



CATEGORY 4:

SPECIAL EVENTS AND OBSERVANCES (SEVEN DAYS OR MORE)

a. UNDER \$15,000

1. PROGRAM OVERVIEW/OBJECTIVES

SITUATION ANALYSIS:

Rydal Park is a 40-year-old, non-profit, continuing care retirement community (CCRC) located 11 miles from Philadelphia in Jenkintown, PA, offering a variety of independent living options, services, and amenities for adults aged 62-plus. Senior living is a competitive business category, with marketing and sales teams continually searching for the most effective method(s) to attract and sell to qualified prospects.

LevLane was retained by Rydal Park in fall of 2012 for branding, creative, marketing, media and website design. The Philadelphia Ad Club Gold Award-winning campaign that LevLane created for Rydal Park richly communicated its recently-enhanced housing options, services and amenities. Most importantly, the new campaign effectively communicated the community's sense of "spirited living," through evocative resident stories and images depicting swimming, golf, dancing, exercising, dining, shopping and socializing. Rydal Park added LevLane's PR services in June 2013 to best utilize the agency's integrated resources, and to extend the new campaign's messaging to additional audiences.

GOALS:

In creating the *Rydal Park Lively Fall Speaker Series*, our primary goal was to create an event to attract qualified prospects to visit or seek information about Rydal Park, with the goal of converting them to future residents. We also wanted to secure media interest and coverage of Rydal Park that would help communicate that it is a desirable place for active adults to choose as their home.

OBJECTIVES:

Objectives were to extend Rydal Park's new "spirited living" marketing campaign and messaging through exciting events for targeted prospects, and to enhance awareness of the Rydal Park name and new image among the local community, which delivers most of its prospects. We also wanted to solicit interest from the local media, from which we'd seek press placements that could help achieve our goals.

RESEARCH:

Our agency research and immersion revealed that most Rydal Park residents came from the area closely surrounding it. We had experience in effectively reaching prospects through direct mail invitations to special marketing events; direct mail is Rydal Park's single strongest direct tactic to reach active, older adults 62-plus, with 22% of all new leads coming from direct mail, which also drives repeat inquiries. We learned that most CCRC prospects are heavy users of traditional local media, and highly interested in news and current events.

TARGET AUDIENCE:

Adults aged 70-plus who live within a 10-mile radius of Rydal Park, with household incomes of more than \$50,000 and home values of at least \$250,000.

PLANNING:

In evaluating tactics and timing with client during June, we learned that October would be a favorable time to offer multiple events for prospects to experience Rydal Park. Because most of the targets are loyal to hometown sports teams, media outlets and personalities they've followed for many years, we determined that a series of special events featuring such local stars would provide an appealing opportunity for them to visit Rydal Park repeatedly within a specific time period, providing measurable results. We identified and contacted prospective speakers to invite, and created a budget and project timeline.

2. EXECUTION/TACTICS

STRATEGIES:

The inaugural *Rydal Park Lively Fall Speaker Series* invited popular, influential local media figures with long careers to relay their insights and the "stories behind the stories." The series would position Rydal Park as a CCRC that features stimulating activities, stimulate local media interest, and attract educated, informed community members who are vested in the world and current events, and who make pro-active decisions and plan well for their futures: the CCRC buyer.

TACTICS:

LevLane scheduled four talks in October by well-known media figures, and created and sent a direct mail invitation to qualified prospects to attend all events. We asked Rydal Park resident Harry Gross, a longtime columnist for the *Philadelphia Daily News* and another well-known media figure, to host the series. We encouraged the speakers to promote their talks through their social media accounts and/or their own media platforms. We made each event free and open to the public to maximize its appeal; wrote and issued press releases and media alerts; made email pitches; and posted event info on Rydal Park's Facebook page and online events calendars. Rydal Park Resident Ambassadors were invited to each event to share their positive experiences and enthusiasm for living there with prospects, to whom Rydal Park gave tours after each event. We provided attendees with delectable refreshments that exhibited Rydal Park's acclaimed cuisine, encouraged them to engage in a Q&A with each speaker, and let them meet each speaker following his or her talk.

3. EVALUATION/RESULTS

Of the 10,000 direct mail invitations sent, more than 160 households responded and 145 attended, five of which purchased an apartment home in Rydal Park. The speaker series was the top new lead generating direct mail event of 2013 by 40% over the next closest lead-generating direct mail event. Plus, it brought in the most repeat inquiries of all other direct mail events during 2013. Rydal Park experienced its best sales year on record in 2013, topping its next closest year by 15 percent. Clearly, the Speaker Series was a great success in attracting prospects and driving sales. This program and its 2014 follow-up are atypical of events marketed by CCRCs, and showcased how the playing field in this industry has advanced along with its savvy consumers. One speaker event was extensively covered by local weekly editions of MONTGOMERY NEWSPAPERS, the chain of suburban newspapers serving the communities in and around Rydal Park, including a photo gallery and video.