulf Coast.
- To invite a minimum of three environmental organizations from the region to participate in the free night.
- To raise awareness of the Port of Gulfport's Green Marine status and involvement in environmental education by attracting a minimum of 400 people to the event.

Strategies:

- Collaborate with Lynn Meadows Discovery Center to promote the free night and invite the public to participate in the hands-on activities focused on environmental education.
- Promote the event to key stakeholders and demonstrate the importance of the Port of Gulfport in the local community as an environmental steward.

Target Audiences:

- Families who reside in the three coastal counties with children in the home
- Port staff, tenants, and vendors with children
- Lynn Meadows Discovery Center members

PORT OF GULFPORT MISSISSIPPI

THE PORT OF GULFPORT INVITES YOU TO LYNN MEADOWS DISCOVERY CENTER FOR

"YOUTH GREEN NIGHT"
FRIDAY, SEPTEMBER 29
5:00PM - 8:00PM

FAMILIES CAN ENJOY FREE ADMISSION TO THE MUSEUM AND PORT INSPIRED ACTIVITIES THAT WILL FOCUS ON ENVIRONMENTAL EDUCATION

IN ATTENDANCE WILL BE:
EPA GULF OF MEXICO PROGRAM, MISSISSIPPI DEPARTMENT OF MARINE RESOURCES, THE UNIVERSITY OF SOUTHERN MISSISSIPPI GULF COAST RESEARCH LABORATORY, PLASTIC FREE GULF COAST, GULFPORT HIGH SCHOOL TEACHER ACADEMY, ENVIRONMENTAL CLUB AND INTERACT CLUB

LYNN MEADOWS DISCOVERY CENTER
246 DOLAN AVENUE
GULFPORT, MS 39507
228-897-6039

Port of Gulfport added an event.
September 12, 2017 · 🌐

Join the Port of Gulfport for a family night at the Lynn Meadows Discovery Center on Friday, September 29 from 5:00pm - 8:00pm. Families can enjoy free admission to the museum and port inspired activities that will focus on environmental education.

THE PORT OF GULFPORT INVITES YOU TO LYNN MEADOWS DISCOVERY CENTER FOR

"FREE FRIDAY NIGHT"
FRIDAY, SEPTEMBER 29
5:00PM - 8:00PM

SEP 29 **Free Friday Sponsored by the Port of Gu...**
Fri 5 PM · Lynn Meadows Discovery Center · Gul...
Crystal, Amy and 8 friends were interested

👤 6 people reached

👍 Like 💬 Comment 🌐

👤 Jennifer J. Crawford, Chris Haines and 26 others

1 Share

4. ACTIONS TAKEN AND COMMUNICATION OUTPUTS EMPLOYED

The Port of Gulfport External Affairs department partnered with Lynn Meadows Discovery Center in 2016 by hosting a Free Night for families on the Mississippi Gulf Coast that attracted over 400 participants. This partnership was developed out of the need to ensure we were reaching all of our audiences when it comes to reaching adults but also the youth in our community. What better place to reach the youth than at your local children's museum.

When determining community outreach initiatives for 2017, we knew that we wanted to partnership with the museum again on a free night but expand it to include an environmental education component that would coincide with the Port's Green Marine initiatives. The Port and Lynn Meadows began planning the "Youth Green Night" in July and the event took place on September 27, 2017 from 5p.m. to 8p.m. The budget allocated for the event was \$1,800.00 and that included the cost to sponsor the free night, promotional items and food for volunteers.

The External Affairs team developed the overall theme and look for the event, including determining what organizations/groups to invite to participate in the "Youth Green Night". All event flyers used to promote the event were done in-house. The port team also purchased water bottles for participants to encourage the use of reusable water bottles and reduce plastic waste. The bottles had a unique color changing feature, which when filled with cold water they changed to blue. Included in each of the bottles were special messages developed by the EPA that focused on promoting recycling and water education.





TACTICS & TIMELINE:

July:

- Port staff met with Lynn Meadows Staff to discuss sponsoring free night for community
- Discussed themes for the free night and determined it would focus on environmental education
- Officially determined the event would be called “Youth Green Night”
- Identified date and time for event

August:

- Conducted planning meetings and discussed potential groups/organizations to invite
- Developed official flyer for the event
- Created news release and distributed to local media outlets: television, print, radio and online
- Posted event on local event calendars
- Created event page on Facebook
- Ordered reusable water bottles for participants
- Contacted groups/organizations to participate that focus on environmental/marine education

September:

- Promoted event on social media and through local media outlets
- Finalized the list of groups/organizations that would be present for the event
- Finalized activities for participants
- Determined that all activities would take place outside on the front lawn
- Ordered pizza and drinks for volunteers

Format of the Event:

- The “Youth Green Night” was held on Friday, September 27, 2017 from 5:00 p.m. until 8:00 p.m. at the Lynn Meadows Discovery Center in Gulfport, Mississippi.
- Event set up began at 3:30 p.m. by the front entrance of the museum.
- Displays and activities were set up by 4:45 p.m.
- Guest began arriving right at 5:00 p.m.
- Before entering the museum, Port of Gulfport staff greeted guests and handed out the port water bottles.
- After leaving the Port’s welcome tent, guests had the opportunity to walk around to the seven activity stations before going into the museum to play.

5. COMMUNICATION OUTCOMES AND EVALUATION METHODS

Overall the “Youth Green Night” was received well by the community and we have made plans to host the “Youth Green Night” again in 2018. Having seven organizations present at the event helped elevate the event from the previous year. According to the Lynn Meadows staff, we had just over 680 people in attendance. That was a little over 280 more people than the previous year. We met the objectives that were set out beforehand:

- We were able to partner with Lynn Meadows Discovery Center and provide free admission to the museum for families on the Mississippi Gulf Coast. This allowed the port to reach museum members that otherwise may not be familiar with the port’s operations or environmental outreach efforts.
- We recruited a total of seven organizations/groups to participate in the free night. Our original goal was to invite at least three. Organizations/groups that participated were the EPA Gulf of Mexico Program, Mississippi Department of Marine Resources, the University of Southern Mississippi Gulf Coast Research Laboratory, Plastic Free Gulf Coast, Gulfport High School Teacher Academy, Environmental Club and Interact Club. In addition to the groups providing activities, Lynn Meadows Discovery Center provided port themed art activities inside the building.
- We were able to raise awareness of the Port of Gulfport Green Marine status and involvement in environmental education by exceeding our original goal of attracting 400 people to the event. In total we had a little over 680 people in attendance.

The “Youth Green Night” allowed the Port of Gulfport to reach all ages in our community. The participation from the various groups also added to the overall event and we plan to invite the same organizations again in 2018.



COMMENTS FROM THE YOUTH GREEN NIGHT:

“I like all the extra stuff.” – Child

“I had no idea the Port was so involved in the community. Thank you for sponsoring the night for us.” – Parent

“We just moved here and hadn’t been to the museum yet. We saw that the Port was sponsoring the free night and that there would be extra activities for the kids so we decided to come.” – Parent

EVENT RECAP:

- The “Youth Green Night” allowed families to visit Lynn Meadows Discovery Center for free and featured port inspired activities that focused on environmental education.
- The event welcomed over 680 people to Lynn Meadows Discovery Center in Gulfport, Mississippi.
- The event was received well and the Port of Gulfport plans to host the “Youth Green Night” again in 2018.

