

Fundraising Letter Writing Campaign



Start Training 2012

Fundraising Guide

Tax ID#13-5613797

Fundraising

Nervous about fundraising? Please know that this is to be expected! Your fundraising goal for this event is a large amount of money...but 13.1 miles is a long way to run or walk...and with some great coaching from AHA, you will reach both your fundraising goal and the marathon finish line! Raising funds is not hard, as long as you remember your ABCs...

Awareness

- Make yourself aware of the mission, programs and statistics of the American Heart Association. Visit www.americanheart.org for more information.
- Make everyone you come in contact with aware of what you are doing and why.
- **Start Early, Ask Often!**

Believe

- Believe in the work of the American Heart Association. Remember, you are not asking for yourself...but for a great cause!
- Believe that you will reach and exceed your goal.
- Believe that people want to support your efforts if they are able to - they just need to be asked!
- Believe in your success in the marathon and the Start Training program.
- **Start Early, Ask Often!**

Contact Everyone!

Give everyone the opportunity to contribute - they may have been affected by heart disease or stroke! Heart Disease is the #1 cause of death in the US. Stroke is the #3 cause of death and the #1 cause of long- term disability.

Who Should You Contact?

Give everyone the opportunity to make his or her own donation!

You will be amazed how many people you know once you start to identify and list them! In developing your list, think of groups of people you know, and then identify individuals within that group. Don't leave anyone off your list because you think they aren't able to or won't donate. Many people have been affected by heart disease or stroke either personally or among their family and friends. Make sure to include:

- Family and relatives...every one of them!
- Friends and neighbors.
- Friends of friends and neighbors!!!!
- Work associates: current and former co-workers, bosses, clients.
- Organizations/Clubs.
- Church, Synagogue or other Religious Groups.
- School acquaintances, Alumni lists, High School, College friends.
- Your kids' families and friends.
- Your parents' friends.
- People/Businesses you do business with....the gardener, hairdresser, dry cleaner, grocery store, bank/mortgage company, pool service company, dentist, doctor, tax accountant, lawyer etc.
- Corporations/Companies. The company you/your spouse work for may make a donation. Some companies "match" donations made by employees...ask your donors if their company has a matching gift program so their donation can be doubled!
- Your Heart or Stroke Hero's mailing list.

How do I approach them?

- Face-to-face is the most effective technique.
- A letter/email campaign is the most efficient way to reach almost everyone.
- Now is the right time to ask! Be prepared to ask when you have the opportunity (keep copies of your letter on hand at all times!)
- Practice makes perfect: Practice asking so the words flow smoothly and you feel comfortable asking people to contribute.
- Follow Up! How many times have you put a donation letter in your 'to do' pile? Many potential donors need a friendly reminder before they get their checkbooks out.
- Phone your contact to follow-up and see if they received your material and plan to contribute. Just because they have not sent you a donation, does not mean they won't. Sometimes people just need a personal reminder.
- Talking to Businesses? Get printed materials (brochures, non-profit information) from staff if you plan to ask businesses for support. They will want to see proof of AHA's non-profit status before making a decision.

Write a Great Letter and See What Happens!

Of course we understand that raising this much money can be a bit intimidating, but you can be successful if you plan ahead, start early, use the resources given to you, be creative and have fun!

Start Now

The key to a successful fundraising campaign is starting early! Recommitment will come quickly. Therefore, it is important to get your letters out at the beginning! If you wait too long, you will be recommitting to the program on the assumption that people will give and not on what is already in your account. So - start now! AND if you get your letters written and in addressed envelopes by February 11th we will send them out for you! (Maximum 50 per/participant)

Use Our Resources!

Call your Mentor. Use the examples provided in this participant guide, those on the website, and call the AHA staff for advice and suggestions!

Writing a Good Letter

We firmly stand by our thought that the #1 way of raising money in this program is with a letter-writing campaign. This is a letter that you send to extended family, current and past friends, neighbors, old college roommates, your favorite teacher from fourth grade, your hairdresser, doctor, chiropractor and just about anybody else that you can think of. Pull out your address book and get printing!

The key to a successful letter campaign is writing a good letter. Here are some suggestions to writing a successful fundraising letter.

- **Make it Personal**
We all love to get personal letters, so make your letter personal. Let them know what else is going on in your life other than this event. Then slide into what the event is about and why you are personally involved.
- **Use Humor**
Start your letter with something like "Have you heard that (your name) has gone off the deep end again. She is thinking about running 13.1 miles..."
- **Short and Sweet**
Keep the letter to one page. If it is too long, you will lose the reader's interest.
- **Use Your Heart or Stroke Hero!**
Let people know that you are not just training, but that you are training in honor of someone – a Heart or Stroke Hero. Introduce your Hero to your donors. Let them know something personal about this Hero (e.g., favorite ice cream flavor). Finally, tell them the importance of research for men, women and children of all ages affected by Heart Disease and Stroke.
- **Be an Advocate for the AHA**
Include the statistics about cardiovascular disease, warning signs or risk factors. This is your chance to not only get donations but to inform your family and friends about cardiovascular disease.
- **Ask**
Very important! What separates this letter from normal letters is that you are asking them to act. Don't just tell them you are doing this, but that you need their help.

