

Creative Marketing Project 2016



Massillon DECA

Washington High School

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I. EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The Massillon Washington High School Choir Program has a long-standing tradition of performing Handel's *Messiah*. The *Messiah* has been performed annually by the Massillon Choirs since 1943, with the 2015 performance marking the seventy-second consecutive year. However, recent years have seen a sharp decline in ticket sales due to an improper use of promotional resources. This has put the future of the *Messiah* in jeopardy, prompting the creation of the Save the *Messiah* Committee. Our DECA chapter's goal is to create a promotional plan that can be used as a guide for future performances, while also extensively marketing the 2015 *Messiah* in order to preserve the production for the future.

PROCEDURES AND RESEARCH METHODS USED

Our DECA chapter utilized both primary and secondary research methods in order to collect data and determine the best marketing tactics to employ for the *Messiah* promotional plan. Our primary research consisted of several interviews, focus groups, and two specialized surveys distributed to the Massillon community. The surveys were used to determine the community's knowledge of the *Messiah* and their usage of media sources such as social media, print media, and broadcast media. Our secondary research was gathered by the whole DECA chapter through the Washington High School Ticket Office, the *Marketing Essentials* classroom textbook, and internet databases.

FINDINGS

The use of two unique surveys allowed us to collect more relevant data to be used in our marketing plan. The media usage survey provided us with invaluable insight into how to best connect with our target market, precious information considering the limited resources of the Save the *Messiah* Committee. The *Messiah* survey that we distributed helped us to identify trends in brand awareness and community interaction. We concluded that:

- Only 37% of those who reported living in our target market planned to attend
- Our target market was asked if they planned to attend, and, if not, then why:
 - 43% reported they were Unaware
 - 23% reported Time Conflicts
 - 18% reported they were Uninterested

RECOMMENDATIONS AND CONCLUSIONS

After collecting, organizing, and analyzing the data from our surveys and other research, we created a marketing and promotional plan to address several key areas for the 2015 *Messiah* and performances of the *Messiah* for years to come. These key areas are *Financial Control*, *Alumni Participation*, and *Community Support*.

Our chapter's plan is comprehensive and uses both traditional and creative marketing schemes to ensure the future of the *Messiah*. Our plan includes utilizing the full promotional mix, fostering efficient use of the Save the *Messiah* Committee's resources, and finding new sources of revenue. Lead by Zach Henry, Mike Rutkowski, and Bryan Wuske, the combined efforts of our DECA chapter and the Save the *Messiah* Committee directly resulted in a 94% increase in ticket sales and a 159% increase in alumni registrations compared to the 2014 performance.

II. INTRODUCTION

A. Statement of the Problem

For seventy-two years, the Massillon Washington High School Choirs have performed Handel's *Messiah* for the community each holiday season. This long-standing tradition has become a necessity for many members of the Massillon community to begin their holiday season. However, for the past several years, attendance and alternate revenues have plummeted while production expenses have remained inflated, generating concern within the community for the future of the annual production. Students and community members alike have shown a dwindling interest in attending, which has compromised our ability to attract advertisers. A recent trend of negative cash flows for various reasons has caused community concern that the *Messiah* may be discontinued. The 2014 *Messiah* lost roughly \$6,000 and nearly drained the financial resources of the WHS Choir Boosters. Starting with the 2015 *Messiah*, our chapter began working closely with both the WHS Choir Boosters and the newly founded Save the *Messiah* Committee to make appropriate modifications to address several issues with the failing *Messiah* production. To solve issues in inefficient and ineffective marketing, poor financial control, and alumni participation, our DECA Chapter, lead by Zach Henry, Mike Rutkowski, and Bryan Wuske, designed a marketing research study to identify the causes of declining attendance and interest and prepared a creative marketing plan to address these issues before the Massillon community loses one of the greatest traditions in high school performance.

B. Significance of the Problem Studied

The primary concern for the *Messiah* is the lack of attendance from community members and students in the school district over the five years leading to the 2014 production, evidenced by a 40% decline in ticket sales over this time. The income from ticket sales has fallen well below the amount of revenue accounted for in the budget, and, with fewer people in attendance, convincing local businesses to invest in advertisements became increasingly difficult due to limited exposure. Over this time period, total revenue fell while expenses remained steady. Few steps were taken to control spending and remedy decreasing attendance rates.

School enrollment has also fallen and negatively affected attendance. Massillon City Schools' student enrollment has decreased yearly since 2006. At that point, there were 5,000 students housed in eight schools. The district has since seen a 20% decline in attendance, forcing the closure of three schools.

The drop in school enrollment and community awareness has had an obvious effect on *Messiah* ticket sales. Whereas past performances nearly sold out in the pre-sale period, recent productions have struggled to fill main floor seating in our state-of-the-art auditorium, even with ticket sales at the door on the day of the *Messiah*.

The *Messiah* is an invaluable tradition treasured by many members of the Massillon community. Some WHS alumni spoke out on social media about how their holiday season never felt right without being able to attend or participate in the performance. Our chapter knew of how Massillonians felt about the *Messiah*, and were perplexed that the production found itself in the situation it was in.

Our DECA chapter worked closely with the WHS Choir Boosters and the Save the Messiah Committee in order to receive all necessary information on the situation. We were then involved with the marketing of the 2015 *Messiah*, and further presented the full Save the Messiah Committee with our final recommendations and marketing plan.

We concluded that the *Messiah*'s dire outlook can be reversed if our plan is followed. Our plan is a comprehensive management and creative marketing unit that will create a yearly pattern for those who make the decisions for *Messiah* productions for years to come. We can solve the *Messiah* deficit through a combination of controlled spending, efficient and effective marketing that utilizes all available channels, and an increase in alumni involvement.

