

Make Way for *ducklings*

Shaw's Supermarkets' marketing program targets customers with very young children

By Marianne Wilson

Busy moms of young children are the target audience of a multi-faceted direct-marketing campaign from Shaw's Supermarkets. Launched chainwide in fall 2003, the "ducklings" program combines promotional savings with information and tips on raising a young family. Shoppers have responded enthusiastically.

"All of the feedback coming in from customers indicates they are delighted with the program. It has been very well-received, with membership far above our initial projections," says Catherine Thomason, program manager, ducklings, Shaw's Supermarkets, West Bridgewater, N.J., which operates 202 stores throughout New England. (At presstime, JS USA Holdings, which operates Shaw's and Star Markets, was acquired by Albertson's. Both the Shaw's and Star Markets banners will remain in place.)

The ducklings program was developed for a very specific segment of Shaw's customer base: parents of newborns and children up to 5 years of age.

"This is an important group for us, and we wanted to give them more value," Thomason explains. "With ducklings, we are delivering targeted information that is relevant to their particular needs."

Its diverse customer base makes such efforts a natural for Shaw's.

"We do a lot of things from an overall perspective to reach out to customers," Thomason says. "Segmenting customers allows us to reach out in a different way,

with very targeted information."

There is no fee to join ducklings. But Shaw's does request that members participate in its reward-card program. Ducklings brochures with reply cards are available in all the stores, or shoppers can join via Shaw's Web site. More than 50% of the sign-ups have been generated on line.

The flagship item in the

tomor. It addresses all her diverse needs, with articles on everything from parenting tips and nutrition to day trips in New England."

The ducklings program includes an extensive direct-mail coupon program (managed by direct-marketing and fulfillment provider W.A. Wilde Co., Holliston, Mass.).

"We're sending out periodic savings samplers that include a variety of coupons, the majority of which are of a higher value than the ones in the magazine," Thomason says.

Samplers and magazine combined, Shaw's is offering more than \$250 worth of targeted coupons during a 12-month period to members of the ducklings program.

"The redemption rates have been exceptional, blowing away the industry standard and far exceeding our expectations," Thomason adds.

Shaw's is planning a number of in-store events this year that tie into its ducklings initiative.

"We view this as an important long-term project and one that will hopefully grow over time," Thomason says.

How does the program benefit Shaw's? Thomason says it dovetails with the chain's mission to give "a little help along the way."

"We want to deliver on that promise, and ducklings helps us do just that," she adds. "Ducklings helps us deliver value to a very important group of customers and give something back to them, building customer loyalty for the long-term in the process." ■

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A seasonal magazine, *ducklings*, contains educational articles and up to \$30 worth of coupons accepted at Shaw's.

marketing initiative is a complimentary, seasonal magazine, *ducklings*. Created by King Fish Media for Shaw's, it contains articles of interest to both working and stay-at-home moms. Each issue also includes \$20 to \$30 worth of coupons, redeemable for products at Shaw's.

"It's a lifestyle magazine for mom," Thomason says, "that includes a range of topics written specifically for our cus-