

▣ CASE STUDY ▣

# GLADSTONE COMMUNITY CENTER

2009 Ambit Award Winner - Most Innovative Solution

▣ CLIENT ▣

Touted as the newest facility in northern Kansas City, the 90,000 square-foot Gladstone Community Center boasts three swimming pools and large recreation and fitness facilities.

▣ PROBLEM ▣

The Gladstone Community Center faced several challenges in building awareness for the new facility and achieving their membership goals:

- The Center is located in a residential area away from the suburb's main thoroughfares, which prevented many potential members from seeing its construction. Non-Gladstone residents were especially unaware of the new Center's existence.
- Construction delays prevented the Center from opening at the planned time to capitalize on the "New Year's Resolution" gym-membership rush.
- The management team anticipated that adults might hesitate to join because of perceptions that the Center was focused on youth events, such as swim competitions.

▣ SOLUTION ▣

Mail Print helped the City of Gladstone create a marketing plan to promote the opening of the new Center. This included two promotions: a "Hard Hat" tour to view the facility while it was still under construction and a "Grand Opening" event that included fitness demonstrations and activities.

To select a target audience, Mail Print determined some influential factors:

- Proximity to home and place of employment is vital in selecting a gym or community center.
- Because many of the amenities and activities in the Center were targeted to seniors, children and young adults, a significant portion of the young singles market would never join, or might become alienated after joining. Families were the best audience to target.
- To fulfill the revenue goals of the Center, memberships had to come from people residing outside the city of Gladstone.
- The location of competing fitness centers left an area outside of the City of Gladstone underserved.

Mail Print then created a database of 5,000 high-potential consumers, factoring driving distance to the community center, presence of children in the household, and income. Homes immediately surrounding the Center and homes with only children in their upper-teens were suppressed from the list.

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== SOLUTION ==

Creatively, the mail pieces used to promote the Center needed to capture attention during an exceptionally high-volume mail time. To make the postcards stand out, Mail Print personalized the pieces with the recipient's "Family Name" in the imagery and text, highlighted the recipients driving distance to the facility, and used a PURL (Personalized URL) to drive recipients online. At the PURL, recipients were given more information, and the opportunity to RSVP for the events. This allowed the Center to plan staffing levels for the events and to build prospect and email databases.

== RESULTS ==

More than 5% of the recipients who received the two mail touches purchased memberships, well above direct marketing industry standards. Both events were also well attended and generated a buzz and a flurry of referrals before the Center was even open.

"The marketing plan and direct mail campaign Mail Print created was crucial to the early success of the Gladstone Community Center," said Sheila Lillis, Director of Parks and Recreation for the City of Gladstone. "With their strategic planning, we were able to reach our membership goals much faster than we expected, which is helping us ensure the long-term sustainability of the Center and its programs."

In addition, the Gladstone Community Center campaign won the overall "Most Innovation Solution" award and a gold award in the Kansas City Direct Marketing Association's 2009 AMBIT Awards.