C. Background Information

The Massillon Washington High School Choir Program has performed George Frideric Handel's *Messiah* every December since 1943. Over those many years, tens of thousands of people from all backgrounds have gathered in Massillon to perform or attend the production. There are few traditions held more dear in the City of Massillon than the performance of the *Messiah* each year.

Handel's *Messiah* is a three part oratorio composed in 1741 that has been performed by many of the world's top vocal and instrumental performing groups. It is comprised of solos, duets, orchestral interludes, and choruses. Many of the *Messiah*'s individual songs garnered their own fame, such as the "Hallelujah Chorus" and "Worthy is the Lamb/Amen Chorus", both of which are often performed alone as well.

The instrumentation is presently provided by a contracted orchestra that accompanies the chorus for one rehearsal and the performance. Solos and duets are auditioned for and performed

by members of the Washington High School Advanced Choir. The chorus is comprised of current high school students beyond their freshman year and WHS Choirs alumni who are all invited to return and sing in the production.

The staff involved with the *Messiah*'s production include the director, the auditorium manager, the WHS Choir Boosters executive team, the orchestra headmistress, and the student executive team of the WHS Choirs. Prior to our DECA chapter's involvement, there was not a position for a marketing manager or any one person with budgetary control. This put a lot of pressure on the choir boosters to manage the *Messiah* individually as well as the choirs as a whole, leading to many of the mistakes that were made over time.

Due to the perilous situation of the *Messiah*, the WHS Choir Boosters called a public meeting in the summer of 2015 to discuss the future of the *Messiah*. At that meeting, the whole production was on life support as community members, choir members and alumni, and current choir parents discussed the pros and cons of every option presented to them. The result of this meeting was a one-year trial run to see if the *Messiah* could still be adequately supported by the Massillon community. The Save the Messiah Committee was born at this meeting, and itself had three subcommittees: financial control, community support, and alumni involvement. Our research and marketing plan was later built around addressing each of these same sectors.

Massillon 'Messiah Sing' at risk after 72 years

WKYC Staff and AP 12:53 p.m. EST November 26, 2015

The choir's 72-year tradition of performing Handel's "Messiah" is at risk due to declining attendance and rising costs.



(Photo: Save the Messiah Facebook)

MASSILLON, Ohio -- Organizers say a Massillon choir's 72-year tradition of performing Handel's "Messiah" is at risk due to declining attendance and rising costs.

The Washington High School choir department told The Independent in Massillon (http://bit.ly/1PQxnRE) that this year's production of the popular choral work on Dec. 13 may be the last.

The Save the Messiah Committee, formed to keep the program going, identified cost, attendance and a lack of alumni participation as the three key impediments to continuing the production.

Save the Messiah Facebook page

The performance costs about \$10,000 annually, the bulk going to pay a professional orchestra and rent risers.

The school district no longer funds any part of the performance, leaving the choir booster club to fund it through fundraising, donations and its annual budget.

Attendance has fallen from about 700 to about 200.

III. PROCEDURES AND RESEARCH METHODS USED

A. Description of Secondary Research

Our DECA chapter at Massillon Washington High School has abundant research sources available to utilize, giving our Creative Marketing Project team a great many tools to develop a successful market research study and creative marketing plan. Our *Marketing Essentials* classroom textbook defines secondary research as research that has already been completed and collected for some purpose other than the current study. For our project, we have gathered this research from sources such as the *Marketing Essentials* textbook, internet searches, WHS Ticket Office information, information from our teacher and chapter advisor Mr. Chuck Richards, and social media records.

The *Marketing Essentials* book was instrumental in helping us to understand how to build a successful market research plan and how to analyze and validate data to arrive at the information we seek. Mr. Richards taught us how to build effective surveys and how to utilize secondary research, which is often limited although easy to obtain.

Several websites were utilized to compile demographic data about our Massillon area target market and the *Messiah* itself. We also accessed Facebook Insight and Twitter Engagement information for the choir program's social media accounts in order to gauge how many people were seeing the program's posts and how those people interacted with those posts and the links and pictures contained in them.

The WHS Ticket Office provided our team with multiple decades worth of *Messiah* ticket sales data, even more years than we initially requested. School administration was also forthcoming with important student demographic information while also helping us to learn what

student demographics were ethical to publish. The WHS Choir Boosters provided us with previous years' *Messiah* invoices and budgetary documents.

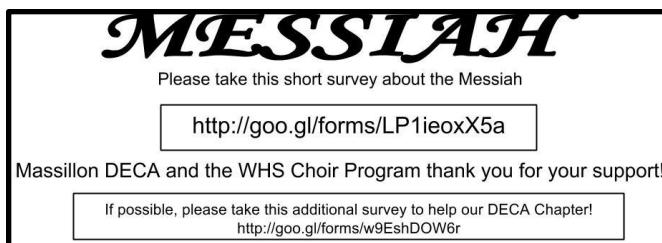
Our chapter wanted to establish goals for the creative marketing project that were based on realistic projections. These S.M.A.R.T. (Specific, Measurable, Attainable, Relevant, Time-bound) goals came from analyzing data such as previous production budget records and ticket sale projections. Our goals were to increase alumni registrations to a minimum of fifty, cap the spending at \$10,000, and sell enough tickets and generate enough advertising revenue in order to make a profit for the 2015 *Messiah*, just four months after the 2015-2016 school year started.

B. Description of Primary Research Conducted

We collected primary data through a variety of methods. We created and distributed two unique Google Forms surveys, conducted several personal interviews with prominent *Messiah* figures, and used the 2015 *Messiah* as our experimental research, as we produced events and marketing materials and were able to directly gauge their effect. This experimental research allowed us to then meet our goals for the production and discover new creative marketing elements which we included in our final presentation.

