

## 2020 AAPA Communications Awards

Entry Classification: Community/Educational Outreach

Category: 3

Port: Port Everglades

Title: Port Everglades Virtual Panel on Careers for National Maritime Day

### SUMMARY

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### SUMMARY

On Friday, May 22, 2020, Port Everglades celebrated National Maritime Day (NMD) by arranging for a live virtual career day panel to encourage high school students from all over Broward County, in association with Junior Achievement of South Florida, to seek maritime jobs and careers. Pre-coronavirus, Port Everglades had partnered with Junior Achievement to bring 2-3 busloads of high school students to the port for an all-day intensive meet and greet with workers from various maritime disciplines. The idea was to have speakers in various locations – cruise terminals, crane office, petroleum terminal, Harbormaster Tower – to give a facility tour and talk about their jobs. The pandemic made the face-to-face interaction impossible. But we still loved the idea and wanted to solidify our relationship with Junior Achievement because of the organization’s wide reach to all corners of Broward County.

This campaign was strategically timed to coincide with NMD, a United States annual observance on May 22 that was created in 1933 to recognize the maritime industry and the significance of waterborne commerce. By timing it to the NMD recognition, we intended to create an awareness of potential maritime jobs rarely considered by high schoolers.

Reaching out to the community through our student population and educating them about maritime jobs through this virtual Career Day furthers the port’s mission to achieve advancements by focusing on job growth, and a helping to build a strong workforce for Port Everglades in the future.

### CHALLENGES OR OPPORTUNITIES

For eight years, Port Everglades celebrated and recognized NMD with an award-winning event called *“Keep Port Everglades Shipshape.”* This annual outdoor, fun-filled event registered approximately 100 people of all ages in the community to arrive through our security gates, to be involved in a recycling project and showing their individual creative skills by painting recycled petroleum drums that would be

used as colorful garbage and recycling bins to encourage people to pick up trash within the port. This annual event was highly popular among students, as they could also achieve community service hours credit for participating.

However, budget cuts and an overabundance of painted trash barrels (eight years' worth) put an end to the event. Simultaneously, we also questioned ourselves about how much a fun paint party was helping to spread the message of the maritime industry's significance.

Our initial challenge was to find another way to commemorate NMD and involve the community.

We wanted to continue reaching out to students because they represent our future workforce and skilled labor is needed at seaports such as Port Everglades. In addition, high school students at our former *Keep Port Everglades Shipshape* painting event seemed genuinely interested in meeting our port staff and learning about how the port operates.

Our Communications staff was introduced to Junior Achievement through our involvement with Women's International Shipping & Trading Association (WISTA International). WISTA has a display at the Junior Achievement World facility in Broward County and is looking for sponsors to expand the exhibit. While the Port was not in a position to financially support the exhibit, we recognized the value of the relationship and worked with Junior Achievement's education leaders to formalize a career day outing at Port Everglades to take place on National Maritime Day. Our initial challenge turned into an opportunity.

The new opportunity was a Nation Maritime Day Career Day at Port Everglades with JA student. We were arranging to bring busloads of students from all over Broward County, mostly seniors, to spend a full day learning about career opportunities at the port by meeting with our staff and stakeholders, and getting an onsite tour of our facilities. The communications team had pursued putting together a proposal identifying a mix of port staff, cruise, cargo, and U.S. government officials and representatives.

Once the pandemic hit, however, we faced a new challenge. Should we take the easy road and delay the field trip to the following year? Or could we salvage the idea and still attract student participation that would supplant our former party-like event during this sad and unparty-like time. With homeschooling and the end of the school year so near, we were not sure that we could pull it off.

By putting our heads together with the Junior Achievement staff we came up with a Career Day-like virtual panel.

But this strategy did not become easier without hurdles. The port was already on a staff telework schedule which required 50 percent to report at the office and 50 percent to work from home (telework) on alternate days. Monday, Wednesday, and Friday one week, then Tuesday and Thursday the next week. This meant that not all who would be identified to speak on the panel would necessarily be at their office computer or in the field with a maritime scenery. Also, not all computers and tablets were equipped with cameras and microphones. We had to ascertain equipment capabilities for each.

To further this challenge, our agency was not yet adept at using equipment and software for virtual purposes and had to catch up. The virtual software we use is Skype for business, which is so outdated in its capabilities that it is being discontinued. JA informed us they preferred to use Zoom because they use

it frequently to connect with students. We quickly took them up on their offer to use the Junior Achievement account and one of its younger staff members working from home to host the meeting.