- **Include Fundraising Goal**

We recommend letting your donors know how much money you want to raise. The amount your donors give may depend on the size of your overall goal. Remember that the \$500 is a fundraising minimum. Think big and go for a higher amount! You'll never know what is possible until you try.

- **Set a Deadline**

We give you a deadline for your own fundraising, but we recommend you set a deadline earlier than that. People are always motivated by deadlines. This way you can assess your fundraising before the real deadline.

- **Let Them Know How to Donate**

Tell them the procedure for making a donation. If they are confused, they are not likely to send a donation. Walk them step-by-step through the process and be sure to ask them if their company participates in a matching gift program. If they do, it's free money for you!

- **Follow Up!**

Keep a list of all the people you send letters to. You can then compare this list to your website and you will see who hasn't donated. **Be prepared to send out reminders.** A lot of people will get your letter and say, "What a neat idea. Sure I'll help and the letter goes in the 'to-do' pile to sit for a while. Your follow up can be a phone call, postcard or a training update newsletter.

- **Send a Thank You Card**

It is really nice to receive a note that says your donation was important, not to mention that your donors probably want to know how you did! A good thank-you card will set you up well for the next event you do with us!

These are just suggestions of things we have seen work over the past few years. Of course, the final letter needs to come from your heart.

For Those That Don't Respond

There will be some people on your list who are unable or unwilling to contribute to your request. Try not to take it personally. Perhaps they are having some financial challenges, unexpected bills, or they support other causes. It is difficult to know why they are unable to support you. However, some people may be able to make a donation later if you suggest this idea. So follow-up with everyone. Thank each person for thinking about the request and move on to your next prospect!

How Can My Sponsors Donate?

By Mail

- Check/Money Order – checks and money orders can be made out to the American Heart Association. Your donors need to **mail all donations to you** so you can process them before sending them to the AHA office.
- Cash – you need to convert any cash you receive from donors to a check or money order.
- Credit card – Donors can include their credit card number on the pledge forms you will include with your letter. You will then need to go online and process their credit card.

Online

Donors can go to your website, click on **Donate** and look for your name. They will be taken directly to your page where they can donate by credit card or by check.

Donation Forms

Every letter you send out should include a donation form. The donor should fill it out completely and send it back to you with their donation. A copy has been provided for you in this packet. Make sure you make enough copies to be included in all your fundraising letters.

Fill out the information in the following fields before sending out to your donors:

- Please fill out this form and return to:
- Please credit my donation to
- To make a donation online please visit:

If you need us to make copies for you or if you would like an electronic version to print out, please call (916) 446-6505 or email sacstarttraining@heart.org. Otherwise you may handwrite the information.

Corporate Donations

Background

Companies often have funds available to support non-profit organizations. These funds may come from an annual budget for contributions/community support, a corporate foundation, and employee donation clubs or from marketing budgets. However, though there are funds available, it doesn't mean that companies are to be considered strong prospects for your fundraising efforts.

Companies receive many solicitations for funds and tend to support those requests that meet their guidelines and corporate marketing goals or that come from a person of influence within the company. You will want to determine if your time will be well spent in preparing a proposal for a corporate donation or sponsorship.

How You Can Secure Corporate Donations

If you work for a company that has funding for contributions available, talk with whoever administers the funds to learn the guidelines and see if they match the American Heart Association's mission and programs. Find out how to apply for the funds. What kind of documentation and proposal do they require to consider your request? Find out if there are deadlines or funding cycles and if they fit with your fundraising deadline.

See if your friends or business contacts might be willing to check into charitable donation guidelines from the companies where they work. Again, a request is more likely to be considered if it comes from someone associated with that company.

Follow-up your letter with a phone call to make sure it was received and to see if there are additional questions. If the company has more questions and wants more information, please contact your American Heart Association staff to help you provide the answers or to attend a follow-up meeting.

Sample Letter 1

Dear _____,

Get ready for some shocking news! I am training to walk a 13.1 mile marathon to benefit the American Heart Association!

No, I haven't lost my mind and my ____ birthday this month hasn't created a mid-life crisis! I have decided to take on this long-time goal in a sensible and fun way! By joining the AHA's Start Training program, I have a coach, a team to walk with, training schedules and clinics, and a reason that makes this more than a personal goal. I am helping to raise funds for heart disease and stroke research, education and advocacy programs.

