

## Resident Rewards Program Garner Prodigy Award for Barrington Group

Oct 20, 2011 By Barbra Murray, Contributing Writer



**Indianapolis—Barrington Group Inc.** got rave reviews from residents soon after launching its **Resident Rewards** incentive program one year ago, and now the apartment property management company has garnered kudos from peers in the multifamily industry. The Indiana Apartment Association recently presented BGI with the 2011 Prodigy Award for the best corporate resident retention program.

BGI created **Resident Rewards** after recognizing a trend at its 14 properties in Georgia, Indiana, Michigan, Ohio and Texas: residents who are actively involved in their apartment community and interact with their neighbors tend to stay put and renew their leases over and over again. Utilizing **Resident Rewards** to forge that community spirit has proven to be a successful one, as the program has become all the rage at BGI's apartment destinations. Tenants can accrue points for any number of accomplishments and each community has a great deal of freedom in determining point-worthy activities.

"The best part about the program is that it's so flexible that everybody can be extremely creative, so it's gone beyond just getting points for paying your rent on time or points for renewing your lease," Kristi L. Dingess, social media marketing manager with BGI, tells *MHN*. "We're doing things like residential points at resident functions where if you volunteer at the function you get points. And one of our communities, Horizons in Indianapolis, has gotten really creative with it. They have dumpster divas, light lieutenants, and salt captains. These people are responsible for picking up trash around dumpsters, letting us know if lights are out, and salting the locks in the colder months, and they get points for volunteering—and of course they love their titles. The dumpster divas just think they're something else."

The list of options for earning points goes on and on and varies from property to property. "At a couple of our other communities, now that we're getting into the time when food donations are big, if you bring in 10 cans you get 30 points. Other communities are doing coat drives, you bring in a coat you get points. We pretty much cover everything. If you want to earn points you definitely can. That's definitely my favorite part of it, that it's not all set in stone and that we can be very creative and very different and very accommodating with it."

In addition to welcoming new activities to the program, BGI has also made it easier for residents to see the fruits of their labor sooner rather than later. "Typically what we've been doing is increasing it to the point where you can immediately redeem those points for an item," Dingess explains. "Most recently we've done an increase so that you can get, for example, a Target gift card, right away."

And the Target gift cards have become the most coveted among the rewards. "You can get gift certificates to Target, Barnes & Noble or AMC, but the \$100 Target gift card, people absolutely love it!" she notes. Of course, there are other items that are very popular among the residents. "People tend to be a little impatient and they go for the smaller ticket items because they can get more faster. So we haven't had anybody cash in on stainless steel appliances or granite countertops, but we've done plenty of digital thermostats, pulsating showerheads and kitchen faucets with sprayers."

BGI is enjoying the success of the Rewards Program and residents' enthusiasm for it, and the Prodigy Award is icing on the cake. "We're very, very excited about receiving the Prodigy Award from the IAA," Dingess says. "It's definitely a huge honor for us. We're on that list with some pretty big-name companies so to get the Best Corporate Resident Retention is absolutely huge."

## Barrington Group Earns Prestigious Prodigy Award

*Barrington Group, Inc. - 10/18/2011 2:12 pm*



**INDIANAPOLIS, IN** - Sarasota, FL. based Barrington Group Inc. (BGI), featuring apartment communities in Indiana, as well as Ohio, Michigan, Texas and Georgia, has received the 2011 Prodigy Award for “the best corporate resident retention program” from the Indiana Apartment Association. Barrington Group has earned this award as a result of the success of the **Resident Rewards** incentive program.

The Indiana Apartment Association (IAA) is a statewide trade organization representing of 200,000 members, conferred the Prodigy Award at its annual meeting. All members of the IAA are eligible to be recognized for their efforts with regards to design, management, performance and innovation. While the IAA receives staggering number of entries each year, only one winner is selected per category.

Launched in August 2010, BGI unveiled a unique resident retention program called Resident Rewards. **Resident Rewards** is an innovative program by which BGI residents can earn points for being good community neighbors, not only in their own apartment community, but in their surrounding neighborhood. Residents are awarded points based on their efforts and those points can be redeemed for relatively simple items such as gift certificates or for more extravagant items, like granite countertops or stainless steel appliances in their apartment homes.

