

# Community Involvement



*Jody Zaker, Property Manager  
Paul & Jerry's Self Storage Blanket Drive*

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It's not about how new your facility is or how many units you have available to rent... it really comes down to the quality of staff you have managing your storage facility. In such a competitive storage industry, it's extremely important that your managers are active within their communities. Managers, who actively participate in community functions, develop impeccable customer service skills, better overall sales skills and establish meaningful relationships with their team and other members throughout the community. Getting involved in the surrounding community will help "brand the name" of your self storage. Bring the community to your store and in turn, you have now created foot traffic.

An ideal starting point would be to work with your local chamber to see what works within the community and how they might be able to help promote and support your on-site functions. Making cold calls to different organizations, non-profit groups and other business leaders will help identify their needs and what your store could do to assist.

Having an open mind is crucial in planning an event of any kind at your storage facility. You know your property best so you have to base your events on how much space you actually have available. Keep in mind that just because you have a smaller parking lot *does not* limit your options completely. Here are some events to consider:

- *Community Yard Sale*
- Child Finger Printing
- Child Car Seat Inspection
- Customer Service Day
- Career Day
- Blood Mobile – "Give Blood Today"
- Vendor Tradeshow
- Pet Pampering Day
- Antique Car Show
- Drives/Donations

Paul & Jerry's Self Storage, in partnership with Broken but Beautiful Ministries, Inc., organized a Blanket Drive for the homeless of Hernando County. The outpouring support of the community far exceeded the county's recognition and it became recognized nationwide by the *Inside Self Storage* magazine along with a variety of local newspapers and media networks. In opening their arms to help those in need, the entire management team has received hundreds, if not thousands, of phone calls and emails offering help and support for the homeless community. No thought is too small and no community is too big to reach out to. After being featured in the *Inside Self Storage* magazine, the phones began to ring off the hook! Someone wanted to allow the homeless to shower once a week and another to provide them with meals. Another handful of people in the community wanted to donate toiletries and clothing. It takes just one small act of kindness to touch the hearts of many who will in turn remember you for years to come when they need your services.

With tough times upon many families across the country, Quality Self Storage in Englewood has offered to be the donation location to collect food and non-perishable goods for the

Englewood East Church of Christ and a local Englewood Pantry. Not only is Quality Self Storage providing a drop off location for the community but they are also showing other businesses that space is no issue for such a worthy cause.

Two Rivers Self Storage of Bradenton provided to Manatee County that there is definitely not a shortage of books if you just reach out to the community and ask. The management team was able to round up approximately five hundred books in just over a month. They put smiles on the faces of senior citizens, single mothers across the county along with giving children the chance to expand the vocabulary with a variety of children's book donations.

In many instances, involving other businesses within your immediate area can be beneficial for them as well and also cut down the total cost you actually spend on hosting an event. Most businesses are excited to advertise their products or services, so having another business sponsor your refreshments or gift bags would allow them to include information about who they are, while still promoting your facility as the event host.

Another thing to strongly consider would be to donate space for good, community causes and you receive positive response from that organization as well as being recognized for your willingness to get involved. Be sure that your manager is striving to attend the Chamber ribbon cuttings and on their way to becoming an Ambassador of their local Chamber. In our management of many facilities we have found that this can be such an asset to your business. In addition, getting involved in your local school community can be extremely beneficial. Not only does your facility get recognized by the entire educational faculty but the support for the children's parents can really give you the extra edge on referrals.

These competitive facilities near you may have hard to beat specials, newly constructed properties and the popular rental trucks with move ins but you can host numerous events on site which makes your facility stand out. People know who you are because they've heard about your successful events, have friends who currently rent from you or even saw media that made reference to your activities. This is where you stand out from the crowd because your community knows who you are as a management team helping others and not just as another business down the street.

In the overbuilt market we are facing today, it's hard to imagine the old phrase... "It's better to give than to receive". We have found that by 'giving' to our local communities, we in turn are receiving more than we give. We spend hundreds if not thousands of dollars a month trying to get people to our stores and by having an event, we could bring hundreds in and it would only cost us pennies. People may not be thinking storage when they arrive but they will know where you are when the need arises... and *we know it will!*

*Accountable Management & Realty, Inc., located in Lutz, Florida, has been involved in self storage facility management for the past twenty years, with 40+ stores currently under contract. They have created a comprehensive training & marketing program for their 150 + employees that now is being taught as well through consulting and auditing. Accountable Management has been an active member of the Self Storage Association and the Florida Self Storage Association for many years. Visit us at [www.FloridasStorageSolution.com](http://www.FloridasStorageSolution.com) or call (813) 929-3088 for more information.*