

FEATHER RIVER RAIL SOCIETY

DATE: October 2018
ITEM: Committee Report
FROM: Eugene Vicknair

October Advertising Report and 2019 Recommendations

Pumpkin Patch Express Marketing

Over the last 4 weeks there has been a big push on both the Pumpkin Train and the RAL focusing on the 2001 special offer. Big Fish also got notice of the RAL offer into local newspaper.

Big Fish sent out a large email blast on RAL and worked with Eugene Vicknair on radio, print, web and email marketing for the Pumpkin Train.

Pumpkin Train efforts include:

Existing media already purchased with plugged in Pumpkin Patch Event Message:

Radio Stations: ESPN – Pitlane Radio (Reno) and KJDX (Susanville, Lassen County and Northeastern California)

Digital media: Graeagle.com - Grand Banner Ad

Free Advertising:

Digital media: Graeagle.com bottom leader board banner ad \$125.00 monthly for two months from Big Fish Creations **\$250.00 value.**)

Graeagle.com News October 1, 2018 news story – blast to subscribers and featured on front page of the website: www.graeagle.com

Email marketing: Event poster sent to Lost Sierra Chamber of Commerce for email distribution to members. Also, was a featured event in an email blast from Grizzly Ranch to their homeowners for the Grizzly Ranch Oktoberfest event happening Saturday, October 17.

Featured on non-FRRS Facebook pages: Explore Plumas County
Graeagle Facebook page
City of Portola Facebook page
Indian Valley Chamber of Commerce Facebook page

Quincy Chamber of Commerce Facebook page

Email blast from WPRM– distribution list from backend system Big Fish Creations

Paid Advertising:

FRRS Facebook event boosts: \$200.00

Deals & Wheels: \$200.00 (split co-op ads with city of Portola value \$400.00)

Portola Reporter: \$302.00 for 2 ads, 40 runs in both Portola & Quincy papers. Third ad paid by Portola Reporter as bonus buy. (Paid for two ads, got one ad free.)

Posters \$230.18 - Posters distributed around community

Total advertising spent: \$932.58

Off-set income: Revenue generated from vendor booth fees: Seven vendors @\$25 each for weekend Oct. 20 & 21 \$175.00. Second weekend: Possible - Six vendors @25 each \$150.00

Estimated total off-set money: \$325.00

On-line response for the Pumpkin Train ads was the largest yet seen since we started the event. Lots of reposts, interest and comments. We reached about 16,000 with just Facebook and had about a 9% reaction / response rate, which is very good.

We will be doing another eBlast and Facebook push this week on Pumpkin Patch Express. Also the newspaper and Deals & Wheels ads should be out shortly. Big Fish secured a new line item in the Portola City budget to assist us with advertising for Pumpkin Patch and Santa Trains this year and in the future.

Special thank you to Big Fish for their work on this, including arranging and facilitating the free advertising. For an event like the Pumpkin Patch Express, many organizations spend far more than the \$932 we have spent so far and get far less reach for the dollar. We have been carefully considering and targeting where to put our advertising to try and get best bang for the buck.

Also, I will note that Ali reported decorations cost of \$427 and we have spent \$200 on two 20' X 10' event tents with removable walls that will be used for vendors and can be used for future events. Aside from train ops costs and any possible pumpkin purchases beyond what the Hansen family is donating, we are putting on this event with a very small budget. This is a great place to be in for this event, which will hopefully generate us some revenue going into the off season.

RAL Marketing

RAL Package Deal: Big Fish approached Pullman House with package idea of discounted room night and RAL. Jan Breitwieser, owner of the Pullman House, is interested and willing to offer package with RAL deal. She agreed to make RAL reservations for guests calling Pullman House for the package. Offer, discount and detail of package TBD. Additional idea being explored is to add dining discount coupon to package deal. Spring is targeted date for RAL Package Deal.

The eBlast on the RAL offer also got a big response, with a very high open rate on the email. A Facebook ad also went out on the RAL and also saw about a 12% response rate reaching about 8,000 people.

While there have as yet been no takers on the 2001 offer, we have seen recent bookings and interest in the RAL late in the season.

2019 Marketing Recommendations

For 2019, we should look at focusing our marketing efforts.

While we want to bring in more visitors overall, in particular we want to push an increase in RAL traffic, continue the increased visitorship we saw for our seasonal events (Pumpkin and Santa Trains plus any new events that are being discussed) and lay the ground work for pushing more venue events (weddings, tour groups, special parties, etc.)

On a separate track, we want to look at expanding our outreach and visibility in the region.

