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Social Cause: Arthritis

Arthritis may not be as popular for fundraising as cancer, but it is a degenerative disease that is second only to heart disease as a cause of work disability. In fact, according to data from Arthritis Foundation, arthritis is one of the most prevalent chronic health problems and the leading cause of disability among those over the age of 15.

To increase awareness about the disease, Massage Envy decided to take on this health issue through its Healing Hands for Arthritis program. “At Massage Envy, we witness the debilitating effects arthritis can have on our members and guests every day and recognize that more must be done to help raise awareness and find a cure for the [nearly] 50 million adults and 300,000 children currently suffering,” says Massage Envy President and COO Dave Crisalli.

According to Paula Stapley, director of communications of Massage Envy Franchising, LLC, the decision to collab-

orate with Arthritis Foundation made sense as Massage Envy wanted to create an event where there is a direct relationship between the benefits the spa provides through massage therapy and the people who are affected by the cause they partner with. “Healing Hands for Arthritis is a reflection of our fabulous therapists and estheticians who help our members and guests relax, realign and rejuvenate,” she says.

Launched last October 12 to celebrate World Arthritis Day, the one-day national event gathered a network of over 700 Massage Envy locations which donated \$10 from every one-hour massage and facial treatments to support Arthritis Foundation’s education, research and advocacy initiatives. Additionally, Murad—Massage Envy’s exclusive skin-care partner—donated 10 percent of all its retail sales sold at Massage Envy locations during the event. In total, Healing Hands for Arthritis raised \$493,150 for the Arthritis

Foundation.

Part of its success is attributed to strategic marketing leading up to the big day. “This event, heavily driven by public relations, was also supported by a comprehensive national advertising campaign, including national TV, online and magazine [promotions]. To maximize the traffic potential of this event, regional co-ops were also encouraged to develop local co-op marketing plans, to include online, broadcast, and PR efforts,” says Stapley.

Getting employees involved was also crucial to the overall success, so incentives were put in place to encourage staff to help stir a marketing buzz. “Our franchisees and regional developers are generous individuals who want to be part of their communities and help those in need. They incentivized their teams at the local level by, for instance, holding contests for most appointments booked or most donations [raised],” she says.

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Selection Criteria

Massage Envy understands that there is a whole lot of work that goes into selecting charities to partner with. According to Director of Communications Paula Stapley, several criteria need to be met:

- Ideally, the charity has a mission related to health and wellness.
- The cause should appeal to Massage Envy employees, helping them to become involved “hands-on” with the charity in ways that go beyond a one-day effort.
- The charity or cause should be widely familiar and adhere to the highest standards of efficiency, reporting and transparency.
- The charity should be national with substantial focus in North America and ideally is women-focused, or at least women-friendly.
- Beyond Massage Envy’s financial contribution, the charity must be open to creative sponsorship opportunities and look at the partnership as long-term and hopefully, beyond a one-day event year-after-year, building relationships with its franchise community.
- Responsiveness and cooperation from both sides is critical to making the partnership work. Thus, Massage Envy requires the charity to have chapters or local representation with a large number of resources in the majority of the U.S.

BY THE NUMBERS

24.3 million Number of women with doctor-diagnosed arthritis*

17.1 million Number of men with doctor-diagnosed arthritis*

39 million Number of physician visits caused by arthritis*

67 million Estimated number of Americans ages 18 years or older projected to have doctor-diagnosed arthritis by 2030**

* Data from Arthritis Foundation (arthritis.org)

** Data from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (cdc.gov)