

The Wheatsheaf Ball

Background

The Royal Norfolk Show Ball is a yearly event which precedes the Royal Norfolk Agricultural Association Show. It's a prestigious county event. In recent years, the true meaning of the Show Ball has wavered from having an 'agricultural' theme and the quality and organisation of the ball had noticeably gone downhill.

YANA, 'You Are Not Alone', a Norfolk Charity launched in 2008 and in this year a committee of 17 people was formed to organise the 'showcase ball' in order to get the Royal Norfolk Show back on the county's social calendar, raise the expectations of guests and to raise substantial funds for this new charity.

The Wheatsheaf Ball, Royal Norfolk Show Ball was held on June 26th 2009. The YANA Charity was launched at a separate event, around eight months before the ball.

Kate Morfoot, Managing Director of JPR was on the Show Ball Committee from the charity conception in 2008 to June 2009, spearheading the publicity, ensuring the key messages were delivered as well as organisational management. Back up from the Jungle PR team was delivered through creative ideas and press release writing and lobbying.

Working in the agricultural sector can be a lonely job. There is a huge percentage of farmers that have mental illness problems due to the loneliness of the work and sometimes an unstable income. 'YANA' You Are Not Alone, was set up to tackle this problem and give farmers a personal and confidential group to contact for advice and support in a potentially life threatening suicidal situation.

Tickets were £55 per person. The ticket price remained the same as other years. It was decided not to increase the price, but add value to it instead, so that people would support the ball and not shy away from the expense of it. We wanted to deliver excellent value for money while still raising an exceptional amount of money for YANA.

Objectives of the Event:

- Selling over 800 tickets & creating awareness of the event for potential sponsors
- Bring back the 'Farming Spirit' of the Norfolk Show Ball, bring farmers together again
- Promoting the YANA Message, 'You are Not Alone' & 'Depression is an illness, not a weakness' – ensuring the farming community were aware of such a charity and support it
- Raising money for YANA
- To ensure the key committee members were quoted in press articles
- To set the standard for future show balls and create a template on how to make it successful for future years

Creativity & PR - What Made it Special

Jungle PR was asked to do the PR for the Ball as its director, Kate Morfoot, lost a close friend through suicide and could relate to the themes and sensitivities of the project. Jungle PR delivered a PR campaign, came up with the name, 'The Wheatsheaf Ball' and briefed the design agency Farrow's in Norwich to do the creative branding.

Target Press were: Eastern Daily Press and Farming pages as well as online to get the message about the Ball and YANA in the public arena, while not deviating too much from the agricultural community.

To launch the Ball, the committee members got together to do a photo shoot on straw bales – an iconic country style shot which would fit the pages of the Eastern Daily Press – our target newspaper with fortunately a comprehensive weekly Rural Supplement.

This PR tied in with the quality invitations branded with the 'Wheatsheaf' logo landing on people's doorsteps via the Royal Norfolk Agricultural Show database, via friends and family and through working with Anglia Farmers Ltd as our main sponsor.

The Wheatsheaf tickets were also promoted via the Diary Pages in the Eastern Daily Press, online via Facebook and Twitter, Business Weekly, Farmers Weekly and through friends and family in the farming and wider business community.

Results

- Positive editorial and broadcast coverage was received: -
 - Anglia Farmers Newsletter
 - Business Weekly Online
 - Eastern Daily Press – agricultural and news pages as well as columns
 - EDP24.co.uk
 - EDP Norfolk Magazine – social diary spread
 - Norwich Evening News
 - Farmers Weekly
 - BBC Radio Norfolk
 - Twitter/Facebook

- Press Coverage totalled over £10,000 vs a PR budget of nil

- This Ball was the fastest Norfolk Show Ball in history to sell out of tickets. Over 850 tickets sold in two weeks after the launch of the Ball and resulting coverage.

- The Royal Norfolk Show's 'Wheatsheaf Ball,' organised and attended by members of the farming community, raised a staggering £65,000, of which £55,000 went directly to the new YANA charity and the remainder to the Norfolk Countrysiders.

- The Ball sparked debate and got the message over that depression 'is an illness, not a weakness'.

- It was the most successful Royal Norfolk Show Ball regarding its theme, money raised, its design, layout, food and general organisation. A night not to be missed with great food, dancing and 'buzzy' atmosphere – it was a delight and honour to be involved with this memorable event.

“The Wheatsheaf Ball was one of the best Royal Norfolk Show Balls ever with around 850 guests. This speaks volumes for the awareness created by the design and PR specialists. The name of the event was a perfect fit for the audience it attracted of mainly farming folk. It was a highly enjoyable occasion with excellent food and entertainment. From a fund

raising angle the organisers exceeded all their expectations and the guests gave generously for a very worthy cause.”

John Purling, Chief Executive of the Royal Norfolk Agricultural Association (RNAA)