

IPI Launches PARKING MATTERS

An Industry-wide
Program for
Advancing the
Parking Profession



Parking Matters. You know that. But many of the people who are our best prospects for growing business are not aware of what we do and how effectively we can help them enhance a property, boost revenue, add security, improve traffic flow or revitalize development. The fact that you're reading this article puts you ahead of the pack when it comes to the parking profession. So you'll be glad to know that the International Parking Institute (IPI) is undertaking an important new initiative that is bound to benefit parking professionals like you, now and in the years to come.

The program, "Parking Matters," is an industry-wide public relations effort designed to generate greater awareness of the vital role parking and parking professionals play in transportation, economic development and revitalization, traffic flow, sport and entertainment venues, college and university life, retail success, security, law enforcement – and more. In today's inter-modal world, what good does it do if only you and your often underappreciated parking colleagues know what you do and how much it matters?

The "Parking Matters" program was developed to harness the power of public relations

to educate and increase awareness about the value of parking professionals among target audiences that count – building owners and operators, architects, university and college decision-makers, city planners, law enforcement officials, transportation thought leaders, and more. Some elements of the program also will reach out to consumers – and other elements are intended to help those in the industry take greater pride in parking as a vital, desirable profession and attract good candidates to our ranks.

What's an industry-wide PR program? You're probably already familiar with other industry-wide efforts. Think *Got Milk?*, an

industry-wide advertising program funded by dairy farmers. While the IPI won't utilize paid advertising to start, our program's objectives and principles are the same. Instead of promoting a brand name or company, an industry-wide program sells a concept – the concept of drinking more milk, eating more pasta, buying flowers every Friday for your dinner table, the importance of a good bed to better sleep, or using more avocados in recipes. These campaigns are often funded by industry associations such as IPI as a way to capitalize on the built-in credibility of an association and its ability to speak collectively as an industry.

The cornerstone of the most successful industry-wide programs is creating awareness through education. After all, at the heart of why parking professionals are often undervalued is the fact that most of our prospective customers aren't even aware we are a profession — and few have been educated about the value parking professionals bring to the table when our expertise is tapped.

Through the "Parking Matters" program, we'll reach out to important target audiences in many ways and on many levels. IPI is already considered a media resource, but we'll be bolstering our position as the leading voice of the industry. IPI's enhanced Web site at www.parking.org offers a growing knowledge center on parking, showing best practices through a series of case studies that illustrate the positive effects and revenue-

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generating potential from good parking design, operations and maintenance. Another project will be collecting industry data and statistics that members and others value. We'll also launch an aggressive effort to educate other industry professionals about the value of parking through editorial coverage in the leading magazines that are read by building owners and managers, law enforcement officers, government and city officials, architects, college and university decisions-makers and airport, hotel, restaurant and retail influencers, among others. And IPI staff and representatives will be attending and serving as speakers and panelists at leading trade shows that focus on these critical vertical markets to ensure a strong parking presence.

Look for a "Parking Matters" video series, chronicling *Conversations with Parking Professionals*, streamed on the IPI Web site and YouTube.com this summer. Thought leaders in parking will share their wisdom in an easily searchable, accessible format.

Attitudes and perceptions can be ingrained and we won't change long-held beliefs and misperceptions overnight, but over time, the "Parking Matters" program will improve the marketing environment for parking professionals and parking equipment manufacturers and suppliers. Built into the program are

post-wave research and evaluation tools to monitor and measure progress. This program is an investment in our collective future.

To get our pro-parking message to the most important audiences, IPI will also develop strategic partnerships with key associations. Our goal is to team with these organizations whose members interface with parking professionals and also deal with transportation issues. In some cases, we'll kick off these joint ventures with shared research to assess baseline knowledge and perceptions — as well as misperceptions — about parking. And then we'll develop cooperative programs to capitalize on what we've learned in ways that will benefit all stakeholders.

In addition, we'll share the mission, messages, materials — and successes — of the "Parking Matters" program with IPI members

as it unfolds, so you can maximize the effect of this broad campaign, bring it closer to home, and translate an increased appreciation for the value of parking into more business and a better bottom line for you.

"Generating awareness about the value of parking professionals — and expanding business opportunities for IPI members — is what this program is all about," explained Shawn Conrad, CAE, executive director, IPI. "This is a long-term effort and one through which we expect to achieve great success."

Conrad credits current IPI Chair Cindy Campbell, the IPI board members, the Advisory Council and a special IPI group of parking professionals formed to create the Alliance for Advancing the Parking Profession, which will oversee the "Parking Matters" program, with having the foresight and follow-through to turn the vision of an industry-wide program into reality.

Be sure to look for updates about the *Parking Matters* program on the IPI Web site, in the IPInsider e-newsletter and in *The Parking Professional*. ■

For more information on the International Parking Institute's "Parking Matters" program, visit www.parking.org or contact IPI at 540.371.7535.

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"The Parking Matters program is a catalyst for positive change in our industry."

Cindy Campbell, Associate Director,
California Polytechnic State University

"This is an effort IPI members should rally around and support."

Mike Swartz, Sr. VP,
Standard Parking Corporation

"Over time, IPI's Parking Matters program will help expand opportunities for parking professionals."

Joe Survance, VP Business Development,
ACS Transportation Solutions

"Advancing the profession is important to everyone in the parking industry. We have needed an approach like this for years. Having IPI lead this effort will give it the national attention necessary to make a difference over time."

Barbara Chance, Ph.D., President
and CEO, CHANCE Management

"Finally...Parking Matters!"

Jim Kennedy, CAPP,
Director of Operations,
Richmond Metro Authority

"It's time to educate others that parking matters. This program will benefit everyone in our profession."

Wanda Brown, Parking and Transportation
Services, University of California Davis
Medical Center