The Comms team intended to produce a live, versus recorded, interactive session with the students to be launched on NMD. This meant that it would need to be a heightened, errorless production. To accomplish this lofty goal, we arranged Zoom several practice sessions with the moderators and panelists. And with an end date of NMD, we had to double down to get prepared. As such, we decided to limit the professional participation to our own staff rather than including our customers many of whom were already experiencing job and income losses. The Comms team reconfigured our plan to strategically select and recruit a mix of port staff that exemplified and spanned the various areas of specialty at the port.

The timing of NMD came when most seniors were done with school. We had to think of ways to incentivize the students to participate and capture their attention for the virtual event. Comms team research determined that more participation could be generated with a raffle or give-away. We explored things like delivering book bags and giveaway treats to each student's household for participating. But during the time of the pandemic, mailing packages was not pursued as a good option because of contamination concerns. Fortunately, Junior Achievement was able to secure electronic gift cards to provide an incentive.

After the flyers were distributed to JA's partner high schools, we were discouraged that by the beginning of the week only 15 students had registered. We insisted that JA reach out to more high schools to reel in more of those seniors. It worked. We were surprised and thoroughly gratified that 80 people participated in the live, virtual panel, including the panelists.

As the 10<sup>th</sup> largest container cargo port in the country and the third busiest port in the world for cruise, the port and its customers depend on a diverse and skilled workforce. Port Everglades supports 231,579 jobs, direct and indirect, throughout the region. It also generates \$32 billion in business income and tax revenue. The opportunity could not be missed to perform this community outreach campaign as it falls within the dynamic of creating an awareness of NMD and the port and fits the goal of communicating about jobs growth.

## PORT EVERGLADES MISSION

The three beneficiaries of the port's Mission Statement are to achieve advancements on behalf of our customers, stakeholders, and community. The Port Everglades Virtual Panel on Career Day for NMD furthers the port's mission to achieve advancements by focusing on job growth, through reaching out to the community and educating residents about maritime jobs. This community outreach campaign also potentially furthers a communications goal of helping to build a strong workforce in the future for Port Everglades itself. In this economic downturn time of the Coronavirus Pandemic, with more than 40 million people out of work in the U.S., it is important to give hope to the younger generation by allowing them to explore options they may not yet have considered in the maritime industry. The timing of this campaign could not be better. As Florida's powerhouse global gateway that seeks to create economic and social value, Port Everglades takes its powerhouse role seriously.

## mission statement

Port Everglades is Florida's powerhouse global gateway. A respected leader in trade, travel and financial stability, we create economic and social value by working in partnership with world-class clients. We achieve advancements focusing on efficient facilities, trade and cruise expansion, jobs growth, safety, security and environmental stewardship for our customers, stakeholders and community.

<https://www.porteverglades.net/about-us/>

## PLANNING AND PROGRAMMING

After a month-long communications planning and research effort, the Port Everglades Comms team successfully produced a live, virtual career day for senior high school students on NMD to bring awareness to the port and maritime jobs.

While the port is located in the heart of two of the three most populous cities in the county, and is close to a county airport, the local workforce and students might not be aware of the many career paths available at the port besides dockworkers and truckers. The Comms team sought to educate and encourage job opportunities.

### Goal:

To reach out to the community and educate them about maritime jobs and help build a strong workforce in the future for Port Everglades.

### Objective:

Garner awareness by students for the potential of port and maritime jobs.

### Target Primary Audience:

High School students, preferably seniors

### Research and planning:

- Brainstorm ideas for an NMD celebration to replace our former "Keep Port Everglades Shipshape" paint party.
- Developing proposals for an alternate campaign that also reached career-minded students
- Developing alternative proposals during the rise of the Coronavirus Pandemic, ditching the current plan
- Research to strategically select and recruit a mix of port staff that exemplified and spanned the various areas of specialty at the port for a panel
- Research and purchase of computer equipment and virtual software for panelists and moderators
- Develop a list of interview questions
- Decide on which port video gives a good overview of Port Everglades while holding the attention span of high school students
- Research to incentivize students to participate and the best time of the day to hold their attention
- Develop an engaging slide presentation as visuals for the virtual panel to show students the waterfront workplace

- Develop a script to layout the plan of speaking to include a few facts and statistics about the port geared to their area of specialty for panel speakers to use during their interviews

