

## Lights and Luminaries Case Study

Paige Alvarez, Ben Evans, Rachel Hall, Zack McNeely, Alexandra McQueen

**Project statement:** Our client was Dillsboro, and we helped with their annual event, Lights and Luminaries. The first night of Lights and Luminaries is College Night. Our role as a team was to promote college night; so we met with the local storeowners, helped produce content, coordinated a raffle, provided the entertainment, and promoted the event on our campus.

**Research / background:** This year was the 33<sup>rd</sup> anniversary of Dillsboro Lights and Luminaries. This was the second year Ben and Rachel helped with this event, so we were able to get a first hand critique of what worked and what did not work with last years event. We worked closely with David Marker, owner of Monkey Toes, and Susan Leveille, owner of Oaks Gallery. While the main focus was raising awareness of this event on campus, we were tasked with creating advertising content, providing entertainment, and helping prepare the town.

Throughout this whole experience we identified many *Strengths*: Almost all of the other shop owners have done this event for years, so there were varying levels of experience, along with Ben and Rachel's experience. They had a binder of last year's news release, radio commercial, fliers, etc. which gave us something to go off of. As far as day of, last year was VERY stressful compared to this year thanks to volunteers. We had a different group of people coming in every hour to help get last minute things done.

We also identified multiple *Weaknesses*: Pride Of The Mountains drum line was not in attendance this year, and multiple people asked where they were. We advertised for Mountain Faith Band to be there, but they had a better opportunity come along. The day of the event, when we were supposed to go around to the stores and collect their donations for the raffle- they did not know hear about it prior to us, so it caused some frustration and confusion.

We took many *opportunities* this year: We hosted a table on the lawn with one of the local storeowners, handed out candy canes and fliers, and told students about the event. We thought this was a great opportunity to help the students get more informed and more likely to attend. We also had the cheerleaders come out this year; they took shifts by grade, and we had at least four every hour, walking around giving out candy canes and greeting people on the street.

There were only a few few *threats*: The weather could have been a potential threat, because it was freezing. This could have been a deal breaker for some that debated coming out that night. Also, this year we did not get as many fliers to hang around campus so this really limited the amount of advertisement for the event.

We really tried to take into consideration what went well last year and what potentially needed to be improved.

**Action:** While Dillsboro Lights and Luminaries is a four-day event, Catamount Communications coordinated College Night, which was focused to the WCU and SCC communities. With our goal to actively make students aware of the event, through promotional materials such as table tents and fliers. These were placed around campus, mostly in the University Center and the library, after Aramark requested they not be placed in the dining hall, which was a let down for us. Being college students ourselves, we knew that the best way to capture the attention of college students, is to be unique. With this in mind, we marketed the event in a new way, Dillsboro Lights and Luminaries on the Lawn (see attached pictures). Dillsboro shop owner, David Marker, attended our space on the lawn to talk to students about the event while we also handed out candy canes. Once the actual event arrived, we had a raffle with gift cards or merchandise from 15 stores, equaling about \$400. We placed signs in windows of all participating stores, as well as raffle bags and tickets. In all our advertisements for the event, we included details about the raffle, so community members knew how to participate! At the end of the night, Santa and Mrs. Claus called our raffle winner to congratulate them on winning the raffle. The emotion and excitement that the student had both on the phone as well as when she met Santa to collect her prize, reminded us why we held the raffle in the first place, community spirit.

**Communication:** With the event taking place on Friday December 2, 2016 the communication plan was as follows:

- A radio ad that aired on Power 90.5 that gave details about the Lights and Luminaries event.
- Approximately 100 flyers distributed throughout Dillsboro, Sylva, and Cullowhee along with 200 table tents that were placed in local businesses and dining halls at Western Carolina University.
- Coordinating a ballet dance and a gospel group to perform at the event, and also coordinating with the WCU cheer team to have them walk around and interact with people during the event.
- Made multiple Facebook/Twitter postings regarding the event on the Town of Dillsboro's social media pages.
- Crafted a news release that was published onto the Western Carolina Journalist.
- Handed out approximately 250 flyers at the local pottery festival in Dillsboro leading up the the Lights and Luminaries event.

## **Evaluation**

**Outputs:** We produced table tents that were produced a little later than the client had wanted, but still with plenty of time for students to see without them forgetting about the event too far from the event. We set them up the week we got back from Thanksgiving. These were produced on budget and with a design Dillsboro loved which highlighted College Night for our target audience of students on campus. We produced a radio ad for the event that focused on College Night and the perks that were going to be associated with the event a couple weeks before the event. Finally, we wrote a press release for The Western Carolina Journalist the Tuesday before College Night to highlight all the things College night attendees will get to experience.

**Outtakes:** From the radio ad that was produced for the event, it put out a week and a half before the event. There is no gauge to how many listeners are on the radio station. From Tuesday, November 29 to Friday, December 2, there were 402 viewers on the web page where the Lights and Luminaries news release was posted onto the Western Carolina Journalist. After talking to David Marker, sales were around \$150 short from last years College Night at his store. He contributed this mostly to the election year, because long time stores in business have experienced lower business during election years.

