

Chapter 26

HOWL for UWG: An Example of Artful Leadership for Art-Inspired Fundraisers on Campus

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ABSTRACT

Howl for UWG, a public art fundraiser inspired by Cow Parade, used the University of West Georgia's wolf mascot to bridge art, academics, and athletics in addition to strengthening relations between the campus and the community. Many universities and colleges across the country have initiated similar projects, but non-artists and non-art areas, such as athletics, often lead these endeavors. The goal of this chapter is to demonstrate that for universities and colleges, art departments on campus can use their direct link to talent, resources, and skills to ensure the success of these popular projects. Howl for UWG serves as an example that art departments can utilize the Cow Parade framework for scholarship fundraising while elevating the artistic aspect of the project to a higher and more meaningful educational experience for all involved.

INTRODUCTION

In 2012, the University of West Georgia (UWG), led by this author, the Department of Art, and others on campus launched a painted wolf project, Howl for UWG: A Public Art Project to Benefit the UWG Annual Fund Campaign. This project raised over \$75,000 for scholarship aid at UWG by working with artists and sponsors to display painted wolves in high visibility areas on the University of West Georgia's campus and within Carrollton, Georgia. In addition, smaller painted tabletop wolf replicas were auctioned to the community. Participating artists for Howl for UWG included UWG art majors, current and former art faculty, art alumni, and community artists. Howl for UWG was led by the author of this chapter and the Department of Art with support from many others across campus such as development staff, University Communications and Marketing, and facilities. In all, 19 painted wolves were put on display. Sixteen wolves were sponsored by local businesses while three were used as part of a 2014 UWG event called Wolfest, which celebrated the inauguration of new UWG President Dr. Kyle Marrero.

DOI: 10.4018/978-1-5225-1727-6.ch026

Howl for UWG was first envisioned and inspired by the popular Cow Parade public art project when the author of this chapter saw the painted cows firsthand during a visit to La Jolla, California in the summer of 2009. According to its website, Cow Parade is the largest and most successful public art event in the world, and the popular public art project has been staged in 79 cities raising approximately \$30 million for charity. Cow Parade first originated in Switzerland, and Chicago was the first American city to host Cow Parade in 1999, followed by New York City in 2000 (Our Story, n.d.).

Since then, many community organizations and universities have adopted the Cow Parade framework and used it to host their own customized events across towns and cities in America. Custer, South Dakota displayed life-sized painted buffalos, and Catskill, New York displayed painted cats. The country music capital, Nashville, Tennessee, showcased painted guitars, while Cincinnati, Ohio displayed painted pigs. In Georgia alone, the Georgia Aquarium auctioned painted dolphins with its Dolphins on Parade event, Sandy Springs, north of Atlanta hosted Town Turtles, and the Athens-Oconee Junior Woman's Club auctioned painted bulldogs with its We Let the Dogs Out in Athens, Georgia. In Newnan, Georgia, the Newnan-Coweta Historical Society displayed painted horses for a project called A Horsey Affair on its historic town square. These projects are popular, and the list of communities participating is long. The Newnan horses were specifically cited for this chapter because the town resides 30 minutes southeast of the University of West Georgia. UWG also has a small campus near Newnan's downtown, and UWG attracts many students from the Newnan/Coweta County area.

The painted fiberglass animals and objects are popular for many reasons. They work well as charity fundraisers, and they celebrate various aspects of the many communities they reside in. Organizers see opportunities to showcase public art and a way to use that talent to raise money for local organizations and worthy causes. As an extreme example, organizers in Sandy Springs, Georgia sponsored, auctioned, and used merchandise sales for 75 painted turtles to raise \$750,000 for local non-profit organizations (Mission & Purpose; Turtle Backs Raise Green Backs, n.d.). In addition, the Elkhart General Hospital Foundation in Elkhart, Indiana used 21 painted hearts to benefit Elkhart General Center for Cardiac Care. These large painted hearts were auctioned in 2014, and they raised almost \$700,000, far exceeding their original goal of \$250,000 (Hernandez, 2014). According to their social media site, the funds were used to expand the hospital's heart failure initiatives to supply Automated External Defibrillators to area businesses and other local non-profit groups. The Elkhart painted hearts and Sandy Springs painted turtles are just two examples showcasing fundraising success.

Many Cow Parade inspired projects will generate a great amount of press attention. Organizers for We Let the Dogs Out stated in an early phone conversation that CBS used the painted bulldogs for transitions during commercial breaks during the televised University of Georgia football games. The painted bulldogs were also mentioned in a Los Angeles Times profile on downtown Athens, Georgia. Regardless of the city or town, the painted animals or objects are often attractive, popular, and highly visible to the public.

Many campuses across the country use their mascots and the Cow Parade framework to raise scholarship funds or to support campus organizations. As examples, Northern Illinois University displayed painted huskies for Huskies on Parade in 2008. The painted huskies were displayed in downtown DeKalb, Illinois and then auctioned for scholarship funds the following year. In 2009, the Georgia Institute of Technology Alumni Association hosted Buzz Around Town. Three dimensional fiberglass forms of their popular Buzz yellow jacket mascot were painted and displayed on Georgia Tech's campus and in surrounding businesses. Funds from the project were used to support various Georgia Tech organizations. The Buzz Around Town project even won a Gold Medal awarded by the Council for Advancement and

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