

*How to*

**Create a Donor Communications Plan to  
See Your Nonprofit Through  
Any Crisis**

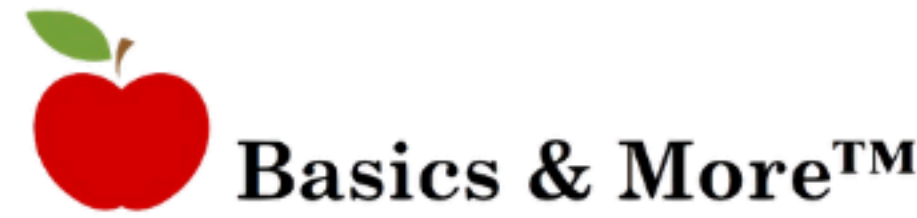


Photo by Jason Rosewell on Unsplash





THE CHRONICLE OF  
PHILANTHROPY



MAJOR GIFT  
ACADEMY  
Powered by Veritus Group



VERITUS  
GROUP



CALIFORNIA  
STATE  
UNIVERSITY | Chico



NonProfit  
**PRO**



ADKINS ARBORETUM  
*A Chesapeake Native Garden*



Strengthening communities by building  
homes, hope, and opportunities for  
families to help themselves



Montana Nonprofit Association



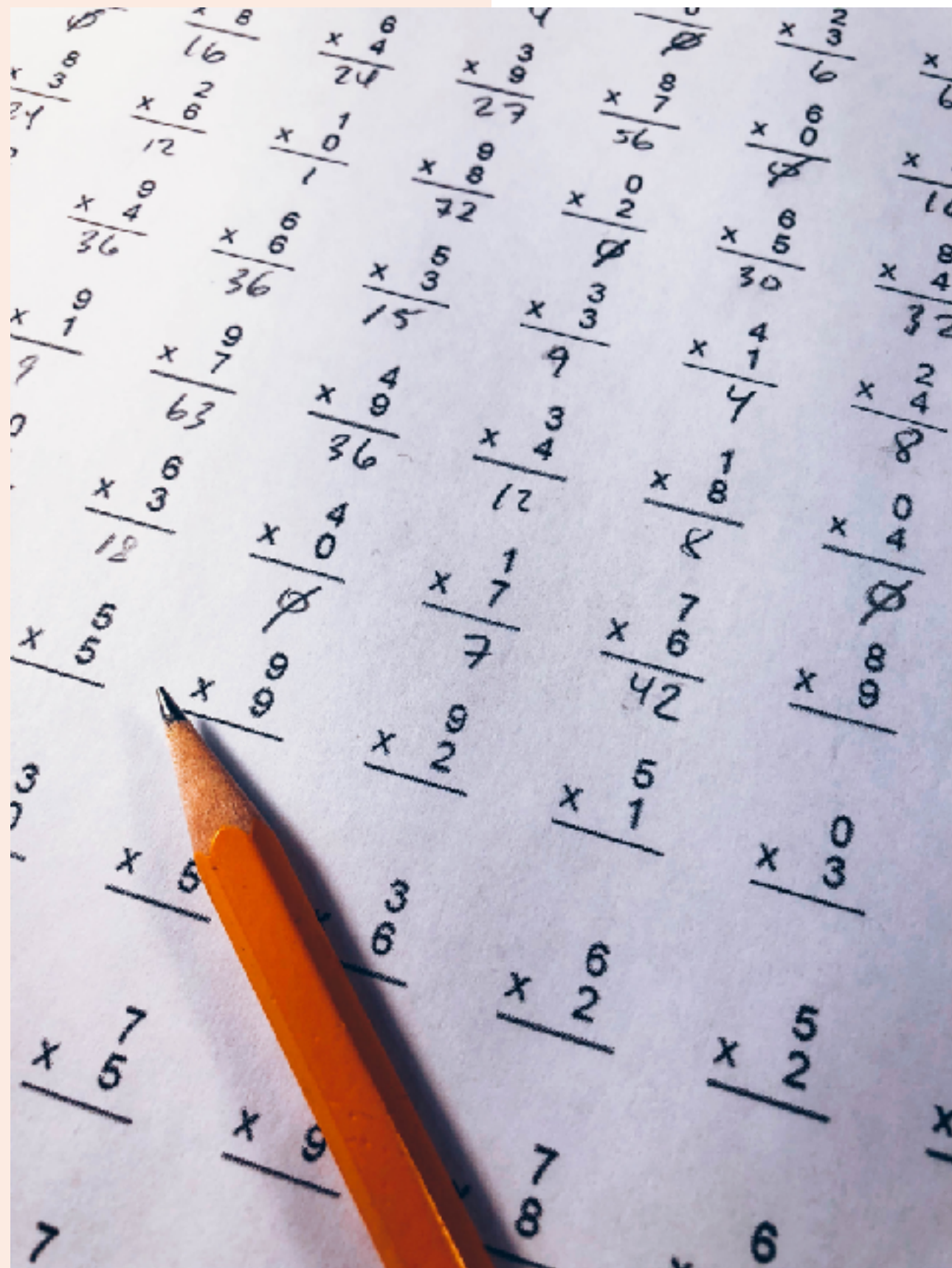




# In Addition...

- ✓ Live in the Philadelphia suburbs
- ✓ Mother to two daughters
- ✓ Loves baking, painting, reading, museums, and YOU





