

CASE STUDY

KENTUCKY DRAGON BOAT FESTIVAL: COMMUNITY BRAND LAUNCH



CONTEXT

In 2010, the Kentucky Dragon Boat Festival launched in partnership with Addia Wuchner, Kentucky State Representative, to raise awareness and funds for breast cancer programs across the Tri-State region. There was no brand, no playbook, and no dedicated budget. The challenge was to build a credible event identity and full marketing operation from the ground up with minimal resources.

ACTION

I designed the full visual identity for the festival and the Kentucky Dragon Boat Festival brand, both still in use today, and built a community-first model on in-kind resources, authentic storytelling, and relationship-driven outreach. I produced all event collateral (posters, flyers, banners, signage, and participant materials), developed a tiered sponsorship program (\$10K / \$5K / \$3,500), managed social media strategy and content, and shot original event photography for ongoing storytelling and promotion. St. Elizabeth donated all print and digital production, keeping costs lean while maintaining a consistent, professional presence.

KEY DECISIONS

Why an in-kind model instead of a paid-media launch?

Because there was no dedicated budget: donated production kept the identity consistent without spending against a number that didn't exist.

RESULT

Exceeded the Year 1 goal by 70%, raising \$51K+ against a \$30K target. Attendance grew 25% (1,200 to 1,500+) and income grew 41% (\$72K+) in Year 2. The festival has run annually since 2010, recognized as “Best of Northern Kentucky,” with the brand identity still in active use 15+ years later.

“Gary has been instrumental in the planning and execution of the Dragon Boat Festival for four years, leading branding and creative development while supporting event logistics; the festival’s success is largely attributed to his hard work and commitment to every detail.”
(Performance review)