The flexibility of the **Resident Rewards** program allows residents to earn points at a rate that is comfortable to them and to spend points at their leisure. As long as a resident lives at the community, they are able to “spend” the points for any items off of a designated list. Creativity is also encouraged with the program, allowing for residents to pool points together to get something for the entire property, like a block party, charitable donation, piece of playground equipment or even a favorite kind of landscape planting.

The Indiana Apartment Association’s selection process for Prodigy Award recipients is known to be highly competitive. Receiving this particular award is a very high honor for the Barrington Group, and validates the company’s belief that the **Resident Rewards** program is a highly desirable amenity with lasting effects.

And this isn’t Barrington Group’s first Prodigy Award. In 1994, BGI received another Prodigy Award for the “best renovated community in the state of Indiana” for their efforts surrounding Horizons Apartments, a 274-unit market rate rental community on the southwest side of Indianapolis.

**Resident Rewards** is exclusive to Barrington Group’s 14 apartment communities. More information can be found via BGI’s website at [www.bgiapartments.com](http://www.bgiapartments.com)

Original article can be seen at :

[http://www.multifamilybiz.com/PR/847/Barrington\\_Group\\_Earns\\_Prestigious\\_Prodigy\\_Award](http://www.multifamilybiz.com/PR/847/Barrington_Group_Earns_Prestigious_Prodigy_Award)

# Membership Has Its Privileges

By: Les Shaver

Apartment companies find new value, opportunity in resident rewards programs.

With rents rising around the country, you'd think there would be less motivation for owners to offer their residents enticements to stay or refer friends. You'd be wrong. Some multifamily operators still want to find every possible way to attract residents.

"As rents start moving up, people start looking for value," says Jim Fenwick, president of residential property management at the Miller-Valentine Group, a Dayton, Ohio-based property manager with approximately 11,000 units across the Midwest and East Coast. "Anything that an organization or ownership or management company can do to separate itself from other companies helps."

As many companies are finding, one way to do just that is by launching a resident rewards program, which can vary from offering discounts and coupons to newly signed residents to a strictly point-based system that mimics airline mileage programs. As such, rewards can take many forms and be doled out for any number of activities, from paying rent to volunteering to help out on site or in the community. But regardless of how they entice residents, apartment owners recognize that there is value in rewarding loyalty, even in a tightening rental climate.

## VIVA VARIETY

For residents, the rewards for renting can begin before they even move into an apartment. For instance, Santa Monica, Calif.-based Rent.com offers a \$100 gift certificate when a renter uses its Internet Listing Service (ILS) to find a place. "When a renter finds a place to live, we incentivize them to come back and tell us that the transaction took place," says Christina Aragon, director of strategy and insights at Rent.com.

Village Green, an apartment owner and operator with about 40,000 units and based in Farmington Hills, Mich., created its Village Green Select division to handle different types of resident discounts and coupons. With the help of an IT firm out of New York, it developed an online menu of 35,000 different discounts from about 4,000 different merchants.

"You become a resident and get this wonderful package of all these discounts you may not be able to find on your own," says Andrew Yule, a senior director at Village Green.

Miller-Valentine offers points for renewals or referring a new resident. "We have even moved to conflict resolution," Fenwick says. "There are times when expectations are not being met. Instead of throwing a \$100 gift card their way, [resident points] have a way of making [the resident] feel better about what may have been a bad experience for them."

**Sarasota, Fla.-based Barrington Group, an apartment owner and manager with 2,400 units in Georgia, Indiana, Michigan, Ohio, and Texas, offers residents points for moving in, paying rent on time, referring a friend, renewing a lease, monitoring an on-site kids club, offering resident testimonials, adopting a common area, helping with a resident event, running a social committee, participating in a welcoming committee, and doing community outreach.**

**"We're a smaller company, so it's easier for us to be a little more creative in our offerings," says Kristy Dingess, the social media marketing manager for Barrington. "If somebody wants to earn points, we're going to make sure they can."**

## DIFFERENT DEAL TYPES

The types of rewards programs apartment companies offer are just as diverse as the behaviors they want to reward. For instance, Village Green has a Lease Equity Program where it enters all new residents into a program where they can ultimately earn 0.5 percent back on a down payment when they decide to buy a home. The resident receives the reward by going with a licensed real estate brokerage firm that has executed a referral contract with Village Green and pays a referral fee to the company. Village Green also offers a package to residents that includes discounts at online dating sites, Target, Best Buy, and many other companies. "We're also creating a brand of locally based coupons for a local gym membership, a local pizzeria, and things like that," Yule says.