Our surveys are the backbone of our whole market research study. We had two teams in our DECA chapter that each formulated a unique survey for data collection. One survey consisted of questions specific to the *Messiah*, how likely the respondent was to attend, and how much background information they knew about the *Messiah* prior to any marketing. The second survey was a research study into the media consumption tendencies of our target market. Respondents were asked to rank their most used media channels, to determine the number of channels they're exposed to on an average day, and to scale how likely they were to interact with

a link or picture on a post. Each survey also asked demographic questions based on age, gender, and their current place of residence in respect to distance from the high school. We distributed approximately 750 survey cards which included links to both Google Forms and clearly defined



The image shows a survey card for the production of 'MESSIAH'. At the top is a large, bold title 'MESSIAH'. Below it, a line of text reads 'Please take this short survey about the Messiah'. A rectangular box contains the URL 'http://goo.gl/forms/LP1ieoxX5a'. Another line of text below the URL says 'Massillon DECA and the WHS Choir Program thank you for your support!'. A final box at the bottom contains the text 'If possible, please take this additional survey to help our DECA Chapter!' followed by the URL 'http://goo.gl/forms/w9EshDOW6r'.

how their information would be used so as to remain ethical. Our respondency rate was 60%, with nearly 450 completed forms being submitted through Google Forms.

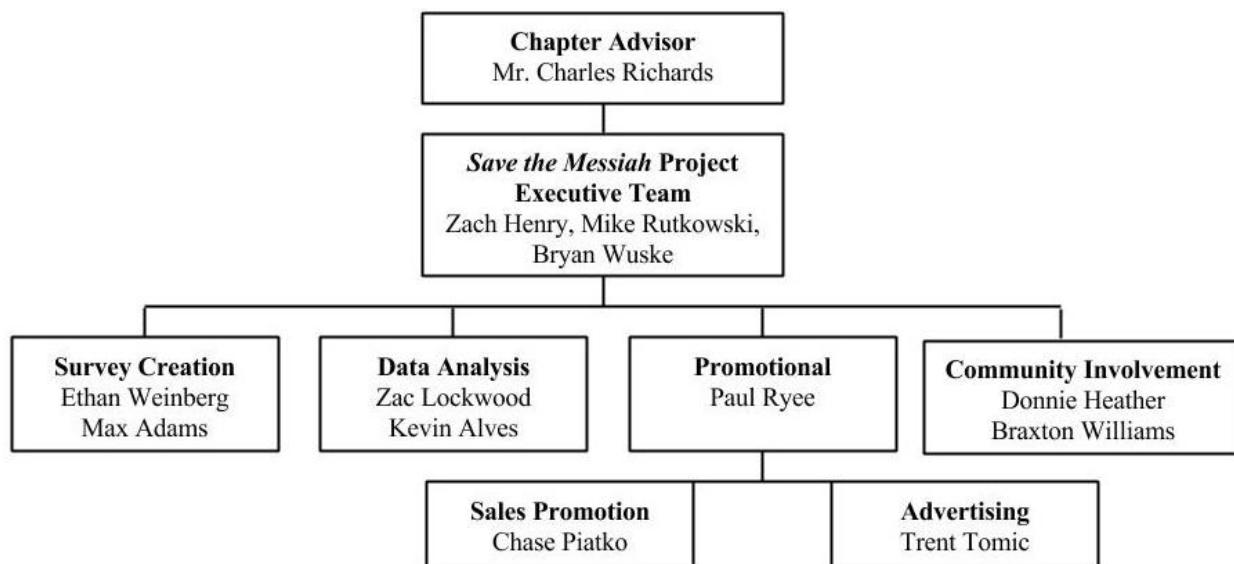
Conducting personal interviews helped us to learn about the management structure that was in place prior to our DECA chapter's involvement. We also became aware of many serious issues inside the production itself, including several conflicts of interest in the management realm of the *Messiah*. Alumni, who were unwilling to part with any facet of the tradition from their high school years, consistently pressured directors and boosters to maintain the status quo of the production. With so much pressure from within and from outside sources, nobody was willing to make any difficult decisions in order to cut costs.

Our control of the marketing process for the 2015 *Messiah* allowed us to experimentally market some of the proposed ideas that our chapter generated during our brainstorming sessions and focus groups. We gained valuable insight into how the community responds to certain marketing activities, and arrived at ideas for future activities as well.

C. Description of Involvement of Chapter Members and Business People in the Project

Over the whole of the eight month process of the Creative Marketing Project, all members of our DECA chapter were involved with the work of our project and fulfilled all of their responsibilities beyond our expectations. The leadership for the project was our creative

marketing project team and our DECA advisor Mr. Richards. By evenly dividing the work of the project and organizing teams based on each individual's aptitude, we were able to foster efficiency in our organization. These teams include: survey creation, data analysis, community involvement, and promotional activities. The promotional activities team was broken into sub-teams focused on specific parts of the promotional mix. An organizational chart follows.



The survey creation team was responsible for formulating appropriate, ethical, open-minded, and valid questions to obtain the data requested by our Creative Marketing Project executive team. The responses of these surveys were then passed to the data analysis team, which consisted of two DECA students with strong mathematical and statistical knowledge. This team prepared charts, graphs, and other reports for our project and the Save the Messiah Committee.

The community involvement team was responsible for the distribution of marketing materials to partner businesses and establishments in the Massillon community outside of the school. This group was often on off-site projects, and also served as our liaison with the local

churches with whom we partnered to promote the *Messiah* in the Christian community of Massillon due to the *Messiah*'s Christian background.

