

Community MOMENTS



Cassie Renteria

Community Association Manager

RealManage North Carolina

May 2020



7 Fun Facts About May

- It is the third and last month of spring season
- The emerald birthstone of this month symbolizes success and love
- A few holidays celebrated in May are: May Day, National Teacher's Day, Mother's Day, and Memorial Day
- May's flower is Lily of the Valley
- The month of May was named for the Greek goddess Maia
- A long time ago, May was once considered a bad luck month to get married
- In the UK, May is celebrated as the National Smile Month



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EMPLOYEE SPOTLIGHT

Cassie Renteria



COMMUNITY ASSOCIATION MANAGER
REALMANAGE NORTH CAROLINA



Cassie Renteria has been a Community Association Manager for RealManage North Carolina for almost two years. Cassie joined our team with Community Manager experience along with extensive knowledge of management and business. She joined our team when we needed someone the most and smack dab in the middle of budget season! She inherited the "challenging" communities of our market. Cassie immediately hit the ground running and has never stopped. Her passion and perseverance helped her not only turn those tough communities around, but many of those communities are now reference accounts!

When asked about Cassie, her board members have nothing but amazing things to say about her. For example:

"This has been a very difficult community to manage, and yet, I always had full confidence in her abilities at the management of the tasks at hand, and with homeowners who were many times unreasonable. She has handled her job with efficiency, grace, and tact in the face of unreasonable expectations from homeowners (and maybe sometimes me!) and has been responsive to me and to my company. She is personally a joy and a pleasure to work with."

Written from a Developer Board Member

Another board member writes:

"Before joining the board, I had contacted Cassie on a few occasions regarding some issues with my house. Not only was she extremely responsive, but she also was able to resolve my issues quickly and professionally. Since joining the board, Cassie has been supportive, knowledgeable, and efficient. Cassie is extremely organized and stays on task. Cassie has also proven to have excellent relationships with many vendors that our HOA has sought to procure. Finally, Cassie also exudes an excellent knowledge of the HOA landscape. She is well informed in areas such as vendor management, budgeting, accounting, and meeting planning. As our board does not have valid or relevant experience in these areas, Cassie has assisted us in navigating the various areas involved in managing a neighborhood, which has proven to be most helpful in our decision-making process."

Cassie is a team member here in Raleigh and never ceases to make someone laugh or smile throughout the day! I am so honored and extremely lucky to have Cassie as part of the Raleigh RealManage Team and genuinely excited at the opportunity to spotlight her.

Written by **Holly Bunch** — Director of Community Association Management

CREATING A DISASTER EMERGENCY PLAN FOR YOUR COMMUNITY ASSOCIATION

In these difficult and unique times, many of us have focused on the immediate emergency, COVID-19, and its devastating global effects; however it's important to remember that even in times of crisis, a natural disaster may still affect your community. As we head into spring, severe weather often brings hail, damaging winds, flooding, and even tornadoes, like those recently experienced by those in Texas, Georgia, and Louisiana. There are a few things you can do to ensure your community prepares in case of a disaster, even in these difficult times. Below are some expert advice as well as a guide on how to handle these unexpected disasters.

Gather Contact Information for All Members

You never know what kind of disaster could strike — and many of them will cause you to need to contact all of your members, owners, and residents. Simple contact information will allow you to reach as many of them as possible effectively. Contact information has been especially vital during COVID-19 as knocking on doors may not be in line with the stay at home and social distancing guidelines enacted by the CDC. Some tips:

- Save a set of contact information that is organized by residence, not by name: there's no reason to contact both spouses if the first one has already answered.
- Make sure you have alternative emergency contacts in case of an emergency.
- A searchable directory stored digitally will be easier to search and maintain than a paper directory. Consider a shared file that can be accessed by all members of the community during an emergency.

Your Emergency Response Plan

Your community association needs a robust emergency response plan that includes all the information you'll need to keep your members safe in the event of a disaster. The response plan should include:

- Evacuation routes, including alternative routes in case the usual ones are not safe.
- Information about how evacuations will be determined (other than those announced by emergency response personnel).
- Contact information for local first responders and aid organizations.
- How you will coordinate with the management company or any other relevant organizations throughout the disaster and the disaster recovery process.
- How communication with the insurance company will occur and how involved the insurance company will be with the recovery process. Be sure to include relevant contact information for the insurance company and a copy of the policy.
- Information about who within the community or the residents has the authority to make relevant decisions.
- A physical inventory of any structures or spaces that are considered association property.
- The individuals who are responsible for taking care of specific tasks — notifying residents; coordinating recovery efforts — following the emergency.

