



Reno Sparks Association Gets Out the Vote With Game Changer Grant

It may feel like a big election year all over, but in Reno, where three out of five city council seats are up for grabs, the stakes are especially high. So, when the Legislative Committee of the Reno Sparks Association of REALTORS® (RSAR), under the leadership of Chairman Mark Ashworth, was brainstorming last fall about how to maximize the number of its 1,900 members getting out to vote for REALTOR®-friendly candidates, it hit upon a novel idea: use the RSAR offices as an early voting site!

“We are fortunate to own our own building,” explains RSAR CEO Cherie Williams. “It’s located in a business district adjacent to a community college, the power company, and a substantial apartment complex. So, we hoped to attract lots of folks who live and work nearby, in addition to our own membership.”

This convenient location made the site attractive to the Washoe County Registrar of Voters, who certified the office as an early voting site. After an initial inspection to make sure that the voting equipment would be secure; that the site could be accessible both early and late in the day; and that there was adequate electronic data transmittal capability; the registrar visited another couple of times to check on this last critical point. The RSAR offices passed the test. “Typically, voting here takes place in the public schools and grocery stores,” says Williams, “Being able to vote in an office like this is something new and different.” She suspects that the Registrar also took into account the fact that the REALTORS® would be able to get the word out, through their active outreach and normal channels of business communication.

Early this spring, RSAR Government Affairs Director Jim Nadeau applied to the NATIONAL ASSOCIATION OF REALTORS® for a Game Changer Grant to help with the publicity. The \$2,950 it received paid for flyers that have been distributed to local businesses, and signage. Signs were strategically placed to direct voters to the RSAR offices; posters in the large classroom that serves as the voting site publicize how REALTORS® protect property rights. “It’s great exposure for REALTORS®,” notes Williams. “Not only in providing this public service, but in raising public awareness about what we do. We’re showing that the business of real estate is not just a self-serving industry, but that REALTORS® really care about neighborhoods and are engaged in the political processes that affect them.”

Getting the RSAR membership engaged meant an initial outreach to members identified as not being registered to vote, through NAR’s Voter Registration Initiative. This was the first year that Nevada’s Secretary of State allowed electronic voter registration, so Williams and Nadeau are hopeful that they ‘caught’ all their members. A campaign of email blasts, tweets, and information on the RSAR website and on its Government Affairs Facebook page is getting the word out to members about the unconventional voting site. RSAR calls it “Get out the Vote – with a twist!”

To send the message home, the Association put out a “Get Out To Vote Call” to members. With the assistance of Silver State Analytics, two messages were developed from the President of the Association, Kevin Sigstad. The messages were delivered by a direct call to RSAR members who are registered to vote, reminding them to get out to



vote and directing them to the RSAR offices as an early voting site. “The program has been deemed success by the number of calls received confirming the times and thanking us for the reminder,” notes Williams.

RSAR is able to track the number of voters who come to cast ballots at its offices, and Williams plans to share the innovative election season program with the other four local REALTOR® associations in the state -- an important criterion of the Game Changer grant program is that projects must be replicable models. “We’ll see where it goes from there!” she says.

To learn more about how RSAR got out the vote, contact CEO Cherie Williams at 775.823.6233 or cherie@rsar.net.