

Cookerly Makes Clean Air Work in Charlotte

Overview

Clean Air Works!, formed by North Carolina's Mecklenburg County, City of Charlotte and a regional business alliance, selected Cookerly Public Relations to market its air quality pilot project in 2006. *Clean Air Works!* engages employers in the effort to improve air quality, which in turn protects the health of citizens, ensures Charlotte's economic prosperity and helps the region meet Federal air quality standards.

Objective

Cookerly Public Relations is charged with branding the program, developing print and media messages, creating and executing special events and developing marketing materials to support employer outreach and reward employers for their participation.

Strategy & Tactics

Cookerly created a comprehensive communications program to support *Clean Air Works!* first-year goal to recruit 50 of the region's leading employers to join the effort and make a positive impact on air quality through branding, media relations and special events.

First, Cookerly successfully branded the regional air quality pilot program by creating a name for the program, *Clean Air Works!*, and designing a graphic identity (logo). The agency also developed and launched a Web site (www.cleanairworks.org) to raise awareness, educate, and promote the program. To assist the *Clean Air Works!* team in securing employee/commuter participation, Cookerly created a turnkey package of materials for distribution at the management level for communication with employees.

Cookerly also successfully engaged the media as a tool both to aid in securing business participation and to build excitement and further raise program awareness. Cookerly developed several media tools to educate and secure coverage by media representatives, including a press kit, securing and conducting media meetings, drafting press releases and medial advisories and establishing ongoing media relationships.

To launch the program, Cookerly arranged an informational peer-to-peer breakfast event. The event served as a venue for introducing the program and signing up potential employers. At the end of the pilot program, Cookerly staged a recognition event where the top participants were acknowledged for their efforts with awards, and all participants received recognition for their efforts as "charter members" in the program.



Highlights

The pilot project exceeded program goals, signing on 52 Partners and eliminating almost 40 tons of pollution-forming emissions in just five months.

Attendance at a Cookerly-organized "Kick Off for Clean Air" convinced four leading employers to join the project.

In the first seven months, more than 70 media stories appeared in top-tier Charlotte media outlets including the *Charlotte Observer* and the *Charlotte Business Journal*.



Results

The 2006 *Clean Air Works!* pilot project exceeded program goals, with 52 Partners on board, 56,000 participants, and more than 78,000 vehicle miles not traveled on area roads. *Clean Air Works!* Partners reported activities that saved the Charlotte region from more than 39 tons of ozone-forming emissions.

Proactive public relations resulted in more than 70 media placements for *Clean Air Works!* Multiple placements appeared in the region's leading publications - *The Charlotte Observer* and the *Charlotte Business Journal*, and the pilot project scored a national headline on MSNBC.com. Cookerly also secured placements on all four of Charlotte's television stations and in numerous community newspapers.



The Kick Off for Clean Air event at Bank of America Stadium attracted almost 100 interested leaders and landed four new employer Partners. The end-of-project event, held at Lowe's Motor Speedway, recognized all 52 Partners with special certificates and honored eight companies and 11 individuals for their efforts.

The pilot was so successful, regional leaders voted in favor of continuing the project in 2007, and engaged Cookerly to support *Clean Air Works!* as it works to double its employer base.