Many of you know that my sister _____ died of complications from a heart attack. However, I was not aware of some startling statistics until now:

- Coronary heart disease is the leading cause of death in the United States. Stroke is the third leading cause of death.
- This year about 1.2 million Americans will have a first or recurrent coronary attack.
- About 452,000 of these people will die.
- Each year about 700,000 people suffer a new or recurrent stroke in the United States.
- There are 5.7 million stroke survivors alive today, many with permanent stroke related disabilities.

I will be walking many miles over the next ____ months to prepare for the Parkway Half Marathon. I will also be busy raising over \$____ for the American Heart Association. I am writing to ask for your support in this effort through your good thoughts and prayers (bandaids for blisters!) and through your generous contribution to the American Heart Association. Donations can be made by check (just return the enclosed form and check to me) or by credit card on my website at www.sacramentostarttraining.org. Be sure to also ask your employer if they have a matching gift program that can double your donation.

I made the first donation of \$____ and will be walking this event in memory of _____. If you have a friend or loved one who has been affected by heart disease or stroke, I would be honored to complete this event in his or her name as well. I invite you to include the person's name on the response form.

I am excited about this effort and look forward to walking on behalf of many who cannot due to cardiovascular disease or stroke. Please join me in reaching the finish line of my fundraising goal and helping to end heart disease and stroke!

Thanks for your consideration of this request.

Sincerely,
XXXX

P.S. Although the event is not until _____, my plan is to have my fundraising goal met by _____. Your tax-deductible contribution, sent as soon as possible, is greatly appreciated!

Sample Letter 2

Dear friends and family,

I hope that this letter finds you well, in good spirits, and enjoying good health. Some of you may already know, but most of you will probably be shocked, and pleasantly surprised to learn that I am training to walk in a half marathon to benefit the American Heart Association. I have been greatly inspired by my sister XXX who just completed a marathon (26.2 miles) in January.

As most of you know, the past several years have been devastating to our family. My beautiful mother, Betty had a major stroke destroying 2/3 of her brain in December of 2005. She struggled for 3 weeks, unable to move, speak, or even swallow ice chips on her own, until she could not hold on any longer. She passed away peacefully with my father by her side in January of 2006. My mother's stroke affected my dear father John as well. Being so dependent on her and so much in love, it was literally impossible for him to survive after her death. After a year of sorrow, and struggle I lost my dear father John almost a year to date of my mother in early January of 2007.

Are you aware of the risk factors of heart disease and stroke?

- High blood pressure/high cholesterol
- Diabetes
- Tobacco use
- Physical inactivity

Well I'm taking that last risk factor and doing something about it. I will be walking many miles over the next four months to prepare for the Parkway Half Marathon on April 30, 2011. American Heart Association Start Training volunteers will help coach and train the team. I am helping to raise funds for heart disease and stroke research, education and advocacy programs.

I am writing to ask for your support in this effort through your good thoughts, prayers and your donation to the American Heart Association. I will be walking in this event in memory of my Mom. I will be wearing her necklace along with a picture of her and my Dad who will be smiling down at me, proud of my every step! If you have a friend or loved one who has been affected by heart disease or stroke, I would be honored to complete this event in his or her name as well. I invite you to include the person name on the response form.

Thank you for your consideration and helping me reach my fundraising goal and for helping to end heart disease and stroke! You can be assured that your support will be far reaching.

Most sincerely,

P.S. Although the event is not until _____, my plan is to meet my fundraising goal by _____. You may make your tax-deductible donation through cash, check, or credit card. Please fill out the enclosed response form and return to me, or you may go online to make your donation through my website at <website>.

Sample Contribution Request to Company

<Date>
<Name>
<Company>
<Company Address>

Dear <Name>,
At the suggestion of <Name of Person, Title>, I am sending this request for your consideration.

I have taken on a personal challenge to train for and complete a 13.1-mile marathon in April as part of the American Heart Association's Start Training program. This program not only promotes physical activity as part of a heart-healthy lifestyle but it also raises funds for research and programs to fight heart disease, stroke and other cardiovascular diseases. These diseases are our nation's No. 1 killer, claiming nearly 865,000 American lives a year - more than the next four leading causes of death combined.

You probably know someone suffering from heart disease, stroke or other cardiovascular disease. Most of us do. To help these people - and to help protect our loved ones - we all need to get involved.

I am counting on your support to help us reach this goal. This is a very worthy cause and I am asking you to contribute \$2000 to my personal fundraising goal of \$5000. Cardiovascular diseases threaten all Americans, but we can help our families, friends, neighbors and others in our community by giving generously to reduce disability and save lives.

On a personal note, I am participating in this program and the marathon in honor of <name> of heart or stroke hero> who recently suffered a stroke. I would be honored to also participate on behalf of any <company name> employees who have gone through this devastating health crisis.

Thank you for considering supporting our efforts. If you have any questions or need more information, please contact me at <contact info>. I look forward to visiting with you.

Sincerely,
<Name>
<Contact info>

P.S. If your company is interested in marketing benefits please let me know as The American Heart Association has new Sponsorship Opportunities with Start Training.