

## Software Helps Humane Society Increase Donors by Factor of 11 in Four Years

The Humane Society/SPCA of Bexar County in San Antonio, Texas has increased the number of its active donors by a factor of 11 in the past four years. Switching to new software that accurately tracks fund-raising campaign performance has played a key role. A series of successful efforts to track the results of individual campaigns, and then capitalize on that success, have made this increase possible.

In the past, the Humane Society/Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals (HS/SPCA) used fund-raising software that stored a lot of information, but made it so difficult to access it that most reporting had to be done by hand. About the time James Bias stepped in as Executive Director, he was approached by a local foundation that offered to provide new **resultsplus!** fund-raising software to over 100 San Antonio area nonprofits, including the Humane Society. Bias immediately began using **resultsplus!** to track the response to donor and volunteer drives. The source of every contribution is now tracked to the point that they know the source of every dollar that comes in. The result has been a steady increase in donations. "On our latest mailing, we generated a return of 2.51%, compared to the 1% or so that was typical just a few years ago," Bias said. "The reason it was so much more effective is that both the list and message were carefully tuned, based on our experience with previous

mailings. Instead of repeating our mistakes because we weren't able to identify them, we are now repeating and honing our successes."

The HS/SPCA of Bexar County is a nonprofit organization whose primary mission is to protect abandoned and unwanted animals and prevent cruelty to animals. The organization relies solely on self-generated income. It is not a branch of a national

organization, nor does it receive funds from any city, county, state or federal source. Its income comes from private donations, adoption and receiving fees, sales of T-

shirts, caps and tote-bags, and donations from foundations and corporations. The San Antonio organization's programs provide temporary shelter and find permanent homes for animals, promote spaying and neutering of dogs and cats, and educate the community on responsible animal care. In its 48 years it has found homes for over 150,000 animals, helping make the community a safer place to live.

### Previous software hard to use

"The software we used in the past had many of the same features we have now, but it was very difficult to access them," Bias said. "The result was that when I joined the organization we were manually producing many letters such as donor acknowledgements rather than generating merged documents. Even more important, it was very difficult to track the success or failure of our fund-raising efforts. We found it nearly impossible to do even much simpler analysis tasks on the computer. As I was getting an understanding of the situation and formulating plans to deal with it, I was approached by a local foundation which had surveyed all the nonprofit software on the market and had come to the conclusion that **resultsplus!** from Metafile offered the best combination of functionality and ease of use. Their idea was that not only would the software be a big improvement, but also that the nonprofits in this area would gain the benefit of being able to share ideas



### CUSTOMER

The Humane Society of Bexar County

### PROFILE

#### Headquarters

San Antonio, TX

#### Type of Business

Animal Care

#### Web site

[www.humanesocietyspca.org](http://www.humanesocietyspca.org)



and techniques among each other. They made an arrangement with Metafile and purchased the software, hardware and training for over 100 nonprofit organizations in this area."

results**plus!** is designed for managing donors, prospects, tributes, and solicitors by tracking information on gifts, pledges, contacts, grants, and solicitations. Information is entered on easy-to-use customized forms that automatically transfer the data to the donor's permanent records. The software interfaces seamlessly with Microsoft® Word as well as Corel® Word Perfect to generate mailings. Email correspondence can be sent to individuals or groups with MAPI-compliant email software such as Microsoft Outlook. Responses and donations from individual campaigns, appeals, and grant requests can easily be tracked. results**plus!** includes over 200 standard reports that can be tailored to suit the needs of a particular organization. Queries can be run on every field in the database. The HS/SPCA uses the events**plus!** module to organize and manage its special fund-raising events while sharing one database and donation history with results**plus!**

#### More dollar-productive mailings

"As contributions are affected by economic uncertainty and postal rates continue to rise," Bias said, "it has become more important than ever to track and manage the effectiveness of our communications efforts. "For example, in a test prospect mailing, the mailing was split among three different lists and mailing pieces to measure the effectiveness of our traditional mailings against a list and mailer from an outside vendor. The amount of contributions received per dollar of mailing expense was four times higher from the outside vendor's piece." Bias took further advantage of the software's tracking and reporting capabilities: when he defined the Appeal, he entered basic information such as how many pieces were

sent, the cost to produce the mailing, and a goal for the number of returns. Both the return stub and the return envelopes were color coded so when the money started coming in, the source of each donation could be entered in the software. Bias was then able to generate reports that calculated the response rate and ratio of the donations to the cost of mailing.

"Results like this could have easily been overlooked in the past when we had no way to systematically track the performance of our fund-raising efforts. Measuring our mailings with results**plus!** gives us the incentive to try out new ideas and incorporate what we learn into future mailings. Knowing we can measure our results down to the penny makes it easier to justify a test. We also use the software to carefully track the results of our mailings to regular donors, which include a quarterly newsletter, three or four solicitation letters, and an invitation 'not to attend our no-ball,' " Bias said. The no-ball has proven to be a tremendous fund-raiser for the group. The first one grossed \$13,000, so Bias increased the mailing to 3,000 people the next year and it pulled in nearly twice as much!

***"Being able to take advantage of its full capabilities has played a key role in our ability to increase our active donor list from 800 to 9,000 in four years."***

- James Bias,  
Executive Director

"Despite the fact that we have no I.T. staff, we have had no difficulty taking full advantage of the software," Bias concluded. "Their technical support department has been very responsive in walking us through the most advanced functionality and helping to resolve any problems we have. Being able to take advantage of its [results**plus!**] full capabilities has played a key role in our ability to increase our active donor list from 800 to 9,000 in the last four years."

