

Art Classes

Many art teachers, from elementary to the graduate level, are looking for worthwhile community related projects to get involved with. Water safety is a natural. Usually, if the school is near a river or lake, it is an area of local interest.

Simply telephone the school and make an appointment with the principal for high school and below, or the chairman of the art department at the university level.

Get their approval before going directly to the art teacher/professors. If you can get the principal or chairman totally behind your project, you have cleared the first hurdle.

Take a water safety packet with you for the first meeting. Be ready. It is suggested you take samples of the water safety brochures, posters, and PSA printed artwork/slicks. Know what you want them to do before going. Have a list. For example, you might want new, fresh ideas for next year's water safety PSA slick campaign. Show them the old slicks.

Another idea is to have a contest between art classes. Maybe the winning student would get an escorted trip around the lake, or receive a free life jacket donated by a local merchant. Contact the local newspaper and maybe they will print the top winners from each class and let the readers vote on the overall winner. By doing this the local newspaper editor will be more receptive to printing the water safety filler during the campaign.

Besides competing between classes, you might expand the contest to schools. You could arrange for the winners to be awarded Certificates of Appreciation from the US Army Corps of Engineers and presented during an appropriate time, e.g., the annual awards banquet, or during halftime at a basketball or football game. Maybe let the winner(s) ride atop the Corps float during a parade.

Be creative and imaginative. Also, be flexible when a principal or teacher or student or parent comes up with an idea. Nothing is cast in stone.

Judging: This is an area, which can help you tremendously. Maybe get the local media folks,

politicians, artists, or celebrities involved. This will help your coverage.

Let's say some of the water safety art is of "A+" quality. You might want to get a statement from the artist to let you add their work to your campaign. Maybe your District, Division or National Water Safety Program could use it or the idea. Please share your successes with others.

Remember, too, you may be able to get the art winners on the local radio or television talk show ... talking about their award winning entry. You should appear on the programs, also. Show the US Army Corps of Engineers Castle every time you get the chance and spread the water safety message at every opportunity. Maybe the art is so good it could be entered in different competitions. The local mayor may proclaim a day in honor of the winner(s). If so, a proclamation is appropriate. Get the media, parents, teachers involved at the signing. You might get the lake manager, District Engineer or elected representatives involved in the signing. Try to orchestrate it around their schedule. But remember, the worst they can say is "No" and you never know when a senator or governor has an opening on their schedule. Those folks will generate publicity automatically for you. But, the key to getting senior elected officials or senior US Army Corps of Engineers leaders is to plan in advance.

A word of caution, if you were working with one class it might not be the best idea to ask the governor to attend, but if the competition was between four or five schools or all the schools in the county, including a goodly number of students, that's a different story. Use good judgment when requesting senior participants.

Another outlet is your District newsletter. Normally, the Public Affairs Officer will be able to assist you in honoring the art winners. Insure the students, teachers and parents, receive copies of the District newsletter after it is printed. You might want to do this again in the future.

Now, think back on this project. How much money will it take to create a water safety art project? Not much, just time and effort. Good luck in locating your Norman Rock-well.