YMCA of Greater San Antonio

2017 NAYDO Strategic Communications Excellence Award Submission

The YMCA of Greater San Antonio was founded in 1876. The year 2016 marked our 140th anniversary and our President and CEO, Sandy Morander tasked the marketing and financial development teams with developing a campaign to educate the community on our extensive history as well as host a celebratory event.

**Goal and Objective**

As all YMCAs do, our Y has evolved so much in the past 140 years. It was important that our community knew how far we have come together and that we are committed to evolving to fit their needs. Our goal was to reflect stability and commitment, while highlighting our years of stewardship. In addition, we knew that this campaign would help us continue to establish our brand as a positive force in the community, taking on the challenges that shape San Antonio’s future.

The Y began as a place for men who were looking for somewhere to belong, a place they felt welcome, and we are still that organization today, but much, much more.

To meet our goal, we needed to convey the ways in which the Y has touched our community and the world. For example, the YMCA of Greater San Antonio was the first service organization in San Antonio.

**Planning and Research**

We moved forward with planning a yearlong campaign that would be recognizable, relatable and would fit in to all of our 2016 marketing initiatives, branch events, etc.

Our research began by speaking with Y staff, members, board members and donors who have been involved with the Y for several years. We asked them to describe their “then and now” as it relates to the Y, and why they remain involved. This helped us to piece together a small timeline, but we needed much more.

Next, we reviewed YUSAs history*.* We felt successes such as introducing the world’s first group swim lessons and pioneering English as a second language, would resonate with our large Hispanic population. San Antonio is also a military city and the Y has aided soldiers since the Civil War. We weren’t doing a great job of highlighting this, but that soon changed.

At the San Antonio Public Library we found limited resources, but it was there that we learned about the archives housed at the The University of Texas at San Antonio (UTSA) Library. These archives included videotapes, cassette tapes, newspaper articles, pictures, board meeting minutes, legal documents and more. The collection was titled, “A guide to the YMCA of Greater San Antonio Records, 1886-2004 (bulk 1989-2002)”.

Two Y staff members spent multiple days at the UTSA Library and in following the Library’s guidelines, could only pull 10 archive boxes at one time. Each box was overflowing with information, waiting to be discovered, but also making it impossible to get through any more than 3 in one day. And, although not all of the information was relevant to our goal, we couldn’t pass up the opportunity to read through board meeting minutes from the 1920’s. It was exciting to find out who our very first board members were and how they went on to be a staple in San Antonio⎯creating our city’s rich history. Then we came across overnight room rental rates, membership rates and financial records⎯if our founders could see us now.

We felt privileged to have the opportunity to embark on this research journey and share it with our board, coworkers and community.

The UTSA Library allowed us to take photos of the archives, however we paid for photocopies of some.

**Communication, Execution and Impact**

Along with collecting facts and figures, we designed a 140th logo that was placed on all marketing materials, on print and digital ads, in staff email signatures and on social media. A hash tag was also created, #ymcasatxturns140.

Throughout the year, we purchased radio ads for various campaigns including Pay the Day, our January membership promotion, water safety and summer camp. For some ads, the script began with “For 140 years” and for other ads, the script ended with “serving Greater San Antonio for 140 years”.

An 8’ x 8’ standing banner was designed to display a timeline of significant YUSA events and YMCA of Greater San Antonio Events from 1876 to 2016. This banner rotated throughout our 12 branches throughout 2016. We also displayed the banner at all special events. The cost to print two banners was $660.

In addition, ads were placed in local publications. The image for the ads was the 140-year timeline discussed above.

As the 140-year timeline banner found a new home each month, we received multiple compliments and inquiries. We were constantly finding members and volunteers spending many minutes in front of the piece.

All of the above built momentum and excitement for June 10, 2016, the date of our annual celebration. The annual celebration is an event we host to thank volunteers and donors while sharing with them the impact their contribution had on the prior year. It is here that we revealed our 2015 Annual Report to over 320 guests.

The theme of the event was “The History of our Future – 140 Years of Service”. The foyer was decorated with multiple tables that displayed old newspaper articles, books, photos, stories, uniforms and more. Upon entering the dining area, guest tables were decorated with centerpieces that told the story of our history.

The luncheon began with a display of photos from the past 140 years as a voice over put guest’s imaginations inside the early 1900’s describing a group of cowboys as they entered a board meeting.

Three separate videos were played throughout the luncheon. The first focused on our history, the second focused on our current journey and the third on our future. The cost to produce these was close to $8,000. The videos not only tell the story of our growth, it reminds our community why we’re here and that we are still the place “for all”. Showing 140 years of impact in 10min of video was not easy to do as there are many stories to tell, but our volunteers and donors got to see that their efforts are truly moving the needle⎯building stronger and more inclusive communities.

These videos have since been shared with all Y staff and used when speaking with potential supporters.

The event ended with a rendition of the song “Y.M.C.A.” by the Village People. The lyrics were changed to reflect our mission and current programs.

The cost to put on the event totaled $21,098. There was a cost to attend the event⎯$100 for an individual ticket, $900 for 5 seats (half a table), all the way up to the highest sponsorship⎯presenting sponsor for $25,900.

This campaign was educational and insightful for our members, volunteers and staff. It helped us have an even deeper appreciation for the Y as a whole and provided us with tactics to invoke this appreciation on our community while continuing to create a better us. Our future is bright! Here is to another 140 years.

**Portfolio of Communication Pieces**

1. 2015 Annual Report
2. 140 years of service timeline 8’ x 8’ banner
3. Song Lyrics
4. YMCA History video
5. Facebook posts