

MEJO332 Public Relations Writing

APPLES Client Portfolio

3 Bluebirds Farm

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Overview

3 Bluebirds Farm is dedicated to creating an environmentally sustainable agricultural community in the Triangle of North Carolina, where adults across the autism spectrum can thrive and receive the support they need. 3 Bluebirds Farm's unique location provides individuals with autism an opportunity to do meaningful work in an interactive and open environment in accordance to their various sensory and social needs. In addition to the program for adults, the organization also offers an individualized day camp and track-out programs for children with autism, in which they can grow and learn socially, physically and intellectually.

With all that has happened and evolved with COVID-19, 3 Bluebirds Farm has had to come up with creative and safe ways to keep the families impacted by autism actively engaged. Since many of the typical programs and camps could not happen earlier this year, the organization built a COVID-19 webpage with a variety of resources that would be helpful for the families and would keep those on the autism spectrum learning and thriving. Just recently, 3 Bluebirds Farm has been able to reopen again and start its programs back up.

Strengths

- 3 Bluebirds Farm is a unique organization that serves a niche community. 3 Bluebirds Farm is the only non-profit organization in the Triangle of North Carolina that serves and supports those on the autism spectrum with a unique, physical farm location. By being the only organization of its kind, 3 Bluebirds Farm is constantly growing and expanding so that it is able to assist as many families as possible.
- Everyone involved with 3 Bluebirds Farm is very passionate about the organization and its mission. From the founder, Erin O'Loughlin, her supporting team, to the various volunteers that give their time and energy to the 3 Bluebirds Farm, it is obvious how much people care about this organization and want to help those on the autism spectrum in any way they can.
- 3 Bluebirds Farm is great about taking a lot of pictures and videos and including them on the website. Pictures and videos are a great way to connect with the public and show exactly what the organization does, and 3 Bluebirds Farm is great about doing this. The workers are constantly taking pictures and videos during the programs and camps, so they can update the website and showcase the various things those on the autism spectrum are able to experience and participate in.

Weaknesses

Website Design and a New Virtual Environment

- With a new transition into a virtual environment, the need for an updated and cohesive interactive platform is essential. The current domain for 3 Bluebirds Farm has some variation in branding across its various media platforms, such as usage of the old farm name, outdated website design, and inconsistent color patterns. As 3 Bluebirds Farms

aims to provide resources to ease the new norm of working from home for parents, as well as instilling an interactive virtual classroom for students, updates are needed to promote and provide an easy-to-access platform for all.

Outdated Content and Improved Communication

- Content creation plays a major role for 3 Bluebirds Farm and across their social media platform, the integration of information as well as updates is necessary in not only keep families connected, but also garnering donations. 3 Bluebirds Farm currently has only old stock photos dated from 2018 and video content that does not contain current updates of events, upgrades and community content. This would be especially useful in maintaining donor and sponsor connections, as well as creating new means of generating new interest and sponsorships.

Opportunities

The Farm

- 3 Bluebirds Farm had an amazing opportunity to announce its purchase of a new 28-acre farm land in a step forward of achieving its end goal of creating a long-term community for adults who are on the autism spectrum. With the purchase of the land occurring right when COVID-19 began in the United States, they were unable to capitalize and share the news with its community. By sharing this news, 3 Bluebirds Farm's message could reach potential new donors as well as reconnect with past donors with the good news.

Donor Communication

- Donors are essential to any nonprofit, but especially during a moment of economic uncertainty due to COVID-19. 3 Bluebirds Farm has the opportunity to personally connect with its existing donors as well as new donors. Reaching out to donors to discuss the new location and update them on how the farm is operating under COVID-19 guidelines is essential to fostering those long-term connections that will keep its doors open for years to come. Offering donation options that can be adjusted to individual donor preferences such as one-time donations, monthly online giving, or sponsorship of farm animals will offer flexibility and variety to current and future donors.

Virtual Events

- 3 Bluebirds Farm has the opportunity to implement new virtual events to adapt to circumstances under the COVID-19 pandemic. Offering virtual events for its students who are unable or uncomfortable attending events at the farm in person would allow for the positive impact of the farm to reach more children in need. During this time, Children on the autism spectrum have been stuck at home and away from others for very long, and these virtual activities can foster socialization during a time of isolation for many.

