PLYMOUTH: CREATIVELY CELEBRATING THE PRESENT, PAST, AND FUTURE

HOW DID THE PLYMOUTH BAY CULTURAL DISTRICT BECOME A DRIVING ARTWEEK CHAMPION WITHIN THIS WELL-KNOWN HISTORIC DESTINATION?

After the Plymouth Bay Cultural District (PBCD) committee embraced ArtWeek and its vision, it was really our local business and art communities that stepped up to the plate to participate. It was inspiring to watch these groups connect, collaborate, and create their own events with such enthusiasm. The Cultural District was there to help guide and facilitate so that these groups would be able to pull it off and promote their own events.

The timing was also perfect. Several new galleries and creative art/craft shops had recently opened as well as new restaurants, craft beer breweries, and a winery. Also, the Plymouth Public Schools was starting to invest in student talent by expanding the Visual and Performing Arts programs to include an international youth chorus. The PBCD and Town of Plymouth had successfully collaborated on a 2017 Patronicity/Mass Development public art crowd funding initiative and were launching work on new large scale murals, painted outdoor furniture, and wrapping District utility boxes in gorgeous historic and retro photographs. With this artistic growth and development activity, we found that artists, performers, District business assets and the public were primed to be part of an arts and culture inspired festival!

A CONVERSATION WITH ANDREW BOTIERI & MALISSA KENNEY, PLYMOUTH BAY CULTURAL DISTRICT
PLYMOUTHBAYCULTURE.ORG

HOW DID THE CULTURAL DISTRICT BUILD UNITY, MOMENTUM, AND PARTNERSHIPS?

Since launching its interactive website/online calendar in 2016, the PBCD has made developing relationships a priority, not only with District assets, but throughout Plymouth and beyond. Executive committee members serve on town committees such as Representative Matt Muratore’s Tourism Roundtable, Destination Plymouth, Plymouth Youth Development Collaborative, BID-Lahey Plymouth’s Community Healthy Assessment Collaborative and South Shore Community Partner’s in Prevention. (Art and culture are seen as a health literacy option to a variety of physical, developmental, substance related and mental health diagnoses.) Regular communication using our monthly e-newsletter and face-to-face visits kept assets engaged, informed, and included. Also, having State Representative Matt Muratore as a staunch advocate of ArtWeek, the arts, and the creative economy has been invaluable – we even made him the Grand Marshall of ArtWeek Plymouth in 2019!

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WHAT PROGRAMMING AND MARKETING STRATEGIES WERE MOST SUCCESSFUL IN REACHING RESIDENTS AS WELL AS VISITORS?

We continue to refine and increase our marketing efforts through print, social and television media. We work with the local newspaper Old Colony Memorial, who has run several articles throughout the month on ArtWeek events and post individual events by day of week. PACTV, our local cable access station, produced several interviews and highlight segments. The core board signs (similar to political lawn signs) were produced and placed in front of each event and were invaluable in getting the word out to residents and locals as well as attracting interest from new potential businesses in future ArtWeek programs.

Social Media was particularly effective. In advance of ArtWeek we partnered with Hawk Visuals to create short promotional videos of several ArtWeek event hosts. We chose a cross section from the 29 approved events to cover a sampling of visual, performance, educational and cultural events as well as events that were targeted to children and families. These videos were informative, funny and great teasers for what was to come and were shared on social media. Additionally we partnered with LadyBug Photography as our official Plymouth ArtWeek photographer. Throughout the 10 days they took fabulous photos which were available to share on social media almost immediately. Finally we did shout outs with photos and logos throughout ArtWeek on Facebook and Instagram both in advance of ArtWeek and during the festival. For instance on Monday, we would do a reminder recap of what events were happening on Tuesday and then post individually for each event with links to the ArtWeek MA.org calendar description. Our graphic designer created a calendar of events for the week which was printed and shared with local hotels, inns and B & B’s as well as the library, art center, Destination Plymouth and Chamber. People were also able to download a detailed schedule via our Plymouth Bay Cultural District website.