Still, setting up a rewards program can be time-consuming as companies go to merchants for discounts. But, Yule says, if an apartment manager or owner can bring enough mass to the table, it's not very costly. For good rewards programs, the process is continual as apartment owners add new merchants. If you don't want to do the legwork of setting up your own rewards program, Naperville, Ill.-based ResidentGifts will do it for you. It buys promotional codes in bulk from various sites and provides them to apartment owners to use as an incentive. The company then splits those savings with the owner and also splits the codes that expire without being used, effectively returning a portion of the money to the property's budget.

Residents can redeem codes at various places, such as Overstock.com, Lands' End, Cabellas, Bath and Body Works, Sports Authority, Fandango, Restaurants.com, 1-800-Flowers, and Omaha Steaks. "There are a wide variety of redemption options and a wide variety of redemption levels—as little as \$10, for example," says Gerry Wiatrowski, co-founder and chief marketing officer of ResidentGifts. "Instead of getting a basket of cookies or free rent, residents get points. They can either redeem those points immediately or accumulate them over the lease term and get what they want."

American Fork, Utah-based Purqz provides daily deals for property managers to send to their residents. The company works to get the best discount possible from retailers, restaurants, and entertainment venues. It charges apartment managers a monthly fee to provide these deals. The company charges about 60 cents per door per month.

**At Barrington, the rewards are even more creative. The company offers its "Rest and Relax" rewards, which can be redeemed with gift certificates to places such as Starbucks, Target, AMC Theaters, and Barnes & Noble. But it also has a "Get Out of Jail Free" reward, which allows a resident to waive a late fee or insufficient-funds fee. Finally, there's the "Love Your Home" reward, which offers apartment upgrades such as new cabinets, ceiling fans, stainless steel appliances, new carpeting, and other in-home updates.**

**"Some people prefer cash in hand," Dingess says. "Others like their apartment and plan to stay there for a while, so they'll do an upgrade."**

## THE BENEFITS OF REWARDS

Despite the extra effort incentive programs require to set up, apartment owners and managers who have established them think they help. "Rewards programs alter behavior," Fenwick says.

What's more, in a concessionary environment, their value may be even greater. "When you give a concession, it's lost forever," Fenwick says. "Six months down the road, they don't think, 'Wow, wasn't it great that we didn't pay rent for the first month.'"

A reward is also cheaper than a concession or a gift card. Fenwick, who uses ResidentGifts, says he can get up to 70 percent off from certain providers (though that's not necessarily the norm).

"It's never dollar for dollar," he says. "If you're giving a \$1,000 concession away, you're paying \$1,000. You've lost \$1,000 of revenue because of that concession. In the best-case scenario with ResidentGifts, that \$1,000 only costs \$300."

**Dingess thinks rewards also prompt renewals, which can help. "The communities in our portfolio that perform extremely well are the ones with the greatest sense of community," she says. "That was part of the idea—bringing a sense of community into each of our properties. This program was a way to do that."**

In fact, Miller-Valentine likes the system so much that it will soon be offering it as an incentive for its employees. "I think [Miller-Valentine associates] will accumulate these points," Fenwick says. "Now they can save them up and get something bigger than one gift card. It's a great way to do something different other than give cash."

## Rewards Ramp-Up

Starting a resident rewards program isn't easy. Keep these three things in mind.

**1. Don't over-promise. Sarasota, Fla.-based Barrington Group, an apartment owner/manager with 2,400 units, wanted to do a resident rewards program. But it also wanted to ensure that it could deliver on its promise. "We had all our ducks in a row before we spoke to residents," says Kristy Dingess, the firm's social media marketing manager.**

2. Treat residents the same. With 129 properties throughout the Midwest and East Coast, Village Green, an apartment owner and operator based in Farmington Hills, Mich., has many different types of residents with different incomes. Despite those differences, Andrew Yule, a senior director at Village Green, wants to make the company's program as uniform as possible.

"It's not about where you live or how much you make," he says. "It's about living in our communities and having the ability to participate in these group discounts."

3. Give retailers mass. When Yule approaches a retailer about offering discounts to Village Green, the first thing he mentions is his company's scope and size.

