

CIVICREC®

12 Marketing Techniques for Reaching New Residents to Encourage Parks and Rec Participation

You love your community, which is why you love new residents. When new people move to town, whether they are new families, singles, retirees, or business professionals, you cannot wait to share everything that makes your community unique and invite them to join in the fun. Advertising to new residents should be a significant component of your parks and recreation department's marketing plan.

By educating new residents on available programs, facilities, activities, and classes, and capitalizing on their interest in exploring their new home, you are more likely to transform them into regular parks and rec participants. To help you reach your newest neighbors, follow these 12 creative marketing tactics.

INCLUDE PAMPHLETS IN SCHOOL REGISTRATION PACKETS

Partner with your local school districts to include pamphlets promoting your seasonal parks and recreation activities in school registration packets. Be sure to include information about youth sports leagues and after-school programs. Parents interested in getting their kids involved in activities to help them adapt to their new home and make friends will appreciate learning about local resources.

SEND A "WELCOME TO THE COMMUNITY" EMAIL

Send a brief, personalized welcome email to new residents from your parks and rec department. Let them know you are glad to have them as new neighbors and include a link to your parks and rec online course catalog and registration system where they can learn about available programming and upcoming local events. Email is an inexpensive marketing tool, and it enables new residents to link directly to your parks and recreation website to learn more about your offerings and register for their first activity.

HOLD A QUARTERLY MEET-AND-GREET FOR NEW RESIDENTS

Not only will new residents want to get to know their local leaders and learn about their local resources, but they will also want to get to know one another. Fortunately, your parks and recreation department can help be the stimulus for the formation of new friendships. Every quarter, invite all new residents to a local gathering at one of your parks or indoor facilities. A simple, informal pizza party not only shows residents that their leaders care about welcoming them to the neighborhood, but it also helps new residents get to know one another, and it shows off your local facilities.

DELIVER YOUR COURSE CATALOG

Make sure new residents receive a copy of your seasonal course catalog. They will be interested in all materials that help them learn about their new community, so a course catalog filled with events, classes, and activities will be sure to get their attention. Whether you deliver the catalog via email or mail, what matters is that it reaches new residents during the first few months after they arrive.



OFFER A FREE PARK/TRAIL PASS FOR THE DAY

Offer all new residents and families a free park/trail pass for the day for use during their first year in the community. A free pass will give new residents an opportunity to check out as many of your local parks and trails as they can fit in a day, and will encourage them to become regular park visitors.

HOLD AN ANNUAL NEW NEIGHBOR GOLF TOURNAMENT

New residents may be looking for opportunities to get involved with a new local golf league to stay active and meet new friends with common interests. Hold an annual golf tournament that is open to new residents only. Randomly form teams to allow newcomers a chance to get to know their new neighbors.

TARGET NEW RESIDENTS WITH SOCIAL MEDIA ADVERTISING

Social media advertising allows you to target specific members of your community with messaging that is impactful, and relevant. Since [it is estimated that 81 percent of Americans have at least one social media profile](#), the most popular of which being Facebook, it is likely that many of your new residents are using social media to learn about their new home. Social networks allow for some of the most targeted advertising options.

With Facebook, for example, by targeting those individuals who have recently indicated in their social profile that they are in your city, town, or county, you can serve new residents an engaging ad that promotes your parks and recreation activities. An example of an impactful advertisement may be a video that showcases all there is to do in your community, from hiking to kayaking to dance lessons to your community's annual hallmark events.

NEW-TO-THE-NEIGHBORHOOD WALKING GROUPS

Walking groups help citizens get active and give participants a comfortable setting to get to know one another. Form a “New-to-the-Neighborhood” walking group and encourage anyone who has moved to your community within the past year to sign up to get to know the area and other new neighbors.

WAIVE FIRST-TIME REGISTRATION FEES FOR NEW RESIDENTS

Once a new resident participates in one of your community activities or classes, they are sure to participate regularly. To help motivate them to get engaged in their new community, offer to waive the registration fee for new residents the first time they register for an activity during their first year in their new home. To encourage family participation, offer a 25 percent discount for a family of four or more.

HOLD AN ANNUAL NEW NEIGHBOR PICNIC

Once a year, invite everyone who has moved to your community within the past twelve months to attend an annual New Neighbor picnic. Hold the event at one of your community parks. Offer activities for kids, partner with local businesses to provide favorite local dishes, and give new neighbors a chance to mingle and enjoy their new community.

BRING A NEW NEIGHBOR PROMOTION

Since people are more likely to participate in an activity if they know someone, or learn about it from a trusted resource, refer-a-friend promotions are effective ways to obtain new activity registrants. Encourage your current class or activity participants to get a new neighbor to sign up with them to attend a future class, for 30 percent off the registration fees for both participants.



WELCOME TO THE NEIGHBORHOOD DAY AT THE DOG PARK

Your human residents are not the only newcomers looking to make new friends. Promote a quarterly “New to the Neighborhood” day at your local dog park. Not only will it give new residents an opportunity to check out another one of your local resources, but it will also give new residents a chance to meet one another and make friends (of both the human and dog varieties).

CONCLUSION

Your community has so much to offer its residents, and it is your job to help educate newcomers about all the programs, activities, and events they will enjoy as members of your community. No matter the size of your budget or your administrative team, with some smart, targeted marketing, you can make your newest residents feel at home, and enjoy their ongoing participation in your local parks and recreation department activities for years to come.

ABOUT THE AUTHOR



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As the Marketing Manager for CivicRec[®], part of the CivicPlus[®] Integrated Technology Platform for Local Government, Jennifer's focus is to understand local government and the park and recreation department's needs and processes. She ensures the benefits and efficiencies of CivicRec and its implementation are communicated and being leveraged by CivicPlus clients. CivicPlus' mission is to make government work better, and Jennifer strives to implement that ideal into useful content that can be used by parks and recreation directors and their staff.

Jennifer holds a Bachelor of Arts Degree in Mass Communications and Journalism with a major in Public Relations from Kansas State University. She has over 18 years of experience in both the public and private sectors handling internal and external audience communications.



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