

*High Note*

## DDR Has Resounding Success with Its Sing! Promotion

**I**N MAY, WE REPORTED ON DEVELOPERS DIVERSIFIED REALTY'S SING! COMPETITION, A NATIONAL VOCAL TALENT COMPETITION DESIGNED TO SHINE THE SPOTLIGHT ON CHOIRS, CHORUSES, GOSPEL SINGERS, GLEE CLUBS, VOCAL GROUPS AND SOLOISTS AT 13 DDR PROPERTIES AROUND THE COUNTRY AND IN PUERTO RICO. Now, with more than 600 entries and 150,000 votes generated, the live performance phase of the program is set to take place September 10-October 8.

Because the promotion has been so successful we contacted Dawn Marie Lecklikner, regional vice president of shopping center marketing for DDR, to get an insider's look at how the program came about.

the Sing! website ([www.2011sing.com](http://www.2011sing.com)), and fans can vote for their favorite performers from October 10-16. One finalist will be selected from each center to move on to the final, national competition.

**How It Works**

Beginning April 15, contestants could complete an online entry form and upload an original audio performance of a song from the approved contest song list. Each of the 13 participating Developers Diversified centers selected 10 semifinalists by online popular vote as well as two alternates identified by the shopping center. These semifinalists will perform live at their nearest Developers Diversified Realty shopping center.

During the performance round, judges and text voting will narrow the field to three performances per property. Video from the three semifinalists' performances from each property will be uploaded onto

Sing! is the brainchild of DDR's "Next Big Thing" committee, a group of in-house marketing pros who keep an eye on popular and industry trends to try to come up with cutting-edge marketing programs. The committee took their cue from popular television shows and the success of live performances throughout DDR's portfolio.

**Prizes Chosen Carefully**

To underscore its commitment to the arts in the communities it serves, DDR chose the grand prize strategically. The winner will receive a once-in-a-

lifetime opportunity to have a personal coaching session on the topic of their choice with two-time Emmy award winner Kevin Briody, as well as receive \$5,000 Developers Diversified Realty MasterCard gift cards and a \$20,000 donation to the charity of their choice.

"We really looked at different aspects of the grand prize," Lecklikner says. "There's something in it for someone other than yourself – the charitable component.

There's the reward for the groups and individuals – the gift card – as well as the once-in-a-lifetime opportunity that's going to be tailored for the finalists. They may go into a recording studio with Kevin. He may work with them on songwriting. He will fly to wherever the group or soloist

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## Sing!

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winner is and spend the day with them exploring whatever is of greatest interest to them. He really wants it to be all about them.”

### Experimenting with Social Media

Sing! was designed to expand DDR’s shopping center presence in the social media arena. Until this point, DDR malls had done very limited marketing that involved texting, according to Lecklikner, so with this promotion they wanted to build in different media through the different phases.

“We didn’t have a proprietary texting list,” she says, “(we have proprietary email lists, we have Facebook pages, etc.) so this is a new element to add in. People will be able to text for the group or soloist they are voting on during the live performances and we will invite them to opt in to our texting club.”

DDR incorporated QR codes in a couple of ways. They could take fans to the voting page or to the Sing! overview page for a specific property.

The QR codes appeared on property signage and in print advertising. During the voting portion DDR gave the performers business cards they could distribute to their fans. QR codes on the cards took them to the voting page. The groups could put their name on the card to ensure that people voted for the right performer.

“We’ve really learned a lot

about social media and just how targeted it could get,” Lecklikner says. “If you went to a specific group’s page you could share that page on your Facebook, Twitter and other social media. You could send your family and friends directly to your preferred entry so they could vote for it.

“The goal is to test new media to determine how successful they were. Was it across the board? Was it in specific markets? What worked better? Sing! was a perfect platform to add to and grow throughout the competition,” she notes.

### Flexibility at Center Level

DDR built in flexibility for each property to customize the program to their market. The investment for each property depended on the resources they had or the partnerships and trade-outs they were able to negotiate. Each marketing team was challenged with leveraging their relationships within their market to maximize results while minimizing the investment.

In Puerto Rico, for example, “Puerto Rico Idol” was just launching. The malls there had street teams go out and intro-

duce the Sing! program to people who were waiting to audition for the TV show. The street teams were there at 4 a.m. talking to people.

Some centers partnered with restaurants at their properties who had karaoke nights, and tapped into those singers. Some worked with creative and performing arts centers. Some properties have their own sound systems; others are working with radio stations to provide them.

“For the judges,” Lecklikner notes, “the centers are partnering with radio stations and arts councils. We really want to make sure we have qualified people who are exciting and engaging for the performers to be judged by.

“I truly believe in this program,” she says. “It’s an amazing program and it’s bigger than any individual property. It’s about giving back. It’s about educating. It’s about engaging the communities we’re a part of. I can’t wait until the finals when we determine who the grand prize winners are. I believe entire communities will be working to get votes for their finalists.” ■



*Two-time Emmy award winner Kevin Briody.*