

ANNE KLEIN COMMUNICATIONS GROUP

Successful Crisis Communications

One in a Series of Award-Winning Solutions

The Challenge:

The Southern Chester County Medical Center (SCCMC) sought to avoid financial jeopardy by persuading its township supervisors to live up to their original agreement and not condemn the medical center's sewage treatment plant.

Results:

- The supervisors did not condemn the plant. Intense community pressure led the supervisors to negotiate an agreement with the hospital to purchase the sewage treatment system.
- The hospital retained a significant amount of the plant's capacity that allowed for completion of its retirement community.
- The hospital president's efforts resulted in a proactive, ongoing community relations program.
- Newspaper articles carried the story accurately and extensively.
- The program received a Silver Anvil Award of Excellence from the national PRSA; a Pepperpot award in Public Affairs from the Philadelphia chapter of PRSA; a Jersey Shore PR & Advertising Association Silver JASPER in Crisis Communications; and a Pyramid Awards Honorable Mention in Public Affairs from the N.J. chapter of PRSA.

Background:

SCCMC needed additional sewage capacity for its expanding hospital facilities, including its Jenner's Pond retirement community. The township demanded the hospital build a sewage treatment plant, with extra capacity for other potential users, and agreed to purchase this capacity for residents with failing septic systems. Then the board of supervisors expanded. The new board refused to honor the contract. SCCMC sued for breach of contract. The board retaliated, threatening to condemn the plant.

Condemnation included the responsibility to pay fair value for the property. The supervisors claimed the plant had no value. They would pay only for the land, leaving SCCMC in great financial jeopardy. Target audiences included: 1) Penn Township Board of Supervisors; 2) community influentials; 3) hospital and Jenner's Pond employees; 4) area residents; and 6) the news media.

The Campaign:

To alert the community to this serious situation, Anne Klein Communications Group planned a grass roots public affairs program to mobilize public opinion. SCCMC's president needed to establish and reinforce community relationships. AKCG wrote key messages and scripts to invite key influentials to one-on-one meetings with the president; scheduled and publicized community meetings; and developed direct mail pieces to invite township residents to the meetings. Prior to the community meetings, AKCG met with the SCCMC president for "refresher" presentation training and use of the key messages. The residents needed to know that if the sewage plant were to be condemned, the hospital would be put in financial jeopardy and their access to healthcare services negatively affected.

To learn more about how Anne Klein Communications Group can help you marshal community support for your special need, please call and ask for Anne Klein or Chris Lukach.