

CASE STUDY: DURHAM, NORTH CAROLINA

Program Name: Water Conservation Program Parade Unit Sponsorship

Agency Name: City of Durham Environmental Resources Department

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Number of Customers: We serve a population of approximately 170,000 people.

Program Description:

Among many successful educational programs that we conduct, one of the most unique and enjoyable is our sponsorship of a walking unit in Durham's annual Holiday Parade. We work with local schools (including a biosphere magnet school that primarily serves economically disadvantaged students) to create costumes and signs that focus on water conservation. Schools that participate receive presentations and support from conservation staff to educate and inspire the students. Students complete much of their work in their art and science classes. Once complete, they wear their created outfits as they march in Durham's Holiday Parade and pass their conservation message on to parade viewers.

Program Beginning:

The Water Conservation Program has been in place since 1993. This featured activity began in 1999.

Target Audience:

The target audience is the diverse population of Durham. Because the parade reaches a large cross-section of our population, so does this particular activity. We usually make presentations to between 25 and 30 students and 12 to 15 are selected to participate in the parade. The parade draws an average of 10,000 attendees. It is also aired live on a local television affiliate and subsequently shown on a cable access channel. Television viewership is undetermined. In addition to parade attendees, the message is also shared by other students of and visitors to the selected schools since posters and costumes are usually displayed throughout the school year.

Program Cost and Funding:

- **Materials Cost:** Approximately \$250 (in addition to educational materials, cost includes customized parade banner and post-parade appreciation pizza party for students)

- **Staff Time:** Approximately 30-40 hours
- **Funding Source:** Annual budget

Program Objective/Driving Force:

The objective of sponsoring a unit in the Holiday Parade is to increase and enhance public awareness of the need to conserve water, particularly at a time when it may not be at the forefront of people's minds.

Program Type:

Agency specific - both classroom based and community based. We start by bringing the message to the classroom. The students then help us deliver that message to the community by walking in the parade.

What Works Best:

For this type of activity, it is best to prepare early and recruit students early in the school year. This gives the teachers an opportunity to set aside time for the activity and incorporate water conservation into their lesson plans. Also, it is important to give specific presentations to the volunteering students to ensure they understand the message. And of course, always make it fun.

What Would Change:

We have learned that you must give yourself and your students time to review their plans. You should really push for creativity and highly visible outfits – ones that really make the message clear. If you start early, you also make it likely that you will be able to help with supplies and ideas for costumes. And lastly, we have learned that you cannot depend on the weather for an outdoor activity such as this – it may be cold and rainy or sunny and warm. One aspect we may change is to sponsor a float, rather than a walking unit. Floats would allow younger students (who could not otherwise complete the parade route) to participate and increase visibility.

Evaluation of Effectiveness:

We have had increased participation among schools from one year to the next as more and more schools hear about our program. In addition, we have had a positive public response to our parade unit and noted public recognition.