

## Fund-Raising Software Helps Increase Mailing Response to as High as 8% Using Targeted Appeals

Taking full advantage of its fund-raising software has helped Big Brothers Big Sisters of Greater Pittsburgh, Inc. see increases of up to 8% in response to their mailings. They've accomplished this by generating special targeted appeals that achieve much higher response levels, compared with only 1 to 1.5% responses to general campaigns.

When Tom Wiese, Development Director, joined the organization he found that it was using powerful fund-raising software but not taking full advantage of its capabilities. "One of the first things I did was delve into the history of previous appeals in an effort to see what worked well and what didn't," he said. "I came to the conclusion that performance could be increased by developing specialized appeals and addressing them to a carefully selected but narrow segment of our database. It was soon apparent that these targeted appeals were generating a lot more response than the broader ones that were used in the past. We have developed a whole series of these appeals and the results have been a major improvement over what was achieved in the past. A key factor in our success has been the software we use, resultsplus!™ from Metafile™, which allows us to quickly generate finely targeted lists based on any combination of criteria we select and also tracks the response of our campaigns to a high level of accuracy."

### CUSTOMER



**Big Brothers Big Sisters**  
of Greater Pittsburgh

### PROFILE

**Headquarters**  
Pittsburgh, PA

**Type of Business**  
Youth Organization

**Web site**  
[www.bbbspgh.org](http://www.bbbspgh.org)

**Matching more than 8,000 boys and girls with mentors**

Big Brothers Big Sisters of Greater Pittsburgh, Inc., has been recognized as the region's premier mentoring organization.

*Making a big difference, one child at a time.*



Since 1965, the organization has matched more than 8,000 boys and girls with responsible, caring adult mentors. Preventative in nature, its program unites agency case managers, volunteer mentors, and parents/guardians who work together to deter the occurrence of problematic behaviors before they are able to take root. Big Brothers Big Sisters of Greater Pittsburgh is a private, nonprofit agency with absolutely no fees or dues for its services. The organization is supported financially by the generosity of individuals, corporations and foundations throughout the community who share the value of putting a friend in the life of a child in need.

When Wiese joined the organization, one of his top priorities was to ensure that the software it used fully supported its mission. "In my previous job," he explained, "I used a package that was powerful but also expensive and difficult to use. When I got to Big Brothers Big Sisters of Greater Pittsburgh, I found that their software, resultsplus!, was equally powerful, even though it is offered at a much lower price and has a friendlier and more intuitive user interface. But it was clear that in many cases we weren't taking full advantage of its capabilities. For example, the vast majority of appeals were targeted to the entire database and little use was made of the extensive capability for tracking information the software program provides. I closely examined which appeals had done the best and who the major donors were. Then I began developing a series of appeals that are each finely targeted to the interests of a specific subgroup of our database. This process was greatly aided

by the capabilities of our software that makes it possible to generate even the most complicated queries with a couple of keystrokes."

### Specialized appeal examples

"In the past we would have sent out a letter to all of our lapsed donors asking for a contribution," Wiese continued. "I wanted to segment our audience more narrowly so I started out by addressing an appeal to alumni volunteers who had contributed in the past but not in the most recent year. Narrowing the audience made it possible to personalize the appeal. The appeal generated a 5% response, much better than we were used to receiving for our traditional lapsed donor appeal. It encouraged us to continue and expand our efforts to focus more personalized appeals to a narrow audience."

Wiese continued this approach by developing a letter targeted specially to the larger donors who have played a major role in the success of the organization to date. This appeal generated a response of about 8%, considerably higher than the response generated by similar less-focused letters. "I think the reason this and other specialized appeals are so successful is that selecting a smaller audience with something in common makes it possible to develop a letter that speaks one-to-one to the recipients," Wiese said.

### Another very successful appeal

Wiese developed another very successful appeal that was based on the personal experience of the organization's Chairman of the Board since 1965, Kenny Ross. Ross had a difficult childhood but his life was turned around by his relationship with his Big Brother. Today, he is the CEO of Kenny Ross Automotive Group, one of Pennsylvania's largest chains of automotive dealerships. This personalized appeal generated a 5% response that included contributions ranging from \$50 to \$2000.

"resultsplus! has played an important role in each of

these successes by helping us increase the depth of relationships that we can create with our donors," Wiese added. "The software even makes it possible to add additional information that can't be conveyed in the fields of a database. We frequently add extra information such as that the donor contributes to us through the United Way or that they are particularly interested in programs that benefit youth in very high-risk environments. We are in the midst of an effort to greatly improve the quality of our data so that we can take our efforts to develop specialized appeals to the next level. At the same time, we

are working hard to expand our list in a variety of ways such as sponsoring special events that will attract new people, networking with community leaders, and so on. We are just beginning to take advantage of the eventsplus!™ add-on module. Working with the same database, eventsplus! helps us record the time and location of events, register attendees and guests, record sponsors and supporters, monitor expenses, and keep track of all of the different tasks that need to be done. We have every confidence that using this events area of resultsplus! will help us be as successful in our events as we have already been in our appeals."

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*- Tom Wiese,  
Development Director*

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