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Do You Love Frisco?

By DeAnn Daley Holcomb

EVERYONE ENJOYS FREE GIVEAWAYS and for that reason the city of Frisco may have come up with the perfect solution to generate attendance at the city's Town Hall meetings.

It's often hard to garner interest for town hall meetings, especially after a family's busy day, but when your agenda includes road construction, a future bond package and water conservation, those topics directly involve the public.

That's why the city of Frisco was determined to get the word out about the meetings and the importance of decisions being made.

Frisco's solution – attach a theme to the meetings.

"What do you love about Frisco?" was

the most recent theme kicked off earlier this year.

It included a write-in campaign through e-mail or snail mail and included a free t-shirt giveaway if you attended the town hall meeting.

Mayor Mike Simpson is unabashed about his love for the city, being the first to kick off the campaign.

"There's a small town feel to Frisco and I believe in our can-do attitude," Mr. Simpson said. "Our teamwork,

our active citizens and their volunteerism and our innovative public and private partnerships all make Frisco a great place to live, work, play, and grow."

There were three questions for a Frisco resident to respond to in ten words or less. The questions included not only why you love Frisco, but also what makes the city special to you and why you like living in Frisco.

Dana Baird, the city of Frisco director of communication and media relations said the city wanted to seek out different voices in the community.

"We received around 100 responses in a week's time," Ms. Baird said. "The responses came in through e-mail and through the mail and I tried to pull out sentences, images, thoughts, things that capture Frisco in a concise manner so we were able to include as many responses as we could on our t-shirts."

Ms. Baird also set up easels throughout the city-- at city hall, the library and at city services departments, so people could pick up a marker and write their response

directly on the easel.

"It was very interactive. For example if someone came in to pay their water bill, there was an easel where they could write a comment if they wanted too," Ms. Baird said.

There were a variety of responses including, "In tune with the past, present and future, great shopping, I love the 'I'm home' feeling that's here and can-do attitude." There were positive responses about the sports venues available from the Frisco RoughRiders baseball team to soccer and hockey. The entrepreneurial energy of the city was also given a thumb's up. There were also responses from citizens about how Frisco cares as one resident dubbed it "the most friendly city in Texas."

"Citizens care about their city and their fellow citizens,' was one response that stood out with me and we used it in the campaign," Ms. Baird said.

Ms. Baird had the slogan produced as a piece of art work and published it on a full page in the city's newsletter and then reproduced the graphic on t-shirts for the town hall meeting.

Our best marketers are our citizens so we want to have them help us increase attendance at the town hall meetings.

Once the write-in campaign was underway, it was back to generating interest for important issues that were going to be addressed at the city's first meeting of 2006. The agenda included a look at not only a future bond package, but the construction of new city buildings, a review of the Arts of Collin County tri-city project and a review of the city's Comprehensive Plan for future growth.

City leaders addressed projects planned for historic downtown Frisco and volunteers involved in the Frisco Hurricane Katrina Assistance program were honored along with the success of the effort.

Frisco residents who attended the meeting not only received a free "I Love Frisco" t-shirt but were also signed up for

a raffle to win a "Frisco Quality of Life" basket.

"We had 89 to 100 people attend the meeting and we passed out the t-shirts as they came in," Ms. Baird said. "Our best marketers are our citizens so we want to have them help us increase attendance at the town hall meetings."

Ms. Baird said the power of e-mail and word-of-mouth in Frisco is how they were able to quickly receive so many responses to their "I Love Frisco," campaign.

The idea to create a theme to entice more Frisco residents to come to town hall meetings came from a conference Ms. Baird attended a couple of years ago.

"The seminar session focused on wacky ideas, bargains on a budget and everyone in attendance shared an idea about something they had done in their city that didn't cost a lot of money," Ms. Baird said. "So I came away with the 'why I love my city' campaign and it worked."

The first town hall meeting theme last year centered around Monday Night Football and was called "Are you ready for a Town Hall Meeting?"

Several local sports representatives were in attendance to give folks the latest update on Frisco sports. Representatives from Pizza Hut Park and FC Dallas were there along with team officials from the Frisco RoughRiders and Texas Tornado.

The theme for the town hall meeting in June will revolve around an ice cream social and will be called "Get the Scoop on Frisco."

"We will have representatives from our city's social services departments available in a vendor fashion to meet with citizens," Ms. Baird said. "We have an average of 100 folks attend our town hall meetings but the good news is we have newcomers attending and that is our focus."

"We use town hall meetings to communicate to our residents the latest information on all of the progressive and innovative projects happening in Frisco so that's going to continue to be our goal," Mr. Simpson said.

Mayor Simpson looks forward to seeing you and sharing ideas at the next Town Hall meeting in June.

DeAnn Daley Holcomb is a freelance writer living in Plano.

The logo for Frisco Style Magazine features a large, stylized 'FSM' monogram in white on a dark red square background. To the right of the monogram, the word 'frisco' is written in a lowercase, cursive font, and 'STYLE MAGAZINE' is written in a bold, uppercase, serif font.

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