

# SPREADING THE

## IPI's first PARKING MATTERS® Marketing & Communications Awards

By Cindy Campbell and Casey Jones, CAPP

Parking isn't an industry that's traditionally garnered lots of warm-and-fuzzy press attention, but that's changing. Thanks to the efforts of IPI's *Parking Matters*® program and committed professionals from all segments of the industry, the good word is getting out that parking adds to communities, boosts businesses, and plays a big part in any effective transportation system.

### BEST OF 2014

#### Norwalk, Conn., Parking Authority Rebranding Parking with Technology, Art, and a Smiley Parking Meter

When the Norwalk Parking Authority did its research, the result wasn't what anyone wanted to hear: Norwalk residents and local business people had unfavorable views of parking, with criticism that there wasn't enough parking and drivers had to pay to park. The Authority's response was to launch a rebranding campaign that contained key messages about friendliness and accessibility, as well as news about recent improvements to parking facilities that make the parking experience easier.

To lend some fun and a friendly face to the campaign, the planners created a parking meter mascot, "Mr. Smiley," who appeared in all print and online advertising, as well as on signage, Facebook, warning stickers, and the Authority's website. Mr. Smiley's message: "Parking Around Town is Getting a Lot Friendlier." The Authority promoted its new consumer-friendly and smart parking technologies, such as pay-by-phone, credit card-accepting meters and pay stations, and street sensors for wayfinding and parking availability information. It placed interactive kiosks around town with community information about attractions, restaurants, and entertainment and developed partnerships and sponsorships with community organizations. One innovative campaign element was "Art in Parking Places," a public art program at various parking



venues in the city, such as the railroad station and the Maritime Parking Garage. Three years later, public perceptions of the Authority are more positive. The rebranding continues with a "We've got a spot for you in Norwalk" campaign that highlights the installation of occupant and space sensors, which provide real-time parking availability information online.

**TAKEAWAY:** A mascot that appears across all marketing materials is an effective way to draw attention to a campaign. Also, look for innovative ways to make parking facilities friendly places, such as with public art.

# GOOD WORD

This year, IPI launched its *Parking Matters*® Marketing & Communications Awards to recognize programs that have gone the extra mile to advance the parking profession through marketing campaigns, special events, and communications efforts. To say the entries we received were inspiring is an understatement. Many parking programs have joined the effort to let their communities know about the good things happening in our industry, and picking winners was no easy task. But we did it, and they were recognized at the 2014 IPI Conference & Expo in Dallas last month.

Three “Best of 2014” awards were given out, along with awards for other fantastic entries. Find details of programs and links to video, collateral, ads, and more at [parking.org/marcomm-winners](http://parking.org/marcomm-winners). Entries for 2015 open this fall.



