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Parker College of Business students work with local nonprofit, gain marketing experience

June 22, 2022



Senior marketing student and Parker Scholar Nathan Albrecht presents part of a marketing plan to representatives of the Boys & Girls Club of Bulloch County for the annual Haunted Forest fundraiser.

When Georgia Southern University faculty member Travis Brickey attended the annual Haunted Forest fundraiser, hosted by the Boys & Girls Club of Bulloch County in Statesboro, he didn't expect to come back to the classroom with a project idea for his students.

“When I first attended the Haunted Forest in 2021, the crowds were great, but I was surprised to see how few college- and high school-aged individuals were in attendance, despite being held only a few minutes from the Georgia Southern campus,” explained Brickey, a lecturer of marketing in the Parker College of Business.

The Haunted Forest, an outdoor haunted trail attraction, is now sponsored by the Boys & Girls Club of Bulloch County, but it has been an October tradition in the Statesboro community for more than 45 years.

“When I got back to campus the next day, I polled nearly 200 of my students in class, and the vast majority had no awareness of the event despite many being interested,” Brickey added.

He went on to propose a project for his students to help market and raise awareness of the Haunted Forest event and make it more appealing to the Generation Z demographic.

The students, many of whom are members of the national co-ed fraternity Pi Sigma Epsilon, worked together to create a marketing plan that included a comprehensive analysis of

strengths and weaknesses, primary data collection via a market research survey, a three-part strategic plan with target objectives, and a detailed action plan outlining recommendations for paid, earned, owned and social media platforms.

“Being a part of Pi Sigma Epsilon, it is important that we live by our motto, ‘people helping people succeed,’” said Courtney Simon, a senior marketing and sales management major. “We found an opportunity to do so by helping the Boys & Girls Club of Bulloch County with their Haunted Forest marketing plan. Working on this extracurricular activity was not only a terrific learning experience, but it felt great knowing we were putting our knowledge to work and helping raise awareness and money for such an important organization in our community.”

In April, the students presented the proposed plan to the board of directors and chief executive officer of the Boys & Girls Club of Bulloch County. Also in attendance were representatives from Willingway, the longtime presenting sponsor of the Haunted Forest and administrators from the Parker College of Business.

“I was truly impressed with the students’ approach in reaching the target audience, knowledge in addressing the identified challenges, and their well-executed plan for obtaining data to support their recommendations,” said Mike Jones, chief executive officer of the Boys & Girls Club of Bulloch County. “Most impressive of all, I appreciate their willingness to volunteer their time when I know they have many competing obligations at the end of the semester. I sincerely appreciate their involvement and intentions.”

Part two of the service project will be to execute the plan and put into motion some of the recommendations presented to the organization’s leadership. Some of these recommendations included the development of a dedicated Haunted Forest website, increased social media presence, use of influencer marketing and re-establishing an affiliation with Georgia Southern with Pi Sigma Epsilon becoming a formal partner.

“What better way to raise awareness and market to a Gen Z audience than to recruit a group of Gen Z students who best understand the generation’s media habits and appeals, making the Haunted Forest a go-to Halloween event in October,” Brickey said.



College of Business students who helped work on a marketing plan for local nonprofit.

Students who worked on the project include Nathan Albrecht, Ansley Atkinson, Michael Bland, Alex Cimmerer, Brennan Craig, Kurt Devine, Anna Gilbert, Kelly Mueller, Brandon Onuschak, Courtney Simon, Tyrone Singletary, Eric Tweet, Lisandra Velez Vidal and Hank Weldon.

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