Cal Poly Rodeo Partnering with Jack’s Helping Hand

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INTRODUCTION

As advanced as society has become in technology and medicine, children are still affected with a multitude of incurable diseases. When a child is diagnosed with cancer, it can be a financial burden for the family in addition to the physical stress of the disease from treatment (Christos, 2015). For a family to manage the toll cancer puts on them, they need assistance to relieve them financially and emotionally. Jack’s Helping Hand (JHH) was created to assist children in the community with cancer and special needs who have unmet physical, mental and medical needs (Jack’s Helping Hand, 2018). JHH is a non-profit organization which provides assistance for children suffering from medical diseases such as cancer (Borges, 2018). One of JHH’s services is a therapeutic horsemanship program called Little Riders. Being around horses has health benefits for body motion, can reduce feelings of tension, anger, and stress and encourage communication (Michigan State University, 2013).

JHH has upheld a strong reputation in the San Luis Obispo County over the years. The organization is recognized in the community because its mission is to provide community programs that meet the unique challenges of children with cancer or special needs under the age of 21 (Jack’s Helping Hand, 2018). People want to hear about how you make an impact; they want to feel part of your cause (Bacon, 2017).

Background

Leading a fundraiser for the families in JHH, the author strategized through numerous meetings and researched fundraising techniques. Social media, like Facebook, is a beneficial platform for donations. Like most international fundraising techniques, Social media like Facebook are used to raise money, many smaller organizations can translate the same techniques for their own local causes (McCurry, 2010). JHH has a large friend list on its Facebook site that grows with every post. According to a social media survey, it is reported almost 57% of the respondents said they followed a charity or non-profit on Facebook, and over half follow 1-3 social media pages. Facebook by promoting a child benefitting from JHH would help connect a face to the story that people are donating to. Raising awareness in a way people can relate to remains the first step to encourage giving. The stadium fell silent as the emotional video had the audience on the edge of their seats. As the children exited the arena wearing their new cowboy hats and rodeo boots, the audience roared and held up their green cards in support for the children in JHH (Pearmen, 2014). The posts on social media before the Poly Royal Rodeo need to be planned and connect the children’s stories with the potential donors prior to the fundraising event.

CONCLUSIONS

The money raised from the Friday night rodeo was a success compared to the lower than expected number of spectators in attendance. After seeing the outcome of the second night’s performance, the author was pleased with the fundraiser and their ability to raise $5,200.19 for the children of JHH. The fundraiser’s efforts could not be directly associated with Cal Poly Rodeo, due to university policies. However, the author suggests incorporating more publicity through Jack’s Helping Hand social media and communications. The need to be emotionally connected to the children for the fundraiser to be a success. Highlighting the children in the Little Riders program on Facebook by promoting a child benefiting from JHH would help connect a face to the story that people are donating to. Raising awareness in a way people can relate to remains the first step to getting people to give (Pearmen, 2014). The posts on social media before the Poly Royal Rodeo need to be planned and connect the children’s stories with the potential donors prior to the fundraising event.

RESULTS

The event efforts to strategically pass a JHH green card to everyone in the stands prior to the video worked well as the audience had something tangible to participate with the event. The video of the JHH story touched the hearts of everyone in attendance and seemed to add more excitement to the event. The audience fell silent as the emotional video had spectators drawn to watch the story of these amazing children. After the video, Spanos Stadium was totally ‘greened out’ as the crowd roared and held up their green cards to each other in support of the children in JHH.

Audience holding up their green cards.

As the children exited the arena wearing their new cowboy hats and boots, volunteers started collecting cards and boots filled with cash. The ‘green card’ technique was a financial success. After counting cash donations from the cowboy boots, mobile donations from Facebook, Venmo, and PayPal combined, the fundraiser was able to raise $5,200.19 for the children of JHH.