

# CHECKOUTS

## COMMUNITY RELATIONS

### Happy Hour Offers Deal, Fun for Customers



Vendors attended Ace Hardware's Happy Hour events.

Looking for a way to provide a little extra entertainment for your customers?

Several Ace Hardware stores found a way to do just that in February when they participated in Ace's Hardware Happy Hour event.

Ace Alameda Station and Ace Cherry Creek in Denver, Colo., were two of the participating stores.

For the event, each participating store offered a happy hour from 3 to 5 p.m. on Saturdays in February. The event included free food and drinks—at these stores, it was soda and water—live music, demonstrations and special happy hour discounts throughout the store. (Note: Local regulations dictate whether you can serve or sell alcohol.)

"You can really run it at any time of the year," says Emily Niese, promotions manager for the stores. "February, generally speaking, is a slower month compared to our summer days, so depending on what coupons you promote, it can really make a difference for your slow season."

Niese says employees learned holding the two-hour event on two or three consecutive Saturdays yielded the best results for their store.

She suggests inviting vendors and asking each to bring samples of their products as well as a product to offer for a giveaway. Store employees raffled off a prize at the end of the event each week.

"We greet our customers with food samples, which are cooked with local Colorado-proud products we carry in our store," Niese says. "Any time you add food or drink with an event, it creates a 'we're having a party' type of feel. We want our customers to lounge and shop our store."

The Happy Hour events are a great way to help local charities or to promote a new product line, as well.

Niese says the store has seen an increase in foot traffic and sales during the happy hour events. "We've seen anywhere from 100 to 200-plus redemptions of coupons during the two hours the event is taking place."

The staff promotes the happy hour ahead of time by handing out coupons and mailing postcards to the local residents, making sure to advertise throughout the month so there's still interest during the fourth and final week of the event.

It seems to be working well. "The response from our customers has been outstanding," Niese says. ➔

Looking for creative ways to engage customers? Whether it's promotions, merchandising ideas, special events or unique advertising, we cover it here. Have an idea? Contact Liz Lichtenberger, [lichtenberger@nrha.org](mailto:lichtenberger@nrha.org), to have your story considered for publication.