"I would pitch the whole portfolio of 60,000 residents and 13,000 employees, and we'd hope to get some sort of discount," Yule says. "If you're not delivering a certain number of users, most people won't find it efficient."

## The Barrington Group Unveils Resident Rewards

Duffey Communications - 10/28/2010 8:18 am

**SARASOTA, Fla. (Oct. 28, 2010)** – In August 2010, local apartment communities managed by the Barrington Group began rewarding residents for contributing in and around their neighborhoods. The program, dubbed **Resident Rewards**, gives community members a reason to keep their lease up to date and their bills paid on time, with home upgrades and gift certificates offered in return for community involvement.



"When we realized our communities with high resident interaction had lower turnover rates, we decided to keep the trend going," says Ronda Gallehue, vice president, property management for the Barrington Group. "**Resident Rewards** is our solution to address turnover rates and to provide a completely unique living experience."

The program gives residents a list of tasks to earn points, such as turning rent in on time and organizing a welcoming committee to greet new neighbors. A community member earns points for referring a friend or for promoting the property with a custom bumper sticker.

These valuable points can be traded for a number of incentives. Residents can earn small items – gift certificates to the movies, coffee shops or book store – or larger ticket prizes including home upgrades, such as granite countertops or new carpeting. Residents can even pool their points and purchase upgrades for the property as a whole, like a new playground piece or a catered resident party.

Just passing the first-month mark, residents from the Barrington Group's properties across the nation have earned more than 12,000 points.

"The response from the first month has been resounding," says Gallehue. "We are incredibly impressed with the enthusiasm shown by our residents and are confident our communities will continue to recognize high occupancy rates."

For more information about the Barrington Group, please visit <http://www.barringtonusa.com>

About The Barrington Group, Inc.

The Barrington Group, Inc. (BGI) is a professional property management company founded nearly 35 years ago in Ohio with a mission to maintain a portfolio of quality apartment communities. Today, BGI operates in 5 states and is always striving to provide excellent maintenance service, well-manicured grounds, spotless apartments and professional staff members while instilling a genuine care for the health, safety and well-being of its residents. A strong belief in long-term relationships means BGI still manages many of the properties in its original portfolio. For more information on BGI, visit [www.barringtonusa.com](http://www.barringtonusa.com).

Original article can be seen at :

[http://www.multifamilybiz.com/PR/473/The Barrington Group Unveils Resident Rewards](http://www.multifamilybiz.com/PR/473/The_Barrington_Group_Unveils_Resident_Rewards)



The Barrington Group

## Renter Rewards Keep Tenants Happy

| By [Candy Evans](#) | Posted Oct 19th 2010 11:04AM

Most reward programs offer points for spending money. Example: charge up your Mastercard, reap miles for travel. But an apartment community in Fort Worth, Tex., has devised a way to reward residents for good behavior, community volunteer service, or simply being a faithful tenant.

Residents at the Chaparral Apartment Homes, a 10-year-old, 135-unit multifamily complex about 10 miles from Cowboys Stadium, are handed out points for certain tasks, jobs and old-fashioned positive deeds. Good tasks range from paying your rent on or before the first of the month -- that's 10 points -- or spending one hour of volunteer time with residents' children at the kids club -- that's 30 points. Put an "I [Heart] Chaparral" bumper sticker on your car that says you like the place, 20 points. Refer a friend, 100 points.

What's going on is a kind of win-win "gold star" program that is part marketing, part social networking, to help Chaparral's management company, Columbus, Ohio-based The Barrington Group, retain tenants while offering incentives.

The plan was conceived in casual conversation with the sprawling management company's president, says Joan Thornton, Barrington's Director of Property Management. Larry Lieberman was looking at properties with the lowest turnover and found a direct correlation between lower tenant turnover and community involvement within the properties: the more involved the tenants were in the community, the more likely they were to renew leases.

"The bottom line was to reduce turn over, and help keep residents happy," says Thornton.

Since the program started in August, 2010, residents at 14 Barrington Group multi-family properties in Michigan, Indiana, Ohio, and Texas have racked up more than 12,000 points.

They are redeemable for grocery, clothing or household items, Starbucks treats, or a night out at the movies

See photos of apartments and homes for rent in your area on RentedSpaces through gift certificates. Residents can also trade points -- a lot of them, of course -- for home upgrades in their apartment.

