

First 5 Commission of San Diego April 27, 2009 Community Education Project Results

Background:

The First 5 Commission of San Diego's Strategic Plan 2004-2009, identifies the need to "develop and implement a Strategic Communications Plan to raise awareness of the importance of children's early development across all of San Diego County's diverse communities." This mandate is a priority strategy for achieving First 5 San Diego's mission through Systems Improvement and Community Change. In addition, the Commission's strategic plan identifies community strengthening and awareness as one of four priority strategies for accomplishing the goals and objectives for each Commission-funded initiative.

In the spring of 2007, the Commission authorized staff to procure a qualified firm to assist in planning, developing and executing public outreach and community awareness strategies. In particular, expertise was needed to target diverse demographic groups across key ethnic communities throughout San Diego County and to develop tailored messages that would be effective in reaching these communities.

In the fall of 2007, the Commission approved the award of a contract to MJE Marketing Services, Inc. (MJE) to develop and implement a strategic communications plan. The communications plan, developed by MJE in collaboration with staff, was approved by the Commission in May of 2008. The plan was designed to increase awareness of the importance of children's early development, educate parents, and increase awareness of Commission-funded services and programs available to children and families. A particular focus of this public education campaign was the Healthy Development Services (HDS) program that included \$400,000 for health projects promotion to increase awareness and utilization of HDS services, emphasizing healthy development checkups.

Commission History:

- On April 2, 2007, (Item 6) the Commission authorized staff to work with the Department of Purchasing and Contracting to release an RFSQ for communications and community outreach consultation services and approved up to \$170,000 through FY 2008-09.
- On September 17, 2007, (Item 8) the Commission approved a contract award to MJE Marketing Services, Inc. for Media Communications and Outreach Consultation Services.
- On May 5, 2008, (Item 10) the Commission approved the Strategic Communications Plan and implementation of the plan.
- On September 8, 2008, (Item 4) the Commission and TPAC members received a presentation highlighting the public education campaign elements.

Community Education Project Overview:

First 5 San Diego and MJE implemented a seven-month (August 2008 – February 2009) public education campaign using a variety of targeted communication tactics and community outreach endeavors.

The key messages of the community education campaign focused on:

- The importance of a child's first five years of life
- The critical role of parents and other early care providers in a child's life
- Services offered to children ages 0 through 5 and their families by First 5 San Diego

To reach the greatest proportion of parents with children under 5 and eligible for First 5 funded services, a primary target audience of women ages 18 -34 with a household income of \$50,000 or less was identified. The secondary target audience was pregnant women and adult caregivers of children ages 0 through 5, and the tertiary target audience was San Diego County citizens.

MJE worked with First 5 San Diego staff to:

- Create a signature look for First 5 San Diego that reflects its mission, and raises and sustains awareness of the organization, its vision, and the importance of the first 5 years of a child's development.

- Implement a community awareness campaign highlighting ways that parents and other caregivers can support and promote early childhood development.
- Enhance First 5 San Diego's website to become a destination site for parents and community members seeking information and resources for children ages 0 through 5.
- Produce and air television and radio Public Service Announcements (PSA's) emphasizing the importance of developmental checkups and the availability of services through the Commission's Healthy Development Services program.
- Produce and distribute a general First 5 San Diego brochure and brochures for each of the Commission's major initiatives.

On August 11, 2008, the First 5 San Diego Good Start Public Education Campaign was launched. Campaign elements included the new website launch, television and radio PSA's, printed materials, mall displays, transit shelter displays, play space sponsorship and launch of a toll-free number for parents (1-888-5 FIRST 5).

First 5 San Diego Good Start Public Education Campaign Results:

- The number of households with children aware of First 5 San Diego as a resource increased from one-half to two-thirds. (Approx. 51,000 more households, 14% increase.)
- The media campaign achieved more than 309 million gross impressions (the number of times campaign elements from the campaign were seen) at the cost of about one-tenth of a cent per impression.
- Use of www.first5sandiego.org has grown from 1,600 visitors a month to more than 10,000 per month.
- The new toll-free number (1-888-5 FIRST 5) averages 320 calls per month.
- The toll-free number (1-888-5 FIRST 5) received more than 2,000 calls with more than 1,300 referrals.
- The public outreach effort, using story and calendar item placements to reach local print, TV and radio (earned media) garnered 10.4 million gross impressions.
- First 5 San Diego has distributed approximately 115,000 brochures and posters.

The community education campaign has received three MarCom Awards for its brochure series, website home page, and Good Start PSA Campaign. The campaign also was recognized for being one of the best in local, regional and cable television commercials by winning two Telly Awards for its PSAs.

Evaluation Results:

Pre- and post campaign surveys of households were conducted to measure the impact of the project in increasing awareness of the importance of the first five years, First 5 San Diego as a resource, and awareness of action steps for parents.

Over a 12-day period before the start of the campaign, from July 21 through August 1, 2008, and again over a 15-day period at the close of the campaign, from February 11 through February 25, 2009, professional telephone interviewers contacted households throughout San Diego County. The main purpose for conducting the communications campaign study was to determine a baseline of awareness among First 5 San Diego's target market and then compare the baseline results with those of a replicated post-campaign survey. This two-phase evaluation measured the effectiveness of the communications efforts in reaching First 5 San Diego's target market.

Following the seven-month public education campaign, the target market's awareness of First 5 San Diego significantly increased from 54% to 68%. Awareness of the importance of the first 5 years increased from 21% to 46% among women 18 – 34, and from 20% to 49% among households with an annual income of less than \$50,000

Staff Recommendation:

- None

Fiscal Impact:

- None