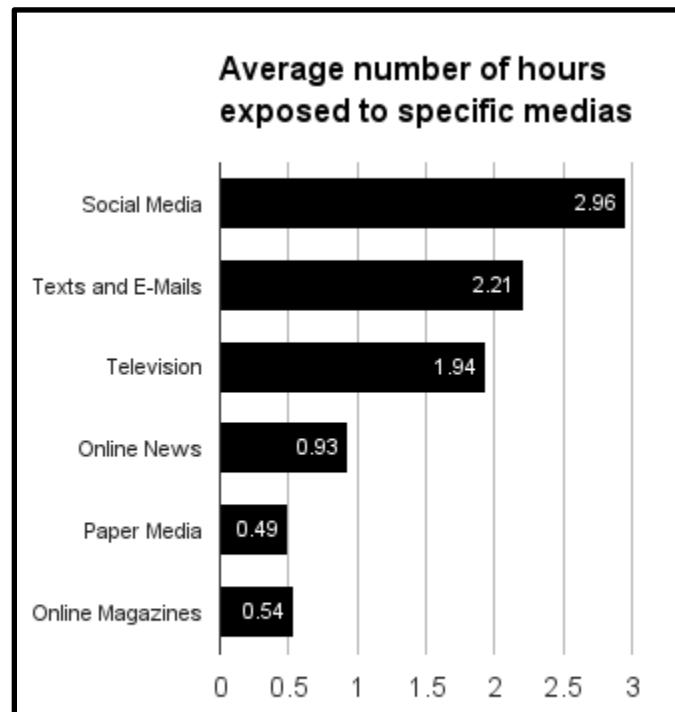
The biggest task was that posed to the promotional team. This team was responsible for leading brainstorming sessions and conducting exploratory research into the ideas presented. They then created rough sketches and drafts of promotional materials and presented these to the chapter for critique. The promotional team was responsible for the whole spectrum of the promotional mix, and performed exemplary in personal selling, helping to bring in consumers to the WHS Ticket Office.

IV. FINDINGS AND CONCLUSIONS

A. Presentation of Findings, Data to Support Findings

The findings of the survey were conclusive and were cause to begin making dramatic changes to the promotion and management of the *Messiah*. We received a total of 307 completed surveys through the Google Forms, and had to disqualify nine due to inappropriate answering of questions. The respondents were of all ages, genders, and backgrounds.

The data received from our primary research was calculated and formatted before being presented to our Creative Marketing Project team and the whole DECA chapter. The results

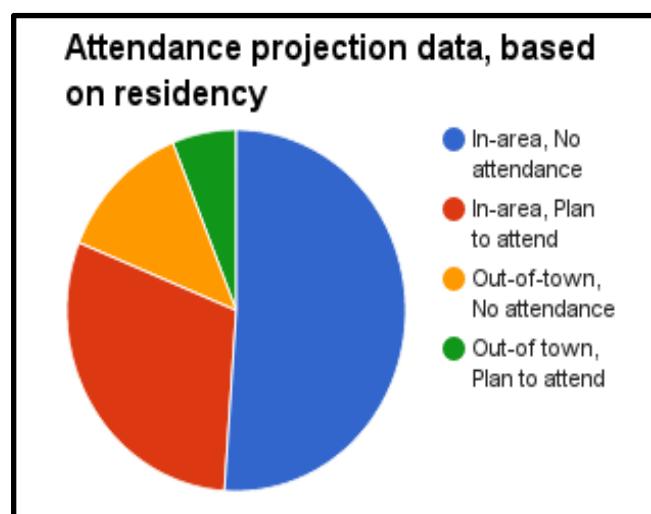


illustrated a very clear deficiency in community awareness and marketing channel usage. The WHS Choir Program has been continuing to utilize many outdated communication channels leading to the inefficient spreading of the choir's messages.

By using market segmentation, we analyzed the survey results based on ages, gender, and whether or not the respondent is an alumni of the Massillon Choirs to arrive at an accurate representation of our target market and our secondary markets. We also identified the most efficient marketing channels for each demographic group.

One question we asked of our respondents was to estimate the number of hours they are exposed to different media sources each day. Social media was the clearly indicated most used form of media, followed by direct communications, such as texts and emails, and television. The results of this question are on the preceding page.

The *Messiah* specific survey showed us what the Massillon community knew about the *Messiah*, which helps us determine what portions of the production need better promotion and broader exposure in our promotional plan. Our Creative Marketing Project team found many unique situations in the Massillon community that need addressed in our promotional plan.

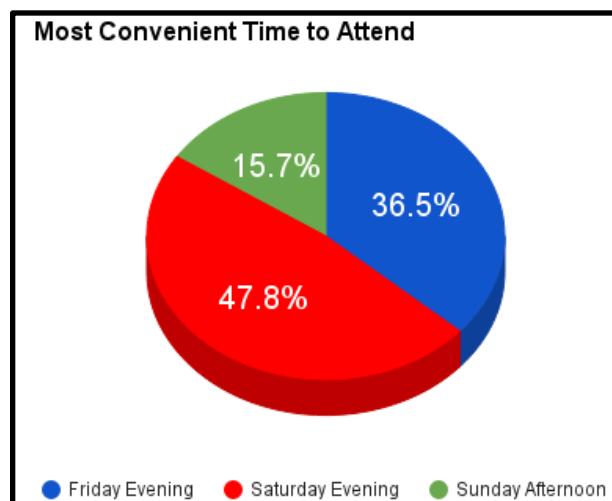


A conditional series of questions was posed to respondents who are alumni of the choir program, identified by a question in the survey that would direct only alumni respondents to the page. The data returned from this page was shocking. 56% of alumni surveyed reported that they never or rarely

would return to perform the *Messiah*. When combined with alumni who had never returned to join the audience either, the percentage climbs to 69%. 27% of alumni have never returned for the *Messiah* in any way, neither joining the chorus nor the audience.

We asked respondents if they planned on attending the 2015 *Messiah* and compared the data against their demographic data to compare tentative attendance against gender and whether or not they live in the Massillon community. By gender, the ratio of non-attendance to attendance is nearly equivalent. The disturbing data is the number of people who live in the Massillon community and did not plan to attend compared to the number of people in the area who did plan on attending. With our branding as a Massillon tradition and community event, our target market is those who live in the Massillon area, which we defined as within an approximately 30 minutes' drive of the school. This was a vital discovery for the creation of our marketing plan.

