

Multi-Media Promotion for Texas Sew Fair

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Abstract

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ANN M. COLE

RADIO TAPES, TELEVISION SPOTS, news releases, posters, package stuffers, brochures, programs—we used them all!

Members of Texas' Department of Agricultural Communications were included in the initial planning and asked to provide mass media support, for a Sew Fair to be held in metropolitan shopping centers in Dallas, Arlington, Austin, San Antonio, and Houston.

In a massive effort to reach these urban audiences, the department utilized various mass media systems.

Preliminary steps called for delegating responsibilities within the department, establishing a timetable, designing a symbol to carry out the Sew Fair theme, and selecting paper and ink colors which would coordinate the entire campaign for the electronic media as well as the printed media. The design created for the poster also was used in the form of a slide on the TV public service announcements and for the printed program with only slight modification.

Personal visits to the women's editors of newspapers of the five metropolitan areas were made by the home economics editor. As a result of these contacts, several papers ran feature stories on various aspects of Sew Fair.

Following the initial planning sessions, each section in the department worked independently with the extension clothing specialists and the home economics editor who served as department coordinator.

The traveling fair, sponsored by the Texas Agricultural Extension Service, was set up on a two-day basis in each city with continuous half-hour programs presented by representatives of

the home sewing industry. Topics dealt with various phases of sewing today's fabrics.

As sewing excitement spread across Texas over the two-week period, all who had been involved in this communications effort had a similar concern. Basically, how effective was the mass media campaign conducted for Sew Fair?

Because this was the department's first multi-media undertaking of this scope, interest and enthusiasm ran high in all aspects of our work from planning and preparing the materials to evaluating the fair, particularly the mass media efforts.

Newspapers Promoted Attendance

An evaluation form, devised by publications editors and filled out by the women attending the sessions, revealed that newspapers were the most influential news source in getting homemakers to attend, even when they heard about Sew Fair from several other sources.

Following newspapers, women listed extension home demonstration agents, word of mouth, package stuffers, posters, and TV in the order of their influence as a news source.

However, word of mouth ranked slightly above newspapers in the category of the most common news sources or the one from which they obtained their information about the upcoming Sew Fair. Other sources were listed in basically the same order as for the preceding category.

Specific extension publications distributed at Sew Fair locations were rated, also. "Sew Manly," a brochure giving information for sewing men's knit slacks, took first place. Close behind were six fact sheets each dealing with sewing a particular fabric, such as velvet, fake fur, corduroy, knit, denim, and vinyl.

Rated third was a colorful program using the Sew Fair spool symbol and theme colors of orange and magenta.

Many of the printed materials were dual purpose. The brochure was specifically designed for use with future county clothing activities, as well as for Sew Fair. Extra copies of other materials could be adapted easily for use on the county level.

Homemakers were most complimentary of the Fair, terming it informative, educational, interesting, meaningful and successful. In making suggestions for future programs of this type, the

women unanimously indicated that they desired more such events. Other helpful suggestions of interest to media people were made, including the need for more publicity.

Seventy-one per cent of the women who completed the questionnaire said they knew who was sponsoring the Fair. An additional nine per cent indicated that they had heard of the Texas Agricultural Extension Service. Of the total who participated in the evaluation, 60 per cent showed they were familiar with other services available through the Extension Service.

With the successful conclusion of the five Sew Fairs our department was relieved, yet encouraged and eager to try more projects that involve coordinating and using different media techniques.

Project Demonstrates Program Potential

Following the Sew Fairs, the Agricultural Communications Department has used the project to demonstrate a mass media campaign's potential for publicizing urban programs in other areas of extension work. A video tape presentation was prepared to tell the Sew Fair story to extension specialists and explain the necessity of long-range planning to develop mass media resources.

This event also served as the subject of an article for the winter issue of *Texas Agricultural Progress* magazine, a quarterly publication published by the Department of Agricultural Communications.

After all, we were challenged by the opportunity; we put it all together and it was successful.

In looking back, we felt that the campaign was a success because of the extensive planning by each medium and, even more so, because we used them all!