

Biking the way to a better world

A holistic approach to health care as a hallmark of global responsibility helps Freewheelin participants thrive like never before

By DORIAN BENKOIL | How often can someone say the media they've created helped people stay fit and also helped save the planet? Freewheelin participants have burned more than 1.3 million calories while reducing their carbon footprint by more than 14.6 metric tons simply by borrowing and using bikes.

Humana, the fourth-largest U.S. health insurance company, launched the bike-sharing program in September of 2007 to help about 10,000 employees go between a half-dozen headquarters buildings in downtown Louisville. Soon after, the company brought in Bikes Belong, a bike industry group that promotes cycling, to extend the program. Together they reached out to the Democratic and Republican national committees about providing bikes at their conventions in 2008. By August, 1,000 bikes were provided at seven stations in Denver, and again in the Twin Cities just days later.

Freewheelin inspired about 42,000 miles of riding spread among some 7,500 rides, despite the shortening of the Republican convention due to Hurricane Gustav. (As Gustav took hold, Humana pledged to donate \$10 for every mile ridden. They ultimately sent more than \$150,000 to the Red Cross.)

Humana's Greg Matthews used digital media to build awareness in the bike sharing program through blogs, social networks, Meetup.com and ads in Facebook. The media helped generate excitement and give participants a place to interact with and



GAME CHANGER 09 CASE STUDY

Freewheelin'

for demonstrating that the Internet is not just something on your screen. Humana's program challenges the fundamental assumption that health insurance is only for after-the-fact-care, and redefines it as a partnership in preventative care and holistic health. Its suite of digital tie-ins helps translate the ambiguous "whole health" benefits of biking into tangible results that spur people to long-term commitment.

encourage each other. An avid fan base has posted videos to YouTube, more than 1,500 photos to Flickr, launched blogs and is now following a Twitter feed and ever-growing Facebook site. Information technology provides the backbone of the operation, too. To get a Freewheelin bike, the participant registers (online if they like), then gets an ID card they swipe to unlock a bike from a rack. They return the bike to that or another Freewheelin station. Their miles ridden, calories burned and carbon contribution are recorded automatically, and sent to personalized Web pages.

DNC volunteer Brian Popp, a Denver-based attorney, talks about the excitement of meeting Gov. Tim Pawlenty, the fun of seeing activity tracked on electronic bulletin boards, and watching video feeds from the other bike stations. "Everybody seemed to like it," he says. "A lot of people were surprised at how easy it was." Denver Mayor John Hickenlooper last month announced the launch of the city's B-Cycle bike sharing program with 30 bikes donated by Humana. "The positive feedback we received from the bike sharing program during the 2008 Democratic National Convention was remarkable," he said.

The program is similar to bike sharing programs in Paris and other European cities, and is further helping change the game in the U.S. through donations of another 30 bikes to Minneapolis, also launching a bike-sharing program, and another 30 bikes to help National Park Service employees ride among monuments in Washington, D.C. Humana is creating a business based on the program to help communities and large companies set up their own bike-sharing systems.

Humana believes Freewheelin is helpful to the company's bottom line, too, by helping lower its members' healthcare costs. The United States is "getting ready to embark on a pretty serious debate about healthcare reform in the United States [about] how to expand healthcare coverage," says spokesman Jim Turner. "We think it's critically important that as the debate begins, that if we could just get the country healthier, a lot of the problems we have with paying for healthcare would be much less severe."

Freewheelin

www.freewheelinwaytogo.com

Bike sharing was a hit when launched in Paris in 2007. It was cheap, convenient and eco-friendly. End of story? Not so fast. A U.S. health insurer changed the game and wrote a new story. Humana promotes its business agenda - lower health care costs - through a state-of-the-art bike sharing program tested during the 2008 U.S. political party conventions in Denver and St. Paul. Freewheelin promotes its social and business agenda through communication - made possible by wireless/mobile and social networking technology. When you ride a Freewheelin bike, wireless networks track your mileage and calories burned. Social networking tools help individuals track their personal successes and, by calculating reduced carbon emissions, their contributions to the shared health and wellness of their community and the planet.



way to go

The Freewheelin pilot program encourages bike-sharing