We also asked whether or not the date and time of the *Messiah* performance affected the respondent's attendance. We followed up by asking what the most convenient performance time would be for them to attend. For the first question, 23% of respondents told us that the timing of the *Messiah* affected their attendance. The results of the second question are pictured in the graph.



The 2015 *Messiah* presented us with a unique option to test market some of our prospective promotional activities and evaluate their effect before we implement them long-term. Some of the activities included: press releases, "cause nights" at local restaurants (a portion of

the proceeds of the night are donated), performances of *Messiah* excerpts at local churches, and a guest bartending at a local establishment. We also broadcast the *Messiah* on social media, our *ESPN 990* radio interview, and by placing the Save the *Messiah* banner on many local websites.

B. Presentation of Conclusions, Rationale to Support Conclusions

Throughout the whole of our study, some trends came to light that we must address in our marketing plan. Through our focus groups, we generated and evaluated ideas for how we could reduce expenses and promote the *Messiah*. Our surveys and interviews helped us determine how best to connect the community to the production, and what outlets reach the broadest market. We decided that our marketing plan must emphasize the family atmosphere of the tradition. Our promotions must make the community feel as though they play a greater part in the performance in order to help make the *Messiah* a more personal cause for Massillon community members.

The experimental marketing we completed helped us to analyze what yearly activities are more effective than others, and to what events the community is more responsive, resulting in \$3,360.00 in ticket sales for the 2015 *Messiah*, compared to \$1,630.00 in 2014 ticket sales.

V. RECOMMENDATIONS

A. Recommendations Resulting from the Study

Below is listed an outline of several steps to be followed to utilize the promotional mix, creative marketing, and effective management to foster the efficient use of resources and remedy the problem of low attendance at the *Messiah*.

1. Increase Alumni Involvement
 - a. Create and Maintain an Accurate Alumni Database
 - b. Encourage Attendance by Alumni

2. Control Expenses
 - a. Purchase Risers, Partner with In-School Organization
 - b. Explore Alternatives to the Orchestra
 - c. Create Guidelines for Future Budgets
3. Generate Community Support
 - a. Sell Advertisements in the *Messiah* Program
 - b. Pursue Funding from Charitable Organizations
 - c. Promote the Brand of the *Messiah*
 - d. Create a Repeatable Marketing Plan

Recommendation 1: Increase Alumni Involvement

The *Messiah* is a very unique opportunity for those alumni of the Massillon Choir Program. There are few opportunities in high school activities for alumni to return to their alma mater and be a part of a competition or performance such as the *Messiah*. The alumni aspect of the production is what helps to truly bring the family feeling of the *Messiah* together. Aside from this, no one should appreciate the hard work of the current Massillon Choirs than those who have already been through the historic program.

Increasing the number of alumni registered to sing in the chorus is a necessary part of our marketing plan. With the declining enrollment of the Massillon City School District, the number of WHS Choir Members has also been declining, making it difficult to fill the stage with chorus members. Without alumni returning to sing, the *Messiah* chorus will appear thin on stage, making our product less marketable for the future.

Many alumni personally feel they are unable to perform the *Messiah* due to physical or vocal limitations or other genuine reasons. However, this group of non-returning alumni represents a secondary market that is extremely receptive of our promotional message. Due to their time in the choirs, many alumni relish the ability to finally sit back and enjoy the whole of the production from an audience standpoint.

Recommendation 2: Control Expenses

Out-of-control spending has been the root cause of the *Messiah*'s dire outlook towards the future. The annual budget had been around \$10,000 each of the past few years. This, combined with declining ticket sales and sponsorship revenue, has lead to a deep deficit. Much of the yearly budget is allocated to the renting of risers from a local company and the contracting of a professional orchestra to accompany the *Messiah* chorus.

Exploring ways to reduce the expenses of the yearly production and taking steps to implementing cost-cutting measures will help to guarantee the future of the production. Traditions can always be reimplemented once the financial standing of the *Messiah* has been insured, but if the production is canceled, it would be extremely difficult to reintroduce the *Messiah*.

Recommendation 3: Generate Community Support

There are few small cities more supportive of their high school's activities than Massillon is supportive of Massillon Washington High School. In a city of 30,000, our football stadium, Paul Brown Tiger Stadium, regularly sells out all of its 16,000 seats. The Massillon Tiger Swing Band, Ohio's oldest football band, is always well-funded for instruments and uniforms. A yearly musical sells upwards of 700 tickets across three performances. Our community rallied together

to finish fourth in the voting in ESPN's 2008 *SportsCenter* competition, Titletown, USA, finishing ahead of such cities as: Boston, Massachusetts; New York, New York; and Los Angeles, California.

With so many worthwhile events at the high school, we must find our niche in the market. The *Messiah* was once a revered community event, but over the years that feeling has been lost. Rebuilding the *Messiah*'s brand as a family atmosphere and holiday tradition will create an emotional connection between the community and the performance and foster a relationship between the *Messiah* and our market, giving the Massillon community a vested interest in the production and its success.

B. Projected Outcomes from Implementing the Recommendations

With the recommendations we have provided, we will follow these guidelines to create a budget and marketing plan that can be followed for years to come. We are hoping that the implementation of these recommendations will help the Save the *Messiah* Committee become a stand-alone organization from the Massillon Choir Boosters as the *Messiah* Boosters, and will thus be self-sufficient in gathering finances for funding the *Messiah*.

