

A Christmas Story House

How do you take a cult classic and improve on it? You enshrine it in a museum. Brian Jones, a 30-year-old entrepreneur from San Diego, bought the Cleveland house used in the 1983 holiday classic “A Christmas Story” on eBay sight unseen and restored it to its original movie appearance. The former Navy intelligence officer is a huge fan of the movie and sells leg lamps like the one in the film.

Challenge:

Jones hired Landau Public Relations to promote the grand opening of A Christmas Story House on Nov. 25, 2006, the busiest holiday weekend. We were challenged to generate local and national coverage and bring visitors to A Christmas Story House and its gift shop solely through media and community relations.

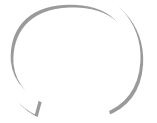


Strategies & Tactics:

We not only wanted to maximize coverage for A Christmas Story House, but we also wanted people in the Greater Cleveland area to embrace the house as a Cleveland landmark.

In order to generate awareness for the grand opening, we set out to secure national television coverage, drive more than 2,000 visitors to the new museum and gift shop on opening weekend, increase Web traffic, position it as a must-see destination in Cleveland for the holidays and stimulate sales of the leg lamps. To do all this, we:

- Developed a comprehensive press kit that included information about A Christmas Story House, its grand opening on Nov. 25 that would reunite many of the actors from the movie, a fact sheet on the house, a trivia fact sheet offering fun facts, bios on Jones and the house’s curator, and a listing of available photography
- Offered interviews and tours of the house during renovation
- Engaged the target audiences – Northeast Ohio residents, the general public and fans of “A Christmas Story” (also known as “Ralphies”) – with periodic updates and news about A Christmas Story House, its renovation progress, special hotel and restaurant promotions, and grand opening weekend activities
- Planned and executed an event recreating the delivery of a leg lamp from the movie, reuniting seven cast members from the film and the lighting of the leg lamp in the front window of the house as a photo opportunity to generate local and national media coverage and provide a memorable experience for grand opening day visitors
- Provided a stream of story ideas Thanksgiving weekend and around Christmas when newsrooms are quiet and reporters are looking for timely, interesting stories to cover



Results:

Media coverage exceeded both the client's and our expectations, and attendance goals were surpassed with record sales and Web site traffic.

MEDIA COVERAGE – more than 919 stories that reached nearly 122 million people.

Highlights include:

- National TV coverage on NBC's "The Today Show," CBS' "The Early Show," ABC's "Good Morning America" and "Nightline," MSNBC's "Countdown with Keith Olbermann" (the #1 story of the day), FOX News Channel's "FOX Report Weekend," CNN, CNN Headline News and "The Rachael Ray Show"
- Turner Classic Movies taped, produced and aired a five-minute evergreen piece called "Hollywood In My Hometown" that ran multiple times Dec. 9-13
- Local market TV hits throughout the nation regarding the grand opening totaled 412
- Wire service stories made available for national pickup by Associated Press, Reuters, Scripps Howard News Service, Copley News Service, Newhouse News Service, UPI and University Wire
- Newspaper coverage included more than 135 articles, including in *The New York Times*, *Chicago Tribune*, *The Christian Science Monitor* and *Navy Times*
- Radio coverage included NPR's "Weekend All Things Considered," interviews on more than 120 radio shows throughout the country and inclusion in several prep reports
- Magazine coverage totaled 35 articles, including *In Touch Weekly* and *Continental*
- *Entertainment Weekly* and *Playboy Magazine* also featured Jones' Red Rider Leg Lamps in their holiday gift guide issues
- Web site stories included USA Today.com, Entrepreneur.com, ABC News Now and NYTimes.com, with the NYTimes.com article being the most e-mailed story on Dec. 6 (when the story ran) and for the week (Dec. 6-13)

ATTENDANCE – More than 4,300 people visited A Christmas Story House during its grand opening weekend, more than doubling the client's goal of 2,000 visitors. A themed hotel package offered by the Renaissance Cleveland Hotel sold out the 491-room hotel. Based on visitor numbers to the Field of Dreams, a similar movie site, Jones predicted about 50,000 visitors to the house in its first year of operation. In less than two months, more than 30,000 people had already toured A Christmas Story House.

SALES – Sales in the museum's gift shop were brisk, and museum employees found it hard to keep the shelves stocked. By the end of 2006, Jones estimated he had sold twice as many leg lamps than the prior year, attributing the sales spike to our public relations efforts and the resulting media coverage.

WEB SITE TRAFFIC – Average number of hits per day to www.achristmasstoryhouse.com increased by more than 800 percent in the months leading up to and around grand opening compared to the number of hits before PR efforts were in full effect.