HOW WILL THE DISTRICT USE ARTWEEK TO COMPLEMENT THE PLYMOUTH 400 CELEBRATION?

Plymouth ArtWeek 2020 will be an official and sanctioned Plymouth 400 event which means that in addition to the marketing efforts of the PBCD, it will be included in Plymouth 400 marketing and television partnerships which will significantly impact participation and attendance. The success of our August PorchFest and requests by patrons to host more than once a year has led to the decision to submit that as a Spring ArtWeek event. We will encourage our event hosts to incorporate the theme of Celebrating the Plymouth 400th as they plan, and are expecting new businesses to also participate in both Plymouth 400 and ArtWeek activities. To be part of Plymouth 400 is very exciting, and to have ArtWeek Plymouth be included as a sanctioned event is an honor. We think being part of both celebrations at the same time will be a win-win for locals as well as visitors!

HOW HAS ARTWEEK IMPACTED THE CULTURAL DISTRICT AND DOWNTOWN DISTRICT?

ArtWeek has been an incredible vehicle to bring cooperation, collaboration and excitement to the district and the downtown/waterfront merchants. The reception and embracing of ArtWeek by most merchants has been great. They are seeing people visit their businesses and who are spending money. We began ArtWeek two-years ago; now when we approach businesses to participate in some manner, they are more than happy to join in because of the thousands of new and repeat visitors that have come to the district.

The PBCD and our ArtWeek events have served as a catalyst for local assets to think creatively on how to bring more customers to their businesses. For example “What’s Good Plymouth,” a brand new downtown merchant association, reached out to inquire about how we created the “More Love is Okay,” an ArtWeek storefront painted hearts project. They are hoping to do something similar with sugar skulls to promote a Halloween week program incorporating restaurant specials, a flashmob, a window decorating contest, and culminating with the Chamber of Commerce’s Trick or Treat on Main Street event and the PBCD free Hocus Pocus movie night. We love that businesses are thinking of engaging customers through art throughout the year and not just when the PBCD is able or just during ArtWeek.
WHAT WERE SOME OF THE KEY SECRETS TO YOUR SUCCESS THAT YOU CAN SHARE WITH OTHERS?

Get prepared to do lots of leg work – especially during year one! 1) Get an early start, create a game plan with the previous years’ participants and work with them in approaching new businesses. 2) Talk about ArtWeek to new groups right after ArtWeek ends to get them excited about participating next year. 3) Schedule face-to-face meetings and invite the ArtWeek team to facilitate a brainstorming meeting where they can share statewide inspiration. 4) Get personal and walk around your district, speaking directly to potential businesses and artists. 5) Create an email database that allows you to stay connected and fresh in the minds of those in your district, providing updates and ideas for them on how to create their own ArtWeek event. 6) Support your local calendar of events with marketing support using social media, community access television and local newspapers.

Also, make sure events are inclusive and that there is a great variety that will appeal to all interests, age groups, and abilities. Activities that can appeal to families are key for our area...it is important to share ArtWeek events with groups that serve children and especially families who may not otherwise be able to afford opportunities outside of ArtWeek. For example, work to share the calendar districtwide working with the school department, Boys and Girls Clubs, YMCA’s, and organizations that serve families at risk like DCF, shelters and food pantries. Free kid/teen/family centered events are generally few and far between, so having an opportunity to participate in a free movie night, art class, or fairy scavenger hunt is special and important. Also share with senior centers and elder care organizations for those on fixed incomes who would love to attend a free or very affordable event. And don’t forget to promote events/venues that are physically accessible and help guide event hosts on what accommodations can be made to ensure that patrons of all abilities can participate. ArtWeek helps make art, culture, and creativity affordable and accessible to ALL and that is something our community passionately embraces.

KEY TAKEAWAYS

• Cultivate diverse relationships outside of the arts
• Seek out photography, video, and social media professionals
• Engage elected officials in a variety of ways
• Enhance marketing with onsite signage, social media, etc.
• Share the calendar widely, especially to audiences where price can be a barrier