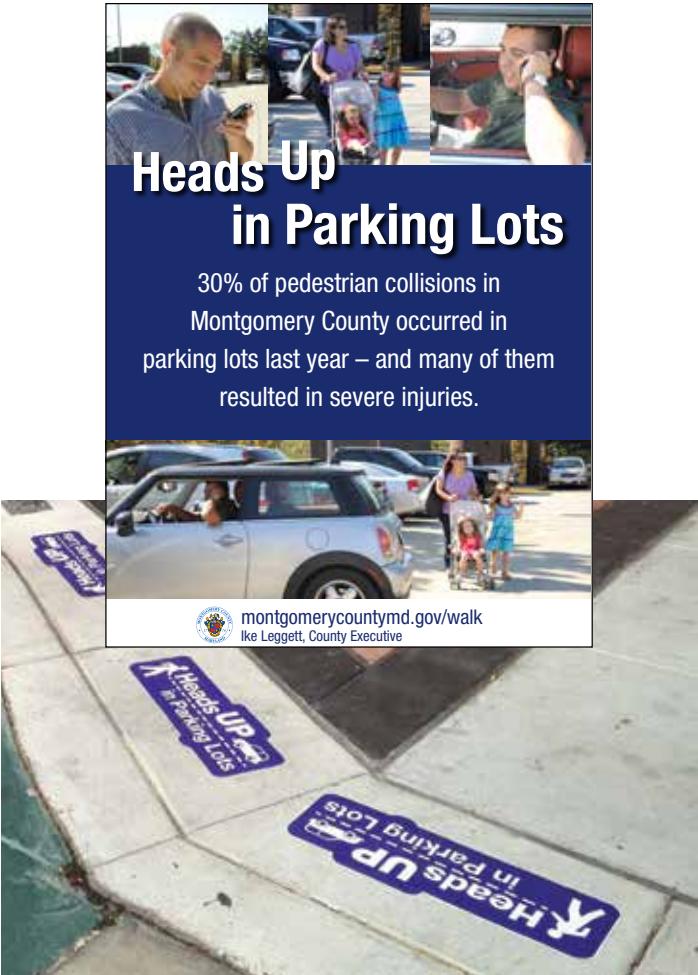
## BEST OF 2014

### **Montgomery County, Md.**

#### **Using Research and an Edgy Message to Promote Pedestrian Safety in Parking Lots**

When Montgomery County, Md., officials reviewed the county's pedestrian collision data in 2013, they were startled to discover that incidents in parking lots and garages comprised 30 percent of all collisions, 18 percent of which resulted in incapacitating injuries. That's about the same rate that occurred on county roads (20 percent). Clearly, the county's successful pedestrian safety program needed to add a focus on pedestrian collisions in parking lots. As a result, it developed an education campaign that relied on forging partnerships with county retail parking lot owners and managers and educating the public with a variety of outreach tools.

Using an edgy message in both English and Spanish that tells pedestrians and drivers what to do—“Heads Up in Parking Lots: Don’t run over people. Don’t get run over”—the campaign featured photographs of people in parking lots who were distracted by cell phones and otherwise inattentive to their surroundings. Employing no- and low-cost techniques, including in-house artwork and digital marketing, the campaign used multimedia education such as posters and pavement decals at partner shopping centers, bus and bus shelter ads, downloadable materials on the county's website, a press conference with the county executive, and public service announcements on YouTube and the county's cable television channel. **TAKEAWAY:** Research and review of available data is an essential element when developing a marketing campaign. Translating materials to reach a diverse audience is important, and partnerships can enhance the communications impact.



## BEST OF 2014

### Dallas Fort Worth International Airport

#### "Finding Your Hot Spot" with Spring Break Express Parking

Travelers at the Dallas Fort Worth Airport (DFW) have a number of parking options: off-airport parking with low daily rates or on-airport parking with higher rates but convenient proximity to terminals. During the 2014 busy spring break travel season, DFW officials wanted to maximize revenues with increased parking in on-airport lots while ensuring customers could easily find parking spots. At the same time, they hoped to increase awareness of the convenient benefits of on-airport parking. Their strategy was to promote Express Parking and encourage travelers to upgrade from remote lots.

DFW's campaign, entitled "Spring Break Express Parking: Find Your Hot Spot," positioned Express Parking as the perfect start to vacation. Customers who parked during the campaign's five-day timeframe were "sprung" \$15 vouchers to spend inside the terminals. The team also collaborated with an advertising agency to use a wide range of marketing channels: traditional advertising (print and radio ads in English and Spanish), digital (online banner ads, e-newsletter), guerilla (ski roamer who met travelers on the shuttle bus and distributed promotional items, surfboard pop up stands, vouchers), and social media (shareable photos with trav-



elers). The creative approaches used to promote Express Parking paid off; Express Parking lots were full by Wednesday of spring break season, compared with Thursday of the previous year, and Express occupancy was greater than the previous year throughout the week.

**TAKEAWAY:** Guerilla tactics and grassroots approaches that use one-on-one marketing can create buzz and bring attention to campaigns. Effective use of social media with shareable photos lends a fun aspect.

### PARKING MATTERS® AWARD

#### ParkIndy and Xerox

#### Engaging the Public to Promote Acceptance of the Modernization of Indianapolis Parking Operations

Indianapolis faced a public education challenge in 2010 when, working with Xerox, it modernized its parking meter system with 1,400 credit card-accepting single-space meters, 325 pay boxes, and pay-by-cellphone functionality. In addition, the system launched wayfinding technology that allowed drivers to receive live, real-time maps showing open parking spots via an app. The challenge: how to educate the public about the new technologies and avoid motorists' befuddlement at the curb.



