



FUNDRAISING TOOLKIT

**The U2FP Guide to Fundraising
Support for Research & Advocacy**

**Made Possible by a Grant from
The Craig H. Neilsen Foundation**

Fundraising is Fun

Living with paralysis is NOT fun. But you can create good times and camaraderie by working with friends, family, and other survivors toward a common goal.

YOU can accelerate the progress of research

YOU can engage the members of your community

YOU can make a difference in your future

YOU can do it with your computer

YOU can do it in your workplace

YOU can do it \$1 at a time

Through fundraising to support research and advocacy, you become part of the solution

WE can support the research scientists who are working to give us back our healthy bodies

WE can raise awareness and money on behalf of the paralysis community

INTRODUCTION TO FUNDRAISING

WHY should you be the one to raise money?

- Money is the major factor that will accelerate progress toward curative therapies
- Researchers now spend too much time raising their own funds when they could be working in their labs
- As a fundraiser you take an active role in the cure effort
- It's fun!

WHERE can I raise funds?

Here are a few ideas:

- In your community by organizing a special event
- As part of a large organization's fundraiser
- Through your employer via a matching gift program
- With personal appeals to your contacts in online communities and social networks

HOW can I raise funds?

That's what the rest of this Toolkit is about – *keep going*

FIRST STEPS

- Identify the organization, researcher, or cause that you want to support. Think about your personal priorities, do some investigating, and make your decision.
- Establish a connection with a nonprofit entity that is eligible for tax-deductible donations. Setting up your own nonprofit can be time-consuming and costly. There are several fundraising organizations in the paralysis community that act as a “gateway” for funding research. Examples include:

Research for Cure – raising money for the Reeve-Irvine Research Center

Christopher & Dana Reeve Foundation – funding recipients determined by a scientific advisory board

Travis Roy Foundation - funding recipients determined by a scientific advisory board

Sam Schmidt Paralysis Foundation - funding recipients determined by a scientific advisory board

There are many more. It's best to investigate the ratings of charitable organizations via Guidestar or Charity Navigator to see what percentage of their income goes to programs vs. administration.

- If you want to support a particular scientist, check with his/her institutional affiliation to see if they have a foundation that accepts tax-deductible contributions. This is often the case, and you can advise your donors to make checks payable directly to the foundation.
- You might also want to support an advocacy organization like Unite 2 Fight Paralysis. Our focus is on building knowledge and power in our community; we do not raise funds for research. Advocacy will play an important role in accelerating progress toward curative therapies, and our team of volunteers welcomes your financial support.
- Once you have identified your fundraising recipient, contact them for support. Perhaps they can send a speaker to your event, help with press releases or offer suggestions on how to have a successful event.
- Set up a recordkeeping system – one of the most important components of fundraising. Depending on your computer skills, here's where you might want to enlist the help of a friend or family member. A simple Excel spreadsheet will allow you to:

Record the names & contact info of all donors;

Keep track of dollar amounts of donations;

Make sure all donors receive a written acknowledgment;

Reach out to this database for future fundraisers.

The Community Fundraiser

The Community Fundraiser works especially well if you live in a small town and have personal connections with individuals and businesses that you know will support your cause. Dinners, auctions, raffles, movie showings, golf tournaments, and walks or runs are examples of successful community fundraisers.

How do you get started?

- Start early. 6 months out is ideal, 3 months the minimum.
- Establish a leadership team. You'll need lots of help, and you'll have a lot more fun if you work with a supportive, energetic group of people. Talk with your team members about the particular interests and skills they bring to the project, how much time they have, and how they would like to contribute.
- Once you have decided on the type of event, identify a date and appropriate venue. Everything else flows from these basic decisions. You'll have to come up with an estimate on how many participants you expect. This can be tricky the first time around, but it's better to have too much space than too little.
- When looking for a venue, think about the public facilities in your town, e.g. parks, school buildings & athletic fields, senior centers, etc. They are often priced reasonably, and may even be donated for nonprofit fundraisers.

You've figured out the event, time & place. Now what?

Sponsors

are the backbone of a community fundraising event. Money from sponsors can provide the start-up cash to rent the venue, buy food, and start a publicity campaign. Depending on the goals of your event, you can solicit sponsors informally or create sponsor packages that appeal to every budget. See the sample Sponsor Packages in the following pages.