Kimberly Ward says these upgrades run the gamut from a new custom color paint job (700 points) to new carpeting (400 points) and granite counter tops, which will cost residents 1800 points. New stainless appliances are point-pricey, but new wood blinds will cost a resident 630 points. Want a pulsating shower head? That's only 300.

Kimberly is 50 points closer to her granite counters, as she just signed a new lease to live at Chaparral for one more year.

"I was fixing to buy a house," says Kimberly, a single mother of two whose children utilize Chaparral's free kids recreational center where she volunteers, "But I decided to stay, I like it here."

LaVictor Lipscomb, a three-year resident of Barrington's Battle Creek Village Apartments in Jonesboro, Ga., south of Atlanta, rides his bicycle every day. The retiree earns about 20 points per month for turning a regular evening ride around his property's perimeter into a security check.

"Makes you feel more involved with the community," says Lipscomb. "It's a self-promoting marketing scheme that's also a win-win for tenants."

Lipscomb pays \$905 for a 2-bedroom, 2-bath apartment on a fixed income. He's thinking about redeeming for a ceiling fan with his points.

Will Barrington have to raise rents to cover the cost of the point program? No, says Thornton, who anticipates a one to two percent increase in operating costs from the program, but believes those costs will be covered by the end results: lower turn over, a lower vacancy rate, and social marketing benefit from goodwill in the communities.

Vacancy, admits Thornton, is a constant battle for any apartment manager. If the points system takes off in the community, she believes it will be a fantastic marketing tool that will make apartment living feel more like home ownership.

"If residents can put in upgrades that they have personally selected in their home, they are more likely to stay with us," says Thornton. "It's really more like they are redecorating their own homes."

Original article can be seen at :

<http://realestate.aol.com/blog/2010/10/19/renter-rewards-keep-tenants-happy>

## Barrington Group's Tenant Incentive Program Proving Successful

Oct 18, 2010 By Barbra Murray, Contributing Editor



**Sarasota, Fla.**— Incentives can go a long way, and, in the form of apartment property manager Barrington Group Inc.'s **Resident Rewards** program, motivation has spurred positive change for tenants and management alike.

The apartment market is rebounding, but property owners still have to compete to secure and retain tenants, as recession-weary renters continue to seek the best bargains. Barrington, which has long made a habit of regularly evaluating the success of their 14 properties, recently noticed a pattern; the turnover rate is lower at properties where residents are involved in the apartment community and interact with their neighbors.

Approximately one month ago, that realization led Barrington's creation of the **Resident Rewards** program, which allows residents to earn points for such accomplishments as submitting rent payments on time, to more interactive undertakings like arranging a welcoming committee for new neighbors. For tenants, points translate to coveted amenities.

The rewards range from the nice and simple to the relatively extravagant. Points can be traded for the Rest and Relax Reward, which offers a gift certificate to Starbucks or an AMC movie theater, or the Economy Booster Reward, which endows a gift certificate to a discount retail destination like Target. The stakes get higher as the points mount. A significant number of points can result in home upgrades, including new granite countertops or stainless steel appliances.

The **Resident Rewards** program also allows room for creativity. "At one of our communities, the tenants came to the managers and asked if they could pool their points to get something for the entire property," Joan Thornton, director of property management with Barrington, tells *MHN*. "That was great, that our residents came to us to do something special for the apartment community. It's fantastic that that was one of the first responses we got to Resident Rewards. One community is even heading up a blood drive, so the program has taken off very, very well. People are really enjoying it."

Barrington has instituted the **Resident Rewards** program at all of the company's apartment complexes, which are located in Georgia and Texas, as well as the Midwestern states of Indiana, Michigan and Ohio. Of course, to facilitate the program, a bit of a monetary commitment is required of management. "We anticipate our operating costs will increase by 1 to 2 percent overall, but the financial benefit is reduced vacancy levels and lower turnovers," Thornton says. "And there is the social marketing benefit and goodwill in the neighborhood. Also, we want our tenants to love their home and love their lifestyle in a multifamily community."

Original article can be found at:

[www.multihousingnews.com/news/barrington-groups-tenant-incentive-program-proving-successful/](http://www.multihousingnews.com/news/barrington-groups-tenant-incentive-program-proving-successful/)