

Central Ohio PRism Awards
Category T18b (Non-Profit): Feature Placements - Broadcast
“Into the Deep with CBS Mornings: Monterey County Sheds Light on Undersea Life”
Monterey County Convention & Visitors Bureau with Fahlgren Mortine

Entry Description

Monterey County Convention & Visitors Bureau and its tourism partners at the Monterey Bay Aquarium sought to raise awareness about a first-of-its-kind deep-sea exhibition opening in spring 2022. Charged with garnering national media coverage of the exhibition, Fahlgren Mortine leveraged timely TikTok content to secure a 6-minute CBS Mornings segment that had a broadcast audience of more than 6 million viewers. The segment aired on Earth Day as part of the network’s Earth 365 series.

Planning/Content

Monterey County Convention & Visitors Bureau (MCCVB) promotes travel to Monterey County, California, and is responsible for generating awareness about the destination’s vast array of experiences for both leisure and business travelers. As MCCVB’s public relations agency of record, Fahlgren Mortine works closely with the destination to understand tourism offerings that may pique national media interest. As many publications gear up for stories focused on reasons to visit places in the year ahead, new and notable destination news is of particular interest in Q4. Headed into 2022, Fahlgren Mortine was charged with securing national media coverage for a new exhibition opening at the Monterey Bay Aquarium called “Into the Deep.” The deep-sea exhibition took years to develop, and its spring 2022 opening was set to be a major new development for the destination.

Appropriateness for Identified Audience

The goal of MCCVB’s overarching media relations program was to raise awareness of Monterey County, California, as a transformative destination and inspire leisure and business travelers to responsibly experience the region with overnight visits. We set out to reach a targeted list of 100 media outlets throughout the year with a focus on stories highlighting the diverse experiences that can be enjoyed during a visit. Key message pillars included outdoors, luxury, culinary, and the destination’s sustainable practices. We had a goal to secure a total of 40 placements with our targeted media outlets and garner 2.9 billion media impressions through ongoing earned media efforts. As the beginning of 2022 approached, we researched journalists with an affinity for stories highlighting the top destinations to go in the year ahead and began mining for story angles tied to the Monterey Bay Aquarium’s new exhibition that may resonate with national morning show targets – CBS Mornings, Good Morning America and TODAY – as a complement to our placements to-date and to fulfill the goal of a coveted morning show feature story.

Creativity

In December 2021, Fahlgren Mortine came across a CBS Mornings’ TikTok video featuring footage of a phantom jellyfish sighting in the Monterey Bay. The team saw this content as a timely reason to connect with the show about the new exhibition, but we first needed to understand how the clip posted on TikTok fit into the overall structure of the show so that we could craft a targeted pitch. We used Critical Mention to replay the show from December 9 and discovered the clip aired as part of the show’s “What to Watch” segment. We then used LinkedIn to find the “What to Watch” segment producer.

Fahlgren Mortine sent a custom pitch highlighting the Monterey Bay Aquarium's upcoming "Into the Deep" exhibition to the morning show's "What to Watch" segment producer. After two rounds of follow-up, the producer responded, and initial interest was secured. We had a call with the producer who then introduced us to a field producer based in Los Angeles. Fahlgren Mortine embarked on multiple rounds of story mining sessions with the field producer who challenged our team to answer the question, "Why should people care about the deep sea?" We shared the field producer's feedback with MCCVB and our partners at the Monterey Bay Aquarium. With further brainstorming, we were able to uncover current research being conducted by the Monterey Bay Aquarium Research Institute on how deep-sea life could be helping to protect our planet.

With a larger story arc in place, the network gave a segment featuring the new exhibition the green light. We arranged for CBS Mornings' production crew to be in Monterey County for two full-day shoots. The first shoot included a tour of the Monterey Bay Aquarium and a behind-the-scenes look at the new "Into the Deep" exhibition. During the second shoot, the production crew accompanied the Monterey Bay Aquarium Research Institute (MBARI) on a deep-sea research cruise. Access to both portions of the shoot were made available through a mutually-beneficial relationship between the Aquarium and MCCVB that had been cultivated with Fahlgren Mortine support for the past several years.

Results/Effectiveness

Feature Placement Results:

The CBS Mornings segment aired on Earth Day as part of the network's Earth 365 series. It was promoted during the show's intro and shortly before the full segment aired during the 8 a.m. hour. The **segment was 6 minutes** in length and had a **broadcast audience of 6,876,534**. The story was also published on CBSnews.com, which garners 22,328,609 unique visitors monthly.

Overall, the segment was a win for both MCCVB and one of the CVB's key tourism partners. **The Monterey Bay Aquarium's chief marketing officer shared, "This is the best broadcast story about the Monterey Bay Aquarium and Monterey Bay Aquarium Research Institute I've ever seen."** In addition to raising awareness about a new tourism development in the destination, the segment **aligned with MCCVB's sustainable practices key message pillar** and contributed to the team surpassing the media relations program's goals.

Overall Results (FY 2022, July 2021-June 2022):

Goal: Generate national media coverage of Monterey Bay Aquarium's new "Into the Deep" exhibition.

- Achieved Result: Generated **national media coverage with CBS Mornings and AFAR**. Placements had a combined reach of 30,352,892.

Goal: Secure 40 earned media placements with targeted top 100 outlets.

- Achieved Result: Secured **58 earned media placements with targeted top 100 outlets**. In addition to CBS Mornings and AFAR, media coverage was secured with Fodor's Travel, Lonely Planet, Outside Magazine, Smart Meetings, Travel + Leisure, USA Today and more.

Goal: Garner 2.9 billion earned media impressions.

- Achieved Result: Garnered **3,720,861,346 earned media impressions** in FY22.