**Outcomes:** The event overall was a huge success. There were lots of students walking around the town all night. While walking through the stores to check on merchants, there were students shopping in each of the stores. The students put the 'student shuttle' to good use and the bus was full each trip. Store owners were very happy with the turn out as well. The winner of the raffle was a WCU student and she was still at the event when we called her. She came and got her prizes from Santa at the conclusion of the event.

33rd Anniversary

# Dillsboro Lights & Luminaries

Experience the magic and wonder of  
the historic village as it is aglow with  
more than 2,500 luminaries!

Friday & Saturday  
Dec. 2-3 & Dec. 9-10  
5pm-9pm

More details on back



Dillsboro  
Lights and  
Luminaries

[visitdillsboro.org](http://visitdillsboro.org)

Table tents that were used

## Enjoy Every Night

- Free refreshments & entertainment
- Horse-drawn carriage rides
- Unique holiday shopping
- Visit with Santa

## College Night

Friday, Dec. 2

- Specials and discount for WCU and SCC Students, Faculty, and Staff
- Holiday raffle for WCU and SCC Students, Faculty, and Staff
- Greetings from the WCU Dance Team

Attendees are invited to donate canned food to  
The Community Table, a Sylva local soup kitchen.  
Boxes will be located in shops around town.



Above: Another table tent we made, but it wasn't used

On the right: We all posted on our social media



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE  
Nov. 15, 2015  
FOR MORE INFORMATION, CONTACT:

Rachel Hall  
Dillsboro/WCU Partnership PR Student  
rchall2@catamount.wcu.edu

### 33<sup>rd</sup> ANNIVERSARY OF DILLSBORO LUMINARIES KICKS OFF WITH WCU NIGHT

(Dillsboro, N.C.) – Western Carolina's Dance and Cheer team are among many entertainment options that WCU will be featuring at the 33<sup>rd</sup> annual Dillsboro Lights & Luminaries Festival, which is always the first two Fridays and Saturdays in December in downtown Dillsboro.

The festival opens with College Night on Friday, Dec. 2 from 5 p.m. to 9 p.m. The night will feature WCU Dance Team, Cheerleaders, and Inspirational Gospel Choir. Santa Claus and Mrs. Claus will be at Dillsboro Town Hall visiting with children and families of Jackson County. A 10% discount will be offered to all WCU and SCC faculty, staff, and students with ID card.

Entertainment for College Night is scheduled throughout the evening and will include:

- Photos with Santa, allows community members to meet Santa and get a few last minute wishes in!
- WCU's Inspirational Gospel Choir, will be filling the air with holiday tunes, at the Jarrett Memorial Baptist Church.
- America's Got Talent favorite, Mountain Faith Band will be at the Jarrett House for a meet and greet.

Dillsboro's Lights & Luminaries is one of the longest-running holiday festivals in the region. Merchants started the tradition in 1983 as a way of saying thank you to their customers for supporting them year round. The shops stay open late and offer a variety of free refreshments and entertainment. The historic village is adorned with over 2,500 luminaries and white lights. Local musicians fill the air with the sounds of the season and Santa hears children's wishes at Town Hall. The festival runs Dec. 2, 3, 9 and 10 from approximately 5 p.m. to 9 p.m.

Free parking will be available at the Appalachian Women's Museum, located just outside of Dillsboro every night of the festival. Western Carolina students will provide a free shuttle to and from parking and downtown Dillsboro on December 2.

During College Night, merchants will offer special discounts to students, faculty, and staff who show their ID card. Participants will be able to enter a drawing for a basket of merchandise and gift certificates donated by the merchants. No purchase is necessary in order to enter the drawing and the winner does not have to be present to win. Santa will draw the winning entry at 9 p.m. in front of Town Hall. Look for the chance to enter raffle in select stores!

College Night at the Dillsboro Lights and Luminaries is an activity of the Dillsboro/WCU Partnership, which was formed at the request of Dillsboro leaders in 2009 and matches the expertise of WCU and SCC faculty, staff and students with Dillsboro's challenges and opportunities. For more information about College Night, go to <https://www.facebook.com/DillsboroLuminaries>.

For more information about Dillsboro's Lights and Luminaries, go to [visitdillsboro.org](http://visitdillsboro.org).

---

Here is the radio commercial that played on Power 90.5 starting the week before the event, leading up to the end of Lights and Luminaries.

"It's time for Dillsboro's Annual lights and luminaries!  
Experience the spirit and the absolute splendor as the historic village will be lit a-glo with over twenty five hundred candles  
Music, refreshments and lots of seasonal Merriment!  
Ride a horse drawn carriage and visit with Santa Claus, all free!  
The tradition starts on December 2<sup>nd</sup> for college night and continues on December third, ninth, and tenth from 5pm to 9pm.  
Free shuttle rides are available from Monteith Park.  
This message was brought to you by the Town of Dillsboro"



Screenshot of where the event was featured in the Monday Message