

## Holiday Programming: Success and Horror Stories

### 2018 OLHA Annual Conference

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### Christmas at the History Center: A Public Relations Success Story

- I. Brief overview of the event
  - a. Annual event the first full weekend (Saturday & Sunday) in December from 1:00 to 5:00
  - b. Logan Museum hallways lined with trees decorated by:
    - i. North Hallway – Adult Trees
      1. Adult organizations
      2. Businesses
      3. Church Groups
      4. High School age groups
    - ii. Entrance and South Hallway – Kids’ Trees
      1. School groups/classes
      2. Scouts
      3. Other organizations
    - iii. LCHC provides the trees
      1. 6 ½ foot trees
        - a. Pre-lit
        - b. No lights
    - iv. Groups decorate as they want
      1. Cute
      2. “Christmassy”
      3. Representative of their business/organization
      4. Use own decorations
- II. Orr Mansion – 1<sup>st</sup> Floor
  - a. Rooms decorated by local:
    - i. Organizations
    - ii. Churches
    - iii. Businesses
  - b. Pick their own theme
  - c. LCHS provides trees
    - i. 7’-8’ trees
    - ii. Fuller trees than hallway trees
  - d. Use their own decorations
  - e. 2<sup>nd</sup> & 3<sup>rd</sup> Floor Rooms
    - i. Decorated by LCHC Christmas Committee
    - ii. Each year new theme
      1. Christmas songs
      2. Christmas Through the Ages
      3. Etc.
- III. Transportation Museum
  - a. 15’ tree

- b. Decorated by LCHC Christmas Committee
- IV. Favorite Trees/Room
  - a. Visitors to open house get ballot to vote for their favorite:
    - i. Adult Tree
    - ii. Kids Tree
    - iii. Favorite Orr Mansion Room (1<sup>st</sup> Floor)

- V. Music
  - a. Local musicians play/sing
    - i. Mansion
      - 1. Piano
      - 2. Small groups
      - 3. Piano students
    - ii. Transportation Museum
      - 1. School Choir
      - 2. School Jazz Band
      - 3. Larger groups

VI. Free Crafts for Kids

VII. Punch/Coffee & Cookies

VIII. Museum Exhibits

- a. Logan County Museum
  - i. Exhibit rooms open (not decorated)
  - ii. Many of the hallway exhibits are obscured by trees
- b. Transportation Museum
  - i. Exhibit Bays/Rooms open (not decorated)
  - ii. Santa "flying" 1922 Restored WA-6 Bi-plane
- c. Orr Mansion
  - i. Decorated for the Christmas but still can be toured

## IX. **Community Involvement**

- a. Community Involvement is necessary for success of the open house
- b. Tree Decorators
  - i. Adult Trees
    - 1. 12-15 trees = 12-15 community businesses, organizations, churches being involved in open house
    - 2. Building a partnership or at least some type of relationship between those groups and our historical society/history center
    - 3. Many times, other people from those organizations/businesses, etc. then come to the open house, so we are getting people in the doors of the History Center and hopefully making a great impression
    - 4. History Center becomes a part of the community's awareness
      - a. Important for our Operating Levy
      - b. Make the aware LCHC is in their community/county
      - c. Even if they are not really interested in history themselves, they may see the good we are doing and vote for the levy
  - ii. Kids Trees
    - 1. Similar positive outcomes to adult trees
    - 2. BRING IN LOTS MORE PEOPLE
      - a. Benjamin Logan Elementary
        - i. Kindergarten-4<sup>th</sup> grade



- Playing in homemade slime
- Some outdoor games if weather was good
- Costume Contest
- One afternoon each year
- Now is stand-alone event
  - Very popular most years
  - Admission is a non-perishable can of food (goes to local food pantry)
  - Sometimes have a guest performance or attraction
    - EctOhio (Reproduction of the Ecto-mobile from Ghostbusters – actual car used in the movie was a Miller-Meteor hearse built in Bellefontaine)
    - Barney Fife impersonator
    - Magician/Escape Artist
  - Tend to get people who usually wouldn't come to the History Center
    - Although they are not really seeing the History Center as a museum (except the Transportation Museum), we are making them aware of us.
    - Probably get more thank you from parents for putting on the Kidfest than anything else we do
  - We close the week before to decorate the rooms (not too scary)
    - Decorating falls to just a few of us, mainly staff
  - Later this month we will have our 12<sup>th</sup> KidFest!

#### Spooktacular:

- Geared to Junior High age to adult
- Positives
  - Brought people in who had never been to the museum
  - Received pretty good comments. Had a couple “jocks” too scared to continue to go through
  - Started out as fun for staff and volunteers
  - Brought new volunteers into the museum for specific purpose of the Spooktacular
- Negatives
  - Way too much work for the number of nights we could do it
  - Had to close museum down as a museum from the time we started decorating to the conclusion of the event. (Started out as one weekend event Friday & Saturday then went to two weekends)
  - Lots of excitement first year in terms of volunteers but then started slacking off in subsequent years. (held Spooktacular 4 years)
  - Decorating fell to very small group of people and was time consuming
  - Too close to Christmas. As soon as we took down spider webs we were putting up Christmas trees – taking too much time away from us being a museum.
  - We took many safeguards to make sure nothing happened to artifacts in the museum and mansion, but it was nerve-racking thinking something might happen to something (never did).
  - Initially we incorporated local history in many of the rooms or haunted scenes, but the way the flow was as the people went through they couldn't get enough of the story to “learn” any history.
  - Got to the point where I was literally counting down the seconds to the last night, so I could start ripping down the decorations.