

Kosciusko After Dark

KLA Whitepaper 2020



Compiling information on extracurricular activities and nightlife in Kosciusko County to keep young professionals local

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Introduction

Play is an essential part of life. As children turn to teenagers and then adults, the art of play can be lost. This is a mistake! Play shapes the whole person curates social skills and increases their mental health. Kosciusko After Dark seeks to enhance the quality of life in the county for twenty-somethings by locating opportunities for connection and play “after dark”.

Through surveys done by the Kosciusko Community Foundation, input received from Talent Development at local orthopedic companies, and the Visitor’s Bureau, this is a clear need to attract talent and to keep residents spending their dollars and time in our county. Our main task is to create an extensive directory of business/contacts that offer services targeted to this demographic and timeframe.

Initially, the team desired to research the possibility of a board game bar in the community. This conversation led to the realization of how much there is already to do in our community *but does everyone know, specifically do people know what is available outside of Warsaw and Winona Lake?* This began the journey of compiling the directory and hosting conversations with leaders in the community and business owners to see how they were addressing this need. Many suggestions and ideas came up for the future, ideally for other whitepaper projects or professionals in a position to make a change.

Through the process of gathering this data, we learned the following: (1) There are key business-owners aware of the need in our community to serve this age range that are actively planning initiatives and events. (2) Valuable notes and suggestions from community members and business owners for the future, including specific ideas/needs. (3) The challenges of unifying our county to provide events.

Due to COVID-19, some of our hopes for the project were unmet. Considering our contacts were mostly small business owners, this crisis demanded space for their ability to lead through times. We did not make additional contacts nor did we brainstorm with them some ideas and hopes for the future which makes part of our project inconclusive.

Directory of Kosciusko Sites

This [directory](#) has been populated based on personal knowledge, networks; outside networking, and a few focus groups with key stakeholders. The directory includes the name of the business, description, address, hours of operation, contact name and info, and any notes with the business owner. We hope to also include any specials or promotions that the business may offer as well; whether they be seasonal or monthly deals. It was a priority to not only find places in Warsaw/Winona Lake but the surrounding area so that the entire county would be shared.

A [google calendar](#) was populated from a list of summer 2020 events from the Visitor's Bureau. It includes specific events that would fit the age demographic and potential for after dark avenues. This calendar is no longer updated as many events have been canceled, postponed, etc due to COVID-19. This shared calendar would be a key resource to be listed on a website or distributed to employees.

Potential Venues:

In the compiling of the directory, available venues for groups/organizations wanting to host an event for this target demographic emerged. This list is on the second tab of the directory. Since this was not the focus of the project, this is not an exhaustive list rather spaces/places that might not be as well known in the community.

Possible Event Suggestions

Listed below are ideas that came out of our conversations with business owners, input from people in this demographic, and the presenter's own ideas.

- YMCA events: encourage events for members and non-members. This could include a late-night or all-night sports tournament, a "lock-in" concept, themed swim night, etc. These events would be through registration with a limit of 18+.
- North Pointe Cinemas: Show an 80/90's classic movie once a month.
- Eastlake Skate: themed skate nights with tickets and costumes
- Pop-Up events: trivia, card/board game tournaments
- Events to sign up as individual, pairs or groups

Some considerations:

- Have a variety of price points to catch all socio-economic demographics.
- Consider options with and without alcohol
- Create more opportunities for the arts to be exposed, including local bands or open mic nights
- One time events at unique locations

Marketing Suggestions

Who would benefit from this directory?

Local Higher Education Institutions: Grace College, Ivy Tech

Local Intern Programs: Maple Leaf, OrthoWorx, Lake City Bank

Employee Recruitment/Retention: KedCo, Visitors Bureau

How could this information be easily found for the right demographic?

- Calendar filter for Kosciusko After Dark on the CVB calendar
- Instagram handle: kosciuskoafterdark
- Create a pamphlet with a list of the main options for employees when they first start.

- The information included in employee/intern orientation.
- Having a clear place for this initiative on the Kosc. Visitor Bureau's page. The key is to have a filter that would limit options so that a majority of what was visible would apply to this demographic.
- Host an event called Kosciusko After Dark where businesses would partner over a week to display what they have to offer through the evenings or to do this over a week long event.
- Communicate on a broader scale KCVB events like their food wars.

Challenges In the Discussion

COVID-19 became a large barrier in this discussion. Plans to have more conversations with business owners, roundtables and create conversations for unification were put at a halt due to the crisis. Small business owners, like the rest of the community were navigating a new path and making big decisions for their survival. It seemed insensitive to force these conversations during this time.

Another challenge is unity. Community leaders mentioned the frustration

Sustainability in the Project

At the beginning of COVID, in a meeting with Kosciusko County Visitors Bureau, they mentioned the idea of adding a filter to their event calendar that would narrow down events specifically for this demographic. A decision about this will be made in early June. Mitch Randall from the CVB would be responsible for the calendar and an asset to focusing on specific events as he is active in the community and a part of this demographic. The directory would also be shared with them for the purpose of finding out the small details of small events like trivia night, tournaments, etc., to include on the calendar.

The overall directory would also be shared with Alan Tio's group as they focus on the brand Clearly Kosciusko and meeting with businesses to push the brand. They hope to make our community a "better place to live, work and play" so by pushing this towards other businesses it can be known as a place to enjoy near lakes. By using this directory they would be able to know who to contact, how to contact them as well as when to do so.

Once this is created, the encouragement would be to coin this term and promote it in the community so that it is more widely known as a resource. Eventually an instagram account or facebook group could be created to engage this population. Facebook would be helpful when it comes to allowing business owners with special permission to include their own marketing and keep people updated

A unified calendar planning meeting over the large events in the community (festivals, several day events) needs to be held. With many, if not all events canceled this summer this would be a great time for the Chamber of Commerce in all towns or the CVB to hold a meeting to unify the schedules for the upcoming summer. With this summer being a miss

This directory will be sent to key people that oversee new hires, interns, KedCO, etc for their use. There is a need for this to be unified and the information to be put together, but the season left many pieces untied. The next steps would be to brand the logo, create a series of events on a shared calendar, and market to the appropriate groups.

Final Summary

Kosciusko After Dark has the potential to meet a great need. While the project does not have specific measurable outcomes deciphered information has been gathered, conversations started, and potential for the future. There is a clear need in our community for organizations and businesses to work together within specific towns and across towns. This summer, with so many canceled events, could be a good time to restructure festivals and events that overlap. If this project were to receive \$1,000 towards their endeavors it would go towards marketing materials and branding for *Kosciusko After Dark* to give to key stakeholders. If possible, it would also go

Appendices

1. [Google Calendar](#). This includes a list of the proposed dates for 2020 festivals. COVID-19 has affected many of them.
2. [Festival 2020 List](#) from Kosciusko Visitor's Bureau
3. Powerpoint Slides