

GRAND OPENING, EXPANSION AND RENOVATION

200,000–499,999 square feet (18,580–46,449 square meters)

Cancer fund-raiser succeeds despite storm

Marin County, Calif., one of the wealthiest areas in the U.S., has an unusually high cancer rate; the disease strikes one in four households. Nobody knows why.

In 2005 The Village at Corte Madera partnered with the Marin Cancer Project to raise awareness of the nonprofit's efforts to identify the cancer culprit.

The center underwent renovations that year. As work progressed, The Village turned construction scaffolding enveloping a center-court tower into a giant photo collage.

It also spent months planning a grand-reopening fund-raising celebration. But a ferocious storm struck on the day of the event, trashing the party venue and forcing The Village to re-create the event indoors on three hours' notice.

Implementation

The Marin Cancer Project already had a fund-raising campaign, Search for the Cause, selling sterling-silver dog-tag necklaces customized in memory or in honor of those touched by cancer.

The Village's lookout tower, 60 feet high and 30 feet wide on each side, is visible from Highway 101, an artery connecting Sacramento and San Francisco. During renovations, the tower



was wrapped in 7,200 square feet of scaffolding mesh. The Village used the scaffolding to hang a collection of 6-foot-by-4-foot portraits of Marin residents wearing the dog tags. The Village installed the wrap on the scaffold on Aug. 23 with a 5 a.m. media event.

Meanwhile it was preparing for the Dec. 1 grand reopening of the renovated center with a fund-raising celebration. But a winter storm unleashed rain and 70 mph wind. The Village had erected a 10,000-square-foot tent for the party. The wind shred-

It Takes a Village

Village at Corte Madera
Corte Madera, Calif.

Expenses: \$78,651.02 (including costs from the original event, later scrapped)

Owned/Managed by: The Macerich Company

Professional Recognition: Nicole Schmitt, SCMD, senior manager, marketing, Susan Valentine, SCMD, senior vice president, consumer marketing, Judy Gray, SCMD, vice president, consumer marketing, Kathy B. Lovold, senior manager, property management, DeeDee Taft, vice president, consumer marketing, Spin Communications

ded it, overturned lights, flipped tables and shattered glassware. Rain soaked everything. The fire chief condemned the tent at 2 p.m. Guests were due to arrive at 5:30 p.m.

The Village scrambled to create a formal event for 500 people in its indoor, 3,000-square-foot food court. Professionals donated time and resources to set up lighting, sound and more. Three fire-fighters remained on duty, at no charge, to ensure safety. Guests were escorted on tours by security officers with umbrellas.

The food-court kitchens were put to use. Eight-foot hedges disguised food-court storefronts. Black velvet draped tables, topped with salvaged decorations. Nordstrom's rolling racks held coats; hair dryers rescued linens. Restrooms got fragrant gardenias and upscale toiletries. The band set up on the concrete floor.

Results

The tower installation garnered publicity worth \$68,500 on its first day and was visible to the 165,172 cars traveling daily on Highway 101. The local newspaper sponsored the tower art with more than \$38,000 in ads and inserted a Marin Cancer Project brochure, sent to 50,000 subscribers, for just \$500.

Comp sales at The Village rose 6 percent to 10 percent throughout the renovation, which garnered print publicity worth \$45,460.

The grand reopening featured more than 30 celebrity endorsements. George Lucas and Robin Williams, among others, lent their images to the cause.

The Marin Cancer Project gained great visibility. Before the tower installation, it had sold 100 necklaces. After that, sales more than doubled in less than four months. By December 2005, more than 2,000 people wore tags. The group funded a teen awareness program, partnered with a local radio broadcast network, and recently hosted an 11,000-person benefit concert.

More than \$117,000 in goods and services was donated for the grand reopening, which raised \$60,000. ■