The ParkIndy team branded the new system with a key-like logo, green and grey colors, and the web-oriented tagline, "ParkIndy.net: Find Your Space."

In-person dialogue with stakeholders was important during the early stages of the rollout, with presentations and a team of parking ambassadors who assisted motorists using the meters. Customer feedback was important, too, and evaluation surveys show a dramatic increase in residents who now say downtown parking is affordable and easy to find.

**TAKEAWAY:** Campaign evaluation and customer feedback are essential. They allow you to assess the success of the campaign and areas for improvement.

### PARKING MATTERS® AWARD

#### Houston Airport System Parking Division Promoting Valet Parking with a Robust Marketing Campaign

Houston Airport System's Parking Division wanted to generate new revenue and create more dynamic parking options at its two airports. The solution was a new valet parking product, but first, the planning team did its research.

The Parking Division's marketing plan was comprehensive and robust. Designed to increase revenue and generate customer awareness of the new valet program, the campaign relied on a wide range of marketing elements: promotional discount pricing during launch, TV and radio ads, billboards, dioramas at baggage claim and on concourses, banners, website information, promotions, elevator wraps, and public relations. A partnership with a local golf tournament allowed valet ambassadors to greet event-goers and distribute promotional items, and additional partnerships with the Houston Rockets and Texans enabled the Parking Division team to advertise and promote the service to game attendees.

**TAKEAWAY:** When launching a new program, learn from others who offer the same product or service. Also, consider implementing the new program in phases to correct any mistakes.

#### PARKING MATTERS® AWARD

### University of California at Irvine, Transportation and Distribution Services

#### Easing Commuter Parking with Sustainable Transit Choices

A marketing plan developed by University of California at Irvine (UCI) Transportation and Distribution Services helps avoid gridlock: Commuters know about their transportation choices, parking locations, service amenities, and sustainable transit options.

Even before students begin their college careers, transportation staff attend a campus-wide festival for prospective students to inform future Anteaters about their transit options. Education continues once students are on campus, with interactive education seminars that provide information on parking

zones, permits, and on-campus motorist assistance. Bus passes, trains, shuttle buses, carshare, and bikeshare are also featured in commuter education materials. In addition, Transportation and Distribution Services sends a quarterly e-newsletter to all staff, faculty, and students, highlighting traffic impacts, parking lot maintenance, rideshare activities, and bike path construction. Special events, such as Rideshare Week and Bike Month, plus cost-effective digital marketing on Twitter and the website managed by the marketing team keep everyone current on the latest news affecting transportation.

**TAKEAWAY:** Even a large institution can avoid traffic gridlock by taking advantage of multiple opportunities to educate target audiences about their transportation options and promote sustainable transit choices.



#### PARKING MATTERS® AWARD

### Texas A&M, Transportation Services Reaching Out to Key Stakeholders with Targeted Messaging

Texas A&M's Transportation office wanted to share its story with a diverse group of target audiences: more than 60,000 students, faculty,

and staff; visitors; alumni; the university administration; and industry peers. Staff decided the best way to inform target audiences about Texas A&M's products, services, and proven results was to implement a campaign with targeted messaging. The campaign, which was launched at the beginning of the 2012 spring semester, used print ads in the alumni magazine and industry publications that highlight car and bike sharing, transit options, sustainability measures, and departmental improvement efforts.

Bus ads in 72 university shuttles, website images, screen ads in the student rec center and business school and table banners also featured key messages about sustainable parking and the use of new technologies such as pay-by-phone.

**TAKEAWAY:** Industry peers are interested in successful programs and how they can be replicated.

#### PARKING MATTERS® AWARD

### Texas Tech University, Transportation and Parking Services

#### Riding Bicycle Use to a New Level with Biannual Bike Clinics

While the Texas Tech's Transportation and Parking Services team welcomed the more than 6,000 students using bicycles on campus, a sizeable number of bikes were abandoned each year due to simple problems. Clearly

there was a need for education about bicycle parking, maintenance, and safety.

