A CONVERSATION WITH MEMBERS OF DISCOVER GLOUCESTER, TOWN OF ROCKPORT, AND CAPE ANN CHAMBER OF COMMERCE CAPEANNCHAMBER.COM

DESCRIBE IN 2-3 SENTENCES HOW THE CAPE ANN REGIONAL EFFORTS BEHIND ARTWEEK LAUNCHED LAST YEAR AND THE RANGE OF EVENTS THAT WERE REPRESENTED.

After an overview presentation by the ArtWeek team last December, we quickly formed a “Cape Ann ArtWeek Committee” to begin community outreach strategies in earnest and to ensure that our presence in this program would be robust and engaging. We were thrilled with the level of interest received from the first committee meeting and the true spirit that surrounded a plan to cultivate a large number of participants. We hosted about four committee meetings before the required deadline to submit which resulted in over 55 ArtWeek events throughout Cape Ann – a huge difference from the previous years where only a handful of event applications were submitted.

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WHO WERE THE CHAMPIONS IN EACH OF THE PARTICIPATING TOWNS AND WHAT ROLES DID THEY PLAY?

Elizabeth Carey, Executive Director of Discover Gloucester, rallied the troops in Gloucester and Cape Ann and led the charge for the committee meetings. Mechelle Brown representing the Town of Rockport and Cultural Development was hugely instrumental in engaging Rockport businesses and organizations. Other leaders included: Jackie DeFalco from SeARts; Beth Pocock from Sawyer Free Library; (who hosted most of our meetings), and Ken Reihl from the Cape Ann Chamber of Commerce.

WHY DID THESE TOWNS TAKE A REGIONAL APPROACH TOWARDS ARTWEEK AND HOW DID IT WORK?

We saw an enormous opportunity to market our coastal community during the “off season” or “shoulder season” – a goal that is consistently important to all the key partners. Not only did we realize the value of this marketing opportunity during the slow season, we also saw the potential impact that could come from all of us working together to collaborate with a well-known entity like ArtWeek that provided enormous press and PR -- priceless!
WHAT WERE SOME OF THE MOST SUCCESSFUL STRATEGIES IN WORKING TOGETHER; WHAT WERE SOME OF THE CHALLENGES?

The ArtWeek Committee was a step in realizing our first strategic plan and the meetings were very well attended. Everyone was engaged and committed from the very start which made it even more exciting and collaborative. Folks agreed to take on different roles to ensure that we had a wide variety of offerings (genre, type of event host, audience appeal, price, and geographic location) as well as local visibility; they really rolled up their sleeves to achieve a successful outcome. It took time and the collective effort of many - but it was a great experience overall.

HOW DID ARTWEEK COLLABORATIONS HAVE AN IMPACT DURING ARTWEEK AND AFTERWARDS?

Because of the region’s broad community engagement, we were selected to submit a short video for WCVB’s Good Morning segment which was fun to film and brought out everyone’s creative side. The Mayor of Gloucester was proud to be front and center, surrounded by so many happy participants representing the towns of Cape Ann. The committee meetings really allowed us to share and initiate programs that would benefit both residents and visitors to Cape Ann. And it helped us balance a concern throughout the process which was to avoid scheduling similar events that would compete with other similar events – it was truly a thoughtful and respectful process.

WHAT ADVICE WOULD YOU SHARE WITH OTHER TOWNS INTERESTED IN A REGIONAL APPROACH?

Get an ArtWeek Committee together and conduct meetings every other week in the months leading up to the deadlines. This helps to ensure that everyone is committed to the cause, that work can be delegated, and fosters broader community involvement and teamwork. But just as importantly, focus on the creative collaboration and relationship building benefits that can have an impact for all of your community partners year-round.

KEY TAKEAWAYS

- Create a multi-town committee that meets regularly
- Give everyone a role to play
- Kick off the “shoulder season” in style
- Invite local elected officials to join in
- Use committee meetings to brainstorm, build commitment, and balance event scheduling

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