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Eye to Eye

Donate to Your Passion & Build Your Biz!

By Brenda Fishbaugh

Get ready for a heartwarming story!

Gina and Chris Martinichio of California SunDaze Tanning Studio & Coffee & Smoothie Bar wanted to thank the Binghamton, NY community for 30 years of supporting the business. Having personally found and adopted an abandoned kitten, they chose a charity close to their hearts – Every Dog's Dream Animal Rescue. Gina then created "Furtastic Friday," giving gifts to customers who donated to the charity. Salon guests who donated had their photos taken next to the huge "Fur-mometer" that showed SunDaze's progress toward their \$4,500 goal.

We've all done these fundraisers, right? But have you raised over \$7,500 for your charity? A single 11-bed salon with one spray-tan room donated \$7,500 to cover medical bills for abandoned pups and kittens!

"I remember once watching an interview with Warren Buffett," explained the longtime salon owner. "The interviewer discussed the fact and principles of giving and how it seemed that every time Warren gave his money away, he became richer. We wanted to thank our tanners for 30 years of sun, and wanted to give back to our community. No one was more surprised than me that our lotion and upgrade sales have now increased 20%."

How did Gina do it? "I worked closely with our distributor, Four Seasons," she explained. "Ashley and Carmen contacted several manufacturers, who sent us samples and goodies to give away. Together, we created some really great giveaways for our customers." For a \$5 donation, SunDaze tanners received either a free session or upgrade and a free lotion packet. For an additional \$10, they received a free gift with a value of up to \$30. "For example, we filled a salon logo coffee mug with packettes, a mini-bottle of moisturizer and disposable eyewear," Martinichio continued. "We ran out of all our donated goodies within our first few 'Furtastic Fridays'!" So, Team SunDaze bought more lotion samples, lip balms, eyewear, nail polish and other items, and stuffed them into "paw print" cellophane bags purchased from Amazon. "Furtastic Friday became a huge

thing and we tried to do something different each week to keep up the buzz!" Martinichio said.

The next thing Gina knew, they had many new customers from referrals and the sharing on social media about the fundraiser. During the week, everyone wanted to know what the Fur Friday offerings were going to be. SunDaze picked up a lot of new social media followers, as their dogs Bert & Ernie, two Chihuahua puppies, became the "spokespups" on Facebook and Instagram. The rescue shelter also spread the word, and animal-loving SunDaze customers continued to come back each week to donate.

Yes, Gina put a lot of her own money into it – they planned to run Furtastic Friday for seven weeks and it has now become a monthly event. "It was so worth spending our money to make this happen. Not only were we able to thank our customers for 30 years of patronage, we also helped a valued animal shelter. We could not have had the success we have without our customers' and suppliers' support, both in business and fundraising. What began as an opportunity to give back turned into an unintended increase in sales. Our customers have purchased full-sized bottles of lotions and products that were Furtastic Friday giveaway samples and they continue to use upgrade equipment! And our clientele is amazed that together, we raised over \$7,500 for a local charity. It was a win-win-win! I am very grateful!" exclaims Martinichio. ■

Want to see photos of Gina's spokespups, social media, Fur-mometer and several of her goodie packages?
Email Brenda@WinkEase.com.



About the Author:

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