



**“Don’t Bug Me”  
Stop the bug and stop the flu!**

## Background:

A looming shortage of flu vaccine and the possibility that large numbers of the some 750,000 Tulsa-area citizens will not be immunized this winter spurred great media attention and public concern.

The Tulsa Health Department and Hillcrest HealthCare System, a nine hospital health system located throughout eastern Oklahoma, joined together with one key objective – communicate tips to help stop the spread of the flu.

The **“Don’t Bug Me! – Stop the Bug and Stop the Flu”** campaign tag line was developed. Three primary audiences were identified – schools, large employers and the general public.

## The Coalition

Members of the local media sales and promotion teams were invited to attend a brief meeting in which an overview of the **Don’t Bug Me** campaign was shared. A coalition quickly developed, with key media outlets serving the Tulsa market agreeing to support the effort with news coverage and favorable creative, production and advertising rates.

The result of the meeting proved to be a groundswell of community support for a major public awareness campaign to prevent the spread of flu and offset the anticipated effects of an under-immunized public.

## The Campaign

Creative materials were developed for schools, businesses and the public. All materials were made available for download from the Tulsa County Health Department website [www.Tulsa-health.org](http://www.Tulsa-health.org) and the Hillcrest HealthCare System website at [www.hillcrest.com](http://www.hillcrest.com).

A three tiered approach for communication was identified:

- ?? Paid and in-kind advertising including print and electronic
- ?? Hand delivered educational materials for more than 200 area primary and secondary schools
- ?? Public relations and publicity

This initiative remains a work in progress, and it is expected to significantly expand in scope. To date, direct costs of this initiative are approximately \$100,000 (\$70,000 committed to television, print and billboards). The indirect value of this campaign – due to volunteerism, media partnerships and leveraging of others' existing communications platforms is estimated to be many times greater than the direct costs.

## Schools

School children, especially elementary and middle-school-aged, are the primary target for the campaign because of their propensity to transport the virus. Following are a number of steps that were taken:

- ?? Educational materials were developed geared toward children, all tied together with a colorful cartoon character of a bug. The material included 100,000 coloring pieces and stickers and instructional guides – all bearing simple, direct messages to teach children how to prevent spreading the flu.
- ?? Some 13,000 posters were produced to be placed in restrooms, and parent-teachers' organizations were encouraged to conduct drives to stock restrooms and cafeterias with anti-bacterial soap, antiseptic wipes and facial tissue.
- ?? A meeting was held with the superintendents of 16 Tulsa metro area school districts, the local community college and the city's universities. These top administrators were briefed, asked for input and provided a draft e-mail message to send to school principals in their respective districts, informing them of the program and urging them to support implementation.
- ?? Along with curriculum, the program included an awards program for classroom teachers. Web-based entry forms and contest rules were made available for teachers to describe innovative uses of the program material. An independent board of creative experts will review the entries. The top three classroom entries will each receive \$500 for teachers for further instruction.

- ?? The local news media will be informed of these innovative teaching efforts and, hopefully, will produce feature stories highlighting positive action and further reinforcing public awareness.
- ?? Dozens of volunteers marshaled by the Health Department delivered all the material to the schools at no cost. Nearly 200 public and private schools received the **Don't Bug Me** educational materials.
- ?? Web links to download the materials, including educational posters and restroom signage and sample letters to parents were provided.

## Large Employers

Large employers were targeted for two obvious tactical reasons: to reach the largest number of people early in the flu season, and to utilize their well-developed, high-tech employee communications systems.

- ?? The first step was to gain buy-in and awareness among the gatekeepers of employee communications. In the Tulsa market, this meant making presentations to the local chapters of the International Association of Business Communicators, the Public Relations Society of America, the Chamber of Commerce and Women in Communication.
- ?? Web links to download the materials, including educational posters, restrooms signage, and sample letters to employees were provided.

## The General Public

Reinforcing the messages targeted at school children, their teachers and parents was a resourceful use of earned and paid media – both serving to increase credibility, frequency and, consequently, reach.

- ?? As stated above, the earned media component began with informal strategy meetings with health reporters and senior editors to explain the goals and objectives. The success of these meetings was enhanced by the limited tone of commercialism or self-promotion.
- ?? A print kickoff in the news media began with a story package that was published in the Sunday edition of the primary newspaper for the Tulsa market.
- ?? Statement stuffers were developed and made available to local banks, water, gas and electrical service companies.
- ?? Campaign efforts are to be extended to holiday-season parades and events such as Rotary and Chamber meetings of business leaders.
- ?? Large shopping malls are also targeted to participate by posting the awareness materials in restrooms, near escalators, elevators and public phones.
- ?? A news conference at an area elementary school featured the leaders of the Tulsa Health Department, Hillcrest and teachers and children utilizing the educational materials. Hundreds

of sugar cookies adorned with the campaign logo in white and green frosting kept the kids' interest.

- ?? Inspectors with the Health Department were armed with posters to place in washrooms as they conducted their routine examinations of 4,000 places of business throughout the metro area.

## Create Your Own Campaign

For public health organizations that would like to create their own campaign, contact TYRA PALMER AT (918) 579-7974 OR [TPALMER@HILLCREST.COM](mailto:TPALMER@HILLCREST.COM)

## Campaign Materials

### **Elementary-aged Children:**

- ?? Two sided coloring sheet (encourage the children to take the sheets home) 100,000 quantity
- ?? Don't Bug Me Stickers (with the bug critter) 70,000 quantity
- ?? Educational Posters for the school 2,000 quantity
- ?? Restroom signs 1,000 quantity

### **Secondary-aged Children**

- ?? Don't Bug Me Sticker 30,000 quantity
- ?? Educational Posters 2,000 quantity
- ?? Restroom signs 1,000 quantity
- ?? Information on the websites

### **Teachers**

- ?? Sample newsletter article regarding the campaign
- ?? Individual samples of anti-bacterial hand sanitizer 25,000 quantity
- ?? Opportunity to apply for one of three \$500 classroom grants for innovative application of the campaign
- ?? Information on the websites

### **Businesses/public**

- ?? Educational Posters 2,000 quantity
- ?? Restroom signs 5,000 quantity
- ?? Sample article for corporate newsletter
- ?? Information on the website
- ?? Health care speakers
- ?? Print ad's

?? TV commercial

?? Billboards

**FOR INFORMATION REGARDING THE DON'T BUG ME CAMPAIGN,  
PLEASE CONTACT:**

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