**How are  
you  
doing?**



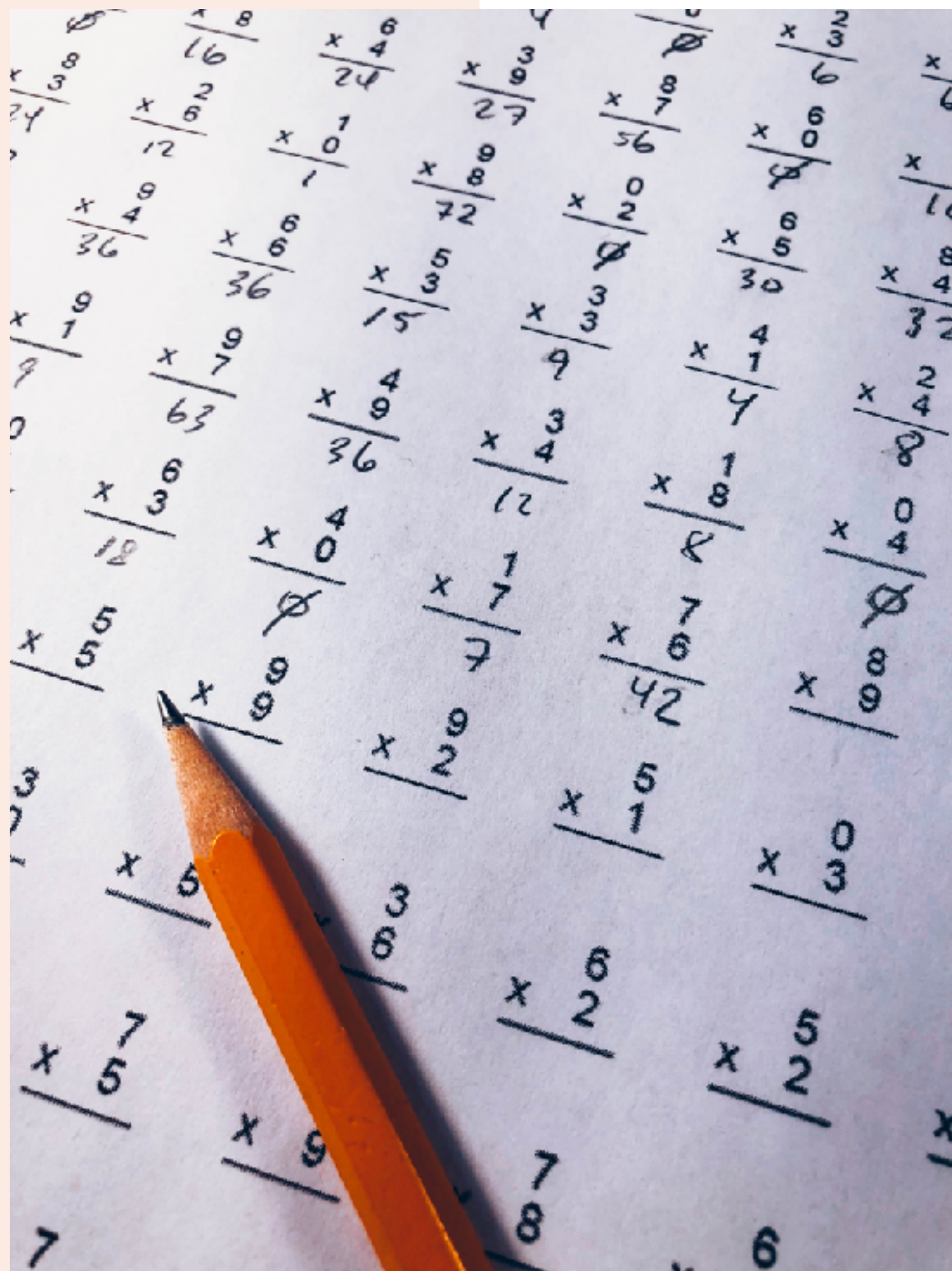
WORLD

THE WORLD IS  
TEMPORARILY CLOSED









How do you  
**Right NOW**  
fundraising?



