

## **Annual campaign fundraising basics**

**By James O. Preston**

Start raising money for your county extension program with a strong annual campaign. Annual campaign is defined as: "Any organized effort by a gift-supported organization to obtain gifts on a yearly basis, usually to support in part or totally general operations"<sup>i</sup>

In an article from the Center on Philanthropy at Indiana University, Stephanie Mannon says, "Techniques used to raise funds range from direct mail solicitation, to personal telephone calls and meetings, to special events such as black-tie galas and barbecues. Fund drives may occur once a year or continue all year long. Funds raised in annual giving campaigns are usually directed toward the current operating expenses of the organization. This distinguishes an annual campaign from a capital campaign that is used to raise money for buildings or facilities, and endowment campaigns that are used to raise funds for an organization's long-term financial stability."<sup>ii</sup>

An annual campaign is about consistency and sustainability. If you are just starting or want to build on your current fundraising efforts, here is a checklist for establishing an annual campaign:

**Create a plan for holding fundraising events and activities that raises money and acquires donors.** If your county council has a development committee, mobilize them to help. If not, form a development committee.<sup>iii</sup> Incorporate your existing fundraising activities and add new ones into an annual campaign plan. Many county councils already do fund raising activities, some on an annual basis. Activities might include events, auctions, raffles, and any number of activities to generate support such as mail and email solicitations. List your activities in a timeline and put them on the calendar. There are many ways to raise money. Find the ways that work best for you and incorporate them into your plan.

**Create a donor and prospect list.** If you already have fundraising activities, you already have donors. Create a spreadsheet starting with those names. Check with MU Extension Advancement to see if there are other Extension donors in your county. Add local residents and businesses starting with those who utilize your services and participate in your programs. Ask your county council and development committee to help you come up with the names that should be included in your list.

**Build your annual campaign plan into your existing communications plan.** Your annual campaign will rely on getting the word out. Use a multi-channel approach that ties a clear message for support with a concise method for response.

**Schedule to ask people to give several times per year.** A recent study showed that December is the only month of the year where donations spike upward. In the study, donations came in at about the same level in every month but December, which saw donations increase. That means you should create a calendar of fundraising that peaks toward the end of the year. The rest of the year, schedule to fit your priorities and the times when people will most likely be thinking about your program.<sup>iv</sup>

**Hold fundraising events and track both the donations you raise and the donors you acquire.** Use your donor spreadsheet to track. If you direct donors to give through the University, MU Advancement will automatically track your donors for you.

**Evaluate your results and adjust plans as needed, and ...**

**Repeat annually.**

For help getting your annual campaign plan started, contact MU Extension Chief Development Officer James Preston (573) 884-8570; [prestonjo@missouri.edu](mailto:prestonjo@missouri.edu).

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<sup>i</sup> National Society of Fund Raising Executives (NSFRE) Glossary of Fund-Raising Terms, 1986.

<sup>ii</sup> The Center on Philanthropy at Indiana University, <https://www.learningtogive.org/resources/annual-campaigns>

<sup>iii</sup> Whether you call it a development committee, a fundraising committee, or a philanthropy committee, invite volunteers in your community who know how to raise money to be on your committee.

<sup>iv</sup> Article, When is Nonprofit Fundraising Season? The Answer May Surprise You. iDonate: <https://idonate.com/2019/01/17/when-is-nonprofit-fundraising-season-the-answer-may-surprise-you/>