

**HomeCare Associates Celebrates 20th Anniversary with Hug a Caregiver Day:
A Group Hug Felt City Wide
3. Special Events, 7 Days or Fewer, \$15K or Less**

50-word summary

Simon PR boosted HCA's visibility with "Hug a Caregiver Day" recognizing caregivers everywhere. HCA employees received congratulatory letters from the Governor, a U.S. Congressman, the Mayor and the Pennsylvania Senate. Feature stories on Philadelphia's top TV and radio station and a photo on the front page of *Metro* solidified HCA's 20th anniversary as one to remember.

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Program Overview

Twenty years ago, HomeCare Associates (HCA) was founded in Philadelphia with a simple yet innovative idea: provide quality care for the elderly and ill in the local community, offer quality jobs to people with few options, and give workers a stake in the company. Since its launch, HCA has provided more than 5,000 men and women with fulfilling, dignified jobs. Many employees started with few skills and now own shares in HCA, have earned college degrees, and help run the company. Some hold board positions. All have healthcare coverage.

Along the way, HCA has established a homecare training program that is a national model. It has helped others start their own homecare businesses. And most recently, it joined the ranks of Ben & Jerry's, Etsy and Patagonia as a socially-conscious company certified as a 'B Corp.'

With its 20th anniversary on the horizon, HCA executives wondered how to capitalize on this important milestone in the right way. It imagined a Philadelphia celebration as humble as its beginnings and its employees, and one that would put HCA in the public spotlight. It turned to Philadelphia public relations agency Simon PR for ideas and execution.

Goals

HCA's goal: Build its visibility in the Greater Philadelphia region while appreciating the importance of giving care. Simon PR came up with the perfect big idea: "Hug a Caregiver Day"—an event to recognize professional and non-professional caregivers alike.

Objectives

- Provide an opportunity for more than a dozen HCA workers to gain recognition and thanks and to demonstrate their caring natures by giving at least 100 hugs.
- Secure acknowledgment from the U.S. Senate or Congress, the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania, and the City of Philadelphia.
- Generate one major TV placement, one radio feature story and one print result.

Target Audiences

- Members of the general public, with a special emphasis on residents and workers in Center City Philadelphia, where HCA is headquartered.
- Newspaper, television and radio reporters at top media outlets serving the Greater Philadelphia region.
- HCA Employees—the worker owners who provide outstanding care to the region's elderly and infirm.
- Key politicians serving the region including U.S. Congressmen and Senators, Commonwealth of Pennsylvania representatives and City officials.

Budget: Simon PR's time was included in a special project fee of \$3000.

Research

Simon PR gathered statistics about the importance of caregivers in the state of Pennsylvania through The Paraprofessional Institute, the nation's leading authority on the direct-care workforce, which promotes quality direct-care jobs as the foundation for quality care. Research showed that the direct-care industry employs 165,000, is the second largest workforce and is among the top 10 fastest-growing occupations in the state. These facts would lay the foundation for invitations to politicians and pitches to the media.

Strategy

- Find a central and visible location near HCA's Center City headquarters for the celebration.
- Keep visual elements understated to be consistent with HCA's humble beginnings.
- Identify and focus on key politicians whose constituents match HCA's employee and client base.
- Target individual reporters who offer in-depth coverage of positive community action.

Tactics

HCA gave the go-ahead for Hug a Caregiver Day in August and secured the date and location: October 22, 2013 at Liberty Place—iconic high rise, retail destination and one of the most-heavily trafficked locations in the City of Philadelphia. With the date and place set, Simon PR began preparing materials to convince politicians and the media to attend. Media relations tools included a fact sheet, a backgrounder illustrating the importance of the direct-care workforce in Pennsylvania, and a media alert with an endearing photo of two HCA caregivers. Politicians received the same package, but with a personalized letter in place of the media alert. Simon PR also wrote copy to secure a proclamation from the Mayor's office, and shared a similar version with elected officials for use on a citation or letter of recognition.

HCA and Simon PR agreed on event logistics. HCA workers would walk the two blocks from their offices to Liberty Place wearing company t-shirts and carrying hand-made signs. Along the way, they would give hugs to passersby and hand out buttons asking "Did you hug a caregiver today?" Kick-off time was scheduled for 10:45 am with arrival at Liberty Place 11 am—perfect timing for both the media and pedestrians in the busy downtown area. Simon PR timed the walk in advance to keep everything on track.

Results

Hug-A-Caregiver day dawned bright and beautiful and at the designated time, HCA workers lined up outside the company's offices carrying colorful handmade signs saying: "Walk this Way, Hug a Caregiver," "Where there is care, there are hugs to share" and "This caregiver needs a hug."

More than 100 people along the way stopped to give and get hugs, and the hug-fest continued at Liberty Place, where representatives from the offices of Pennsylvania Governor Thomas Corbett, U.S. Congressman Chaka Fattah, and Philadelphia City Councilman Bill Greenlee read letters and proclamations. The City of Philadelphia proclaimed October 22 "Hug a Caregiver Day" and congratulated HCA workers for their skill and compassion. Pennsylvania Senator Lawrence Farnese also sent a letter. It read, in part, "The Senate of Pennsylvania congratulates HomeCare Associates upon this special milepost in its proud history and extends warmest wishes for a future replete with ever-increasing success and service to the community."

Long-time anchor and reporter Lisa Thomas-Laury of Philadelphia's top TV station, 6ABC, who endured here own bout with illness, gave and got hugs, interviewed several worker-owners and filmed the large group hug for a story on the 6 pm news. Philadelphia *Metro* sent a photographer who captured the exuberance of the day with a front-page photo. And Philadelphia's top radio station, KYW Newsradio, sent community affairs reporter Cherri Gregg, whose story showcased the selflessness of HCA workers. She reported: "Keith Love says he doesn't need recognition for his work. He told the story of a client with multiple sclerosis who always smiles when Keith walks in the room. "Whenever he sees me his spirits come up," says Love. "But I don't need anything in return. It's not necessary. As long as I see you smile, that's good enough for me."

The positive response from the public was awesome. Writes COO Tatia Cooper: "What you delivered was greater than we ever expected. When we started planning, we were thinking about how to gain visibility during our 20th anniversary. What you delivered was that—and so much more. You gave us a creative way to appreciate the work of caregivers everywhere, and for that we are very grateful. Those simple hugs went a very long way . . . strangers opened up about the caregivers in their lives and how much they appreciate them. This truly made our workers feel recognized as professionals. The event was incredibly affirming for our staff, and for HCA, and for that we send hugs to all of you."