# In Today's Webinar, You'll Discover:

- How consistent donor communications builds trust
- How to ask for monthly gifts in a pandemic
- The importance of empathy and vulnerability
- Your most important message
- *And more!*







# **Why Donor Communications?**

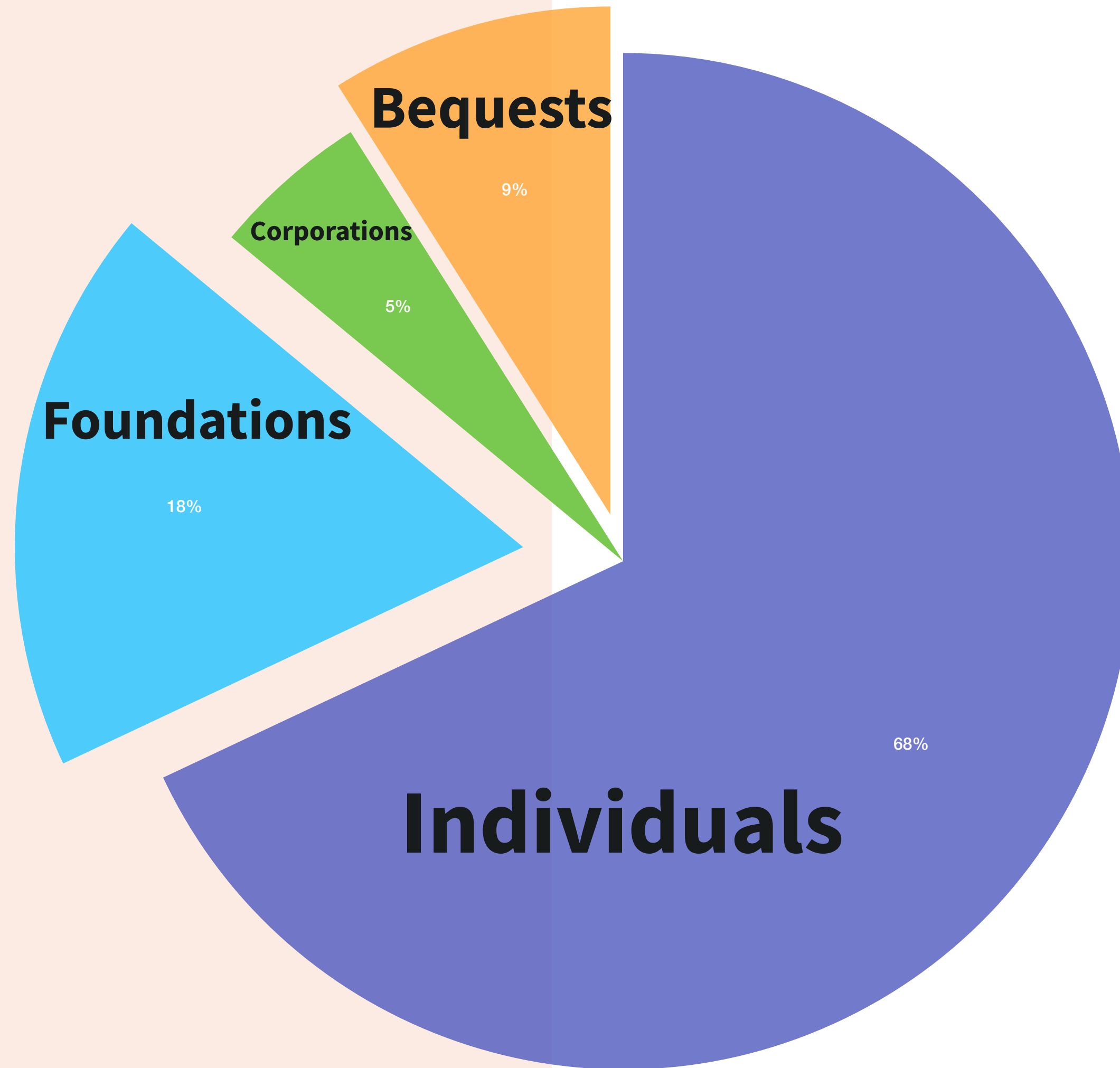




**Show Me  
The Money**



Pie Chart



● Individuals ● Foundations ● Corporations ● Bequest

- Corporations 5%
- Bequest gifts 9%
- Foundations 18%
- Individuals 68%

Source: GivingUSA



**Nearly 80% of all  
Philanthropic  
Giving Comes  
From Individuals**





# **“Where Your Attention Goes, Your Time Goes”**

**IDOWU KOYENIKAN**



A blurry, dark image of a person in a dynamic pose, possibly a dancer or athlete, with a bright light source in the background.

# Declining trust

# in nonprofits



**In a survey of 34,000 people,  
including 500 Americans, the  
article noted: “Only 52 percent  
of Americans have faith that  
nonprofits will ‘do what is  
right.”**

**THE CHRONICLE OF PHILANTHROPY**



# **Trust**

## **How Can Nonprofits Gain Trust With Their Donors?**

- ✓ A reputation built over time
- ✓ Honesty and transparency
- ✓ Research, ratings and credentials