Small-town businesses are asked for donations every day, often 2 or 3 times! Try not to get discouraged if your request is declined. More often than not they would like to support your cause, but just don't have the funds. As a general rule, you can expect to hear "yes" once for every ten times you ask. Sponsor commitments often take repeated contacts, so persevere and you will be rewarded! Here are a few tips for finding sponsors:

Talk to business owners you know personally, but not if you think the appeal might jeopardize a friendship.

Identify businesses that are related to your cause, e.g. health care, medical supplies, etc.

What businesses in your community have a reputation for philanthropic giving?

A personal visit from someone using a wheelchair gives legitimacy to your appeal.

Before you start soliciting sponsors, you should assemble additional information about your event and the organization or individual for whom you are raising funds. You may also want to create a Sponsor Agreement that will confirm the level of sponsorship, to be signed by the sponsor. If you need artwork files or any other information from them, it can be indicated in the Sponsor Agreement. See the sample Sponsor Agreement in the following pages.

You now have an impressive package to present to a potential sponsor:

- Information about the event;
- Information about the cause you are supporting;
- A Sponsor Fulfillment Package with options for every budget;
- A Sponsor Agreement to be signed upon commitment.

It's helpful to create another spreadsheet with your list of potential sponsors, contact information, date of contact and by whom, and commitment if any. Again, this is information that can be used from year to year, and after the initial setup saves time and helps the operation run smoothly.

Remember, you cannot thank sponsors enough. In addition to writing a formal thank you and receipt for their donations, be sure to fulfill any obligations that are part of your sponsor packages. Acknowledge their support as much as possible in your publicity and at the event itself.

Sample Sponsor Package for Community Fundraiser

Gold Sponsor

\$1000: Your logo on signage at the event
Your logo on the back of souvenir shirts
Your logo on printed materials
Website link at <http://www.xxxxxxx>

Silver Sponsor

\$500: Your logo on signage at the event
Your logo on printed materials
Website link at <http://www.xxxxxxx>

Bronze Sponsor

\$300: Your logo on signage at the event
Website link at <http://www.xxxxxxx>

For more information contact: _____

You can add or subtract options as suits your event, but be sure to create cascading levels of fulfillment.



Sample Sponsor Agreement

Please complete this Agreement in its entirety, sign, date (your name on signature line constitutes an electronic signature) and return via e-mail to _____

Company/Organization Name: _____

Company/Organization Address: _____

Contact Name: _____

Alternate Contact: _____

Address 1: _____

Address 2: _____

City: _____ **State:** _____ **Zip Code:** _____

Primary Contact Phone: _____

Primary Contact Email: _____

Primary Contact Fax: _____

Web site: _____

We wish to purchase the _____ Sponsor Package in the amount of
\$_____.

Payment:

Fees are payable in advance of any ad placement or sponsorship fulfillment. Please make checks payable to _____ and send to _____. You may also pay online with a credit card at <http://www.xxxxxxxx>

Artwork:

Please submit all company/organization artwork/logo in .tif or other high-resolution format via e-mail attachment to _____. If you would like us to lift artwork/logo from your website or another site, please provide a link to target.

Payment and artwork must be received no later than _____ to ensure inclusion in the event materials.

Questions? *Please contact* _____

Signed

Date

The sponsor dollars are rolling in, now what?

Marketing & Publicity

The options and opportunities for promoting your event are endless. Your choices will be based on the nature of your event, your community, how much time you have, and your target audience. We've compiled a list of ideas to get you started.

- **Press Release** for traditional media outlets: newspapers, radio & TV stations. It should be brief; no more than a page long and follow a specific format. See a sample press release in the following pages. Check, recheck and then check again for typos, unclear language, and correct contact information. Then, ask someone else to do the same.

Your press release should be written so that it could be taken "as is" and published. Include quotes and some interesting information. "Why should I care?" is the question you need to answer. Remember to include the "who what when where why and how" as we learned in grade school.

No matter how much or how little coverage a media outlet gives you, at the very least they should be willing to list your event on their calendar and/or mention it in a public service announcement. A surprising number of people look to these resources to keep up on local events.

Use Google to find ALL the media outlets in your area including radio stations, TV outlets, small specialty newspapers and local newspapers and magazines. Search "media + your town" and see what you get.

- **Interviews.** After you submit your press release, follow up with a phone call and see if you can get an interview. It's possible the media outlet will contact you first to do an interview.

