Little Cities of Black Diamonds

The Little Cities of Black Diamonds are small, historic coal mining towns in Southeast Ohio, spanning four counties. During the late 1800s, this region of Ohio experienced a coal boom, with the industry becoming a major part of the economy. After the initial boom of coal mining, the industry began to decline, which has continued for several decades. The region now has a legacy of coal mining heritage and towns searching for alternative economic activity.

The Little Cities of Black Diamonds (LCBD) Council is a historic preservation and community development organization based in Shawnee, Ohio. We worked with the LCBD council to help their preservation and community development organization based in Shawnee, Ohio. We worked with the LCBD council to help their preservation and community development organization based in Shawnee, Ohio. We worked with the LCBD council to help their preservation and community development organization based in Shawnee, Ohio.

Moving from Local to Virtual

Due to the COVID-19 pandemic, the annual LCBD Fest that is usually hosted in Shawnee was not held in-person for the past two years. Council members were innovative and decided to host the festival online.

Our Intro to Appalachian Studies class created a social media campaign to promote the festival. The social media campaign focused on generating interest in students’ research related to the topics covered during the LCBD Fest. The goal of the campaign was to reach a wider audience within the Appalachian region and beyond. The social media campaign also serves as an archive for viewers to see the history of their community, even after the conclusion of the festival.

In addition, our Sociology of Appalachia class was divided into three groups: data collection committee, report committee, and presentation committee. Survey questions were based on the survey from 2020, but students made important adjustments to the questions so that the survey was more applicable to the content of the 2021 LCBD Fest. For instance, the questions were updated to ask respondents about what they learned from the 2021 LCBD Fest and what format they prefer for the fest. Qualtrics was used to create the survey, which is used for data collection and statistics. The survey was then shared during LCBD Fest.

What We Did

In the Intro to Appalachian Studies class, we were divided into five groups based on the migratory groups of the LCBD Fest: African American Migration, European Migration, Earliest Coal Town Settlements, Turn of the Century Migration, and Modern Migration. Each group member was assigned a leadership position, such as creative director or team leader.

After gathering information and attending a LCBD meeting, students completed research on their topics while using the LCBD Archive to compile articles, photos, and other documents to create posts for the LCBD social media. The depth of this research allowed both students and the larger community to learn more about subjects than they might have at an in-person LCBD Fest. This content was then shared on LCBD’s Instagram and Facebook accounts during the festival. On each day of LCBD Fest, a different topic was released.

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Looking Toward the Future

Despite the setbacks of the ongoing pandemic, the 2021 LCBD Fest was able to succeed and have a wide reach. This year’s festival featured a more accessible format through the social media posts and the website virtual content. After presenting our results to the LCBD Council, they discussed plans to bring the LCBD Fest back to an in-person setting, while also incorporating the accessibility of online content related to the event. The respondents of the survey also supported a hybrid format for future LCBD Fests. Hopefully, the innovation sparked by the changes in 2020 and 2021 will lead to greater engagement with the LCBD historic preservation and community development efforts.