**“Consistency over time is  
trust.”**

**SATYA NADELLA**



**How *simple*?**



# The Ask, Thank, Report, Repeat Model



**Donor Feedback  
& Engagement**





**ASK**

**Storytelling**

**Data**

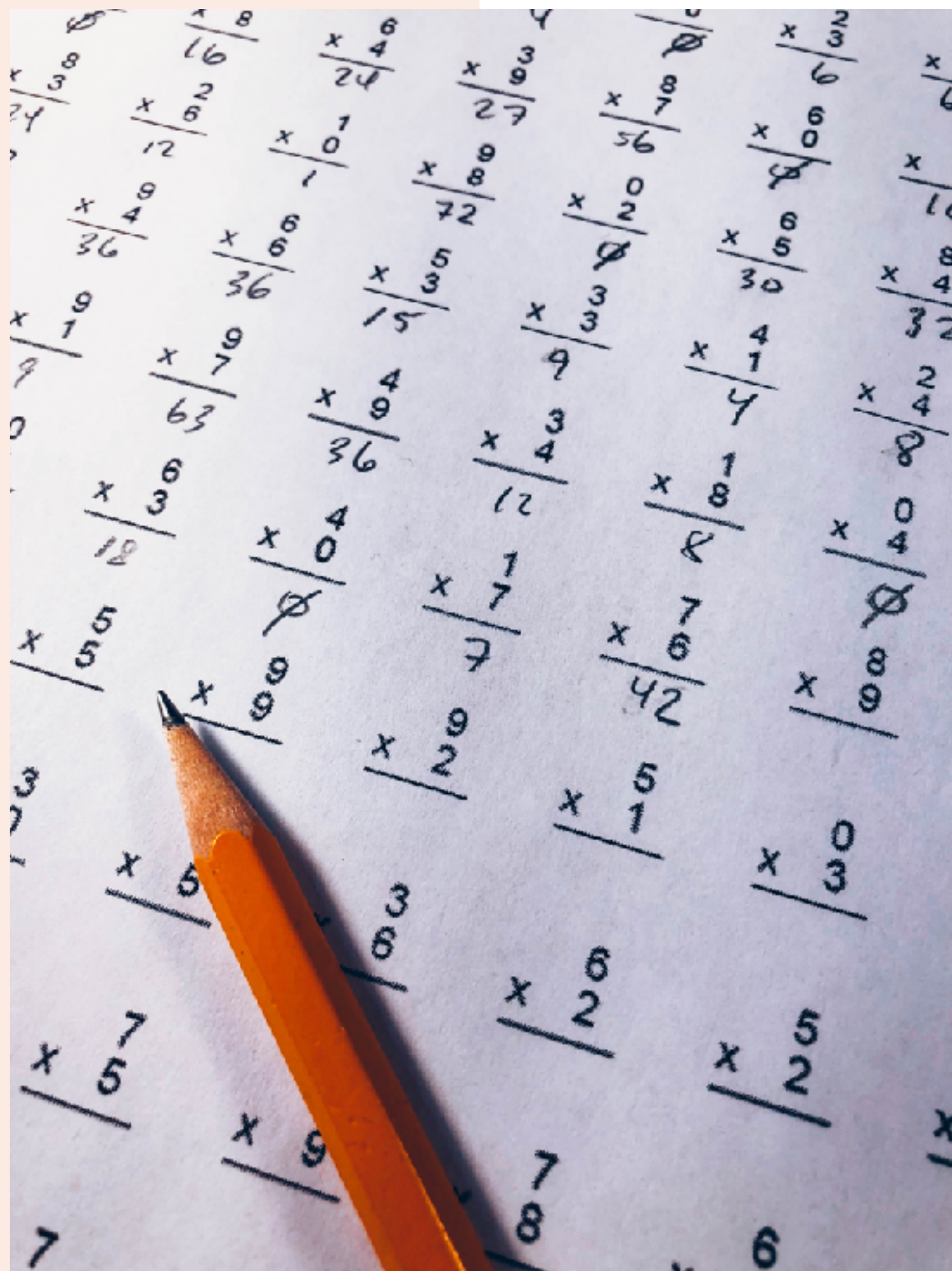
**Gratitude**

**Testing**

**Culture**

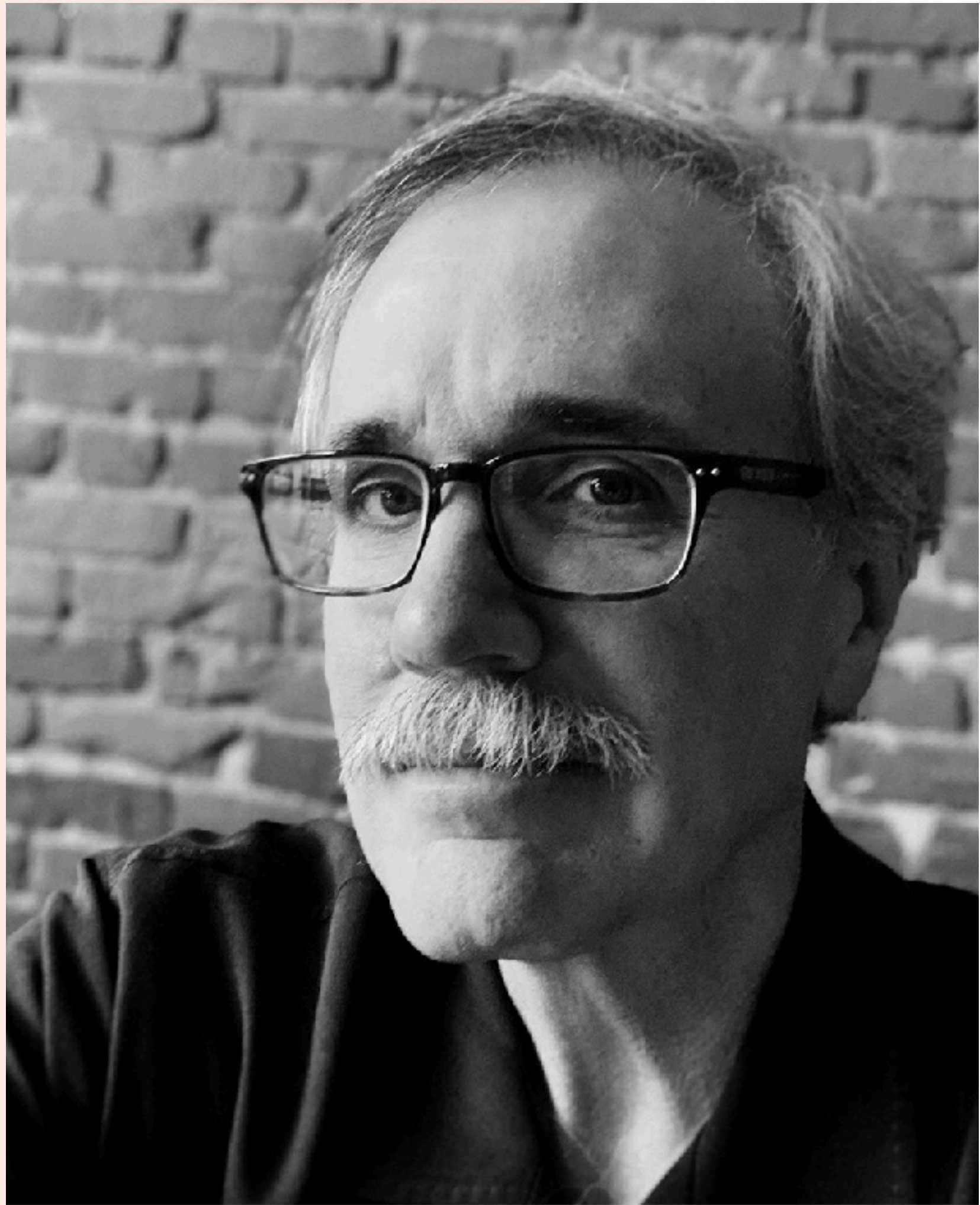
**Focus on  
the Donor**





**How many  
times can you  
ask?**





**JEFF BROOKS**

**“How Often Can  
You Ask In A Year  
Without Losing  
Donors?”**





[HOME](#) [COURSE DESCRIPTION](#) [SYLLABUS](#) [TUITION](#) [GUIDES](#) [FAQ](#)



# What Does That Look Like?





# Sample Donor Communications Plan

| What                              | Who                 | How Many Times a Year? |
|-----------------------------------|---------------------|------------------------|
| Campaign: Direct Mail & Email Ask | All Names           | 3                      |
| Print Donor Newsletter            | Donors Only         | 3                      |
| Monthly Giving Ask: Direct Mail   | Segment             | 1                      |
| Monthly Giving Ask: Digital Only  | All Email Addresses | 2                      |
| Email Newsletter: Digital Only    | All Email Addresses | 12                     |



