

Michigan Municipal League

Love Muskegon



michigan municipal league
Better Communities. Better Michigan.



PROJECT DETAILS:

NAME:

Love Muskegon

DATE:

2012-Present

CATEGORIES:

Community Organizing
Civic Promotion

INSPIRATION:

How can you create an organic movement to get people to care about a city most are inclined to overlook?

THE GIST:

A group of young residents, looking to promote their hometown and attract new business, started a grassroots promotional campaign.

Love Muskegon

PROJECT SCOPE:

Dozens of businesses and hundreds of residents were able to show that average people can have an impact on how people view their community, especially an older, urban city. The anonymous campaign grew into dozens of positive, community-oriented events.

Overview:

To show their love for their community and to attract an out-of-state brewery looking to relocate in Michigan, a small group of residents stripped down and jumped in icy winter waters with signs spelling out "Love Muskegon." The simple gesture spawned an anonymous group of young professionals who came up with a brand and started distributing materials with the phrase at events around the community. "The campaign gives everyone permission to have a love affair with their community," stated national community development expert, Peter Kageyama. "That is so important."

The Knight Foundation's Soul of the Community Survey has shown why loving your community matters. The study found that residents' attachment to their city corresponds to the success of the city. In a small but important way, the "Love Muskegon" campaign has inspired everyday citizens to switch their discourse from "What are they going to do for us?" to "What can we do for the community?"



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**Accomplishments:**

- Organizers developed an open-sourced logo that became widely dispersed throughout the community
- Organizers developed a series of new events including a weeklong event, "Love Muskegon Week," and a summer solstice wine tasting party
- Community foundation and residents jointly developed a \$500 micro-grant program
- Created a new framework for new and existing activities with a common brand around "Love" of their city
- Able to get 400 people to show up to the photo shoot for a statewide promotional video shoot; more than any other city
- Inspired people to get Muskegon-themed tattoos
- A crew of anonymous residents now show up at city-related events passing out 'Love Muskegon' materials

Budget:

Little to no budget outside the limited cost of printing stickers, fliers and other marketing materials.

Funding:

Since there was no formal organization behind the campaign, all money spent on printing marketing materials came from small donations made by individuals.

Equipment:

Social media, stickers, bumper stickers, fliers, and other marketing materials.

**Organization:**

A small anonymous group of individuals initially inspired to recruit an out-of-state brewery to their community. While the term grew in popularity and started appearing in more places, the group has maintained its anonymity, preferring to have the simple message speak for itself.

Participants:

Open sourcing allowed for anyone to partake.

Actions Taken:**1) DEVELOP A CORE GROUP OF ORGANIZERS**

Work to come up with a core group of organizers who will take the lead on promoting the message around your city. The group needs to be made up of true believers in the city who are willing and able to use their energy and creativity to spread the good word about your community. The group does not need to be highly structured. Your goal is to be out in the community pushing a message and inspiring others, not keeping meeting minutes or drafting bylaws. The Muskegon group saw benefits in keeping the make-up of the group anonymous to avoid personal politics or preconceived notions of motivations.

2) COME UP WITH A SIMPLE BRAND

Think of a slogan and brand that is simple, effective and accessible. The Muskegon group had a very simply message that was affirming and something anyone could identify, "Love Muskegon." The actual brand is a clever play on local geography and the state of Michigan, which is simple and effective enough for anyone to appreciate.

3) MAKE THE BRAND AVAILABLE

The goal of a community campaign like Muskegon's is to get as many people involved as possible and to inspire a sense of ownership. To accomplish this, the Muskegon group made all of their materials open-sourced, or free to the public to use without concern over rights or trademarks. The more people and groups using the moniker and message, the more the campaign and its purpose will spread throughout the community.

4) GET OUT IN THE COMMUNITY

In our electronic age, it is easy to set up a social media presence and consider that your outreach strategy. Just as it was before social media, it is important to be an active presence in the community. The Muskegon group had anonymous boosters wear full body green suits and show up at events with "Love Muskegon" materials. The group also allowed different entities to use the "Love Muskegon" name in the promotion of community events around town.

5) FIND SIMPLE WAYS TO INSPIRE

Beyond just spreading positive messages, it is important to use your campaign to inspire and support actual actions. The local community foundation used the "Love Muskegon" banner in a micro-granting campaign, which allocated \$500 for nine small citizen-driven neighborhood improvement projects in the community. Partnerships like this allowed the campaign to be associated with demonstrable action and change.

ng trucks and make visiting the construction zone an event. Document the process and continue to share your story onsite and through social media.

Lessons Learned:

- Don't trademark
For the campaign to become viral, avoid squabbling over ownership of the message and branding. Create a simple message that can't be misconstrued and let people run with it.
- Keep the leadership anonymous
By keeping the organization and leadership of the movement anonymous you can avoid the headaches of detractors making assumptions about the campaign based on the participants. Anonymity allows people to focus on the campaign and not get caught up with what the intentions of the organizers may be.
- Avoid official affiliations
You want the community to focus on the campaign and feel like it is theirs. If your campaign becomes affiliated with established organizations it is easy for the public to construe that that particular partner organization owns the project, and not the community.
- Recruit positive people
If you want a campaign about loving your community to go viral, you're going to need positive people to make up your team to help move the cause forward.

Experts:

Jen Cross, jen@shopcontinuity.com
Peter Kageyama, peterkageyama@gmail.com

The Center for 21st Century Communities

Building 21st century communities

Experts from around the world—in academic, business, and public sectors alike—agree that investing in communities is a critical element to long-term economic development in the 21st century. Michigan's future depends on its ability to attract and retain knowledge-based workers. Central to attracting this priceless commodity is *place*. Research proves that successful 21st century communities effectively leverage the assets summarized in this brochure. Learn more and stay engaged at mml.org.

Who we are...

The Michigan Municipal League is the one clear voice for Michigan communities. We are a nonprofit, but we act with the fervor of entrepreneurs; our people are dynamic, energetic, and highly approachable, passionately and aggressively pushing change to achieve better communities and a better Michigan.

What we know...

Never before have so many diverse interests, from academic researchers to the business community to government leaders, shared a single conclusion: Michigan's future depends on its ability to attract knowledge-based workers. And what is central to attracting this priceless commodity? *Place*, specifically vibrant 21st century communities.

What we offer...

Through its Center for 21st Century Communities (21c3), the League provides education, technical assistance, public outreach, and unprecedented access to experts and resources. The 21c3 is a “one-stop-shop” for communities interested in creating and sustaining livable, desirable, and unique places that attract the highly skilled, creative, and talented workforce of the next century.



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