

Overall Organization Budget: Small Community overall budget (\$100,000 and under)

Submission Category: Community Awareness

Organization: Wamego Area Chamber of Commerce

Who worked on this Project (internal/external): Wamego Area Chamber of Commerce/CVB and City of Wamego Both

Integrated Components or Type: N/A

Project Description: Wamego CVB “Totos Around Town”, is a public art project. Wamego is known for its’ connection to Oz – featuring the OZ Museum (visited by over 40,000 people each year), the Yellow Brick Road, and Oz-themed businesses like Toto’s Taco! & the Oz Winery. 15 Toto sculptures, measuring 36-40” tall, have been adopted by local citizens & businesses & each feature one-of-a-kind artwork that represents the character of Wamego, the state of KS & the Land of Oz! The Totos are mounted on native limestone.

Project Goals: For a number of years, the Wamego CVB board had discussed ways to offer visitors additional attractions to help them to explore more of Wamego, extending their stay beyond a retail, restaurant or museum visit. Also, there was a desire to implement an attraction that would be available to travelers outside of normal museum and store hours. Visitors will be posting Toto selfies all over social media & spreading the word that Wamego is definitely a destination location.

Problem to Overcome: Wamego attracts over 40,000 visitors each year to the Oz Museum. Additionally, tens-of-thousands attend our major events & festivals, including the Tulip Festival, Celebrate Freedom in Wamego, & OZtoberFest. The longer visitors stay in the community, the greater their potential economic impact - such as eating a meal, filling up at a gas station or visiting local retailers. The Totos Around Town project creates an attraction asset that appeals to all ages, & will add time to the visitors stay.

Background: The project was initiated in late 2017. Following design and production of the Toto statues, a statewide “call for artists” was sent out and 31 art designs were received. Fifteen bids were accepted during an “Adoption Auction” and the selected artwork was brought to life by the artists. The Toto statues were revealed on June 7th and installed on July 16th, 2018. For Toto hunts, maps & photo listings are available at the Chamber/CVB office, in local businesses, and online.

Community Resources: Area artists created 15 designs, Higgins Stone donated the limestone base, the City of Wamego financially supported the installations, the City Commission approved the project and locations. The Columbian Theatre provided the Auction space and CVB Transient Guest Tax dollars were invested in the project.

Results: Installation of the completed Totos began on July 16th and were completed July 18th, 2018.

The enthusiasm and popularity of the project is reflected in the following Facebook stats:

July 18th Post: 310 Likes, 180 Shares, 33 comments, 18,743 people reached/viewed

July 19th First Post: 36 Likes, 10 shares, 1 comment, 194 people reached/viewed

July 19th Second Post: 64 Likes, 14 shares, 252 people reached/viewed

July 20th Post: 83 likes, 99 shares, 6 comments, 8,317 people reached/viewed

Web Link: <http://visitwamego.com/totos-around-town>

Comments: Great coverage by Topeka stations WIBW-TV, KSNT-TV & KTWU-TV (Sunflower Journeys program)