

Potter League Makes a Difference in Animals' Lives With Sage Fundraising 50

No animal is turned away from the Potter League for Animals, a private nonprofit organization committed to zero tolerance of animal suffering and homelessness. It accepts all owner-surrendered animals from Newport County in Rhode Island, as well as strays from nearby communities, finding homes for hundreds of surrendered dogs and cats each year.

The Potter League also addresses root causes of animal abuse and overpopulation through community outreach programs, and offers obedience classes, cremation, and pet-loss support groups. In recognition of its good works, readers of Newport Life Magazine voted it the "Best Local Charity" for 2005.

Going to the Dogs

Low-end software and stand-alone computers hampered the shelter's efficiency and potential growth. So in the late 1990s, the Potter League invested in new computers, a network, and Sage Fundraising 50, selected primarily for its ease of use.

"When we adopted Sage Fundraising 50, we thought we'd never need all the features built into it," says Pat Heller, director of community outreach and development. "Boy, were we wrong. Our constituent base has easily grown five-fold since then and we have been able to keep our administrative headcount flat, thanks to the capabilities provided by the software."

Purr-fect Solution

Practically everything in the Potter League's half-million-dollar development account is now managed with Sage Fundraising 50. The software tracks all gifts, whether from the annual walk, memorials, one-time donations, or planned giving program. The system records the donors, their employers, pets' names, which shelter service is used, and participation in the shelter's numerous events.

"In our type of organization, we have a constant influx of potential donors," explains Heller. "People may visit us to adopt a pet. They may donate pet food or blankets. Plus, we get 400 new volunteers each year without even recruiting. Everyone goes into our database as a possible future donor. Currently, we have 17,000 people in our data bank, and the number is always increasing. With Sage Fundraising 50, it is easy for us to maintain complete records on all of them."



CUSTOMER

Potter League for Animals

INDUSTRY

Nonprofit
Animal Shelter

LOCATION

Newport, Rhode Island

Number of Locations: One

Number of Employees: 21

SYSTEM

Sage Fundraising 50

Challenge

Manage database of more than 17,000 constituents with small administrative staff; track general fundraising efforts and \$7.5 million capital campaign.

Solution

Sage Fundraising 50 to automate all aspects of organization's development efforts, including direct mail, planned giving, events, invitations, and appreciation.

Results

Constituency base increased five-fold while staffing stayed flat; organization can send out accurate annual reports; acknowledgements are sent in a timely manner.

Heart and Sole

The Heart and Sole Walk for the Animals, which draws 450+ participants, is organized through Sage Fundraising 50. “We keep excellent data on each person who walks, how much they raise in pledges, and even link the names and addresses of the people who pledge them. It is simple for us to contact participants for the next year. Without the software, this would be extremely cumbersome,” says Heller.

“Another feature included in Sage Fundraising 50 that we really appreciate are the RSVP capabilities, so we know when people responded for events like the walk,” continues Heller. “If it’s two weeks before the date of an event, and we know that responses are up by 10 percent over the same time last year, we can adjust our plans accordingly.”

Doggone Good Data

“Because our records are so good, we can now publish an annual report, segmenting donors by giving level,” notes Heller. “For the longest time, we didn’t do this for fear of leaving someone out. Having reliable data and being able to list all donors accurately is a wonderful benefit for us.”

Now that the organization manages such a large database, their mailings are prepared by a third-party rather than consuming their internal resources. Sage Fundraising 50 is used to generate the lists, which are exported to a mail house. Internally, thank-you letters and pledge reminders are generated directly from the software, as well as records of memorials, which allow families to contact people donating in their loved one’s name.

The Cat’s Meow

The Potter League is kicking off a capital campaign, in hopes of raising \$7.5 million. Sage Fundraising 50 software is an integral part of the effort.

“We’re using our software to track volunteers for the campaign, recording which assignments they take on, and how much money they generate,” says Heller. “Sage Fundraising 50 will let us create contact cards, generate lists of names, and print our own invitations, saving a great deal of time.”

“Our goal is to make a difference in animals’ lives. Sage Fundraising 50 helps us do a better job. I can’t imagine how we’d manage without it.”

—Pat Heller
Director of Community Outreach
and Development
Potter League for Animals

Because Sage Fundraising 50 provides a field for storing e-mail addresses, the Potter League is also launching an e-newsletter. It will go out monthly to give constituents quick updates on shelter news.

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