

**Ramp Up the Effectiveness of Your Holiday Messaging**By Pam McDonald

Paul Flowers, President of [Circa 46](http://www.circa46.com/), an advertising agency with a specialty in senior living and a Senior Housing Forum partner, points out that the holidays are ripe for traffic-generating promotions that motivate prospective residents to visit your community.

**Avoid The Trap**

“However,” he says,“there is a trap related to holiday promotions into which many communities fall. That is, they host events that do not highlight a community’s uniqueness, opting instead to simply throw what amount to holiday-themed parties.”

To use the holidays as an opportunity to demonstrate what makes your community special, he encourages you to inventory those aspects about your community that prospects tend to gravitate toward. He says, “Identifying those probably won’t require a lot of effort, because you, most likely, are already featuring them as selling points on tours and in presentations.

**Examples & Tactics**

If one of your community’s strongest assets is dining, create promotions that allow you to showcase your chef:

1. A holiday tea gives your chef the opportunity to show off by creating and serving gourmet hors d’oeuvres or desserts for your guests to enjoy. And the scents emanating from the kitchen will create a positive first impression for prospects, when the first enter your door.

Paul notes, “As an aside, my mother was a residential realtor. One of her most effective tactics when conducting an open house was to heat up an apple pie in the oven, so the first thing a buyer experienced upon entering the house was the enticing aroma of the pie, thereby setting a positive tone for the tour of the home.”

To make the tea event even more effective, Paul recommends adding some appropriate holiday entertainment to accompany the good food!
2. A holiday cooking demonstration – which might range from Christmas cookies to gingerbread houses – can spotlight your chef’s talents. He notes, “Such a demonstration can be especially effective if you have a very personable chef who likes to interact with your residents and guests.”
3. An intimate holiday dinner for geriatric care managers who often influence their clients’ senior living selection process can raise your community’s stature in their minds and establish you as one of the communities in your market that offers superior dining.

**Spread The Joy**

If your community actively participates in civic or charitable organizations – like the Salvation Army or other local charities – consider conducting holiday events that feature those organizations. Most civic and charitable organizations have a development person who would be pleased to speak at your event. In addition to the entertainment value provided by the event, the focus on charity will give prospects an extra reason to remember you.

Communities that have emphasize life-long learning might want to offer holiday-oriented lectures, like popular Christmas traditions that have been established in their cities. Paul says,“You might also bring in experts to teach about holiday-related flower design or table settings, reinforcing the life-long learning component your community offers.”

And for communities that have a strong multi-generational focus, he recommends offering programs that make holiday memories for grandchildren – activities that grandchildren and grandparents can do together.

**Highlight Your Strengths**

Paul sums up,“The key consideration is to look at what your community does very well, and then take advantage of the holiday season to highlight those strengths to prospective residents and their influencers.”

He adds, “Not only will you build perceptions of your community’s strong points in the minds of prospects, you will provide your residents and their families with holiday activities that reinforce those aspects of your community they too probably enjoy most.”

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