- Specifically, the Bluebird Ball that is annually hosted will have to be transferred online this year. 3 Bluebirds Farm has the opportunity to take advantage of donors who normally cannot attend in person from all over the state and beyond. In constructing this virtual event, the farm will have to strategically incorporate activities to encourage attendance and donations.

Online Presence

- 3 Bluebirds Farm has the ability to expand its presence in the online space. Active usage of social media allows for two-way communication with their publics and community. This will help relay any news or information easily and effectively. Beyond social media, the farm has the opportunity to update their website in order to make information easily accessible and visually appealing.
- On their website, 3 Bluebirds Farm has space to create a donation transparency page. By showing donors, participant's families, and others in their community what donations are allocated for, 3 Bluebirds Farm can be seen as a reliable and trustworthy nonprofit. This would also show its publics the costs that are needed to operate such an organization, which may compel further donations.

Threats

COVID-19

- With the current COVID-19 uncertainty, 3 Bluebirds Farm has faced major changes in the current structure of farm, participant experience, as well as adapting to financial changes. Currently, the farm receives a lower amount of donations due to economic instability which has resulted in lower disposable income usually used to maintain the grounds, upgrade class resources, etc. Furthermore, with social distancing restrictions, classroom and farm infrastructure has led to a decreased amount of in-person attendees. This has drastically affected the overall operations of 3 Bluebirds Farm and emphasizes the need for improved community and donor relations.

Donor Communication

- In relation to COVID-19 and the need for sponsorships as operations and events transition to a virtual environment, 3 Bluebirds Farm has struggled to maintain consistent communication with donors in sponsors, which is of utmost importance during this time of economic uncertainty for the non-profit. Lack of donor and sponsor engage is essential at this time, and imperative to ensure 3 Bluebirds Farm have the financial resources to maintain the physical and logistical operations of the farm.

Conclusion

For 3 Bluebirds Farm to continue to grow and mature the Triangle's pilot Autism non-profit organization, further public relations outreach efforts need to be taken. Because of the 2020 public health crisis, 3 Bluebirds Farms needs to focus its energy on reaching new audiences, including donors and fostering a strong program in this virtual era.

In November, 3 Bluebirds Farm will host its 6th annual Bluebird Ball, held virtually. In 2019, the 5th annual ball brought 230 guests, 55 sponsors and over \$125,000 raised by donors and the live art auction. There is already a dedicated page on the website to the event, but 3 Bluebirds Farm needs to find active ways to keep donors involved and get the community involved. Written material should be drafted and given to past and current donors, updating them on how the non-profit has navigated the COVID-19 crisis and a recap of this year's program. Another letter should be given to donors informing them of the online fundraiser. Because donations are likely to be smaller because of COVID-19, donors need to know exactly what their money is going to and how they will be recognized so that they are reassured they are helping to make a difference for individuals with Autism.

We recommend creating deliverables to be sent to local news and magazine outlets. A press release on the Bluebird ball needs to be written, as well as a press release on the new farm that the organization recently purchased. The organization has been raising money for its dream residential community for people with Autism, and the land was recently purchased this year. However, no public announcements have been made about this acquisition and it should be capitalized on. Local news outlets need to be informed of this news, as it was a big step in fulfilling the organization's overall mission. John O'Loughlin, with CBS 17 Raleigh, has shown high interest in the organization and is willing to give 3 Bluebirds Farm more exposure. With

this contact, there is a lot of opportunity to showcase the work of 3 Bluebirds Farm and upcoming events.

We also recommend that 3 Bluebirds Farm do a deep-dive into their website and improve the website's overall user experience. The website is difficult to navigate and can be hard to follow because of the surplus of information. Several dates need to be updated and stock photos should be replaced with pictures of the farm.

Overall, we strongly believe these recommendations will bring 3 Bluebirds Farm new media attention and donations, but will help grow their non-profit effectively and achieve their mission.