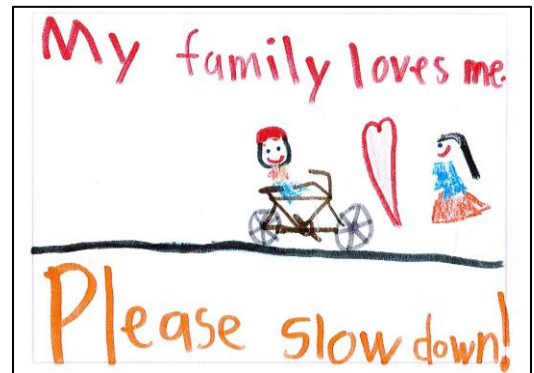
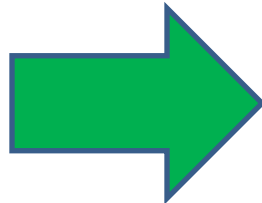


# Village of Bayside

## Citizen Engagement: Right Brain and the Emotional Draw

9075 N. Regent Road  
Bayside, WI 53217

### ICMA Annual Awards: Community Partnership



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### **Right Brain: The Emotional Impact: A Case Study**

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Each year, the Village receives inquiries, concerns, and other comments in relation to pedestrian traffic in the community. Bayside is in an urban setting, yet prides itself on its rural natural features in an urban environment. We have a limited number of sidewalks in the community. This does not, however, hinder the amount of pedestrian and bicycle traffic. In addition, young children often ride or walk to school in early Fall and Spring, when weather permits. The issue at hand, is a 35 mph stretch of Brown Deer Road, also considered State Highway 32, which transverses the Village as its' major thoroughfare. Here is where many children, pedestrians and bicycles must cross to go to and from school. The mentality in much of Wisconsin is that vehicles have the right-of-way, as opposed to pedestrians. To combat this concern, the Village took a multi-phased and faceted approach to improve pedestrian awareness in a less traditional way.

In early 2011, the Village received a groundswell of support/concern for improvements on this busy stretch of road. As one of the most traveled areas (for both vehicles and pedestrians), we began to search for a long-term solution. Many residents began working together to form advisory needs for the area. Residents and the Village participated in organized bike-to-school days, where our police department provided added enforcement and visibility. While all these initiatives helped create community momentum, there was still something missing. In fact, the Village received an email that suggested improvements for the area.

*“I have a few suggestions to improve the safety of this crossing but I am looking to all of you for support and to add your own suggestions. I personally would recommend, at a minimum, the following changes:*

- *Add additional crossing lines on the east side of Regent (they are only on the west side currently) so that cyclists crossing southbound do not first need to cross Regent to get to the crosswalk and then cross back to the right side of the road on the south side of Brown Deer to continue onward, adding an additional hazard.*
- *Add yellow “strobe lights” with ample space before and after the crossing to alert vehicles to slow down and yield to crossers; In my observation, this is especially critical for drivers coming westbound on Brown Deer from Lake Drive.*
- *Create a “15 mile/hour” zone before and after the crosswalk during peak hours prior to and after school ie. 7:45 am – 8:30 am and 3:30 pm – 4:15 pm.”*

These improvements may seem reasonable, and possibly even, effective. There was just one problem - we already had every one of them in place. We had the traditional, regulatory signage, flashing lights, a 15 mph school zone, and everything else you would normally see across the country. And herein lays our problem. All of these “effective” measures were already in place, but were either ignored, unnoticed, or most likely – simply ineffective. So much so that the group of concerned residents lobbying the Village didn’t even know they existed.

In the mindset of author Daniel Pink, who promotes “right brain,” emotional thought as a way to help better communicate with the public, the Village embarked on an *Emotionally Intelligent Signage Contest*. The premise was simple - hold a contest that would have children, parents,

and residents – the public – create signage that would help draw motorist’s attention and force them to slow down and stop at crosswalks. The winning designs would then be made into actual traffic signs (for about \$100 each) – providing a fresh, innovative look to the way we reach the public.