When you get an interview spend time in advance thinking about your main message. Work it into your answers as much as possible. You could wear a shirt promoting your event or cause for your interviews. Have your business card with donation and contact information handy for the reporter.

Give them a strong visual to help tell their story. One fundraiser preparing for a wheelchair race showed reporters the very new looking soles of her very old shoes and the 4 pairs of dirty, bloodied, battered gloves she had worn out while training. The contrasting images did a lot to tell the story of a wheelchair athlete.

- **Posters.** If you're doing a small town event, have some colorful posters printed and distribute them around town. Most businesses will agree to display posters for nonprofits. Be sure to include date, time, cause, and pictures if possible in your poster.
- **The Internet** is full of opportunities to promote your event. Do you belong to MySpace or Facebook? In addition to talking about the event on your personal page, you can refer readers to your cause's page (if it has one). You can also set up a page for your event that will tell people more about it, and issue invitations to your contact list.

Visit other websites with a connection to your cause – forums, blogs, bulletin boards, etc. Post your story, and/or ask the site to link to your cause.

Email friends, relatives & business associates with news about your event.

Sample Press Release

Following is an actual successful press release. Note that major details are in the first or second paragraph. The "hook" was the able bodied elite athlete competing in a wheelchair for a cause.

Full Name
Cell Number
Email Address

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Area Martial Artist Sits Down For Those Who Cannot Stand Up

Accepting the challenge of a student, Sr. _____ will compete in the PF Chang Rock N Roll Half Marathon in a wheelchair. A 7th degree black belt and owner of 5 area martial arts academies, _____ was challenged by his student, _____; herself paralyzed, to complete the 13.1 mile race as she will; in a wheelchair.

The pair will raise money for spinal cord injury research. _____, an area martial artist and student of _____, sustained her spinal cord injury more than four years ago in a still-unsolved shooting. _____ was helping _____ with her training when she groused "You think it's so easy? You strap 50 pounds to your back and race 13 miles on your hands." _____ in that instant agreed. "It's not the same for me." He explains "I have control of my balance and core muscles in a way that a paraplegic does not. But it's still pretty challenging." His first taste of the difficulty faced by those with spinal cord injuries came when he was training with _____ one morning. "He flew up a hill while I chugged along behind. When he reached the top I told him to try it again without using his abs. It was a little more challenging the second time." she teased.

Wheelchair competitors are not, in themselves, new or noteworthy; _____ and _____ will not participate in the racing chair division but in the standard division. "We'll be using regular wheelchairs weighing between 40 and 50 pounds instead of the lighter racing chairs," they explain. "_____ cannot get in and out of the racing chair any more without assistance." _____ adds, "Why do it if it's easy?"

Of course, they are competing in their fundraising totals as well as the race. The pair will donate all proceeds to Research for Cure, a 501(c)3 Not-For-Profit organization that raises funds for the Reeve Irvine Research Center.

Donations can be made through <http://www.xxxxxxxx>, or checks made payable to Research for Cure.



The "Research for Cure" Story



Pictured L to R: Tania Cusack, Karen Miner, Dr. Hans Keirstead, Susan Rotchy, Fran Lopes

Back in 2001 a small group of volunteers, many living with spinal cord injuries, decided to do a fundraiser to support research. They organized a golf tournament in their little town of 6000, and Research for Cure was born.

The group took a long look at the work being done by various scientists in the field of spinal cord injury, and eventually decided they wanted to support the Reeve-Irvine Research Center in Irvine, California. As Research for Cure's vision grew to include additional fundraisers, they established their own 501c3 organization.

Today Research for Cure hosts a golf tournament, 5k run, and TWO dinner auctions annually. They have no office space, equipment or salaries in their budget, just the expenses of their fundraising events. The leadership team of Fran Lopes, Karen Miner & Susan Rotchy, all of whom have spinal cord injuries, coordinates a growing band of volunteers that makes these events possible.

Drs. Oswald Steward and Hans Keirstead of RIRC attend the fundraisers and welcome the opportunity to meet with consumers and show their appreciation to Research for Cure. To date Research for Cure has raised nearly \$400,000 for RIRC, providing financial support for the high cost of maintaining a chronic rat population that would not otherwise be funded.

