

## Memphis Habitat for Humanity Makes Fundraising Strides with Software

The Memphis affiliate of Habitat for Humanity has improved the efficiency of its fundraising operations and volunteer coordination. How? By implementing a software program called **resultsplus!** that makes it easier for their development staff to obtain the information they need to do their jobs. New employees and volunteers alike become productive with the software almost immediately, which means they can spend less time on training and more time accomplishing necessary work. The software has helped them save money on postage and printing by generating highly-targeted mailing lists and by eliminating undeliverable and duplicate mailings. The process of providing information to management is also done with the software by running user-defined queries, built-in standard reports, and producing custom reports specific to the agency's requirements.

### Dedicated to eliminating substandard housing

Habitat for Humanity of Greater Memphis, a nonprofit ecumenical Christian housing ministry, is dedicated to eliminating substandard housing in the city of Memphis and its surrounding areas by making decent housing a matter of conscience and action. The Memphis Habitat is one of 1,600 USA affiliates of Habitat for Humanity International, founded in 1976 and headquartered in Americus, Georgia. The Memphis affiliate is ranked among the top 25 in terms of construction of houses.

Habitat for Humanity works in partnership with families in need of adequate shelter to build simple, decent homes. The

houses are then sold to Habitat's partner families at no profit and with no interest charged. Partner families invest hundreds of hours of their own labor - "sweat equity" - into building their homes and the homes of others. Their mortgage payments go into a revolving Fund for Humanity, which is then used to build more houses for others. Each Habitat affiliate is an independent, nonprofit organization, organized by local citizens and operated with a local



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board. Local volunteers provide most of the labor.

### Getting the database into shape

When Teresa Fazio was hired as Volunteer Coordinator for Habitat a few years ago, she immediately began working with the software package the agency had recently purchased to automate their development process, **resultsplus!** from Metafile Information Systems, Inc. "The first project I worked on was entering names from our various index cards and lists into the database," Fazio said. "I was told that, in the past, generating mailing lists or reports took a considerable amount of time and effort, first to find the information, then to select the names or numbers that were needed, and finally to enter and format the information. But once we got our information into **resultsplus!**, it was an entirely different story. We were able to obtain any information we needed in a few minutes, just by querying the database or running a report."

Fazio said that from her very first day she found the software easy to use and that it was equally easy to help employees and volunteers get up to speed. "The user interface in **resultsplus!** is organized in a very intuitive way," Fazio said. "All the most important things you need to do-such as enter data, query the database, send a mailing, or generate a report-are right in front of your eyes. Just as important is the fact that the support team at Metafile is very easy to reach and able to solve problems quickly and completely."

#### CUSTOMER



Habitat for Humanity  
of Greater Memphis

#### PROFILE

**Headquarters**  
Memphis, TN

**Type of Business**  
Shelter/Housing

**Website**  
[www.memphishabitat.com](http://www.memphishabitat.com)

### Generating targeted mailings

The Memphis Habitat staff frequently uses the software to generate mailing lists. "We send two bulk mailings a year to our entire list of 17,000 names, usually in June and December," Fabio shared. We also generate many smaller, targeted mailings on a regular basis throughout the year. "We have done finely-tuned mailings to people who meet very specific criteria, such as those who worked on a particular building project and also contributed a certain amount in the last year. We can generate lists of volunteers so we can mail or email them surveys to get their feedback, which in turn helps us improve our future builds."

The recipients of targeted mailings are invited to donate a specific amount and then be recognized in the Annual Report for that level of giving. The staff has found that targeted mailings typically generate a much higher response ratio than the mass bulk mailings, although the staff recognizes the need for both types. The primary reason for the increased response rate is that the appeal used in a targeted mailing can be much more personal and specific to the recipient. "For example, we can refer to experiences that were shared during a certain build and the pride of the volunteers in what they accomplished for that particular family. The letter can also be signed by a person well known to that group of volunteers, such as the leader of the build, further increasing the level of personalization."

Joanna Curtis, Development Director for Memphis Habitat for Humanity, oversees the use of **resultsplus!** to track gift entry. "By tracking each gift, we can easily determine the performance of any particular appeal or segment our database." Curtis said. "For example, in our last appeal we used **resultsplus!** to send one letter to people who had given to us previously, thanking them for their contribution. We sent a different letter to those who had never given, encouraging them to join our donor ranks."

### Providing information to make decisions and to meet regulations

The staff carefully tracks the responses generated by their mailings in several ways. **resultsplus!** has coding devices built in for tracking each unique appeal and a mail merge

feature that records each mailing in the targeted constituents' folders. The software also enables the staff to take it one step further by including codes on their return envelopes, which helps easily determine and record which appeal each donor has responded to and for which fund. Later, this appeal, campaign and fund data can be queried and reported on using the software's standard reports or designing a query to pull specific data. Fazio cited the importance of the software's ability to easily provide the information needed by management for decision-making and regulatory purposes.

Curtis agrees that, as Development Director, the ability to easily run reports is vital to her job. "Each month we generate reports from **resultsplus!** that our accountants use to reconcile their financial statements and the board uses to evaluate our fundraising efforts."

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Development Director

### Improving the database improves development efficiency

The staff can also use the query function to identify incomplete or incorrect records in the database so they can be corrected, for example to locate records without a zip code or an email address. The more complete and correct the database is, the more they can improve their development program. "An important field called 'Mail Code' is used to

indicate people for whom we no longer have a valid address ['Undeliverable'], or people who should not receive mail ['No Mail'], and other options. A quick query revealed that there were names in our database with no value entered in this field. By simply correcting this problem, I was able to reduce the waste in our mailings," Fazio said.

"There's no question that **resultsplus!** improved the efficiency of our development process," Fazio concluded. "First and most important, the program is simple enough to use that everyone who needs to use it, actually *does* use it. Second, it makes it so easy to generate targeted mailing lists that we are able to do mailings on a regular basis, which reduces expenses and improves results. Third, if anything goes wrong, we know that we can depend upon the **resultsplus!** support team at Metafile to get us back on track quickly."