Adopting measures such as selling advertising space in the *Messiah* program and pursuing donations from charitable organizations will give the production more financial resources. This will allow greater budget flexibility with where money is allocated. With more revenue, we can increase marketing activities across the board which will help to bring more people to the show, leading to more revenue. The funding must first be received before the initial investment in greater marketing can be made.

C. Plan for Implementing the Recommendations

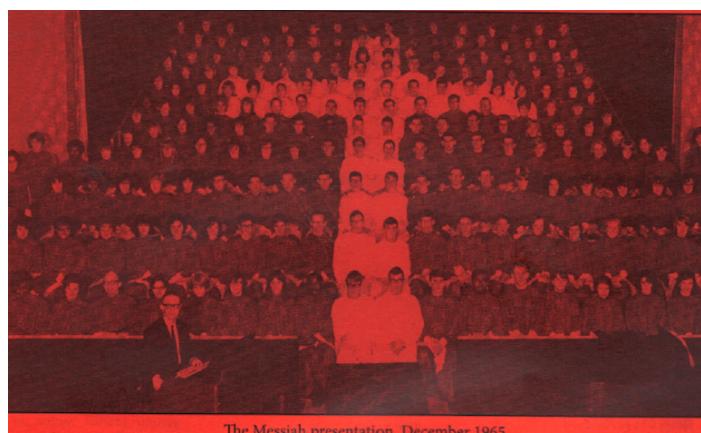
Goal 1: Increase Alumni Involvement

Recommendation 1a: Create and Maintain Accurate Alumni Database

In the coming months, we recommend that the WHS Choir Program takes the necessary steps to implement a database of WHS Choir Alumni that includes email addresses, graduation years, optional home addresses, and, for recent graduates, college of attendance. This database would become an invaluable asset when it comes time to inform, remind, and persuade alumni to return for the *Messiah*, and would also prove advantageous at other times of the year with the distribution of the WHS Choirs Newsletter. After the initial launch of the database, graduating students should be encouraged to enter themselves into the database before they leave WHS, lessening the burden on the choir staff of collecting and inputting the data every year. With many alumni reporting that they did not return to sing due to being unaware of rehearsals or uninvited to return, an accurate database of alumni names with contact information would prove invaluable for the increase of alumni involvement.

Recommendation 1b: Encourage Attendance by Alumni

Alumni, having gone through the *Messiah* and the WHS Choirs, should have a higher appreciation for the work that the current students and performers have put into the production. For this reason, and for nostalgia, alumni should also be greatly encouraged to attend if they are not performing with the chorus. The



The Messiah presentation, December 1965

price for alumni registration should be lower than the price of an alumni ticket, and the price of the alumni ticket should be lower than the price of a public sale ticket. This would encourage more alumni to be involved, and still reward them for their service to the performance even if they are not performing in that year's *Messiah*. We are suggesting a product mix \$5 alumni registration fee, \$8 alumni ticket, \$10 public ticket.

Goal 2: Control Expenses

Recommendation 2a: Purchase Risers, Partner with In-School Organizations

To relieve the stress of renting the risers for the chorus each year, we have explored the possibility of purchasing a set of risers to be used yearly by the *Messiah* and offer the usage of the risers to other WHS stage productions. Our team then spoke with the teacher of the WHS Construction Trades class about a potential partnership. Due to the timing of the yearly *Messiah*, we presented the Construction Trades teacher with the possibility to make assembling and disassembling the risers an end of the semester project for his class. We also offered yearly compensation to the class's building materials fund for the work, along with compensation for the teacher to attend training courses to assure safe construction of the risers.

Recommendation 2b: Explore Alternatives to the Orchestra

There exist several alternatives to the current orchestra that is contracted to perform with the chorus in the annual *Messiah*. After extensive research into several options, our recommendation is the Boardman High School Classical Orchestra. This is a full orchestra of high school students that performs and studies the classical style of music, and it is as well-loved by their community as the *Messiah* is loved by Massillon. Bringing these two communities together would help to further promote the family atmosphere of the production. Supporters of

the Boardman Orchestras would also present an additional market of people who would be willing to purchase tickets and attend.

The cost of hiring the Boardman Classical Orchestra would be greatly less than the cost of the present orchestra, and could help to foster a relationship between the two schools' music programs, both of which are regarded as some of the premier programs in the state. In addition, there is a venture capitalist in the area who has taken a great interest in this preposition, and he has pledged to personally cover the cost of transportation. The condition is that the Boardman Orchestra is transported to and from Massillon Washington High School the day of the performance, and the *Messiah* chorus is transported to the Boardman Performing Arts Center for the sole rehearsal between the chorus and orchestra. This rehearsal could also be used as a public relations activity, allowing the Boardman community to view a portion of the rehearsal, exposing them to the *Messiah* in their own area. Following this plan would help to further unite the communities.

Recommendation 2c: Create Guidelines for Future Budgets

The Save the *Messiah* Committee should create a firm budgeting process as a yearly blueprint for the production of the *Messiah*. It is the tendency of many involved to think solely of preserving the traditions that have been integrated into the performance over the years. However, this is what allowed the cost to balloon out of control. Through the years of war and economic downturn, the *Messiah* was performed without interruption because of the dedication of those involved to the overall tradition of the performance, not specific parts of the tradition.

We recommend a budget of \$7,500.00 for the 2016 production and for the immediate future. This represents about \$2 in budget for every \$1 in ticket sales from the previous year. Due

to the increased support from area corporations and businessmen after the efforts of the Save the *Messiah* Committee and our DECA chapter, ticket sales are not the primary source of the *Messiah*'s funding. However, it is not safe for the Committee to rely solely on donations to support the production. A period of economic struggle could lead to less corporate dollars available for donations, which would place the *Messiah* in jeopardy again.