In the words of founder Karen Miner, "It's nice to have a purpose instead of just getting through the day." For more information on Research for Cure, visit <http://www.researchforcure.org>.

The Corporate Fundraiser

Marathons & Walk A Thons

You may not have the time or resources to organize your own fundraiser. Fortunately you can find opportunities to join a program or event that is already in place. One example is the **Rock 'n' Roll Marathon Series**, currently offered in 9 different cities in the U.S. Wheelchair racers are welcome.

Each marathon registers charities on an individual basis, so you can start by checking to see if your charity is registered in your city's event. If not, contact your charity and ask if they would be interested in participating.

If you decide you want to try a marathon, be sure to give yourself a few months to train for the event. Fortunately the Rock 'n' Roll series also offers a half-marathon, and many of the participating charities provide training programs. More information on the Rock 'n' Roll series is available at <http://runrocknroll.competitor.com/>.

Other organizations that host marathons or walk a thons may include your charity itself or a local support group. A little Internet research can lead you to an event that works for you. Again, be sure to perform due diligence and check to see what percentage of funds will actually go to charitable programs vs. administration.

Joining a half marathon or similar athletic event serves a dual purpose. While you are raising money for your favorite charity, you are improving your health & fitness through training. Potential donors love to see someone working hard toward a goal rather than just asking for a handout.

Once you commit to a marathon or walk a thon, you will do the actual fundraising by seeking pledges and/or asking donors & sponsors for support. In addition to your own word-of-mouth efforts, there are lots of resources available to help generate interest and contributions.

- As with all fundraisers, RECORDKEEPING is very important. The lead organization may have particular forms that they want you to use to keep track of your donors. If not, refer to the recordkeeping suggestions in the Toolkit introduction.
- Consider setting up your own PayPal account (www.paypal.com). If you think that potential donors will want to pay via credit card, it's essential to make this option available. Individual PayPal accounts are relatively easy to set up, and once you have it you can provide a direct link from your emails, Facebook page, etc.
- Employ the "Marketing & Publicity" tips from the Community Fundraiser section. Working with the media adds excitement to your cause and generates donations.
- Keep everyone posted on your progress – how your training is going, how much money raised so far, etc. This can be accomplished via emails, Facebook, or using a web interface called Chipin (www.chipin.com). Chipin can process & track payments, provide a widget for blogs or other pages you may wish to link, and even provide your own web page.

The real fun begins when the actual event day arrives. You've done your training, gathered donations, kept everyone informed – now it's time for the payoff. Important reminders:

- Take lots of pictures. You'll want to have a visual to share with all of your supporters. You can post them on your web pages, blogs, etc. and send to everyone via email.
- Invite the media. Hopefully by now you've established some contacts who will want to see the end result of your efforts. If they are unable to attend, write your own story with pictures and send it to your contacts after the event. Be sure to talk a lot about the cause for which you raised money.
- Share the story of the day with all of your donors. A written and pictorial story will be greatly appreciated by everyone who chose to contribute.
- If you haven't done so already, be sure to acknowledge all donations in writing. The foundation you are supporting may be able to provide you with the appropriate tax-related language for your letters.
- Have FUN!

Matching Gift Programs

One of the smartest (and easiest) ways to raise money is through a matching gift program. Companies or individuals will match the donation you make, often dollar for dollar, thereby doubling your contribution. To get started:

- Check with your company's human resources or payroll department to see whether it offers a matching gift program.
- Ask for donation guidelines and a list of eligible charities if your company does offer a matching gift program.
- Some companies will match a gift to any qualified charitable organization, not just a particular list. Be sure to ask about your specific charity.
- Decide how much you want to donate and which organizations you want to donate to.
- Donate through the matching gift program, filling out the appropriate forms to ensure that the match is donated.

If your company does not have a matching gift program, you may still be able to make charitable contributions via a payroll deduction. Many government agencies offer this service to their employees.

The Combined Federal Campaign, a program of the U.S. government, has a comprehensive list of participating charities to which you can donate via payroll deduction. State and local agencies often have similar programs in place. A payroll deduction makes donating easy; all recordkeeping is taken care of and your contribution is paid before any other bills.

If you don't work for a company with a matching gift program, another easy way to raise money for your charity is to use Goodsearch (www.goodsearch.com). Goodsearch is powered by Yahoo and generates high quality search results. It costs the user nothing, and 50% of revenues (about a penny per search) go to charity. Once you become a Goodsearch user, you can easily direct your search activity toward the charity of your choice.

