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Quirky campaign earns ink for Bottom Line Poetry Contest

South Florida Business Journal - by [Jeff Zbar](#)

Even before Gary Schweikhart helped launch the Bottom Line Poetry Contest marketing campaign for the Digestive Care medical practice, he figured it would be a public relations winner.

The veteran publicist knew that creating a PR campaign as quirky as a poetry contest about colonoscopies would pique media and consumer interest.

“The contest started generating media interest from the day we announced it,” said Schweikhart, president of P.R.-B.S., a Boca Raton marketing firm.

Since the campaign was launched in early March, the practice has received 230 poems and scores of media hits.

Contests and promotions generate more than media interest. They create buzz among consumers, and strong word-of-mouth marketing opportunities. Once entries are tallied, the winner announcement generates media interest anew.

Focusing on the important topic of colonoscopies, the disease they can detect and the impact they have on people’s lives would only heighten interest, he said. The event was held in honor of National Colorectal Cancer Awareness Month.

Within two days, the contest was featured in a local humor column. Days later, it was discussed on NBC’s “Today.” Local alternative newsweekly **New Times** wrote about it, and rumor has it that Bill Maher mentioned the contest on his HBO series, Schweikhart said.

The Internet was abuzz with the contest, including hits on sites like GotPoetry.com, CNBC.com, Plime.com, Reuters.com, AllBusiness.com, FightColorectalCancer.org, MedicalNewsToday.com and PR-Inside.com. In all, the contest logged scores of media hits. The 230 entries came in from 39 states and six countries, including the U.K. Canada, Cyprus, France, Israel and the West Indies.

“When I pitched the idea to Digestive Care, I was hoping for a couple-dozen local entries,” Schweikhart said.

As a marketing program for a medical group, the campaign “far exceeded our expectations,” said Dr. Kenneth Rosenthal, the Boca Raton gastroenterologist who chairs Digestive Care’s PR committee. Like any good campaign, the entries had human-interest elements, including humor, seriousness, stories from survivors, and – from one winner – the tale of losing a loved one to colon cancer. The other winner submitted a limerick. Winners were to receive either a \$500 check or a free colonoscopy.

“Some of them were also very moving to read,” Rosenthal said. “Many of the people submitting poems mentioned how they or members of their families were colon cancer survivors for whom a colonoscopy had been a real life saver.”

The campaign also multiplied traffic to the practice’s Web site, DigestiveCareOnline.com, he said. The Web and more than 4,000 online headline impressions and links will help sustain search engine marketing traffic for the practice. That will help promote Schweikhart’s next campaign, which could be a songwriting contest that would seek original songs or parodies to be posted on YouTube.

NEWS & NOTES

- **Fish Consulting** in Hollywood, a franchise marketing firm, has been named to handle marketing for Mr. Clean Performance Car Wash, a new line extension from **Procter & Gamble**’s Agile Pursuits franchising division. The agency is helping to relaunch the brand under the Mr. Clean name, as well as drive national franchise sales.
- **American Diabetes Wholesale** in Pompano Beach, a diabetes supply company, has partnered with racecar driver and Type 1 diabetes patient Charlie Kimball to launch the GlucoStories & Charlie Kimball Share Your Story contest.
- Kathy Koch, president of **Ambit Advertising and Public Relations** in Fort Lauderdale, and immediate past chairwoman of the board of the Broward Alliance, has been recognized by the **Florida Economic Development Council** as its 2009 District 8 Volunteer of the Year.

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