![resultsplus!]

Combining Local Appeals with Statewide Organization Pays Off

Using a unique approach to fund-raising that combines local ties with a statewide organization is helping Child and Family Services (CFS) of New Hampshire achieve strong fund-raising results even in a tight economy. The actual appeals come from local members of the community while this statewide organization provides efficient "back-office" services. CFS has recruited over 100 community leaders throughout the state to spearhead its fund-raising efforts. These volunteers generate personal appeals by mail or phone calls to their neighbors, typically generating a 5% to 10% return. Personal networking is what makes this approach work. What's challenging is tracking and managing over 100 small local campaigns with a tiny headquarters staff. So how does CFS accomplish this? With a software program called results*plus!*™ that makes it possible to easily generate the finely targeted lists required for each micro campaign and also makes it easy to monitor and report on the activities of each volunteer - all from a single interface. "Even though the entire community resources operation is being run from headquarters, essentially by one person, the software provides a level of customization and localization that keeps us in tune with the preferences and personality of each of the towns we operate in," said Corinne Scarlett, Community Resources Coordinator.

Child and Family Services is an independent nonprofit agency dedicated to advancing the well-being of children by providing social services that strengthen family life and promote community commitment to the needs of children. Through a wide array of programs for all ages, CFS aspires to help families find sound solutions in child development and child rearing and to empower families with knowledge, encouragement, and resources to help themselves. Tax-deductible gifts are accepted in many forms: cash, stock, appreciated securities, and real estate.
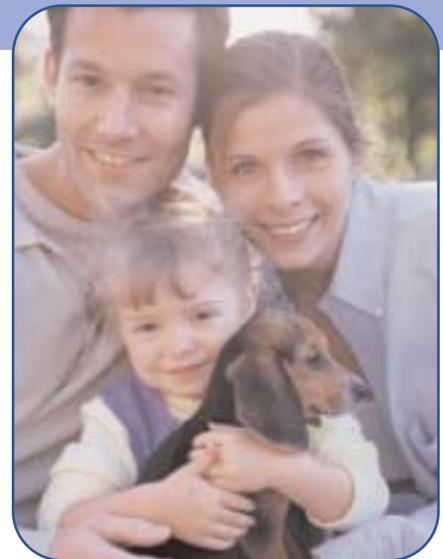
Fund-raising cycle

"Our fund-raising cycle begins in the Spring when we recruit volunteers throughout the state to act as chairpersons to head up our local fund-raising efforts," Scarlett said. "Many of these people return year after year to contribute their most valuable resource -- their time -- to promoting the well being of the children of our state. The majority of our volunteers are mature women who are well-known and respected in their communities. Obviously, the dedication and capabilities of our volunteers is the key to the success of our fund-raising. At the same time we are rebuilding our volunteer network, we also work to polish up another very critical resource: our donor database."

Software plays critical role

Scarlett said that the software used by the organization, results*plus!* from Metafile™ Information Systems, Inc. , plays a critical role. "It would be a nightmare to try and manage our efforts using either paper-based records or a less capable fund-raising software system," she said. "We don't have the human resources that would be required to actually manage 100 separate databases. results*plus!* multiplies our effectiveness and efficiency by allowing us to enter all of the information on each individual donor into a common database and then letting us pull that information out whenever and in whatever ways we need it. Our approach requires mail merge letters that are each personalized and signed by the appropriate local chairperson. The chairpersons personally sign each one and send them in envelopes with stamps. The responses come back to our headquarters and at this point we regain the economy of scale of having a central organization. The person entering the contribution does not have to determine which local chairperson was responsible. Instead, they simply enter the contribution and the software tracks the details behind the scenes, such as which chairperson was responsible for that particular gift."

Reports aid follow-up process

The organization sends an initial fund-raising appeal in the Spring and a follow-up letter in the Summer. Last year a year-end December appeal was added to the process. results**plus!** enables Scarlett to generate reports for each local chairperson on a regular basis showing each gift that has been received from their donors. These reports give the chairpersons the opportunity to look through the gifts received to date, compare it to their own list of people they expected would contribute, and generate an additional follow-up: a letter, phone call, or even a personal visit where appropriate.

Child and Family Services also does a number of special events throughout the state that rely heavily on their ability to easily and quickly generate lists and mail merge letters based on criteria appropriate for the upcoming event. Before each event, Scarlett generates a query that includes people within a specific geographic area who have given a gift recently as well as those who have attended this type of event in the past. The local chairpersons also contribute to the invitation list by reviewing the list of donors and prospects in their area. Based on her final list, Scarlett enters a special code that ensures that all designated people receive an invitation. Using the events**plus!**™ module within results**plus!** enables CFS to have all of its donor and events information integrated in a single database, which is key.

The ability to generate reports on a wide range of criteria has been critical to the organization's ability to learn from its experiences and continually improve its fund-raising. "It is easy to determine exactly what the response was to each of our localized efforts," Scarlett said. "Our chairpersons continually come up with new ideas and we try them out first on a small scale. If an idea works, we think about expanding it; if it doesn't, we've still learned a valuable lesson. Being able to see the exact results of each particular event provides tremendous assistance in planning the following year." A report run at the end of the year details the results generated by each local chairperson. Demonstrating the solid results that have been achieved

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and explaining how those donations have been used helps motivate everyone involved for an even stronger effort the following year. Another year-end report compares the latest year's efforts to previous years. This allows CFS staff and chairpersons to see which of last year's donors contributed again this year and how these numbers compare to results in the past.

Working with larger contributors

The organization's development director, Ruth Zax, also takes advantage of results**plus!** to identify and track individuals, foundations, or companies with the potential of becoming major donors. With the software, Zax can track every contact made with each individual person or organization in the database including phone calls, mailings, newsletters, etc. It stores a wide range of information including what type of programs a foundation or corporation typically funds. This information helps Zax write far more effective grant applications. She can also record detailed information on the people she is dealing with, including conversation notes, which helps build stronger relationships.

"It's no secret that the last few years have been a very challenging environment for organizations such as ours," Corinne Scarlett summarized. "While the economy has certainly had its impact, we have been able to survive and even thrive by taking advantage of our unique approach to fund-raising which combines the personalization and community involvement of a local organization with the efficiencies and resources of a statewide effort. results**plus!** software fits this approach perfectly by making it possible to keep all of our donor and event information in a single database, while also making it easy to target appeals that are tailored to specific localities and conditions and track the results."