

#Giving Tuesday



This One Day Should Last All Year

By Susan Saldibar

We sure have a lot of “days” these days, don’t we? For instance, did you know that November 1st was “National Cook for Your Dog Day”? How about November 15th “Clean out your refrigerator day” (I didn’t, did you?) Oh, I could go on and on. But there are some designated “days” that make a lot of sense because they make us stop and think about what we are doing to become better people and look at how we can make things better for people around us.

There is one such day coming up on November 27th called “Giving Tuesday”. I only found this out after speaking with Debra Gawet, Social and Digital Content Strategist for [Sage Age Strategies](#) (a Senior Housing Forum partner). Debra talked about the importance of senior living communities to recognize the power of every day giving. “Days like ‘Giving Tuesday’ are a good reminder that there are ways to give everyday,” Debra told me. And as the person in charge of with digital and social content, she has witnessed communities who have some pretty cool giving programs for residents, staff and the greater community.

Is your community giving every day?

I asked her to share a few things she’s seen recently. Here they are:

- Residents and staff working together to create homemade items for animals, while raising money and donating it all to local animal shelters. They have shared some great photos on social media.

- Scheduling resident and staff visits to local schools and engaging in special activities with the young students. This is beneficial for both the residents and the students as we've seen a lot of research regarding the benefit of inter-generational bonding.
- Family-friendly events for residents with their caregivers, family members, and loved ones. They all bring food, have people do face painting, provide arts and crafts, bounce houses, music, and truly try to make it fun for all.
- Residents and staff working together to turn flower donations into beautiful flower arrangements; displaying their work throughout the community for all to see and enjoy.
- Residents sharing their talents. One community recently had a 99+-year-old resident teach the other residents how to make a classic Italian recipe from their family. After the food demonstration, everyone sampled the meal.

These are cool activities that are ongoing and give back to others within the community as well as outside their doors.

Don't celebrate Giving Tuesday just so that you can promote it.

Using "Giving Tuesday" as an example, I asked Debra, from her marketing vantage point, what wisdom she could pass along to senior living communities in terms of sharing their giving culture on their websites and through social media. Here are a few pointers:

- **Infuse your messaging with a giving tone.** "It's important to humanize your messaging," Debra tells me. "Infuse it with words that reach out and are 'caring' in tone."
- **Resist the temptation to "promote".** "There can be a fine line between sharing what you are doing and striking an overly promotional tone," Debra says. The best way to avoid this, is to direct the focus on your residents, staff and greater community, not on your organization as a business.
- **Share photos and stories.** "When you share your stories on social, it adds heart and humanizes your brand," Debra says. "It helps you bring to life what your community is all about in an authentic and meaningful way," she adds.

The biggest mistake communities can make is to either ignore special days like Giving Tuesday, or to simply turn them into one-day promotional opportunities. "Instead, you should use these special designated days, like Giving Tuesday, as a stepping stone to creating a more giving culture within your community," Debra says. "Communities should always be looking for opportunities to give back, whether it takes the form of random acts of kindness directed towards residents and caregivers, or giving back to the greater community."

Maybe we should all look at these special "days" like Giving Tuesday as a reminder to try harder, dig deeper and give back more. What do you think?



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