

## Consortium Member Spotlight on Sylvia Allen

by John Rainey

**G**reenPlay, LLC, is pleased to have Sylvia Allen, President of Allen Consulting, join our team of talented consortium members. Sylvia is a world-renowned expert in sponsorship, marketing, sales and public relations. Her marketing and public relations firm produces an average of more than 100 events per year and raises more than \$1 million worth of sponsorships for clients annually.



She was on the faculty at New York University for 20 years and has taught seminars on sponsorship and sales around the world.

For GreenPlay, Sylvia has helped communities create and implement sponsorship plans and will be helping when the need arises for sales and marketing projects.

### What is “Sponsorship”?

Sylvia defines sponsorship as “an investment, in cash or in kind, in return for access to exploitable business potential associated with an event or highly publicized entity.” The key words in this definition are “investment,” “access to,” and “exploitable.”

- **Investment** is an opportunity where there is a viable payback -- it has real value that will be returned. Not a donation.
- **Access to** means the ability to be associated with a particular offering (event, sport, festival, fair, program, etc.).
- **Exploitable** (a positive word) means “to take the greatest advantage of” the relationship. In other words, it is about allowing the sponsor to make the greatest use of their investment and capitalize on their relationship.

## How do you help communities create Sponsorship Plans?

Sylvia begins with a thorough review of the community's goals and objectives. Then she performs a needs assessment and asset inventory to help determine what may have value to your potential sponsors. Next, she will do a value analysis to see where sponsorship opportunities exist. She will help them develop a Sponsorship Policy that translates into a clearly defined, transparent path toward achieving their goals and objectives.



*A group of volunteers in Berks County, Pennsylvania - a client of GreenPlay and Sylvia Allen.*

## How do you determine the valuation of assets or programs?

She asks her clients, "What are you selling and how much can you charge?" Think about all of the things of potential value to a sponsor. Next, think about the method of communication that you would be using to publicize an event or program. Sylvia advises that there is not a set formula that works for all occasions, but she gave a simple example of one approach.

EX: Imagine you have a Community Garden Fair and you have determined posters are one of the best methods of getting your message out. How do you know what to charge your sponsors for these posters? Suppose you printed 100 posters, each poster was seen by 100 people per day, and you put the posters up 30 days before the event. With this information, you can calculate the total number of impressions: 100 posters times 100 impressions per day times 30 days equals 300,000 impressions. That's an impressive number if you were the local hardware store. If the store owner had done a postcard mailing, he'd probably pay about \$30 per thousand names, so if you use this multiplier on your potential impressions it would be 300,000 times \$30/thousand which gives your poster a value of \$10,000. All of a sudden, you have a viable asset that can be "exploited." Now add in a radio ad, a cable TV ad, an ad in the local newspaper, and you can calculate those impressions, providing a view of the "value" that you have to offer to sponsors. Of course you have to anchor that with the reality of competitive opportunities and the subtleties of locality and market size, but the basic premise holds true.

## How do you figure out what to offer for sponsorship?

Sylvia cautions: "Never offer too much for too little." If you have a realistic inventory of your assets, you can find a way of delivering what your potential sponsor wants to buy and fulfill their need. That's where a professional assessment can really pay off. Every community has opportunities that can be "exploited" if you apply some creative thinking --VIP seating, VIP parking, park benches, naming rights, etc.

**GREENPLAY**LLC

The Leading Edge In Parks, Recreation,  
And Open Space Consulting

From the **The LEADING EDGE Newsletter** — Spring/Summer 2015

## What's your experience with Parks and Recreation agencies?

Sylvia has worked with numerous communities and says that many of them are "overwhelmed" with the new realities of market-based economies. Many of these folks are steeped in a culture of providing service in terms of basic amenities and traditional services, and they are not prepared for the need to "sell" their places and programs. She perceives there is a real "fear of sales" that needs to be overcome, while developing a sense of confidence in each agency. Sylvia's approach combines a mixture of skills training and motivational psychology to help the facilitators feel comfortable in their new roles.

## What's the most challenging part of your job?

"Earning trust." The consulting business is a two-way street, and the best way to deal with people is to be honest, caring and direct. You hope that your clients reciprocate. You have to learn to "park your ego at the door" and engage your clients with a true sincerity that, hopefully, leads to trust. The hard reality is that sometimes you have to tell people that their initial expectations are too grand and help them accept that the economic environment or limited sponsorship opportunities are not likely to result in their anticipated results. That doesn't mean they are not achievable, but sponsorships may not be the only path to realizing those expectations.

## What do you think is your best skill?

"I'm a people person," Sylvia says. "I love teaching and sharing. A few years ago, after a trip to Africa, I started 'Sylvia's Children,' which supports the Mbirlizi Advanced Primary School in Uganda which has 1,024 primary school students (and another 120 in secondary school), of which 25% are orphans as a result of the AIDS crisis in Uganda. Now in our 12th year, we have built a well, a boys' dorm, classrooms with furniture, a library with books, a kitchen, a chicken farm, a sewing facility and developed 7 acres of land for growing corn, and a 6,000 sq. ft. medical clinic and hospital. This experience has given me a new humility and passion for life that drives my professional career." Today, Sylvia approaches every new project with a passion and tries to have fun and relax with the knowledge that every day brings the potential to make a difference, and if you maintain a positive attitude you will.



*A volunteer and young student from the Sylvia's Children organization.*