## ACTIONS AND OUTPUTS

### Strategies:

- Ensure consistent messaging about the port as an economic powerhouse providing jobs
- Leverage networks to drive participation
- Allow panelists to tell their personal stories of climbing career ladders to serve as inspiration for the student audience
- Guide panelists to incorporate information about the port as a learning element for the students
- Boost promotion leading up to NMD by participating in the national “Sound Off” initiative of the American Association of Port Authorities (AAPA), encouraging all vessels in the harbor to sound their horns at noon every day from Monday to Friday in honor of NMD
- Incorporate recognition of NMD into the live video production

### Tactics:

- Utilize the newest promotional video use to provide the students with an overview of the scope of the port
- Practice sessions
- Live production
- Social media to announce the virtual production is uploaded now available in a virtual library for students and anyone else to view
- Promote the production for viewing on our social media sites, at a port Employee Forum, the Port Everglades Association, and other opportunities

### Collateral Material Development:

- Interview questions on career paths
- Script
- PowerPoint presentation slide deck as visuals for the production
- Virtual library production

### Media Relations:

- Social media was used to drive views to the Jr. Achievement posting.

### Social Media:

- Social Media platforms to gear up in anticipation of the event with messaging on NMD
- Live production link on social media

### Staffing:

- Ellen Kennedy, Acting Director of Business Development, Port Everglades
- Maisey Alpert, APR, Communications Manager, Port Everglades

### Timeline:

- July 2019 to March 2020
  - Met with WISTA and Junior Achievement to tour its South Florida JA World facility that housed a mock business town.

- We discussed collaboration efforts for students by offering the students to spend a day at the port
- Point people to lead the project were identified and began the planning process
- The port Comms team planned the logistics and speakers for the event
- April to May 2020
  - Due to the Coronavirus Pandemic, all events and tours were suspended
  - Collaborated with JA to review options and come up with a plan
  - Prepared a proposal identifying a mix of port staff, cruise, cargo, and U.S. government officials and representatives who could potentially form the virtual panel
  - After senior management decided that during the Pandemic was not a good time to ask our customers to participate in the virtual panel as many companies were experiencing job and income losses, the Comms team reconfigured the plan to strategically select and recruit a mix of port staff that exemplified and spanned the various areas of specialty at the port, including the engineering, operations, and marketing teams
  - Assessed and ascertained the computer equipment and software capabilities that each panelist and moderator had and purchase necessary items
  - Researched the virtual software available and decide on use
  - Researched ways to incentivize the students to participate and capture their attention for the virtual event, considering that the timing of NMD came when most seniors were done with school
    - Explored numerous options from delivering book bags and giveaway treats to each student's household as an incentive for participating.
    - Determined that e-gift cards were the best way to achieve this incentive given the Coronavirus Pandemic environment
  - Flyers were distributed to the main high schools that JA dealt with and, with Comms team insistence, reached out to more high schools to drive participation and reel in more of those seniors as there who no quantity limit on the number of participants
  - Developed interview questions on career paths
  - Write a script
  - Developed a PowerPoint presentation slide deck as visuals for the production
  - Prepped the panelists and fielded questions or concerns
  - Held Zoom practice sessions
  - Produced an inaugural live, versus recorded, interactive virtual video session with the students launched on NMD on maritime career opportunities, including a chat box
  - Rolled out the campaign on social media accounts
  - Delivered the live recorded event to be accessed by any student virtually through the online JA library

Other actions provided:

- Announced the live event to port employees during a regular forum and followed up with a link to view their coworkers
- Announced the YouTube link to other groups such as the Port Everglades Association, a business organization

The NMD production can be viewed below. To date, the video has been viewed by 160 people.

National Maritime Day Zoom chat with students from various High Schools:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=JuDA1fJells>

## OUTCOMES AND EVALUATION

We originally anticipated 25 high school seniors would participate in Port Everglades' NMD event. We were pleasantly surprised and elated that over 80 people participated in the live, virtual panel, including the ten panelists and three moderators. The current YouTube views stand at 166.

Even though the Comms team developed questions that could be asked of interviewees to get their juices flowing, registered students submitted questions ahead of the live event and we passed them on to the interviewees and addressed them during the live session. During the live session, the chat box was churning with additional comments and questions by the students. We didn't have time to answer them all!

The recording will live virtually in an educational library maintained by JA for students of all ages and interest would be able to easily access to learn about port and maritime jobs.

The resulting positive impact was on growing the awareness of careers at the port, helping the port thrive in the future with a diversified and skilled workforce. And ultimately, helping community members find essential jobs during the global Coronavirus Pandemic with mounting job losses.