Budget for Disasters

Is your community responsible for providing some financial assistance to residents throughout the disaster recovery process? Are there communal pieces — swimming pools, game rooms, or playgrounds, for example — that are paid for by HOA dues? How will they be repaired if a disaster occurs? These questions also become more complicated during COVID-19 when many associations are doing everything possible to cut expenses. Your community disaster recovery plan should have a budget that includes:

- The actual numbers of the budget.
- Methods for adding additional funds to the budget if necessary (fundraising, raising funds from homeowners, or allocating funds from another source, for example).
- Financial priorities in the event of a disaster.
- A list of responsibilities that will be covered by the community in the event of a disaster.

Who Can Help?

Throughout your community association, you have residents with different needs and different skill sets. As you're recovering from your disaster, there is plenty of information that you will want to be able to access quickly. Items might include:

- Information about individuals who are in a position to provide assistance to the elderly or handicapped. For example, that single young man — or father with several teenage sons — at the end of the block might be in a great position to help escort the elderly woman down the street to an evacuation point.
- Information about organizations that are providing aid throughout the emergency process. Make sure to collect numbers from any organizations that are offering help, including churches and other

volunteer organizations.

- Any residents who have specific skills that will be useful throughout the recovery process.
- Vendors who have been pre-approved to take care of physical recovery following an emergency.

When disaster strikes, you want to be prepared to respond swiftly and efficiently. Designing a solid disaster response plan will make it easier for you to be sure that your residents are taken care of and that your neighborhood is back to normal as soon as possible following an emergency. Keep in mind that residents should also be encouraged to know they will respond in the event of specific emergencies, especially those that are common to your area.



HOSTING VIRTUAL LIFESTYLE EVENTS IN YOUR COMMUNITY

Studies have long shown that building relationships with other in your community and neighborhood have a lasting impact on satisfaction and emotional well-being. However, during these times where we are being encouraged to practice social distancing and many of us are under shelter-in-place orders it can be difficult to connect with your neighbors.

If you are one of the millions of Americans living in a community association, your board has likely cancelled any in-person events and also shut down shared amenities, but that doesn't mean you can't still connect, virtually, with your neighbors. Virtual events provide a unique and important experience for many owners, below are a few ideas that your community might be interested in planning.

WHAT IS A VIRTUAL EVENT?

A virtual event is any organized gathering that takes place online instead of an in-person at a physical location. One of the biggest benefits of these online events is that they can accommodate as few or as many people as necessary, including massive sessions with thousands of people in attendance.

EVENT SET-UP LOGISTICS

There are a lot of online communication platforms out there to use, but Facebook Live, Zoom, and even Google Hangouts are easy to use and provide free to use versions of their software. Choose which platform you want to

use to host your event and create an account for your community. From there you will need to create an event with a class description and can even include photos. Be sure to include the date and time, and if applicable, provide the vendor's registration information for payment. Make sure to send an email to homeowners with the event information and giving directions as to which online platform the event will be on, and what if any, supplies are needed. If your community has any social media pages, post information with links to register there as well.

IDEAS FOR EVENTS

Setting up virtual events is a fairly easy process but many people are left wondering what types of events they can host virtually that owners would enjoy. There are many sites out there with fun and unique online event ideas but here are some of the ones we've seen be successful in our communities. While many of these ideas can be done just for fun, you can also incorporate prizes to try and get more participation from homeowners.

PHOTO SCAVENGER HUNT

A photo scavenger hunt is a great way to come together while practicing social distancing and it can get all ages involved. Start by creating a list of things that people may be able to find in their homes, and while on walks in your neighborhood, you can even get creative and add something to a tree in your neighborhood or in your front window. Once you have a pretty big list, create an online event page or post on social media with details of what participants should be on

the lookout for and when they need to have the photos submitted. Tell participants that they can tag the photos as each item on the scavenger hunt and that you will announce the winners at the end of the contest.

ALL KINDS OF GAMES

Trivia nights and bingo have always been pretty popular for community get-togethers and they can still be even online. Companies like TriviaHubLive offer paid platforms that let you easily host a trivia night with a bunch of residents, but you can recreate the same type of activity free using Facebook Live or even Zoom. If you aren't comfortable being the "quizmaster" consider hiring a local company like those that provide services to local bars to host your virtual event.

Bingo games are even easier to play virtually as you can download cards from numerous websites for your residents to use. Recently Matthew McConaughey hosted a virtual bingo night for a senior community in Texas that was a hit. All you need for a virtual bingo night is a host to call out the numbers and to let participants know where they can get the cards.