Goal 3: Generate Community Support

Recommendation 3a: Sell Advertisements in the *Messiah* Program

For many years, the *Messiah* program distributed at the performance was a very clean and standard pamphlet, containing only a Director's Note, the program of the performance, a short bio about each soloist, and a list of all the members of the chorus. However, the annual WHS On Stage musical production creates a program with more color and higher quality paper that is often kept as a keepsake of the production. This is funded by selling advertising space in the program and allowing individuals to purchase space on a Patron's Page, that lists the name of the patron, the level at which they supported, and an optional message to the chorus or a specific chorus member.

It is the recommendation of the Creative Marketing Project team that the Save the *Messiah* Committee implement the same system for future *Messiah* productions. The sale of the advertisements will allow for the program to be printed on higher-quality paper and generate funds for the production's budget. If the price of the programs exceeds the budgetary restrictions, however, the previous style of program can be substituted, allowing for all of the money raised through advertising space sales to be used to cover other costs of the production.

Recommendation 3b: Pursue Funding from Charitable Organizations

There are many corporations, both in the Massillon area and on the national level, that sponsor charitable giving and community development programs that provide funds to organizations much like the Save the Messiah Committee. This is because the donations represent corporate tax deductions due to the nature of the organization. Many non-profit foundations are also active charitably in order to maintain their tax-exempt status.

The Paul and Carol David Foundation is an active entity in the Massillon community, funding the construction of a local YMCA and the Paul and Carol David Indoor Practice Facility at Massillon Washington High School. The Foundation sponsors a grant program for parties whose mission aligns with that of the Foundation, and it is the recommendation of the Creative Marketing Project team that the *Messiah* program completes the application necessary for consideration for a grant award.

A WHS Choir alumnus in the defense industry introduced the Save the Messiah Committee to the Boeing Corporation's Corporate Citizenship effort and their Community Engagement in Ohio program, which provides support for organizations in Ohio through different activities. We recommend the Committee applies for both a corporate grant and an event sponsorship, and works closely with the Boeing Community Engagement representative to find a solution that best suits both the *Messiah*'s needs and Boeing's guidelines for grant-making.

Recommendation 3c: Promote the Brand of the *Messiah*

The main factor behind the *Messiah*'s dire situation was the decline in attendance and recognition of the WHS *Messiah* brand. Our recommendation is to rebuild the *Messiah* brand as a Massillon family tradition that involves the whole of the community. Focusing on the

Messiah's ability to bring families together on stage and in the audience should be promoted as the true spirit of the performance, especially with its yearly proximity to the holidays.

Branding is necessary as it helps to unify the message spread across all of a company's or product's promotional materials. A unified marketing plan is more efficient and effective than several standalone promotions. Building the brand of the *Messiah* makes the production more recognizable at all times, allowing the Save the Messiah Committee and the WHS Choir Boosters to spread marketing materials throughout the year to inform and remind the target market.

Once the brand has been rebuilt, the Save the Messiah Committee must take the necessary steps to properly market the *Messiah* to the Massillon community to ensure that the target market has been made aware of the production, the meaning behind it, and the date and time of the performance. Continuing and increasing radio interviews on local stations will be a key factor, as many people in the area indicated on our survey that they listen to local radio for most of their time spent driving. Flyers and other print media advertisements in local churches will help to promote the *Messiah* to the religious demographic of our target market.

Recommendation 3d: Create a Repeatable Marketing Plan

A problem with the Save the Messiah Committee and the Massillon Choir Boosters organization is that there are no marketers on either executive team. While they are passionate about the students and the *Messiah*, they lack the expertise in marketing that is necessary to create and distribute effective promotional materials. And while our DECA chapter will always remain at the school, it would be unreasonable for our chapter to assume marketing

responsibilities beyond a consultative role for *Messiah* productions beyond the 2016 performance.

Our chapter's final step was to work closely with the Save the Messiah Committee to develop a general marketing plan that can be used by persons of all backgrounds to more effectively market the *Messiah* years in the future. While a marketing program cannot be used identically for multiple years, a process can be followed to promote such a consistent event as the *Messiah*. We created the marketing plan that follows.

Utilize Social Media

With such technological advancements

as the internet and social media channels such as Facebook, Twitter, and Instagram, it would be absurd to ignore the value of these

applications for free marketing. We utilized the "Save the Messiah" Facebook page to inform

the Massillon community about the special events leading up to the 2015 *Messiah* and about the performance date. We kept those following our Twitter and Instagram accounts up-to-date with information about the progress of the Save the Messiah Committee. We also advertised on our school's website, which is the homepage for every computer within our school district. The plan for the future is to keep these accounts active through the future to gain a bigger following.

Utilize Broadcast Advertising

With our connections to the WHS Teleproductions department, we made a television ad to be broadcasted on the local television channel. This advertisement included the dates and



times of the show, the price of the tickets, and the information about where to buy tickets. Along with the advertisements aired on television, we used two radio stations for promotion. ESPN 990 host Ray Jeske agreed to promote the *Messiah* on the air in a segment in which our creative marketing team also called in and were interviewed about the production, helping to spread the information about the performance. The most listened to AM radio station in Western Stark County, 1480 WHBC, also promoted the *Messiah* by giving away ticket packs as prizes for trivia contests. Both radio stations have agreed to continue allowing this promotion on their wavelengths in future years.

Distribute Print Advertising

With a production like the *Messiah*, we had to connect with the community. In correspondence with our local newspaper, we created an advertisement that was in print the entire week leading up to the *Messiah*. In downtown Massillon, we purchased a large banner to hang across the four lane highway that runs through town. We also utilized two other electronic banners along this highway. The date and time of the performance can be changed on the banner, so future costs for displaying the banner across the highway are minimal.

