

Case study: Mary Bridge's Courage Classic

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One of Mary Bridge's major fundraisers is the Courage Classic - a three day bike tour that takes riders through 172 miles of mountain trails and breathtaking scenery. Now in its 16th year, it's grown substantially more successful in recent years thanks to Firstgiving person to person online fundraising. This year alone, it raised over \$500,000.

With Pierce County in Washington absolutely overflowing with fundraising campaigns, Mary Bridge Children's Hospital has to work hard to stand out from the crowd. Firstgiving helps them get their message out to more people than ever before, and enables them to reach new donors.

Although they keep a watchful eye out for signs that the Courage Classic has run its course, the signs just aren't there. Backed by Firstgiving, the fundraiser has continued to grow, with a 20% increase in donations in 2006 and another 10% increase this year. Last year, 278 of the 404 riders used Firstgiving to fundraise online and, this year, that number has risen to 320 of the total 550 riders. On average, each rider raises \$1000 and the hospital has reached far more supporters thanks to Firstgiving.

When asked how their supporters found using Firstgiving, Special Events Assistant Karen Burlingame said, "Even self-described technophobes and those who prefer face time enjoy Firstgiving. Riders have said it makes fundraising easy - their friends can pay with a credit card (which will, many times, increase contributions) and it's a non-threatening way to ask for money. It's also made it easier to reach people outside of our city - donations are coming in from all over the world."

Firstgiving means less work for the hospital's fundraising staff because of its easy-to-use structure. Burlingame is impressed. "In our 4 years of using it, I think I've received four phone calls asking for help."

Another enormous benefit of using Firstgiving has been that it brings the hospital closer to its supporters, allowing them to get to know each other better. "From reading the stories on their personal fundraising pages, we saw how many of our participants do this ride because they, or someone they know, suffered abuse as a child. We've asked some of them to share their stories, which have raised awareness of our work and helped heal some of those who have been hurt."

So, how has the hospital been so effective at getting the word out about Firstgiving?

- They've put a direct link to their Firstgiving Start Page on their website
- They promote their Firstgiving Start Page in their newsletter
- They include an insert on fundraising with Firstgiving in their event welcome pack
- Word of mouth does the rest of the work for them

And of course there's all the hard work put in by their extremely dedicated staff and supporters. Thanks to them, and with Firstgiving's help, Mary Bridge Children's Hospital has been able to raise more money than they ever thought possible.

To learn how Firstgiving can help your organization raise more funds with greater ease, email information@firstgiving.com.