



RISE

Results in Independent Schools E-newsletter
Shining a Light on Fundraising

Alexander Haas
TRANSFORMING INSTITUTIONS THAT TRANSFORM LIVES

December 12, 2023



Giving Tuesday Hijacked My Inbox

by David H. King
President & CEO

Let me start by saying that we at Alexander Haas are strong advocates for **Giving Tuesday** and anything else that promotes the growth and expansion of philanthropy.

But (and you knew that was coming), I'm sitting here on Tuesday, November 28, watching my inbox fill up with Giving Tuesday solicitations. I quit counting them when it got to 35 by 10 a.m. Some of these are organizations that I've already made my annual gift to for 2023. Some are organizations that I have not supported in years. I received a solicitation from two organizations (including what seems like one an hour from one of them) to whom my only gift – ever – was a memorial gift for a friend who passed away. At this point, it is only 10:51 as I type this; I have moved on to just deleting them unread. And they are still pouring in.

I will acknowledge that, by virtue of my 30 years of working with nonprofits, I'm probably in more nonprofit databases than the average person. With that said, what I have noticed about the ones that I have read is that they are basically all the same. Essentially, they are asking me to give because it is Giving Tuesday. They are not making a case that they are worthy of the gift. They are not making the case that they are addressing a real need in a meaningful way. They are not telling me about their aspirations and plans that my support will help them to fulfill. Nope, they are telling me that I should give because it is Giving Tuesday. It reminds me of calls I get from time to time from organizations who tell me, "Next year is our 50th anniversary, so we want to have a big capital campaign". When I ask what the campaign will fund, the answer is usually, "We have not figured that out yet, but we want to have a campaign." Folks, the marking of an anniversary – no matter how significant – is not in and of itself a compelling reason to give. And frankly, neither is the fact that it is the Tuesday after Thanksgiving.

Giving Tuesday has led some to abandon critical aspects of effective fundraising. Number one is – you must have a compelling case for support. I think in the rush to "get in on" Giving Tuesday, many organizations' strategy is to simply bombard people with email and remind them that it is Giving Tuesday. I wonder how long that will continue to work?

As I said in the open, I support Giving Tuesday. Spotlighting philanthropy is a very good thing. However, solicitation messaging has become routine for many, and the focus is on the volume rather than the quality of communication. It is time to get back to making the case and using some creativity to capitalize on Giving Tuesday.

By the way, I vowed not to open any social media on Giving Tuesday, as I knew it was going to be consumed with Giving Tuesday appeals.

[Our Team](#)

GIVING TUESDAY

Results Flat

Donors contributed \$3.1 billion to U.S. nonprofits on GivingTuesday, roughly the same amount as last year, which marked a record high for the giving day. This year’s donations were up by less than a percent, just \$20 million.

Lower participation could be one reason the day failed to bring in significantly more donations than it did in 2022. Just 34 million people made contributions on GivingTuesday, down 10% from last year.

“We are concerned to see a decline in participation in line with giving trends from the past year,” **Asha Curran**, CEO of GivingTuesday, said in the news release announcing the figures.

“GivingTuesday’s mission is to inspire generosity among as many people as possible, not just raise as many dollars as possible.” *COP, 11-29*

[Our LinkedIn](#)

A Snapshot of State Independent Schools

Tennessee you're up next. Let's look at what participating schools raised in philanthropic funds in the state of Tennessee.

School Count 23

Advancement Median Funds Received for '22	\$2,958.025
Median Number of Donors	1,018
Median Percent Participation by Constituency & Hard Credit Funds Received	
Median % Participation by Parents/Guardians of Current Students	57.3% \$640,573
Median % Participation by Alumni/ae	9.7% \$571,819

Median % Participation by Grandparents of Current Students	18.8%	\$131,000
Median % Participation by Parents and Grandparents of Alumni/ae	14.4%	\$510,237
Median % Participation by Employees	80.6%	\$33,907

Trustees	
Median Number of Trustees	23
Median Hard Credit Funds Received by Trustees	\$162,831
Median Soft Credit Funds Received by Trustees	\$231,580
Funds Received by Purpose ('22)	
Median Funds Received for Current Operations: Unrestricted	\$784,923
Median Funds Received for Current Operations: Restricted	\$221,224
Median Funds Received for Endowment	\$893,485
Median Funds Received for Other Capital Purposes	\$1,325,861
Median Funds Received for Irrevocable Deferred Gifts at Face Value	\$352,646

[Data from NAIS Facts at a Glance.](#)

Our Facebook

Digital Resource for Neurodivergent Students

Understood.org, a nonprofit organization focused on providing resources to neurodivergent individuals, has announced a \$757,000 grant from the Oak Foundation to launch a digital resource for students with learning and thinking differences.

The funding will be used to create *Through My Eyes*, a digital interactive hub rooted in behavioral science, which aims to harness first-person storytelling to transform attitudes and behaviors. The resource will include toolkits that shows students, educators, and families how to use best practices of social-emotional learning to promote positive mental health outcomes for students with learning and thinking differences and addresses racial and economic equity to increase equitable outcomes. Understood will partner with InnovateEDU as a K-12 design partner and Split This Rock as a community-based design partner. PND, 12-9

Donor Participation Dropped in '22

In 2022, the U.S. nonprofit sector saw a 1.7% decline in total giving, a 10% drop in the number of donors, and a 3.5% decrease in retention rates. A report from Independent Sector found that while roughly 90% of the drop in donors was among those giving less than \$500 annually, the number of major (\$5,000 to \$50,000) and supersize (more than \$50,000) donors also fell by 3.1% and 2.1%, respectively.

Other Key Findings

- 52% of the respondents indicated they trust what the non-profit does is right, down 7 percentage points from 2020.
- 39% of survey respondents who said their personal financial situation was “getting worse” trusted nonprofits, compared to 67% of those who said it was “getting better.”
- 31% of nonprofits reported engaging in advocacy or lobbying in 2022, a significantly

smaller percentage than 20 years ago, despite 90% of the public supporting nonprofits educating policymakers on communities.

- 48.5% of nonprofits reported increasing staff workloads to meet rising demands for services in 2023.
- Nearly two-thirds of nonprofit employees over 25 hold a bachelor's degree or higher, nearly 20% struggled to afford basic necessities in 2021.

[More here.](#) *NPD, 11-15*

We Know Independent Schools

For more than 35 years, Alexander Haas has been a fixture in the nonprofit community. We are honored to have worked with so many remarkable independent schools, both secular and non-secular, across the country that help mold today's adolescents into tomorrow's leaders. Take a look at our list of independent school clients, past and present.

[Our Clients](#)

A Fresh Approach to Fundraising

Our services aren't cookie cutter. We don't operate with a boilerplate, merely changing names and locations. We craft each and every service we provide to match your organization's unique needs, wants and abilities. We work hard and expect you to do the same. Together we can help you transform your institution, your fundraising, and the community you serve.

Whether your need is in Capital Campaign, Annual Fund Campaign, Major Gifts, Leadership Annual Giving, Planned Giving or all of the above, we take a fresh approach to nonprofit fundraising.

[Our Services](#)



*A*lexander·Haas
TRANSFORMING INSTITUTIONS THAT TRANSFORM LIVES

www.fundraisingcounsel.com
info@alexanderhaas.com

Piedmont Place | 3520 Piedmont Place NE, Suite 450 |
Atlanta GA 30305-1512 | 404.525.7575