# Donor Retention Rates

| AGE     | ONLINE ONLY | OFFLINE ONLY | MULTICHANNEL |
|---------|-------------|--------------|--------------|
| 18 – 24 | 19%         | 24%          | 50%          |
| 25 – 34 | 22%         | 25%          | 55%          |
| 35 – 44 | 21%         | 24%          | 54%          |
| 45 – 54 | 21%         | 24%          | 52%          |
| 55 – 64 | 22%         | 26%          | 58%          |
| 65 – 74 | 24%         | 29%          | 62%          |
| 75+     | 26%         | 26%          | 59%          |

Source: Blackbaud Target Analytics, donorCentrics Benchmarking



# Multichannel

## Direct Mail

|   |  |
|---|--|
| <b>Credit Card Payment</b>  | <b>EFT</b>   |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Visa <input type="checkbox"/> MasterCard <input type="checkbox"/> Discover <input type="checkbox"/> American Express | <input type="checkbox"/> Checking <input type="checkbox"/> Savings |
| Credit Card No. _____   | Name on Account _____  |
| Exp. Date _____ Security Code _____   | Routing Number _____   |
| Name on Card _____  | Account Number _____   |
| Signature _____   |  |

Give online at [www.CommLink.org/give/Donate](http://www.CommLink.org/give/Donate)

---

Rose and Albert take great comfort knowing that Mark is safe, happy and loved at Community Link.

