

AIDS Ride for Life Fundraising Tips

Thanks for participating in the AIDS Ride for Life and helping the Southern Tier AIDS Program (STAP) in the fight against AIDS in our community! We know fundraising is hard work and that most of us don't really like asking other people for money. So as part of last year's post ride survey, we asked a number of questions about fundraising; what challenges people faced and what methods they used to overcome them. We also conducted a number of one on one interviews with the 2009 riders (including several of the top fundraisers from last year) to find out what approaches they used that really worked for them. Using the insights gleaned from all that data, we've put together a short list of tips and ideas to help make your fundraising efforts easier and more effective. Explanations of each tip or idea can be found below the list.

1. Fundraising is creating an opportunity for people to help (Switch Your O's)
2. Use online resources
3. Connect the AIDS Ride for Life with the global fight against AIDS
4. Talk about why you ride
5. Use snail mail
6. Organize an event or tap into your specific skill set
7. The "Tip" or "Loose Change" jar
8. Don't forget, every little bit does help (Don't rely on a few big donors)
9. Ask for the donation!
10. Incentive prizes for you

1. Fundraising is creating an opportunity for people to help (Switch Your O's)

Most riders look at fundraising as an obligation, and it is. But an amazing number of riders told us that many people who donated **thanked** them for the chance to do something, for the **opportunity** to help. Lots of people want to help, but they don't know how. Supporting you in the ride is an easy way for people to do something. If you think of the O's in obligation and opportunity as the wheels on your bike, obligation is the front wheel, the one you have to push over the top of every hill. But opportunity is the back wheel, the one that does all the work. Let your donors help you spin that back wheel by switching your focus from obligation to opportunity!

2. Use online resources

If you use email or have a Facebook, Twitter or other social media accounts, use them. Make a group on Facebook and ask your friends to invite their friends to join too. Using the Firstgiving website (sign up here: <http://www.firstgiving.com/stapride>) that STAP has enlisted to manage online donations will make your online fundraising much easier and effective (nearly 65% of all donations came in through Firstgiving last year). Post your Firstgiving link in your Facebook status and/or to your group members every week or so. Make sure to include the link to your fundraising page in **every** post, group update, tweet or email you send; make it easy for people to give. You can even add the Firstgiving link to the signature of you email messages with a tag line that says "Join me in the fight against AIDS", or something similar. Keep updating people to remind them about the Ride and the

opportunity to give or help. Don't know what to post? You can always talk about a training ride you took (just did 25 miles to get ready for the ARFL! "*Add link here*"), or a story you just saw about AIDS, or even a picture of yourself in that sweet new riding jersey you got for the big day!

3. Connect the AIDS Ride for Life with the global fight against AIDS

While it is very important to emphasize that all money raised by the AIDS Ride for Life is used for AIDS efforts here in the Southern Tier, a number of riders told us that people were more willing to donate, and often more generous, when the rider talked about AIDS as global issue. It's that old "Think Globally, Act Locally" thing. AIDS is an international challenge, but we can help fight it everywhere by fighting it here.

4. Talk about why you ride

Whatever reason you have chosen to take on this challenge, tell your donors about it. If you see the ride as a way to help, just want to add some meaning to all those miles you are putting in or have a personal connection with AIDS that you are willing to talk about, tell the story. Whatever your reason, put it in your emails, letters, Facebook posts and on your Firstgiving page. Personalizing the Ride gives your donors the chance to not only help STAP but to help you reach your goals as well. Don't be shy about telling people what your own fundraising target is, and don't be afraid to set it above the minimum you need to raise.

5. Use snail mail

Last year the top 2 fundraisers and other High Gear Club members sent actual letters to prospective donors in the mail. The effectiveness of this technique may depend to some extent on the demographic you are targeting, but because so few people communicate via letter anymore, taking the time, effort and expense of using the postal service does have an impact on donors. Be sure to include why you ride and your fundraising goals.

6. Organize an event or tap into your specific skill set

Still don't want to just ask for the cash? Offer something of value in return! Last year a number of riders found ways to raise lots of money by having bake sales, garage sales, wine tastings or trading services for donations. You can even offer to return your neighbor's bottles & cans, as long as you get to keep the cash for the Ride!

A good way to trade services is by creating your own raffle. Are you a good cook or a massage therapist, or anything else cool for that matter? Put all your donors in a drawing (you should decide whether or not to "weight" the chances of winning based on donation amount) for a chance to win your services! If you are a craftsperson or an artist, you can do the same thing with your work. Raffle off pictures of yourself in biking shorts!

If you are part of a team, hold a team event of some kind. Consider a bake sale, car wash (*Auto Zone on Rte 13 is a good place*), or mulch delivery (*Ithaca residents can get free mulch from the pile by the golf course off Willow Avenue*). *Just make it clear the donation is for the delivery, not the mulch itself.* Then you can split the proceeds among the team riders! If you come up with a great idea, send it in to us so we can share it with other riders.

7. The “Tip” or “Loose Change” jar

If you work in an office or any other location that has foot traffic, put a jar on your desk or counter with information about the Ride, seed it with a few bucks and see what happens. You should check first with whoever is in charge of your work space however, just in case there are rules about such things.

8. Don’t forget, every little bit does help (Don’t rely on a few big donors)

Last year the AIDS Ride for Life raised over \$280,000.00 from more than 4,350 individual donations in amounts ranging from \$1 dollar to \$1400 dollars. Fully 50% of all donations were for \$25 dollars or less (in fact, \$25 dollars was by far the most common donation amount) and nearly 50% of all funds collected came from donations of \$50.00 or less. It all adds up! Let people know it is okay to give **any** amount. In fact, ten \$10.00 donations is in some ways better than one \$100 dollar donation because while the money is the same, it means that 9 additional people have had the opportunity to help and have taken the time to think about AIDS. Of course, big donors are great too!

9. Ask for the donation

Be sure to include a “call to action” in all you communications, for example “Please help by donating” or “Donate Now” or “Help STAP fight AIDS” or “Come to my garage sale and help fight AIDS.” You are asking people to donate so be sure to tell them how to do it. Remember, you are not asking for yourself, you are giving people an opportunity to help in the fight against AIDS! Donations are tax deductible too! And don’t forget to say thank you on behalf of STAP!

10. Incentive prizes for you

STAP gives out prizes to riders who exceed certain fundraising amounts. This year the amounts will be \$1000.00, \$1500.00 and \$2000.00 with the goodies getting better the more money you raise (details will be announced in mid-August). Imagine yourself in an AIDS Ride for Life logo riding vest to help show off your achievement and commitment! Why not use one of those levels as your fundraising goal?

**Good luck with your fundraising and thank you
for being a part of the
Southern Tier AIDS Program
AIDS Ride for Life!**

