

**Title: The Snow Hero Initiative:  
Engaging the community and building voluntarily compliance one snow storm at  
a time.**

**Category: Communications  
Jurisdiction: City of Centennial, CO  
Jurisdiction Population: 100,377  
City Manager: John Danielson  
Innovation Award  
Rapid Fire Session**

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## **Overview**

**Purpose:** The City of Centennial recognizes that other municipalities have opted to implement a punitive ordinance requiring sidewalk snow removal including assessment of fines for noncompliance. After consideration of such an ordinance the City decided to first encourage residents and businesses to be good neighbors through a Snow Hero initiative. The City believes encouraging voluntary compliance will be more successful and effective than a punitive ordinance.

The Snow Hero Initiative recognizes residents, businesses and neighborhoods that help keep our City safe by removing snow and ice from sidewalks and other pathways.

### **Goals:**

- Widespread knowledge of the branded volunteer initiative via various public outreach as well as paid and earned media tactics
- Recognition of Snow Heroes throughout the community through program nominations
- News coverage by local media outlets
- Establish goodwill among Centennial residents and business owners in 'being a good neighbor' and creating safe and clear pathways
- Decrease snow removal complaint inquiries to the City's Citizen Response Center

### **Method:**

The City of Centennial communications staff worked in tandem with Webb PR to develop a branded campaign encouraging the voluntary removal of snow and ice from properties following a snow storm. The initiative was created in response to community input on the need for snow removal, especially in business parks and multi-family residential buildings. Target audiences included City residents, business owners and multi-family dwellings.

The Centennial Snow Hero concept was developed to serve as the face of the volunteer snow removal initiative. The logo encompassed a wintry, vintage feel signifying a simpler time when everyone helped their neighbor, with highlights of color to attract the eye. The design was intended to give a warm, inviting feel to encourage interest and participation while also portraying what's widely considered a chore, as a means of demonstrating civic pride.

The primary information source for the Centennial Snow Hero campaign was a dedicated page on the City's website including: a brief description of the campaign, snow clearing tips for property owners and managers, and a form website visitors could submit to nominate Snow Heroes.

Several promotional pieces were developed to promote awareness of the initiative including: posters, door hangers, ads in print media and bus shelters, window decal recognitions and signage.

The City recognized all individuals or organizations nominated for their participation in the volunteer snow removal initiative by presenting them with a Centennial Snow Hero window decal or yard sign for display and a mention on the City's website. Anyone residing, working or owning a business in the City qualified for a nomination.

### **Community Input:**

While the 2013 winter season seemed mild by Colorado standards the metro area reported more than 69 inches of snow, providing just enough powder to allow the City of Centennial's Snow Hero initiative to achieve great success. Residents nominated 128 fellow community members for showing their 'snowman-ship' by voluntarily clearing snow and ice from the sidewalks and parking lots on and near their properties. Centennial community members were asked to nominate others that showed the "Snow Hero" spirit for recognition. The 128 nominees for the volunteer snow removal initiative included 100 residents; 25 business properties/shopping centers; 2 homeowners associations/ civic associations; and 1 special district.

During the nomination process nominators were given the opportunity to share stories about their Snow Heroes. South Suburban Parks and Recreation was recognized by a community member for its outstanding snow removal process and provided this testimonial:

*"There are a number of us who are handicapped, families with children or just citizens who love being outdoors in Colorado, especially right after a good snow. The grounds/maintenance crew keep the path around Arapaho Park cleared of snow immediately after a storm so everyone in the area can enjoy a walk and get some fresh air."*

### **Results:**

After the implementation of the voluntary initiative, snow removal requests to the City decreased by 75 percent from the previous season. Requests to the City's Citizen Response Center (CRC) regarding sidewalk snow removal significantly decreased following the introduction of the Snow Hero campaign. The CRC reported only 26 requests after the implementation of the Snow Hero initiative compared with 106 the previous season.

Earned media was an important tactic in introducing the Snow Hero campaign to the community. During the inaugural initiative launch the Snow Hero program received 11 media mentions in print publications, online media and through local television. All media mentions encouraged residents and business owners to "show their snowman-ship" by being a good neighbor and promptly clearing snow and ice following a snow storm. Analysis of earned media value indicates a major return for the campaign. These media placements would be the equivalent of a nearly \$400,000 advertising purchase (approximately 13 times the entire campaign budget) in terms of number of people reached (impressions).