

Small Dollar Donor Opportunities for a Successful Capital Campaign and Beyond



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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Our local animal shelter provides an essential service to our community such as reuniting lost animals with their owners. If no owner steps up, the shelter provides all necessary health services in preparation for the animals to find a new forever home. These lifesaving services include vaccinations, antibiotics, microchipping, spay or neuter (to ensure the cycle of unwanted animals stops with them). Services may also include more expensive treatment such as emergency and/or medical surgery.

As a kitten foster who has fostered 290 cats and kittens for the shelter, I have witnessed firsthand the lengths the shelter goes to save the animals in its care. In many shelters throughout the country, neonatal kittens are euthanized as soon as they enter the shelter because they do not have the resources or volunteers to care for these fragile kittens. Our shelter does not euthanize kittens, or any animal, unless it is for the health of the animal.

Why am I sharing this? Because the shelter needs resources to provide these services, and adequate and efficient space to care for the animals. Due to the generosity of multiple large dollar donors, the shelter initiated a capital campaign and recently purchased land to build a new animal shelter. And while these large dollar donors are critical to the success of this project, we should not overlook the impact made by small dollar donors, those who donate under \$250.00.

This proposal will explain the need for a new shelter and a high-level plan to engage small dollar donors to support the capital campaign if they are able. Most importantly, we must engage and reach out to the small dollar donors who are more likely to become repeat donors. The sustained revenue allows the shelter to provide quality care to the animals.

SHELTER HISTORY

The shelter’s mission is to “aid, advocate and adopt to enrich the lives of companion animals.” This mission has never wavered since the shelter’s inception in 1976. The 48-year-old, 8,000 square foot building, however, is outdated and the current layout does not use space efficiently.

The Board of Directors purchased property to build a new 14,000 square foot shelter at a cost of 3.8M. The Board and the Planning Committee initiated a Capital Campaign to contact and engage community businesses and individuals for sponsorships. An online donation site was created to track all donations. During the quiet phase of the campaign, \$3.6M of the \$3.8M goal has been met.



Current Animal Shelter



Rendering of New Animal Shelter

DONOR SUMMARY

The shelter relies on both large and small dollar donors to raise the necessary operational funds. There is a lot of focus on engaging large dollar donors for these costs and for the additional costs needed to build the new shelter. Small dollar donors are another very important demographic that support the needs of the shelter.

As Secretary on the Board of Directors, I propose the Board of Directors review and take action engaging our small dollar donors, those who have donated under \$250.00. As the campaign continues, small dollar donors play an important part in reaching our goal and beyond. Every donor must feel engaged, appreciated and recognized for their support no matter the amount that is donated.

The shelter must review additional avenues to raise awareness and donations from small dollar donors. As an organization, we are not doing enough to engage these donors and bring in new small dollar donors. The following proposal demonstrates why it is essential the shelter focus on connecting with these donors.

CHARACTERISTICS OF A SMALL DOLLAR DONOR

The small dollar donors share common characteristics. We must ensure that we are taking these qualities when developing a communication plan. The following are common characteristics:

Characteristics	Descriptions
Donation Amount	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • For this proposal, smaller donations are under \$250.00
Socioeconomic Diversity	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Derive from a variety of socioeconomic statuses like income, occupation and education • Unable to make a large one-time donation • Desire to make a difference in the welfare of homeless animals • Desire to be a part of the excitement
Personal Connection to the Shelter or Mission	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Passionate with a love for animals • Follow our online presence (i.e., Facebook, website, blogs by fosters) • Follow other animal-related pages, shelters and rescues • Past/future adopters, volunteers, shelter staff, shelter members • Friends and/or family members of those who have a personal connection to the shelter
First Time Donors	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Increased opportunity for sustainability (donate a small one-time building donation, then set up a monthly recurring donation that increases the long-term operating revenue)

SURVEY SUMMARY AND RESULTS

Surveys were sent to a random sample of people who have already donated \$250 and under to gain insight into what motivates donors to support us.

The survey questions are a mix of options to select and free form. The results of the survey provided insight into these donors. The questions provided qualitative and quantitative insight. Refer to Appendix A for a copy of the survey.

The following provides a summary of the survey:

Topic	Feedback
Survey Summary <i>(Table continues next page)</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 10 surveys emailed • 4 surveys returned by due date (2 by email, 2 by mail)

Topic	Feedback
Question Replies Summary	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Question #1: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ “Volunteer” was the top reply ○ “Past Adopter” was second • Question #2: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Common theme from respondents on why the shelter is important is because it provides a necessary service to the community • Questions #3: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ All 4 replied “Yes” that they feel the gift of support will have a positive impact • Question #4: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ All 4 replied “Yes” that they feel appreciated by the shelter • Question #5: • No addition feedback was provided
Lesson’s Learned	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 40% response rate. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Is there a way to improve this? ○ Provide more time? ○ Different communication method? • Two respondents had issues opening attachment and mailed their results <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ How can survey be revised to eliminate this blocker

HOW OTHER ANIMAL SHELTERS ENGAGE SMALL DOLLAR DONORS

Best Friends Animal Society located in Kanab, Utah, is the national largest no kill rescue. In addition to requesting for donations, they have opportunities for membership, becoming a monthly donor and sponsoring an animal. (www.bestfriends.org/donate).

