



First Night Wilmington, Inc.

A Banner First Night When the organizers of First Night Wilmington Inc., were planning for Delaware's largest News Years Eve celebration they turned to FastSigns and Rexam Image Products for support. They needed an efficient way to direct thousands of people to more than 40 different cultural events taking place on a cold and windy New Year's Eve in downtown Wilmington.

First Night Wilmington, Inc. is a non-profit organization sponsored by area companies, community organizations, foundations, individuals and government agencies dedicated to coordinating the yearly celebration that contributes to the revitalization of the downtown business district. The annual New Year's Eve celebration features the best of the area's cultural life including, a wide array of music, visual, literary and community-based arts, children's performances, dance troupes, food and fireworks. The celebration transforms the city into a stage by using a variety of indoor and outdoor entertainment sites throughout downtown Wilmington. The sites are in locations that do not ordinarily host these types of activities, such as bank lobbies, retail businesses and offices. Thus, the challenge facing the organizers was how to help people identify a First Night entertainment site.

In years past, 2-ft x 3-ft signs mounted on small easels were used to indicate entertainment site. However, in wintry weather they were not very durable and did not have the visibility necessary to direct people to the desired events. According to First Night Operations Manager Barbara Woodford, "We really needed something bigger, more eye-catching and durable to tell people what was going on, where, and how to get there. We also needed a good way to recognize our generous sponsors for their First Night contributions."

It was then that First Night contacted FastSigns of Wilmington DE. According to owner Mike Levitsky, "First Night came to us asking what could be done to improve their presentations. The signs they used in previous years did not offer a degree of flexibility,

as far as color graphics and durability is concerned." For additional ideas, FastSigns consulted John Vendlinski, a marketing sales consultant for DuPont Tyvek®.

John recommended a banner of Tyvek material that DuPont supplies to Rexam Image Products of South Hadley, MA. Rexam, a leading provider of coated paper, film and specialty substrates for color digital imaging technologies, developed a coating for Tyvek that accepts pigmented and dye based inks from ink jet printers. The product, DMTB9 Tyvek®, is a banner material designed for outdoor and indoor promotional applications where tear strength is important. Additionally, it performs well in tough environmental conditions because its spun polyethylene base provides impressive tear-resistance in comparison to its weight.

A sample was sent from Rexam Image Products to FastSigns. "We knew Rexam had Tyvek, but we were unaware of the mystical thing they do to it so it accepts ink jet," said Levitsky. Samples were printed using a recently acquired HP 2500. "We were happy with the way it accepted the ink. The quality, color and finish were wonderful." Next, FastSigns tested the product to see if lamination was necessary. The output was covered with water for 30 minutes. As advertised, the water did not affect the printed image. Even the area of the output that had no ink coverage was water-resistant. FastSigns was impressed with this feature and happy to learn that they would not have to overlaminate any of the banners.

Soon after approving Tyvek as the media of choice, Rexam Image Products donated as much banner material as necessary to complete the job. Likewise, FastSigns who works in conjunction with several non-profit organizations throughout Delaware donated all print and production expenses.

FastSigns printed 45, 3-ft x 5-ft banners at 600 DPI. Due to their inexperience with the new printer, they expected complications. But they were pleasantly surprised when the printer, ink and media did all the work. To complete the banners, FastSigns needed only to apply banner tape reinforcement and grommets along the top and bottoms of the banners. "The Tyvek worked very well for us. When the banner finished printing, it was essentially complete. There was no overlaminating or dry time. They were printed, taped, grommets and out the door."

The organizers at First Night were also thrilled with the banners, which successfully guided people to events. "Most people come to First Night without a plan of action. They show up and just wander around. The banners were a great compass for leading these people to the desired events. The color graphics added to the festive feeling of our arts events." commented Woodford. First Night received positive feedback from the audience and sponsors as well. The signs were highly visible, which made it easy to pick and choose which event to attend. "We were especially excited that we were able to promote our sponsors through the use of their color logos. Their contributions make this celebration possible. We are most grateful to FastSigns and Rexam Image Products for helping us solve a communications challenge and for joining us as partners in presenting

our annual community event. Without their generosity none of this would be possible,"
Kim Scarpello executive director, First Night Wilmington, Inc.