

## **Menasha Complete Count Census Committee 2010 Report**

The City of Menasha's Complete Count Census Committee for the 2010 Census was organized and met for an initial meeting on June 24, 2009. The committee membership consisted of employees of the City of Menasha and Menasha joint school district, local non-profit agencies, and citizens. The committee met monthly through December 2009, and bi-monthly through February 2010. The final committee meeting was held on April 21, 2010.

Activities completed by the committee included:

- Creating a calendar of events at which committee members could distribute census literature and promotional items (August 2009).
- Posters were distributed to local churches and agencies.
- Articles for newsletters created and distributed (city newsletter, senior center newsletter, school district newsletters), and local newspaper.
- Census signage created and displayed at Calder stadium (entrance/exit to Hwy 441).
- Translation of census articles into Spanish, and Hmong.
- Re-designed and translated a census brochure, inviting families to a census assistance center.
- Collaborated with high school students to assist in the distribution of supplies.
- Collaborated with the Menasha Library to distribute census information and promotional items.
- Partnered with the Menasha school district to distribute census information and promotional items at parent teacher conferences and family school events.
- Collaborated with the Veterans of Foreign Wars (VFW) in hosting a census assistance center.
- Partnered with the city of Menasha parks department to place outdoor signage downtown and in several city parks.
- Utilized the marquees at the fire departments and senior center to remind citizens of the upcoming census.

### Strengths

- Complete count census committee members were committed to distributing census information whenever possible.
- Census signage at Calder Stadium.
- Bilingual committee members to translate and customize census information, and to outreach in their respective cultures.
- Committee member who served on city and county census committees was able to share un-distributed supplies from the county.
- Local partnerships
- Promotional items – the most popular were the blue cinch bags, footballs, LED flashlights, hats, tote bags and bag clips.
- Mail return rate of 84%.

## Weaknesses

- Lack of communication and support from the regional census offices in Oshkosh and Chicago.
- Regional Partner Specialist not able to problem solve concerns of committee members.
- Lack of Promotional items and brochures in early part of campaign when opportunities for distribution were abundant.
- Posters were complex, ill-designed and difficult to read.
- Yard signs difficult to read and arrived after the fact.
- Excessive promotional items with city of Menasha complete count committee logo. Eventual distribution to the public.
- Lack of a budget to localize census campaign.

## Citizen Complaints

- Census promotional items made outside the US when our own industries were struggling to stay open and our unemployment rate was high.
- Tax dollars spent on promotional items that were often late in arriving or of absolute no use to anyone i.e. mouse pads, refrigerator magnets.
- Tax dollars spent on the postcard before the census form mailing and the letter after receipt of the census form.
- Poor marketing design of posters, brochures and yard signs – difficult to read i.e. print small and lengthy messages.

## Future Considerations

- Allow the individual complete count census committee to order their own supplies directly from the distribution center. This would give the committees more control in ordering the type and quantity of supplies for specific events.
- Have census promotional products available early in the campaign (summer events) so as not to miss promotional opportunities.
- Availability of funds at the local level for unique and innovative promotional ideas.

## Conclusion

The City of Menasha's mail return rate was 84%. This was consistent with the Fox Valley region and the state of Wisconsin. The more the census message is given with the importance of returning forms, the higher the return rate will be. A committee that is comprised of members who know the community enhances the ability to promote the census campaign.