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Public Awareness

United States
Department
of Agriculture:
Battling the Asian
Longhorned
Beetle

Background

The Asian Longhorned Beetle (ALB) is a highly destructive pest that kills hardwood trees such as Maple, Elm, Ash, Poplar and Birch. The larvae are believed to have arrived in the U.S. in wooden shipping crates from China. In 1996 the U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA), Animal and Plant Health Inspection Service (APHIS) established the ALB Cooperative Education Program to eradicate the beetle and protect our nation's treasured 1.2 billion susceptible host trees.

Citizens in the City of Chicago have played a vital role in helping officials battle the beetle infestation since 1998, when the first sighting was traced to a load of firewood in the Ravenswood neighborhood on the North Side. In October 2003 an alert citizen spotted the beetle on a light pole and called authorities. An aggressive eradication program was initiated that included a quarantine and removal of over 1,500 trees.

When the quarantine was lifted in the Spring of 2005, the perception among the general public in the city was that the battle had been won.



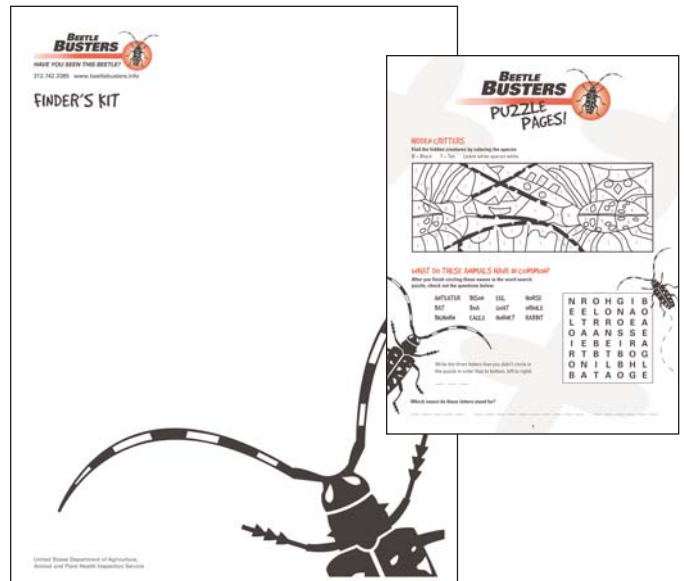
However, to be confident the ALB has been eradicated, USDA-APHIS requires a four-year period of no sightings. Since the Agency does not have the manpower or resources to actively search the large number of trees in Chicago parks and neighborhoods, they required continued vigilance on the part of the citizens. The JDG Communications Team helped to develop an awareness campaign to enlist citizens to be their eyes and feet in the community and to search for signs of the ALB.

JDG's Solution

JDG created an awareness campaign to increase awareness among citizens living in the Chicago, IL areas affected by the Asian Longhorned Beetle, that it remains a threat to the city's trees; and motivate them to look for the beetle over the months

of July through October when the pest is most active and to report back to APHIS with either a positive ("I think I saw the ALB") or a negative ("I did not see the ALB") report.

The JDG Team developed a Campaign Implementation Plan with a three-pronged approach. The first component was to create local awareness throughout the City of Chicago using the major media to overcome the perception that the battle was already won and that citizen participation was still needed. The second was an educational component targeting youth in the affected neighborhoods to enlist their involvement in the search and reporting efforts. The third was to create a community outreach targeting adults in the areas affected by the ALB.



We selected the campaign theme name "Beetle Busters" with the tagline "Have you seen this beetle?" The campaign logo included a graphic representation of the beetle to create instant recognition of the beetle and to prominently focus on what the public should be looking for. The Beetle Busters logo with phone number and Web URL for reporting was applied on all campaign support materials including T-shirts, baseball hats and press releases.

A web site at www.BeetleBusters.info was created to provide an easy way for citizens to report their findings. It also included photos, more in-depth information on the signs to look for, Frequently Asked Questions and the History of the ALB in the U.S. We customized the tactics and support materials to deliver the key messages across all three prongs of the campaign.

To reach the broader Chicago audience, a launch event press conference was held in a city park within the target area for major media. Speakers from the City of Chicago, a local alderman and USDA representatives delivered the themes that citizens were still being asked to be on the lookout for the beetle and report their findings. USDA tree climbers were onsite demonstrating their techniques so

the TV stations could capture B-roll footage for their newscasts. Kids who would be participating in the summer search surrounded the dignitaries wearing their logo hats and T-shirts.

To create awareness and interest among youth, we partnered with the City of Chicago Park District summer camp program. T-shirts and baseball caps were furnished for camp activities leaders and campers. We developed Beetle Busters Finder's Kits that included a Wanted Poster showing photos of the beetle and tree trunks damaged with entrance and exit holes. It also included Activity Sheets that were fun as well as educational. A calendar for July and August suggested ideas on how to extend the camp program over the summer. The Report Sheet gave kids a tool to collect the information and the report both negative and positive sightings by phone or at the website.

The third prong was focused on local community outreach by creating awareness with community newspapers, civic organizations and staff in alderman's offices to enlist local support and reach citizens in the target areas. The intent was to encourage the public to be on the lookout for the bee-

tle during the course of their normal activities such as walking the dog, strolling the baby or cooking out in the backyard.

Results

The launch event received excellent coverage by the local media including an "A" section article in the Sun Times featuring a full color photo of the beetle, two days of radio coverage on all news WBBM including an interview segment with the USDA National Asian Longhorned Beetle Program Director, and TV news segments aired on local affiliates of ABC, Fox News and WGN. There are 1,000 kids who are participating in the program through the Chicago Park District Summer Camps. Activities reaching the community groups are underway and expected to engage adult citizens as well.

