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Count Down To Choose. Are You Election Ready?

Martin County, Florida

Submitted by:

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Countdown to Choose. Are You Election Ready?

RESEARCH: In 2008 seventy-eight (78%) percent of Martin County’s registered voters (99,000) voted in the Presidential Election. Throughout the election, Elections Center staff noted an influx of 70-80 phone calls per day from voters unsure of their status. Voters called the office inquiring: “Am I registered to vote?”; “Where do I vote?”; “What identification do I need to vote?” and, “Do I have to wait until Election Day to vote?” Expecting a higher volume of calls with questions for the 2012 Presidential Election due to a two-page ballot, reduced polling locations, and fewer early voting days, the Supervisor of Elections decided to identify effective methods of communication to convey pertinent information to registered voters. The Elections Supervisor and staff held weekly brainstorming sessions from January 2012-March 2012, to determine how to direct voters to the Elections Center’s website for access to their voter information to help eliminate unnecessary calls to the office. Staff reviewed comment cards from the 2008 election and elections data to project the expected voter turnout for 2012. After weeks of brainstorming and reviewing data, staff decided to implement a “Countdown to Choose. Are You Election Ready?” campaign to encourage voters to be proactive.

OBJECTIVES: To increase awareness among Martin County voters, two objectives were established to reduce/eliminate the number of voters who were unaware of important information. (1) Increase media to reach residents through television, radio, banners, inserts, billboards, and community presentations through a “Countdown to Choose. Are You Election Ready?” campaign reaching 20% of the 100,000 registered voters. (2) Increase the number of registered voters making necessary changes to voter records, by 10% through the Elections Center’s website, voter drives and/or other means.

IMPLEMENTATION: The first phase of the campaign was to review data collected through brainstorming sessions and voter comment cards from voters to assist in the development of a campaign. From the oldest to the youngest voter, the objective was to create a sense of realization that the countdown clock was ticking for the Presidential Election. Voters needed to also realize it was their responsibility to be “election ready” prior to Election Day. Once approval was granted, the outreach team placed important information on the website with a new “Access Your Voter Information” link. A “Countdown to Choose. Are You Election Ready?” clock was also placed on the home page counting down the hours, minutes and seconds to the General Election. The Deputy of Elections Outreach established new community partnerships. Chick-fil-A and the Elections Office partnered to sponsor a “Countdown To Choose. Are You Election Ready?” placemat contest for middle school students. Over 800 entries were received and the winner’s art work was displayed on 30,000 Chick-fil-A placemats in two local
store locations from June 2012-November 2012. A local attorney donated space on a digital billboard for **8 months** leading up to the election. The county's Traffic and Sheriff's Departments allowed the use of **5** digital traffic message boards for the entire 2012 election cycle for various election messages. Utility bill inserts were placed with billing information to reach **94,000** homes. **Six** plasma televisions were set-up in public libraries with important election information. Additionally, **80** "Are You Election Ready" street pole banners were displayed downtown; and, two mailings of postcards were sent to over **50,000** homes.

The second phase of the campaign was to reach voters by alternate methods. The Elections Center created a flyer and emailed it to **20** houses of worship for placement in church bulletins. Twenty (20) voter drives were conducted at restaurants, community fairs, banks, hospitals, the mall, and libraries. Presentations were made to **16** HOA's, **12** nursing homes and **4** gated communities ran PSA's for the "Countdown to Choose" campaign on private community channels. A guest column was submitted to the local Stuart News by the Supervisor of Elections encouraging voters to be "**Election Ready**" and directed them to the MartinVotes website. Newspaper advertisements ran **10** times, together with **6** press releases. **2,000** chip clip packets with newsletters, voter forms, and flyers were distributed at community and chamber functions. From January-November of 2012 PSA's were televised on the government access channel reminding voters the countdown clock was ticking... Check Your Voter Status!

**EVALUATION:** Upon completion, the campaign met objectives set forth. (1) From January-October of 2012, 12,597 changes were made (addresses, names, and political parties). Twenty-five **25%** percent of the changes were made on the website. In addition, **40%** of 35,562 vote by mail requests were made on-line. (2) Advertising boosted dramatically compared to 2008. Implementing the placemat, billboards, banners, utility bill inserts, mass mailings, an increase in radio usage, television, the countdown to choose clock, voter drives, a new website link, church bulletins, and guest column, these efforts increased voter awareness as much as **60%**. Letters of support were submitted to the paper by voters complementing the Elections Office for providing information to voters and for conducting accurate elections.

**Budget:** Campaign projected budget was **$65,000**. Street pole banners-$4,500; Utility inserts-$5,400; banners-$1,040; postcard mailing-$12,200; chip clip-$1,500; Newsletter's design-$250; radio advertising-$1,500; flyer's design $85.00; Sample ballots-$27,332.13; digital billboard and traffic board-donated; television PSA-no cost; placemats-$1,324.00. Newspaper ads-$2,400. Total cost of campaign=$57,731.13. Staff time-one full time employee working 40 hrs. a week for 6 months. Voters educated and aware of "their" voter status= **priceless!**
Countdown to Choose. We're Ready... Are You?
Check Your Voter Status
772-288-5637 MartinVotes.com
www.FemaleInjuryLawyer.com | Sponsored By
Goldstein, Schmitt & Wade, FL

Middle School Chick-fil-A Contest that displayed 2012 Election Dates

Digital Message Board used for the entire campaign donated by the Martin County Sheriff's Department and the Martin County Traffic Department

It's Your Responsibility.
Check Your Voter Status!
United Way
www.MartinVotes.com
88-5637

Billboard Space Donated by Local Attorney Lauren Goldstein

Billboard Space Donated by the Martin County United Way to display Countdown to Choose message through the entire 2012 Election Cycle
Countdown to Choose
Clock on Elections
Office Web site

Are you Election Ready?
Street Pole Banner Used with
Countdown to Choose Campaign

Church Insert Used for
the Countdown to
Choose Campaign

Countdown to Choose.
Vote Early!

OCT 27th thru NOV 3rd
7AM-7PM

- Rotonda Library
- Indiantown Library
- Hobe Sound Library

Sunday
October 28th
7AM-7PM

Your Country
Needs You!

Update online at:
www.MartinVotes.com
(772) 288-5637

MARTIN COUNTY SUPERVISOR OF ELECTIONS