The Transportation and Parking Services team developed an outreach program that uses branding, incentives, partnerships, and advertising to draw student, faculty, and staff members to a twice-yearly bike clinic at a high-traffic area on campus. It offers free diagnostics and simple bike repairs, on-site bike registration, and information from on-campus groups promoting bicycling and bike safety. The volunteer-run clinics are incentivized with free water and vitamin

drinks, branded water bottles and sunglasses, and bike seat covers with the Bike Clinic logo. The team promotes the events with postcards on dining tables, tags placed on parked bikes, posters, and posts on Twitter and Facebook. Most effective are emails to bicycle permit holders and postings on the university's daily broadcast email.

**TAKEAWAY:** Resolving a transportation issue doesn't have to cost a lot. In this case, in-house production of promotional materials, existing branded incentives, and effective use of volunteers kept costs low.

**PARKING MATTERS® AWARD**

## City of Sacramento Parking Services Division with the IPS Group:

### Smart PR for New Smart Parking Meters

The City of Sacramento partnered with IPS Group to install 4,000 solar-powered smart parking meters that accept credit cards and coins. With this modernization came the need to educate the city's diverse business groups, motorists, and employees about the new meters and related policy changes.

Working in a public/private partnership with IPS, the city's creative team leveraged the vendor's experience with other jurisdictions to develop a comprehensive campaign that used multimedia messaging and marketing materials. The campaign used a dedicated website, a video on meter use, press releases, posters for display on bulletin boards and in merchants' windows, an instructional brochure, social media, and a live demo with a smart meter in the City Hall lobby, close to the customer service counter.

**TAKEAWAY:** Don't reinvent the wheel; leverage the past experience of others when developing a marketing communications campaign. When you ask the public to make a change, be sure to allow plenty of lead time for public education.

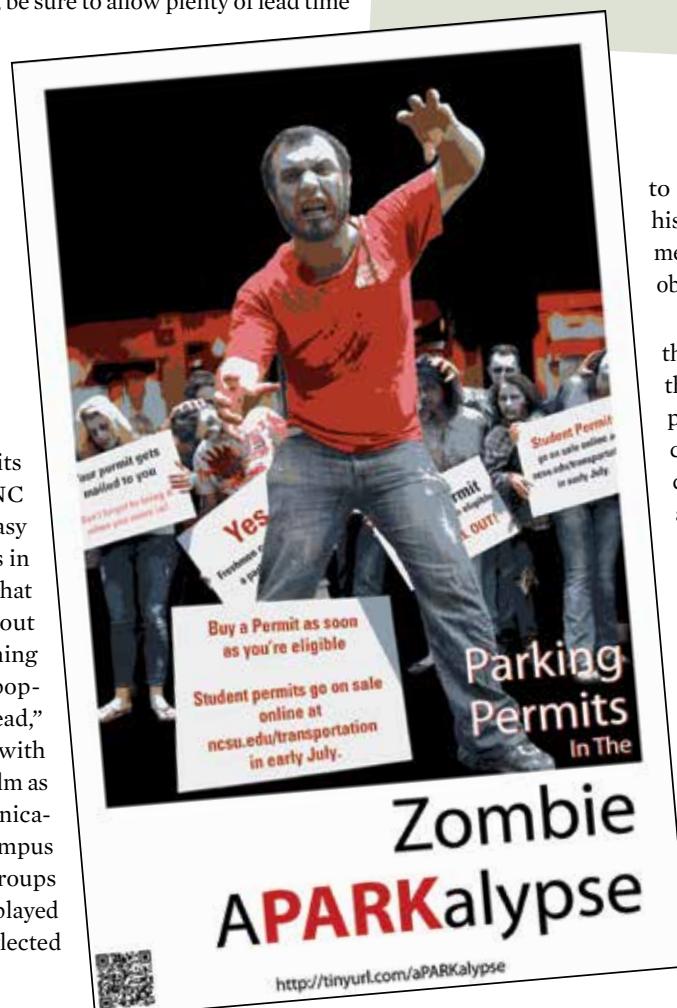
**PARKING MATTERS® AWARD**

## Pittsburgh Parking Authority Using a Keychain Fob to Promote Pay-by-Plate Technology

Can you recite your car's license plate number? Most drivers can't. This was the challenge faced by the Pittsburgh Parking Authority as it planned the change from single-space, coin-operated parking meters to a pay-by-license-plate system.