Similar to Brest Friends, Happily Ever Animal Sanctuary (HEA) located in Green Bay, Wisconsin, also promotes small dollar donations with the opportunities listed above. HEA not only seeks monetary donations, but they also have a “Grant a Wish” program and cottages at their sanctuary that guests can stay at. While cottages and weekend stays are a creative way to raise funds, it would not be a feasible opportunity for our shelter due to logistics. (www.heanokill.org/makeagift).

As a volunteer and kitten foster, I have more than 10 years' experience in animal rescue. I have volunteered at both of these rescues plus other local organizations. Both Best Friends and HEA have a strong focus on gifts of support from donors. Best Friend's has a Stewardship Team, which I was member for 3 years. Volunteers call new donors with a short message to thank them for their gift. There is no solicitation for additional donations. It takes resources and time to make these calls, but people are very surprised but grateful for the personal call. If our volunteers are willing to assist, this might be a excellent starting point to engage donors.

SMALL DOLLAR DONOR INTERVIEWS

The best way to learn how small donors feel the rescue is doing regarding recognition and how they believe we could expand our footprint. A regular monthly donor, who asked to remain anonymous, requested her donations specifically be used for the shelter's Hope Fund, which provides for emergency medical care. "When the shelter shares on their Facebook page that the Hope Fund was used, it makes me happy to know that my donation helped."

Personal appreciation is key to us gaining and retaining donors. "The shelter is small and the online system states their appreciation, but a personal note of appreciate would be appreciated, but it's not 100% necessary because I know my donation is helping the animals and that's most important," she says with a smile.

PLAN FOR COMMUNICATING TO SMALLER DONORS

Together, the [characteristics](#) listed above encompass who are the smaller dollar donors. Each donor must be made to feel that their donation is important to the success of the new shelter. Donors must be kept updated on the progress of the campaign and the build once it breaks ground.

Communication should be through various platforms (e.g., Facebook, website, mass emails, postcards, quarterly newsletters, volunteer blogs, and word of mouth). To create donation and to communicate that content for smaller donors, it must be:

- Simple and clearly written
- Contain a "Call to Action"
- Fun and engaging with images and graphics
- Tell a story about who they are helping when they make a donation:
 - Content about the animals in the shelter
 - Content about how new building and features will help the animals (e.g., the medical room, surgical suite, new sprinkler system for safety, new dog runs and trails, etc.)
- Share fun ways to make a difference/donation (e.g., fundraisers, auctions, matching)

CONCLUSION

Large dollar donors allow the shelter to quickly meet capital needs, such as the construction of our new building. However, small dollar donors are critical to the ongoing success of the organization. These are the donors that will continue to donate long after the capital campaign is complete. As an organization, we must engage current donors and reach out to new donors who are passionate about supporting animal welfare in our community.

This process will take time, but it will not be a futile exercise. Sending a survey to our current volunteers would be an excellent place to start. We could ask them what opportunities they would be interested in such as writing postcards or making “thank you” calls to new donors. From there we can review the results and determine next steps.

Animals at the shelter need someone to be their protector and to be their voice. Small dollar donors are essential voice to the welfare of every animal in our shelter today and in the future.

APPENDIX A

Donor Survey Example



Dear [Insert Donor's Name]

Hopefully you have heard that our community is getting a new animal shelter! That's right, with the help of generous donors like you, we are raising funds to build a new animal shelter. The current building is almost 50 years old, outdated and lacks many current safety features such as a fire sprinkler system. As a donor, we want you to be a part of this extraordinary time in the shelter's history—giving the companion animals in our community a new home!

Please take a moment to share your thoughts. Completing this quick and confidential survey will provide us invaluable insights about donors like you, who are vital to our success. Your voice matters to us, and we are excited for you to stay connected and see the impact of your input!

Paws and Meows,

Humane Society

Please circle all applicable options and use the comment line to add any feedback you would like to share.

1. How did you learned about our organization?

- Online
- Social Media
- TV
- Radio
- Newspaper
- Shelter visit
- Past adopter
- Volunteer
- Other: _____

2. Why is the shelter important to you? _____

3. Do you feel your gift of support will have a positive impact towards the new building?
 - Yes
 - No
 - We cannot make this dream come true without you. If you selected No, what could we do better? _____
4. Do you feel your gift(s) is appreciated by the organization?
 - Yes
 - No
5. Was this an acceptable communication method to reach you?
 - Yes
 - No
 - a. If you selected No, please provide us your preferred contact method, so we can update our records.

WORKS CITED

www.bestfriends.org/donate: Various ways Best Friends Animal Society engages small dollar donors.

www.heanokill.org/makeagift: Various ways HEA engages small dollar donors.