

# Using Text Messaging to Engage a Community

Organization: 413 Families

## About the Program

413 Families is a community texting program launched by six organizations that provide youth and family services in the Springfield, Massachusetts area: Springfield Museums, Springfield City Library, the YMCA of Greater Springfield, WGBY Public Television for Western New England, Springfield Public Schools, and the Reading Success by 4th Grade initiative.

## Challenge

The organizations were looking to engage their communities with free or low-cost event and activity notifications, as well as tips on education, parenting, and more. Focus groups indicated that Springfield parents were eager for ways to engage with their children, and the sponsoring organizations needed an effective way to reach them. The program's target audience is families with children up to eight years old.



## Using Texting

The 413 Families organizations have shared messaging via TV, radio, and print, but found that sending text messages was quicker, more targeted, and far less expensive. In addition, focus groups revealed that parents in the community responded particularly well to text messaging — that they used texting more than any other social channel.

Springfield residents join the 413 Families campaign by texting "413Families" (or "413Familias" for Spanish) to EZ Texting's short code, 313131. The campaign is promoted through info stations at community events, postcards, banners at community partners' facilities, community publications, and social media posts. Opt-ins receive two-to-three texts per week with family-friendly event alerts, opportunities to win gift cards and event tickets, and tips on interacting with their children.

One of 413 Families' goals is to ensure grade-level reading for students via encouragement from their parents — encouragement prompted by text message. In one message, opt-ins were asked to share a photo of them reading to their child for a chance to win a gift card. That single campaign yielded 50 photo responses.

## Results

The 413 Families campaign has been a resounding success — campaign opt-ins surpassed their goal by over 30% during the pilot period. 87% of surveyed campaign participants said they were “extremely likely” to recommend 413 Families, or that they already had. One of the biggest benefits has been a noticeable increase in event attendance — and 413 Families has traced many of those attendees directly to the text campaign coupons.

Above all, the organizations behind 413 Families are so pleased with the campaign’s success that they’re looking to expand its scope to encompass neighboring communities.

## Conclusion

Text-based community outreach powered by EZ Texting is effective, easy to run and inexpensive to fund. With EZ Texting, 413 Families has been able to engage its community members using the communications method they prefer...and, in doing so, has produced extraordinary results.

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*“With EZ Texting, we’ve been able to engage our community more effectively than with any other form of communication. Our campaign exceeded its initial goal by over 30%, and continues to surpass expectations.”*