There are a lot of options for online games, resources like this Thrillist article discuss some popular multiplayer games that can be played online by groups. Ask your community what games they'd like to see you play virtually, many game companies are now offering simple online tutorials to help people play even while respecting the social distancing guidelines.

FITNESS AND EDUCATIONAL CLASSES

Probably one of the most popular virtual events are those that help people stay in shape. As gyms across the country have closed, many of your residents are probably looking for alternate

ways to work on those summer figures. If you happen to have a fitness guru living at your community consider asking them to host a class where participants can login and follow along. VillageWalk at Lake Nona recently started hosting an online Yoga class to all residents via Zoom.

Some educational options include arts and crafts, where a local expert can walk your owners through making something with things they likely already have in their homes. Language classes are also popular as hosts can provide immediate feedback to those trying to learn. Your community is full of talented people who would probably love to share their knowledge with neighbors so ask for volunteers to teach these classes if possible.

CONCERTS OR MOVIE NIGHTS

Many local music artists are likely looking for ways to perform and make some additional cash while most venues are closed. You can use Zoom or Facebook Live to host a virtual concert for your community. We encourage you to find



Another option is hosting an online Movie Night. Netflix Party offers options for those who already have an existing Netflix account to login and watch a movie together. Don't have Netflix? There are plenty of other options available for free that you can use to watch movies with your neighbors like those in the Nerdist article. Just make sure you let people know the ratings and restrictions for the movie as many with children may need to know before letting the whole family join in.

SOCIAL NETWORKING COMMUNITY BEST PRACTICES

We live in a digital age where communication delivery is at lightning speed, and the majority of community associations are turning to social media to communicate with homeowners. Social media is a useful tool in keeping a community informed of various events and activities. However, a social media policy should be adopted to ensure that your board avoids negative issues that may arise on your social media platform. Below, you will find guidance for your association counsel on best practices for your social media site.

LIMITING CONTENT

According to The College of Community Association Lawyers, "Content should be limited, by the association, to matters that benefit the community." Examples for your social networking community include general announcements, reminders, event photos, polls to collect opinions about decisions facing the community, and other content that your community would find helpful. If the association would like to offer an online "bulletin board" for the community, the association should encourage members to submit information to a designated contact person for the community's social media site. This person will be in charge of receiving, editing if necessary, and posting to the site. However, if you want to allow your homeowners to network with each other or create groups, you may need a site administrator that has access to each group and can periodically monitor the content. Sites like Ning allows you to give administration rights to committee chairs.

CONTENT THAT SHOULD NEVER BE POSTED

To help prevent legal issues, there are posts that you should avoid publishing. These post types include photos of anyone without their consent, specifically children, confidential business relating to the community, private information of a community member, posts directed to a specific person in your community, and inflammatory or defamatory remarks. Following these guidelines will help to ensure a peaceful online presence.

STAYING COMPLIANT

Once your association board creates a social networking community policy, have the association's lawyer review the policy to make sure it is compliant and address any other things that should be considered. According to KSN Law, "With the rise of social media use by associations, board members should be cautious and restricted in the information they choose to disseminate via social media. Courts generally find that information posted on an online platform can be utilized in litigation. Board members should expect that communications shared on social media will be available in the event an owner initiates legal action against the association." Lastly, reviewing and updating the policy annually will ensure that it is still relevant to the rapid changes in social media.

HANDLING NEGATIVITY

Social media can present a challenge for board members if faced with negative comments from homeowners. It is best practice to include guidelines to de-escalate situations in your policy. If your board has a negative comment posted by a homeowner, address the comment and show the community that the board cares and wants to work with them to ensure their happiness. Leave a reply that you understand the issue and acknowledge their concerns. Then simply tell them that you will message them directly to continue working toward a solution. The main goal is to get them offline and address issues one on one.

As board members, take the time necessary to draft a social media policy that provides guidance and protects against slander, privacy, and harassment claims. Social media can be a fun and engaging tool for your community and an easy way to keep homeowners in the know. Investing some time and effort will promote community compliance and harmony.



BOARD PORTAL TRAINING

KARA'S KORNER

BOARD PORTAL TRAINING:

May 13th, 7:00 PM, Central Time

May 14th, 7:00 PM, Mountain Time

BOARD TOOLKIT TRAINING:

May 21st, 7:00 PM, Central Time



Kara Cermak, CMCA®, AMS®, PCAM®
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