



First Things First



July 30, 2020
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from the organized desk of
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A Winning Approach for Atlanta Girls' School

When millions of students were sent home in March, the spring fundraising calendar for many independent schools suddenly changed. By April, it was very clear that galas, auctions, and school fundraisers could not go on as planned, soon to be followed by graduation ceremonies and other cherished rites of spring for students, teachers, and families.

For **Atlanta Girls' School** (AGS), the 2020 spring event was to be more than another fun evening. AGS opened its doors in 2000, and the *20th Anniversary Soirée* had been carefully planned for April 2020 as a celebration of two decades of educating girls to lead lives of purpose.

Luckily, the event itself could be rescheduled to a late fall date, but the immediate issue was the loss of spring donations—especially an auction paddle raise that benefitted the annual fund—so close to the end of the school and fiscal year.

The solution? Explain the situation and ask donors to step up to help on a designated *Online Giving Day* in May. The outcome? Donors came through with gifts large and small to make the day a success, well surpassing what had been projected for the paddle raise.

As you think about your own creative solutions for the coming year, here are some ideas that worked for the Atlanta Girls' School:

- Give donors the facts. The Soirée was the major fundraising project for the spring, and the loss of much-needed funds would be significant. At the same time, asking donors to make Soirée gifts now rather than later could hurt the fundraising potential for the fall rescheduling of the event. This was shared simply and in a straight-forward fashion.
- Communicate consistently in a short timeframe. Using email and social media,

a series of brief messages using videos and photos were sent in the week leading up to the Online Giving Day. This tactic helped make donors aware the day was around the corner without it becoming "old news." The videos were short, made at home, and came from the heart.

- Be creative! A long-time AGS volunteer leader and Board member decided to use the occasion of her birthday to celebrate AGS and penned a charming, clever poem that she emailed to friends and family asking for gifts to the School. Dozens of donors responded to her birthday wish, bringing in dollars for AGS and building awareness of the School and its mission.
- Be sensitive to the situation: In the weeks leading up to the Online Giving Day, several Board members and other donors pledged challenge gifts so that online donations of any size could be matched dollar-for-dollar. The day's message was that that gifts would be doubled, rather than promoting participation rates, competitions, or class totals, which seemed less important in these times.

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We Think You Should Know

New Survey Looks at Fundraising Activities

More than half of charitable organizations in the United States are expecting to raise less money in 2020 than they did in 2019, and an equal percentage believe the same will occur in 2021, according to the **Association of Fundraising Professionals'** (AFP) *Coronavirus Response Survey*. More than 850 fundraisers in the U.S. participated in the survey distributed to all AFP members in May.

Key Highlights from the Survey

Compared to the first quarter of 2019, 33% did not see any changes in fundraising totals, while 31% saw increases and 35% saw decreases.

- More than half of respondents—57%—expect to see decreases in giving in the second quarter. Only 25% expect an increase, while 18% believe giving to their charity will remain the same.
- 56% of respondents expect to raise fewer funds in 2020 compared to 2019, while 21% predict organizational funding will increase, and 23% believe fundraising totals will remain the same.
- Three out of 10 human service charities said they expect to raise more funds in 2020 than in 2019, six percentage points higher than any other subsector. Larger organizations also expect to do better with their fundraising.
- Almost half of charities report increasing their fundraising activity now because of COVID-19, while 44% will keep their fundraising at normal levels throughout the year. Only 7% of organizations plan to decrease their fundraising.
- When asked which types of fundraising they will focus on more in 2020, 82% of respondents selected activities related to donor retention and stewardship, with 78% of respondents saying they would focus on social media, online and virtual events, and 75% selecting email as a priority.
- 74% of respondents submitted a grant for funding through the CARES Act, and 66% successfully received funding through this legislation. The CARES Act also included a limited universal charitable deduction provision, and 44% are using the new deduction in their fundraising solicitations.
- Nearly 64% have had to cancel at least one fundraising event, and 24% have canceled three or more events. At the same time, more than 50% have switched at least one in-person event to a virtual event, with 14% converting three or more events into online experiences.
- 9 in 10 respondents indicated they are now working from home, with 45% believing their organization was “well prepared” for this shift and 38% believing they were “somewhat prepared.”

Of Interest in Atlanta

Atlanta Habitat for Humanity has canceled on-site volunteer opportunities and homeowner workdays at its building sites, relying on staff and construction and warehouse teams to do the work since May 18. The organization remains committed to the nonprofit’s mission, but the work is moving slowly without the support of the roughly 12,000 volunteers who each year donate the equivalent of \$3 million in labor costs. *ABC, 7-24*

Leadership Atlanta has decided to put off holding its Core and LEAD Atlanta 2021 classes for the upcoming year. *ABC, 7-24*

Residential and commercial trash and recycling firm **Republic Services** donated 40,000 N95 masks to the medical staff at **Grady Memorial Hospital***. The donation was part of Republic’s \$20 million “Committed to Serve” initiative that supports frontline employees and the company’s small business clients *ABC, 7-24*

The **Susan G. Komen Greater Atlanta** nonprofit named **Rick Aranson**, the organization’s chief operating officer, was named executive director of the organization. *ABC, 7-24*

Doug Shipman stepped down as president and CEO of the **Woodruff Arts Center*** and will be replaced on an interim basis by former **Metro Atlanta Chamber** leader **Hala Modelmog**. *ABC, 7-16*

The **United Way of Greater Atlanta** created a new initiative to fund organizations focused on addressing racial inequity in their communities and on a regional level. The *United for Racial Equity and Healing Fund* will prioritize financing organizations that are dedicated to tackling the underlying issues leading to systemic racism in certain ZIP codes where the majority of residents are Black and people of color. *ABC, 7-9*

The **Community Foundation for Greater Atlanta** announced that **Frank Fernandez**, the current senior vice president of the **Arthur M. Blank Family Foundation**, will replace **Alicia Philipp** as its new president and CEO beginning in August. *ABC, 6-26*

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