

State Fair wins national award for new media efforts

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The Great New York State Fair and **Pinckney Hugo Group**, a full-service marketing communications firm in Syracuse, N.Y., have been awarded two Hall of Honor Communications Awards from the International Association of Fairs and Expositions (IAFE) for Best Use of Social Media and Best External Newsletter through e-mail/Web.

The IAFE Hall of Honor Communications Awards competition is divided into 16 categories. Entrants are judged in five divisions according to attendance. The New York State Fair was recognized in the divisions for fairs with attendance between 500,001 and 1 million. The purpose of the competition is to improve the advertising and publicity programs of fairs and to provide recognition for those fairs doing an outstanding job.

For 2009, The Great New York State Fair communicated with thousands of fairgoers on a daily basis by using social media to provide updates and stay connected to a community of fans and followers that stretches from Hawaii to Wisconsin to New York and included 19 countries.

Using Twitter (@NYSFair), Facebook (The Great New York State Fair fan page), e-blast announcements, e-newsletters, text messaging and online sharing tools, the Fair was able to regularly share information and interact directly with individuals interested in the Fair.

"One of the main focuses for this year's Fair was to try and reach as many people as possible," said New York State Fair Director Dan O'Hara. "One of the many ways we did this was through our social media efforts and e-newsletters, so it is an honor to be recognized by the IAFE for our latest interactive efforts."

The Fair's social media presence contributed to a nearly 30 percent increase in Web site traffic to the Fair's official site (www.nysfair.org) when comparing the 14 days leading up to the 2009 Fair (Aug. 13-26, 2009) to the 14 days leading up to the 2008 Fair (Aug. 7-20, 2008).

On The Great New York State Fair Facebook fan page (www.facebook.com/nysfair), the Fair posted a countdown to Opening Day and information about new exhibits, new attractions, concerts, competitions, advance sale tickets, annual traditions, transportation, and more.

With more than 17,000 fans signed up on the Facebook page, fans were able to post comments about Fair foods, Fair memories and Fair entertainment, and engage in online conversations. Fans could also ask basic questions about attractions, view Fair photos and take the "Favorite Fair Food" poll.

The Great New York State Fair also used Twitter - a "micro-blogging" service that allows individuals to make posts up to 140 characters - to deliver news, make concert announcements, unveil new exhibits and share fun facts about the Fair.

In 2009, the Fair also ran a series of contests on Facebook, Twitter and via text message to give fans of the New York State Fair the opportunity to win concert and admission tickets.

Interactive marketing efforts played a significant role in the promotion of the 2009 Fair and concerts. Email was utilized to keep the public informed of announcements in the months leading up to the Fair. Fairgoers had the option to sign up at www.nysfair.org for the Fair's free e-blast announcements and e-newsletter service. Subscribers received e-mail updates on the latest concert announcements through the New York State Fair "Entertainment Update" HTML e-blast and Fair news, through the New York State Fair HTML newsletter. They could also be the first to know about special deals and discount concert tickets.

The IAFE Hall of Honor Communications Awards will be presented at the 119th IAFE Annual Convention, Nov. 30 to Dec. 3 in Las Vegas.

About IAFE: The International Association of Fairs and Expositions (IAFE) is a voluntary, non-profit corporation, organizing state, provincial, regional, and county agricultural fairs, shows, exhibitions, and expositions. Its associate members include

state and provincial associations of fairs, non-agricultural expositions and festivals, associations, corporations, and individuals engaged in providing products and services to its members, all of whom are interested in the improvement of fairs, shows, expositions, and allied fields. For more information, visit www.fairsandexpos.com.

About Pinckney Hugo Group: Pinckney Hugo Group is a full-service marketing communications firm providing strategic solutions for clients in a broad range of industries through strategic planning, creative, research, advertising, graphic design, media, direct marketing, public relations, social media, sales promotion and interactive development. Based on its creative ideas, the agency has gained a national reputation for transforming clients' businesses and brands. *Inc.* magazine included Pinckney Hugo Group on the Inc. 5,000 list of the fastest-growing private companies in the country in 2007, 2008 and 2009. For more information, call 315-478-6700 or visit www.pinckneyhugo.com.