The project began in earnest, with some simple information being released through the Village’s weekly email distribution, not knowing how much, if any, response the public and the kids would engage in the process. Quickly, the program snowballed from what some considered a “dumb idea” to one that garnered local, state, and national media attention. The program was so noteworthy; the Village even attracted the Wisconsin Department of Transportation attention. In a public email, they outlined the following:

*“Do people at times ignore signs or overlook them? Certainly. Of course; you can install what you like on private Right of Way, but we would not recommend “emotionally intelligent signs”.*

This is an example of why the public at times finds government frustrating. The WIDOT admits that normal regulatory signs are ignored, but are not willing to explore alternative solutions to resolve the issues. After receiving the WIDOT’s response, the Village was even more motivated that we were on to something that was different and may have an impact.

Through the work of a dedicated team, the Village spearheaded several community engagement initiatives, including:

- Judging at each of the three local schools by the students and faculty;



Kids voting for their favorite signs.

- Display at Village Hall during open hours for judging and evaluation;
- Online judging of the individual signs;
- Town Hall meetings provided community input, education on crosswalk safety, and judging;
- Village hosted a Community gathering in the Park (Bonfire in the Park and Business Promotion) to evaluate and judge signs;
- At the conclusion of the July 4 Parade, all signs were posted on our website and a notice was resent via email encouraging the public to evaluate one more time.

Perhaps most unexpected was the community's outreach and involvement in the process. Many of the local school districts took the project on as a challenge, and incorporated the sign design into their classroom syllabus. A local arts and crafts business, *Art Trooper*, held a Sign Design Night, where children could help utilize their supplies to create an entry. In fact, the efforts to improve pedestrian safety became so widely recognized, that many members of the public indicated their interest in becoming volunteer crossing guards for the busiest intersections. The Village's police department provided necessary training and equipment, with local parents providing the time – at a volunteer rate.

At the end of this process, 115 sign designs were submitted and 2,412 votes were cast for the signage. After all the votes were counted, the field was narrowed to 25. From this, a seven member evaluation panel evaluated the signage on:

- Originality, creativity, overall impact, WOW factor, uniqueness, relevance, simplicity and intuitiveness, effective appeal to different generations (kids, adults, etc.), and overall impression.

Twelve (12) signs were ultimately selected as finalists to be turned into actual traffic signs to be placed throughout the Village. The Village then worked with a local vendor, TAPCO, Inc. who donated three of the initial signs, as well as constructed all of the winning entries into aluminum traffic signs, which were placed throughout the community. All of the entries, information about the process, and much more information can be found out at

<http://www.bayside-wi.gov/index.aspx?NID=350>.

**Below you'll find the winning sign slogans.**

- Slowpokes Welcome in Bayside
- Drive like Your Kids Live Here
- HIT THE BRAKES, NOT US
- SIMON SAYS SLOW DOWN
- THIS IS A SCHOOL ROAD; NOT A SPEEDWAY
- GET OFF YOUR PHONE; HANG UP
- SLOWING DOWN = SAVING LIVES
- SLOW DOWN
- GO SLOW

***How did the program improve the organization/Who has benefited?***

The idea for emotionally intelligent signage has helped raise awareness throughout the community, as well as the organization. Each department has a buy-in to see the project come to fruition, with public safety front and center. In addition, we've created a new way to think about issues. As opposed to looking for what has been tried and tried again unsuccessfully, we taken a different approach to problem solving.

***What customer/community needs and expectations were identified and fulfilled?***

We took a problem (pedestrian/bike safety) and turned it into a full scale community engagement process. By making residents the stakeholders in the process, they became part of the solution, as opposed to continually turning to government to find the solution.

***What lessons were learned that could be shared with other local governments?***

We believe this is a formula that can be replicated anywhere – and even tweaked to serve specific communities and various subjects. Perhaps the most important take-away is the process of education and engagement these challenges provide. It's often the journey, more than the destination.