They no longer worry if his needs are being met on a daily basis. Rose shared, "It was time for Mark to move. Everyone at his Community Link home has quickly become our family."

Mark's social time was spent with his parents and their friends. Now he hangs out with his own friends and gets to do fun things with them. He is happy and is flourishing.

**That's why your donation is so important.**

During Mark's first day at Community Link, he recognized his friend Leroy. He remembered that they attended school together. And they participated in Special Olympics together 40 years earlier.


Knowing that Mark already had a friend at Community Link lessened Rose and Albert's anxiety and made them feel at ease.

Moving Mark out of their home and into a Community Link residential home wasn't an easy decision for Rose and Albert, but it was the best decision for Mark. The Kujawas shared, "We gave him back to the world to be happy and to make others happy."

[First name], you are so important to Community Link. We could not provide the high level of service to our participants without your support.

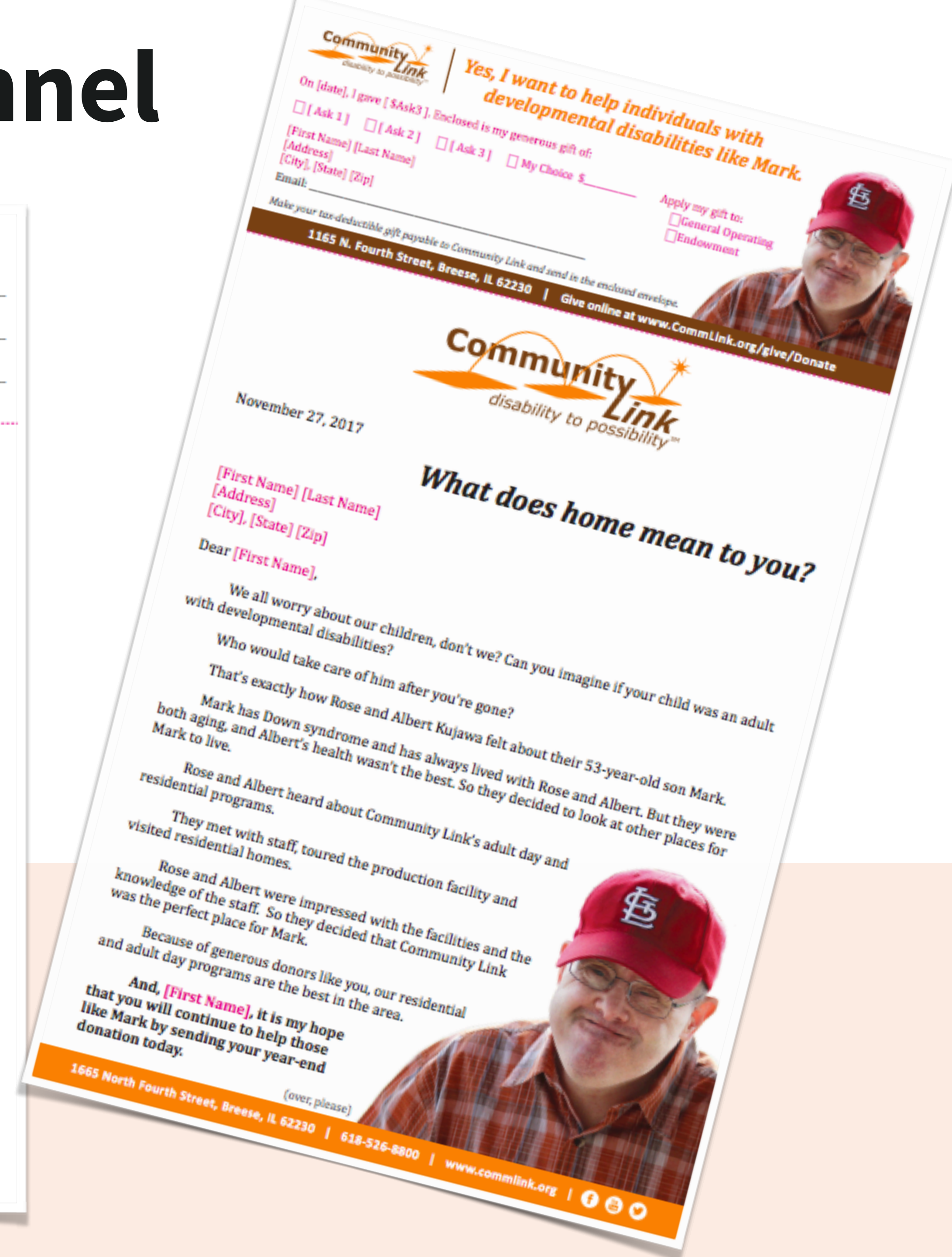
Please send your year-end donation to Community Link today, so that we can continue to help individuals with developmental disabilities like Mark.

Gratefully,



John Huelskamp  
Executive Director

P.S. [First Name], please send your tax-deductible gift by December 31st to help individuals with developmental disabilities live their best possible lives!