Last year we looked at our target markets. Based on our feedback via social media and discussions with visitors at the museum, those still appear to be good areas of focus.

The Target Markets we broke out are:

- Families
 - With children or grandchildren 5-17
 - Medium and higher income
- Travelers to region, defined as Plumas County and 1 hour drive radius from Portola
 - Includes Truckee, Reno, Susanville
 - Target Bay Area market travelers
- Cross-Over Visitors
 - Travelers who come to the region by means of another event/venue looking for something more to do. (i.e. travel for a wedding and have few days to explore the area, or golf trips with families looking for something to do)
 - San Francisco, San Jose, Walnut Creek, Danville, Marin and surrounding areas
 - This target already has accommodations and is in the location for the weekend and looking for supplemental activities
- Residents within day trip distance, defined as 2-1/2 hour drive radius from Portola
 - Includes Truckee, Reno, Susanville, Chico, Carson City, Sacramento, Oroville, Marysville – Yuba City, Auburn
- History and rail history enthusiasts
- Machine enthusiasts
 - Auto clubs
 - Motorcycle clubs
- Event venue seekers
 - Weddings
 - Birthdays

- Special Events
- School Groups
 - School field trips for history
 - Technical school education trips

To better focus our efforts, Big Fish and I are proposing that we concentrate primary ad efforts on one topic per month and reinforce that across our marketing. This will not preclude posting items about other things such as restoration progress, but will mean that all methods of marketing are primarily on the same message.

Other outreach areas, particularly with regard to regional notice, will run separately and require cooperation from other volunteers, as outlined below.

Finally, we are looking at moving ahead with exploring joint marketing programs for RALs and submitting plans to the Board for review.

Here is a breakdown of the specific marketing recommendations:

Focused Marketing

Each month we will push a particular focus for marketing. Primary responsibility for this marketing will be Big Fish and Eugene Vicknair. The conduits for this marketing will include:

- Facebook
- Instagram
- Targeted websites (Graeagle.com, SierraEvents.com, etc.)
- YouTube (possible)
- Radio ads
- Print ads (for special events)
- Possible special events like Great Train Show
- Will also try to generate news items among radio, tv and print

Monthly focus will be:

- January: Membership
- February: RAL pre-booking
- March: RAL
- April: Museum opening
- May: Operations opening and / or Museum event
- June: RAL and / or Museum event
- July: Operations
- August: RAL
- September: RAL and Pumpkin Patch Express
- October: Pumpkin Patch Express
- November: Santa Trains
- December: Santa Trains

Regional Awareness

This will have several components and will require assistance from other volunteers and be coordinated through Eugene with help from Big Fish.

- Brochure distribution
 - o Brochures will be placed in a wider range of areas and marked using colored stickers for the areas they are placed in. Eugene is drawing up a map for review that will define these regions.
 - o Volunteers will be needed to place these brochures, which will include the new Audio Tour / Museum Map insert.
 - o Suggestion to stamp ½ off admission coupon onto insert or brochure.
- Billboard
 - o Place banners / billboards at select locations.
 - Locations being explored include Nervino Airport, public property in Delleker, parks along Highway 70 in Portola, Hansen property in Doyle
 - o These would be vinyl banners using existing fences / structures or temp structures such as billboard trailer or shipping container.
- Direct outreach
 - o FRRS authorized personnel would go and speak with community groups and invite residents to visit and / or volunteer with the museum. Eugene has already started doing events like this. We need additional volunteers to speak at such groups.
- Membership / Volunteer solicitation mailing
 - o In January / February timeframe, Eugene with help from Big Fish will produce and mail a letter to local residents in Graeagle / Blairsden and surrounding region using discount mailing program with Chamber of Commerce. Letter will talk about museum and invite residents to join and volunteer.
 - o Time will also be tied to January marketing focus.

Another concept we would like to propose to the Board is having School Field Trip days for the local Jr. High and High Schools. This would be a chance for students to learn local and railroad history and / or explore the more mechanical side of the museum. These would be coordinated visits with the local schools. It would require a docent or docents to lead such events, so this will require some planning and finding volunteers who can be available and present well to groups.

Whitman Building

Big Fish is also going to work with Eugene on accelerating our funding efforts on the Whitman Building. We will be looking at:

- Direct Marketing Efforts
- Economic Development Efforts
- Targeted sponsorship of businesses/affiliations with historic or current connections to WP

The goal is to raise money and awareness about Whitman Building project and to get purchase and building costs covered. We will be working to more closely determine associated costs and create targets to generate revenue.