

A Wonderful World...on a shoestring budget

When I was 21, I lived in Europe for less than \$15 a day and still got to experience six countries in four months. I loved where I was, who I was, and how I still had the time of my life with no money or help from anyone. It's a very empowering feeling to know how far you can make it with so little.

Ten years later, my world is ruined if I go one day without a \$5 latte. Maybe when you get older, you feel that great success means having more. Or you tend to forget where you were when you were 21 and how you 'needed' so much less to be 'happy'. It's interesting to see what happens to the human spirit when money is taken away.

I joined the York Hospital Festival of Lights Parade Committee with grand ideas and the best intentions. I figured, 'I'm pretty new here; this could be a great way to meet new people and to show extra initiative?' And there is nothing better than a Christmas parade to get in the holiday spirit.

The committee had two great meetings where many impressive themes were discussed. The song 'What a Wonderful World' was brought up, and ideas started building, including plans for a giant world as our centerpiece with a winter wonderland surrounding it. And YES, we would have the song playing in the background as we marched. What a great float! What a great message!

As time diminished, so did the economy and our budget. All of a sudden, our 'bare bones' budget transformed into no budget at all, and all my float dreams were shattered! BAH HUMBUG!!

Dina Dellapasqua took our 'Wonderful World' idea to Karen Pence and EVS. The team took their time and skills to transform our vision into an illuminated reality. EVS built a stand to display our 2-sided custom sketched globe (thanks, Karen!). Now lethal with staple guns, we all became experts at securing blue and green lights to plywood. White batting, light-up reindeer, and a Christmas tree all crawled out of basements and hallways to create a 'winter wonderland.'

Our light-up world was everything we hoped it would be; it meant so much more because we created it. We marched proudly, waving our world balloons through streets filled with happy faces and red noses. Our little CD player sang different versions of 'What a Wonderful World' as we waved and cheered to the spectators lining the streets.

Our group pulled together and donated or bought supplies to make this float happen. We worked as a team with little money and it felt really good! At the end, we won 1 of only 4 awards, claiming 'Best Use of Lights.' I think we all felt like we were 21 that day. What a wonderful world.

- Katie Sweet