



PRO-ACT's Recovery Walks! 2009 Billboard By Noni West

As planning was underway for PRO-ACT's 2009 Recovery Walks! PRO-ACT staff and the organization's sponsorship manager were looking for fresh sponsorship ideas. We realized that on the drive into Center City Philadelphia there were several charity walk billboards and realized that this would be a great way to attract potential walk donors and participants.

PRO-ACT already had experience using billboards. Several years ago the PRO-ACT Family program had a billboard donated to them and it proved very successful at driving program attendance.

The staff raised the idea of a billboard for Recovery Walks! 2009! at the Bucks County PRO-ACT Chapter meeting and it was approved. PRO-ACT staff researched outdoor advertising companies, explained our mission, target audience and timing. Clear Channel emerged as the company to work with because they would give us the advertising space as a public service ad. PRO-ACT's financial responsibility was to pay for the production of materials.

I-95 was chosen as the location because it is one of the main arteries for travel around Philadelphia. Its route goes through Bucks, Philadelphia and Delaware counties – three of the five counties served by PRO-ACT. That meant that many potential participants would see the sign and learn about Recovery Walks! PRO-ACT and our sponsors.

A small team was assigned to the billboard project – PRO-ACT's Executive Director Bev Haberle; people who were creating Recovery Walks! materials; the sponsorship manager; and Recovery Walks! coordinator. Everyone brainstormed the "message" for the billboard and came up with billboard headlines, choosing the final headline by vote. Because billboards are seen by people driving their cars at 65 to 75 miles per hour, the one constraint was that it be compelling, short, easy to read

at a distance and include our web address since registration and donations were being done online at www.recoverywalks.org.

Clear Channel designed the billboard. Their designers are skilled at working in such a large medium. We gave them the headline and logo and they came up with four options and we selected one.

The final component was to include the listing of sponsors on the billboard. We included the opportunity to be listed on the billboard in our sponsorship packages. Because billboards are an advertising medium with a long closing date (you have to have all of the materials finalized way in advance of when the billboard will appear) we had to be clear that sponsorship commitments were required by a certain date in order to be included on the billboard. The billboard ran from mid-July 2009 to our September 12th walk. In order to be included on the billboard, sponsors had to commit by June 15th. The organization of the sponsorship process was the most complicated part of the program.

The billboard was completely successful and the major lesson we learned was to start the whole process early.

Do you want to put up a billboard to promote your Rally for Recovery! or other activities? PRO-ACT is happy to serve as a resource for any organization who wants to use billboards/outdoor. Mike McDonnell is our point person for billboards and can be reached at 215.788.3738. PRO-ACT is now using Clear Channels' public service outdoor for some of our other programs.

About PRO-ACT: Pennsylvania Recovery Organization – Achieving Community Together is hosted by the Bucks County Council on Alcoholism and Drug Dependence, Inc. The recovery community organization was founded in 1997 to promote the rights of, and ensure opportunities for, those still suffering from the disease of addiction. PRO-ACT is led by the recovery community and embraces all pathways to recovery. Since its founding, PRO-ACT's primary focus has been on improving access to opportunities and programs that sustain long term recovery for individuals and families.