Email:



*"We gave him back to the world to be  
happy and to make others happy."*





**But What About  
Now? In the  
Middle of a Global  
Pandemic?**



# For Example:





# For Example:



Dear Pamela,  
We hope you are safe and healthy during these uncertain times. At times like this, we are especially grateful to live in a tightly knit and supportive community. For more than 30 years we have been building a community food system in Vermont, which is needed now more than ever.

Warmly,  
Melanie Katz, Intervale Center

This Mother's Day, give a gift that grows.

We are so lucky to live in a state rich with forests. But even in Vermont, hundreds of miles of critical areas along our rivers and streams lack the vegetation they need to protect our waterways.

Spring is here! Help us plant trees in the most needed areas around Vermont, and improve the state's water quality for the long-term.

When you donate \$35 or more between now and Mother's Day, we'll plant a tree for you to honor a loved one.

Thank you for giving a gift that grows!



# For Example:



In this unprecedented time, the Intervale Center is working on the frontlines to respond to the COVID-19 emergency while continuing our core programming in support of strong farms, healthy land, and nourished people.

Now more than ever, we need your gift of hope.

Your gift will give hope to people experiencing food insecurity. Alongside friends like Skinny Pancake and the Vermont Foodbank, we are implementing new programs to get healthy food to more people in ways that are safe and dignified with a specific focus on serving restaurant and food service workers.

Your gift will give hope to Vermont farmers. We are supporting over 100 farms to retool their operations in response to evolving markets and demand, as these essential businesses adjust, survive, and thrive.

Your gift will give hope to future generations. We are planting native trees to improve water quality and mitigate climate change because even in a global pandemic, this critical work does not stop.

Among the uncertainty, one thing is undeniable: spring is here. We are planting the seeds of a healthy, joyful, and just future, and we'd love for you to join us by planting hope.



# For Example:

Friends,

In this unprecedented time, the Intervale Center is working on the frontlines to respond to the needs of our community while continuing our core programming in support of strong farms, healthy land, and nourished people.

Among the uncertainty, one thing is undeniable: spring is here. We are planting the seeds of a healthy, joyful, and just future, and we'd love for you to join us by planting hope.

You may be stuck at home, but you can still make a difference. Act now and give a gift to the Intervale Center to help us respond to COVID-19 while also addressing the climate crisis.

Now more than ever, we need your gift of hope.

---







# For Example:



intervalecenter • Following



**intervalecenter** Make a gift of \$35 or more before Mother's Day and we'll plant a tree for you in the name of a loved one of your choice! As we collectively address the global pandemic, most of us are doing our part by staying home. Like you, our thoughts are with our essential workers in health care, public safety, and food services - including farmers. Let your loved one know how much you care at a time when you cannot be together. Link in bio

4w



20 likes

MAY 7

Add a comment...

Post



**Vulnerability**











# For Example:



**You already know. Life turns on a dime.**

*Any emergency gift that you can  
give right now would help to local  
families in these dark days.  
You are part of our family.  
Thank you!  
Donna*

[FirstName] [LastName]

[Address]

[City] [State] [Zip]

Dear [Name]:

To say these past weeks have been challenging is a bit of an understatement. Together we've watched our community cope with loss, fear, and uncertainty.

**~~In the midst of it all, I hope you're staying safe and well~~**

Last month, when I sat down to write this letter to you, I never imagined how quickly life could change. Then crisis hit in the form of a global pandemic.

*When I thought about it, I considered pulling this letter.*

But I remembered your commitment to the children of our community. And it seems like the time is right to hear some good news.

**Don't you agree?**

Because, quite simply, with your past support to the Easterseals headquarters, you've made a difference in the life of a child.

**A difference where it counts: right here in your community.**

Gifts from generous donors like you to *Easterseals* helped reduce the effects of COVID-19 on families and children right here at home.



# For Example:

**“Even in the waiting, I hope we can remember we are free to see the small things as miraculous things. None of us are alone here. We are connected in more ways than we know.” —Morgan Harper Nichols**

*Above photo of bobcats playing by long-time volunteer Terry Minks.*







# **Donor Loyalty: Fundraising's Holy Grail**



# 90%

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“Monthly donor retention rates: 90 percent and up (double the average donor retention rate of 45 percent!)”

**ERICA WAASDORP**



**60%**

---

“Sixty percent of donors under  
35 give monthly.”

**ERICA WAASDORP**



**24**  

---

“The average monthly gift is  
\$24, or \$288 a year.”