The low-tech key to helping drivers was a virtually weightless keychain fob containing the Authority's website address, lists of credit cards accepted by the meters, and most importantly, a blank space for drivers to write down their license plate numbers. Eighty thousand fobs were hand-delivered to locations, groups, and individuals who would be helpful familiarizing parking patrons with the new parking meters. The campaign included a how-to video, tri-fold brochures, FAQs, and a 24/7 help desk. "Meter Greeters" were dispatched city-wide to distribute key fobs and guide parkers through the use of the new meters.

**TAKEAWAY:** When confronting a change, be creative. Low-cost, grassroots approaches can have a huge impact when designed to reach target audiences with attention-grabbing tools that make the change easy to manage.

**PARKING MATTERS® AWARD**

## North Carolina State University Transportation

### Creating a Buzz about Parking Permits with the Zombie aPARKalypse

How can university parking permits create on-campus buzz? For NC State's Transportation team, the easy answer involved engaging students in the creation of a four-minute video that humorously conveys messages about the importance and ease of obtaining parking permits. Inspired by the popular TV program "The Walking Dead," the team recruited a staff member with expertise in media animation and film as the creative director and a communications specialist as producer. The campus theater department and student groups provided the volunteer talent, who played the zombies, a student who had neglected

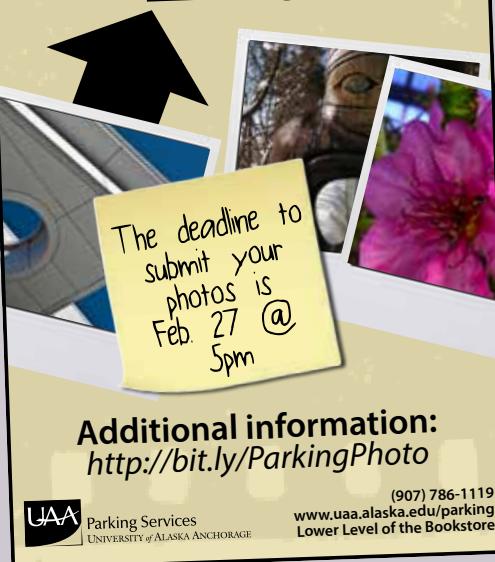
to obtain a parking permit and his girlfriend. A department staff member demonstrated the ease of obtaining a parking permit online.

The video was promoted through social media, including through the personal Facebook pages of the actors, as well in campus partner websites, imbd.com (internet movie database), and YouTube. The university billboard system displayed a poster about the Zombie aPARKalypse video, and a poster with the video was displayed in the Transportation lobby to entertain students waiting to conduct business.

**TAKEAWAY:** Video is effective in delivering messages, especially to those who learn visually. Involving your target audience in a video production creates interest and widens the appeal of your message.

# Annual Parking Photo Contest

## Win a Parking Permit!



### PARKING MATTERS® AWARD

#### University of Alaska, Parking Services Building a Positive View of Parking with a Permit Photo Contest

The University of Alaska at Anchorage (UAA) Parking Services team knew its department was not always viewed in a positive manner. In 2008, the department launched an annual Through Your Eyes Parking Services Photo Contest to showcase the university campus in a new light and build more positive perceptions of parking and Parking Services. The first-place winner receives a free annual parking permit with the winning photo printed on it. The five runners-up receive free semester parking permits.

The contest is promoted via emails, posters, and an ad in the campus newspaper, all of which feature winning photos from the previous year. Parking Services also places ads on digital TV screens around campus.

**TAKEAWAY:** Contests with prizes are a great way to increase visibility for parking systems. For contests and programs that repeat each year, explore ways to improve program elements. **P**



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