

EVENTS

Audi raises brand image, awareness with title sponsorship of athletic charity benefit

October 25, 2010



By KAITLYN BONNEVILLE

Audi of America was the title sponsor of the first Eunice Kennedy Shriver Challenge – a run-walk-and-cycling benefit event hosted by Best Buddies International and Special Olympics.

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The event took place at the Washington Monument on the National Mall on Saturday. Johan de Nysschen, president of Audi's president, participated in the activities along with more than 60 employees from the company's headquarters in Herndon, VA.

“Our founder, August Horch, once said, ‘A dream worth having is a dream worth pursuing,’” said Anja Kaehny, manager of lifestyle communications and corporate social responsibility at Audi of America, Miami. “It is that pioneering spirit of innovation and making visions come true that Best Buddies, Special Olympics and Audi have in common and that establishes the strong link between our organizations.

“The tactics these organizations employ, building friendships and integration through sports, seem simple yet were revolutionary for the time,” she said. “Since 2007, Audi has supported a number of Best Buddies initiatives and helped to raise nearly \$38 million in

total donations to date for the charity.

“We’re also the title sponsor of their two biggest fundraisers.”

Audi offers a full line of German-engineered luxury vehicles. It has 272 dealers in the U.S.

Best Buddies International is a nonprofit organization that creates opportunities for one-to-one friendships, employment and leadership development for people with intellectual and developmental disabilities.

Charity challenges



Cycling participants at the finish line of the EKS challenge

The Eunice Kennedy Shriver Challenge featured a 20-mile cycling event, lead by Washington Mayor Adrian Fenty. It began at the Washington Monument, proceeded up Pennsylvania Avenue, past the Capitol and continued through the city.

Other activities included the Carl Lewis Challenge, a 5K run and 3K walk, a Celebrity Youth Fun Run that intended to engage and motivate young people.

A Friendship Race was also held that included an Athlete/Buddy Single Race, the Corporate Tandem Relay, the Open Tandem Relay, the Family Challenge and the Celebrity and Athlete/Buddy Tandem Race.

Audi – the largest corporate team participating in the event, helped fundraise more than \$50,000 for the driving forces behind the nation’s disability movement.

The automaker provided a fleet of 30 Audi A8 cars to both organizations during the weekend to ensure that they and their guests were easily shuttled around.

“Through Audi’s underwriting of the event’s cost, the majority of revenue generated from this great event will go directly to the organizations,” Ms. Kaehny said.

Charity and brand image

In this day and age, it’s crucial that all brands and corporations exercise responsibility.

Recently, a number of luxury automotive brands have stepped up to sponsor charity events.

Automaker Mercedes-Benz celebrated its 125th anniversary by planting 125 trees in New Orleans City Park in an effort to help support Hurricane Katrina relief efforts ([see story](#)).

Maserati raffled off 400 tickets at \$1,000 each for a GranTourismo Convertible in support of the Columbus Citizens Foundation's scholarship program. The Foundation disperses \$2 million annually to qualifying students from the elementary to graduate school level ([see story](#)).

Being involved in a cause that consumers support heightens a brand image. According to a study by Cone Inc., 85 percent of consumers have a better image of a brand if it is aligned with a cause or philanthropy.

"We truly believe that talent has no boundaries," Ms. Kaehny said. "It is especially fitting that the inaugural EKS challenge occurs in October to coincide with the Congress-designated National Disability Employment Awareness Month.

"We currently have a Best Buddies participant on staff, he's a true asset to the company and an inspiration to us all," she said.

"We truly work in a team atmosphere and everyone who works here the employees, dealers and partners get involved in the company's causes."

Final Take

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