

Austin Children's Shelter Provides a Safe Haven With Sage Fundraising 50

Abandoned, abused, and neglected children in Travis County, Texas, face plenty of challenges. But at least they have a safe interim home when they must be removed from their parents' care. Since 1984, the Austin Children's Shelter (ACS) has been a safe haven for approximately 300 children every year, and was recently voted Best Nonprofit Organization by the Austin Chronicle Readers' Choice Poll.

A well-intentioned benefactor donated a large, sophisticated, and expensive fundraising product to help ACS manage its donor information. Unfortunately, the package did not match the agency's needs, and no one learned to use it. Moreover, the manufacturer did not offer support, and would not help ACS convert from its existing database.

"Lucky" Knowledge of Sage Fundraising 50

Then ACS hired Megan Hartman as development associate. Hartman had previously used Sage Fundraising 50 at another nonprofit agency. "I talked with the executive director at ACS about how the shelter was severely limited by their fundraising software and should check out alternatives. We evaluated four products. It was then I realized how lucky I'd been to work with Sage Fundraising 50."

ACS now uses Sage Fundraising 50 to track all aspects of donor activities, from initial contact to ongoing solicitations. All donor and gift information, mailings, and even phone conversations are stored in the Sage Fundraising 50 database. Sage Fundraising 50 is used to run reports targeting donors at specific levels, generate invitations to events, and produce fast, professional-looking thank-you notes.

"Thank you letters, which also serve as tax receipts, are an extremely important factor of our fundraising process," Hartman explains. "Before, we had a two-month backlog, which was totally unacceptable. Now, thanks to Sage Fundraising 50, we can send out gift acknowledgements automatically. Donors really appreciate that."



CUSTOMER

Austin Children's Shelter

INDUSTRY

Nonprofit
Social Services, Shelter

LOCATION

Austin, Texas

Number of Locations: One
(two shelter houses, one administrative office)

Number of Employees: 60

SYSTEM

Sage Fundraising 50

Challenge

No one knew how to use the complicated fundraising software donated to the organization. A mock-up database was created but left room for error and lacked a means to track donations and thank donors properly.

Solution

Sage Fundraising 50 now tracks the entire donation process from beginning to end, and manages major event details.

Results

Sage Fundraising 50 is saving more than half a day per report, 30 percent of one fulltime employee's workload, an average of seven hours on each newsletter mailing, and will pay for itself within one year.

Speed and Savings

By automating data processing, Sage Fundraising 50 has streamlined development tasks at ACS. "Sage Fundraising 50 has cut my workload by 30 percent," Hartman estimates. "It has trimmed the time we spend on a newsletter mailing from an entire day to just a couple of hours. The first week we had Sage Fundraising 50, our executive director asked me for a report and was shocked when I gave it to her two minutes later. Before, it would have taken me at least half a day to prepare—assuming I could drop everything else to devote time to it!"

Hartman notes that Sage Fundraising 50 is easy to learn. "Interns and volunteers do a lot of our data entry," she says. "Because Sage Fundraising 50 is so user-friendly, it only takes a few hours for me to train new people. This eliminates time I'd otherwise spend in hand-holding, and frees me up for doing my own work."

Excellent Event Planning

ACS recently used the event planning capabilities within Sage Fundraising 50 to manage a motorcycle-ride fundraiser. "Instead of manually tracking registration forms received, release forms for motorcycle passengers, payments, and discounts, we relied on Sage Fundraising 50," Hartman says. "The software worked so well that my workload, compared to last year's event, was reduced by 50 percent."

The Austin Children's Shelter still maintains its volunteer information in a separate database. But that will change soon, when the information is added to the Sage Fundraising 50 builtin volunteer management system. "After the data conversion, we'll have superior capabilities for tracking volunteer contact information, details like TB testing and hours served, which is required for grant purposes," Hartman says.

Customer support on Sage Fundraising 50 has been outstanding, according to Hartman. "I can't stress enough how helpful our Sage Software representative has been," she notes. "He's never annoyed with questions, and cheerfully explains any issues we have. In fact, he encourages us to call him. He's just amazing."

"Sage Fundraising 50 has changed the way we operate," says Hartman. "It's also proved to be very affordable. We expect the software to pay for itself in just one year."

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Development Associate
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