The Micro Fundraiser

Today's economic climate coupled with the amazing capabilities of the Internet has led to a rise in popularity of the "micro" fundraiser. Used with great success in the 2008 Obama campaign, it's a strategy that works well for all levels of fundraising drives.

The goal of a "micro" fundraiser is to get a little money from a lot of contributors. You want your donors to feel that as little as \$5 can make a difference. Whether you raise \$500 or \$5000, you are doing your part to help solve the paralysis predicament!

"Micro" fundraisers come in all shapes and sizes, and there is something to suit everyone's interests and capabilities. They can take as much or as little time and effort as you have to give. Here are a few ideas to get you started:

- Speak at a local service club (Rotary, Elks, etc.). Bring along lots of information about your cause, and don't be shy about asking for donations after your presentation (pre-addressed envelopes are a good idea). As often happens, you'll be spreading awareness at the same time as you're raising money.
- Place a collection jar in your local favorite hangout, athletic club or supportive business.

- Ask for donations in lieu of gifts for your birthday or other holiday. One U2FP supporter asked his friends on Facebook to help him raise \$100 for U2FP by his birthday – he succeeded and then some!
- Hold a garage sale to support your cause. You'll get rid of a lot of your old junk, and may be surprised at the extra donations you receive. Once again you spread awareness as you raise money.
- Ask your co-workers to give up a Starbucks each week to donate to the cause. It can add up fast!
- The old standbys – car wash or bake sale – can still be worthwhile, especially in a small community. You may find local kids who need to fulfill community service hours and are looking for a project – enlist their help!
- Host a potluck or benefit dinner at a local restaurant.
- Ask 10 people to donate \$10, and ask each of them to find another 10 people. Bingo - \$1000!

Social Network Microfundraising

Much of today's microfundraising started on social networks, where people often have hundreds of easily reachable contacts. If you're active on Facebook, MySpace, Twitter, forums or blogs, you have an opportunity to raise money for your cause.

If you're going to do an online fundraiser, you'll need to make sure the structure is in place for your contacts to make a donation. If your organization is "wired in", at a minimum it should have the capability to accept donations via its website. More technologically advanced causes may also be linked in to Facebook, Twitter, etc.

There are a few online services you can use if you want to set up your own fundraising page, including:

- ChipIn.com
- FirstGiving.com
- NetworkforGood.org
- TipJoy.com
- Fundable.com
- JustGive.org
- GivenGain.com

These sites vary in their fees, services and requirements, so check them out carefully before you decide which one to use.

Now that you have your systems in place to do some microfundraising via your social networks, here are a few suggestions:

- Give your campaign a name. As ambitious a project as the Spinal Cord Injury Clinical Trial Network USA (SCINetUSA) is raising money through a “Dollar a Day” promotion.
- Incorporate all the technology you use into your campaign and spread the word to your contacts via
 - Email
 - Facebook
 - Twitter
 - MySpace
 - Forums
 - Blogs
 - Snail Mail
- Make sure you have a system to track and acknowledge every donation, and thank people immediately.
- Post current updates to let your contacts know how the campaign is going. Encourage everyone to share the information with their own networks.

The Jennifer Longdon Story



In November of 2004 Jennifer and her then-fiancé were pulling into a drive-through restaurant in Phoenix when their car was side swiped, followed by gunfire and a shot to her back. As a result of this still unsolved crime, Jennifer became a paraplegic, leaving behind her career as a massage therapist and tae kwon do instructor.

As she slowly pieced her life back together, Jennifer started looking for ways to help advance research into spinal cord injury. She began with a "micro" fundraising project. When her friends came to visit after her accident and asked what they could do to help, she asked each one for the same favor: "Please commit to raising \$1000 before my anniversary date."

Together they brainstormed ideas for how to raise the money. Some succeeded, some failed, but in the end this group of friends raised a total of \$8000.

Jennifer didn't stop at one fundraiser. She heard that the Rock 'n' Roll Marathon was coming to Phoenix, and she made the ambitious commitment to participate and raise money for Research for Cure. She challenged her trainer, a martial artist, to compete in a wheelchair with her, and together they raised over \$6000. Jennifer is now actively involved with the Research for Cure organization and looking forward to many more successful fundraisers.