

Community Associations and Facebook

HSCA on Facebook

By Terence Leung

For the Federation

As the use of online social media applications continue to grow, it's no surprise Calgary communities have also incorporated the use of sites such as Facebook and Twitter as part of their communications strategies.

The Hillhurst-Sunnyside Community Association (HSCA) has seen its Facebook page swell to over 1,000 members ever since Sarah Hughes, marketing and events coordinator, identified that the community would benefit greatly from trying to connect with its membership online.

"I was part of a revitalization of the farmers market here and trying to find ways to make it more successful," explains Hughes who was hired by the HSCA a few months ago.

"I was thinking that since everybody that I know uses Facebook, we could use it to publicize our farmers market and set up a page for it. I invited everyone I knew who would be interested and even people who were fans of other farmers markets."

The result was a stronger showing for the farmers market, but more importantly a contact list and network Hughes could go back to for future events.

Eventually, she set up an official HSCA Facebook page where users can comment on events or the community.

"I already use Facebook a lot for myself personally," she says. The HSCA has also integrated their site to drive more users to join their Facebook and Twitter pages along with their email signatures which has a link to their website. She adds the Facebook page gets about five 'friend requests' every day.

"But it's been awesome for us (HSCA). You can import all your email contacts and ask them to join or like the page. I also coordinate rentals and people who have rented from us seek us out to add their Facebook profile."

"The Hillhurst-Sunnyside Community Association has seen its Facebook presence swell to over 1,000 friends."

Hughes believes community associations looking to connect with their communities online need to establish a plan that incorporates a variety of online social mediums. Most importantly, those tools need to be accessible and easy to learn for its administrators.

"We've done a few tweaks to our site which is a WordPress site. You literally just log in, and then write what you need to and post it to our site. It's the same thing with our Facebook and Twitter account. You link the Facebook and Twitter page to the site and vice versa."

Using their Facebook page to publicize the HSCA's Dec. 3 Holiday Gift Market between 7 – 10PM, Hughes has been updating HSCA's status reminding people of the date and that the market will feature baking goods, gifts, hot chocolate and even a photo booth.

There is a separate Facebook event listing showing 283 who "will be attending" and 248 who "may be attending".

"It's not a difficult thing to do once someone shows you how. It's almost too easy and it's basically free marketing," says Hughes.

"It's a great way to get the word out on something quickly to a large group of people and with little cost."

If you still aren't ready to take the plunge the Federation of Calgary Communities has created a page where community associations can post upcoming events, photos, discussion topics or anything else you can think of to promote your community. **Find us at www.facebook.com/FederationofCalgaryCommunities**