Utilize Personal Selling

Personal selling is a key aspect of every business: without the direct interaction with customers, the business will not gain a secure customer base. Along with sending out invitations to community members, we also had all chorus members take home pre-sale ticket order forms. All final ticket sales had to go through the Massillon Washington High School Ticket Office, which is staffed daily by Michelle Wolfe, whose job is partially to sit and field calls and ticket requests for any and all events at the school, including the *Messiah*. Mrs. Wolfe was instrumental

in the personal selling aspect of our ticket sales, and we would not have achieved our 2015 goals without her. Moving forward, we will continue to utilize the WHS Ticket Office for all public sales and distribute order forms through students and alumni. We will also move forward with using a Save the Messiah sub-committee to sell program ads to add revenue.

Active Public Relations

To focus on giving back to the community and creating the family image for the *Messiah*, our DECA chapter came up with multiple ways to do so. One of our ideas was to perform one or two choruses at local churches during their worship services in the weeks leading up to the *Messiah*. This way, we can promote our brand, the tradition *Messiah* meaning, and increase our publicity to people most receptive to the message in a way that doesn't cost the Committee anything.



D. Evidence that the Project has been Presented to the Proper Officials

We emailed our findings to the director of the Massillon Choirs, Mrs. Kerri Riley, and several executives of the Save the Messiah Committee and WHS Choir Booster Club in hopes that they could utilize the research we conducted to improve the program in the future. Presented below is a screenshot of the information sent and the response received by Mr. Ron Swartz, the President of the Save the Messiah Committee.

Kerri Riley, Ron Swartz, Jen Klinger, Bryan Constable

Save the Messiah Report

To whom it may concern.
My name is Mike Rutkowski, and I am one of the Chapter Representatives for Massillon Washington High School's DECA Creative Marketing Project for the 2015-2016 school year. As a part of such a well respected business organization as DECA, our team, along with all members of our chapter, have been working on a marketing plan centered on your business. Attached to this email is a copy of our research, findings, conclusions, and recommendations, which we believe can help the *Messiah* grow in the future. We look forward to hearing back with your comments and critiques. Please respond at your earliest convenience.

Thank you for your time,

Mike Rutkowski
Member, Massillon DECA 2015-2016
(330)-830-3901 Ext. 51409
michael.rutkowski@massillonschools.org

Send | Saved |

Dear WHS DECA Chapter Members,

As an executive of the Save the Messiah Committee, I am beyond grateful for your actions taken to market this year's *Messiah* and future productions. The information you have provided will be used to continue to better the *Messiah* program for years to come. Your creative marketing team has exceeded the high standard set by our program. Thank you again.

Sincerely,

Ron Swartz

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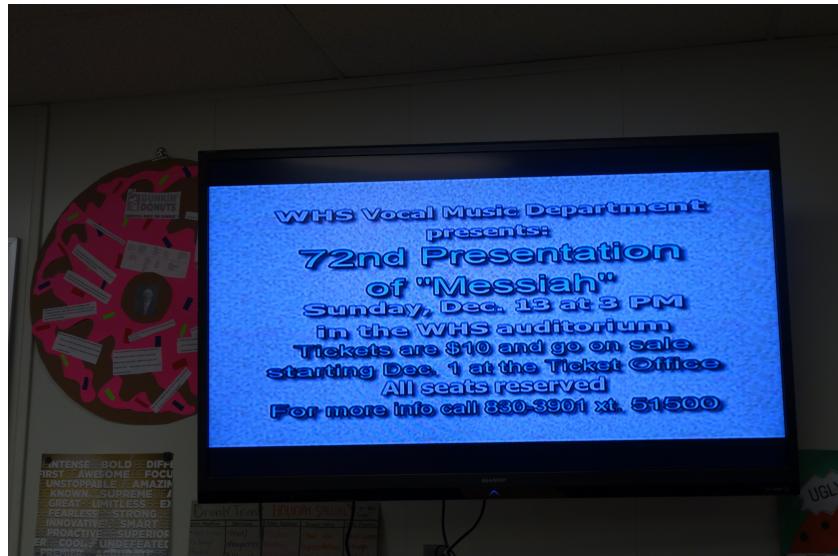
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VII. APPENDIX



Here, a picture of one electronic billboard we were able to utilize

The advertisement we placed on our WHS Teleproductions TV channel



We distributed marketing materials to local churches for display



Pictured above is one message we were able to display on an electronic billboard along the main highway in town near the high school.



Above: Our entry into the Massillon Community Parade

Right: The Save the Messiah

Facebook event and page created
to foster public awareness

Kathy Catazaro-Perry, Mayor

Massillon

City of Champions

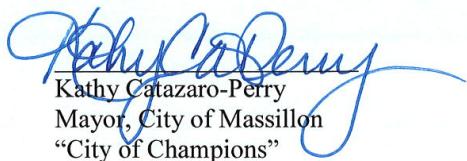
March 15, 2016

To Whom It May Concern,

I would like to recognize and thank the Massillon DECA Chapter at Washington High School for a job well done this winter with the Creative Marketing Project to promote the *Messiah*. Massillon DECA Chapter Coordinators Zach Henry, Mike Rutkowski, and Bryan Wuske have so much to be proud of together, working with their Advisor Mr. Chuck Richards. As a former marketer, I am impressed with the depth of their scope and the results they have achieved. This enthusiastic group left no stone unturned with their marketing creativity.

Their quest to promote the beloved *Messiah* began several months ago to develop advance ticket sales. The group placed a banner in the annual Christmas parade and passed out fliers to begin alerting the community that a wonderful event was on the horizon. They also sold program advertisements, had local radio interviews as well as marketing on the local television channel. Ingenious ads were also placed in the local newspaper. They partnered with local establishments to put on “cause nights,” in which a portion of the night’s proceeds were donated to the *Messiah*. A Social Networking Campaign was an added sales tool that allowed the DECA to meet its goals and exceed their expectations.

Sincerely,



Kathy Catazaro-Perry
Mayor, City of Massillon
“City of Champions”

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