**ERICA WAASDORP**



## Lifetime Value of 100 sustainers

|                    |         |
|--------------------|---------|
| Avg gift per month | \$20.00 |
|--------------------|---------|

|   |                               |
|---|-------------------------------|
| Avg years of giving (combination of channels) | 6 years, 3 months (75 months) |
|---|-------------------------------|

|   |            |
|---|------------|
| Total Lifetime Value of monthly gifts per donor | \$1,500.00 |
|---|------------|

|                                     |          |
|-------------------------------------|----------|
| Avg of extra single gifts per donor | \$200.00 |
|-------------------------------------|----------|

|  |            |
|--|------------|
| Total Lifetime Value of each sustainer | \$1,700.00 |
|--|------------|

|                               |              |
|-------------------------------|--------------|
| Total value of 100 sustainers | \$170,000.00 |
|-------------------------------|--------------|

**\*HOW TO CREATE LIFELONG DONORS THROUGH MONTHLY GIVING. HARVEY MCKINNON**







**“Action  
Expresses  
Priorities.”**

**MAHATMA GANDHI**





# Sample Donor Communications Plan

| What                              | Who                 | How Many Times a Year? |
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| Monthly Giving Ask: Digital Only  | All Email Addresses | 2                      |
| Email Newsletter: Digital Only    | All Email Addresses | 12                     |



# For Example:

Planting trees is one of the most cost-effective ways to improve Vermont's water quality for the long-term while also addressing climate change. This year, the Intervale Conservation Nursery will add 30,000 native trees and shrubs to Vermont's lands.

Because even in a pandemic, this work does not stop.

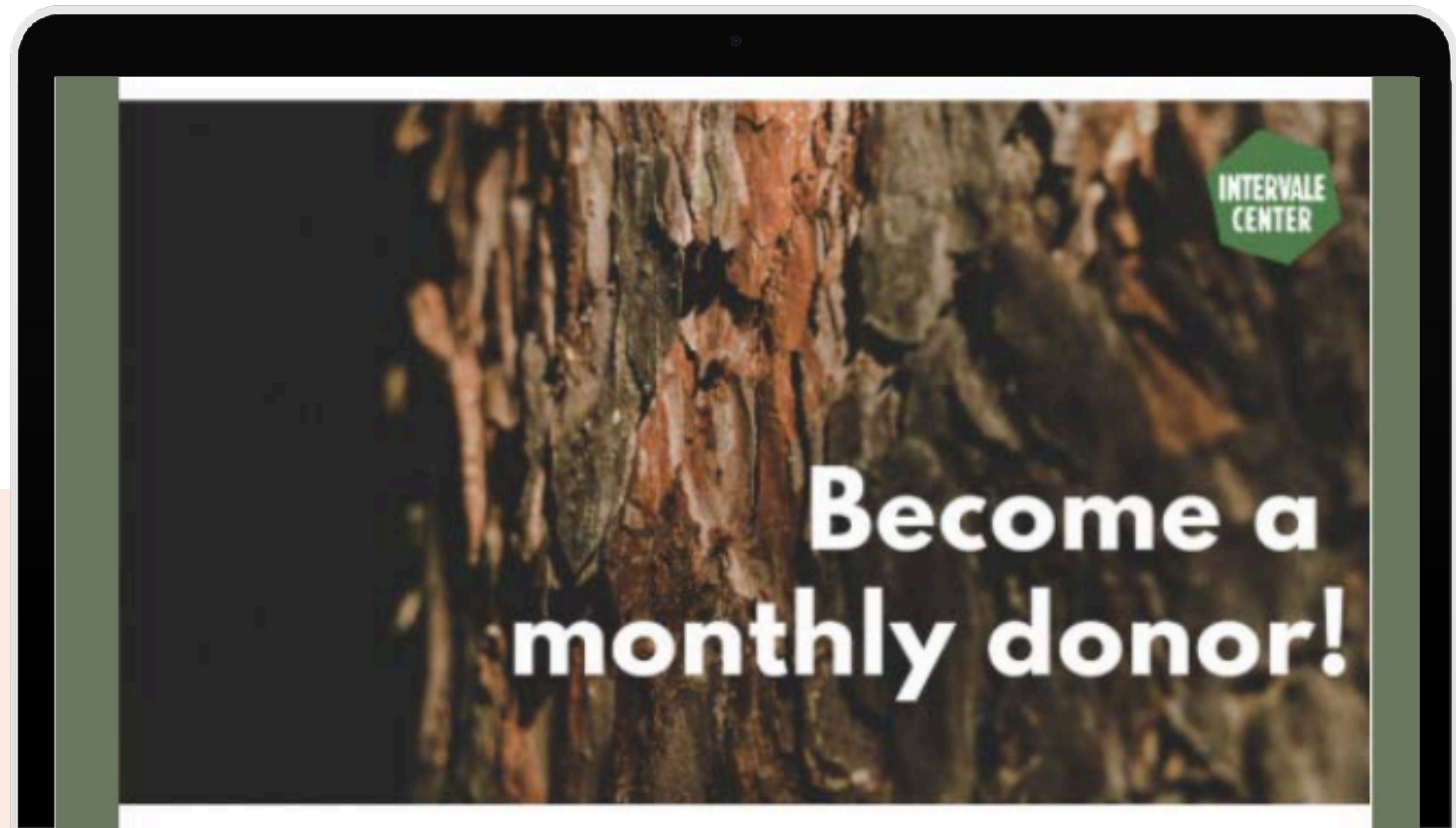
Our future is in your hands - will you help us plant more trees?

You can act now by giving a gift that sustains. Become a monthly donor and support us for the entire year!



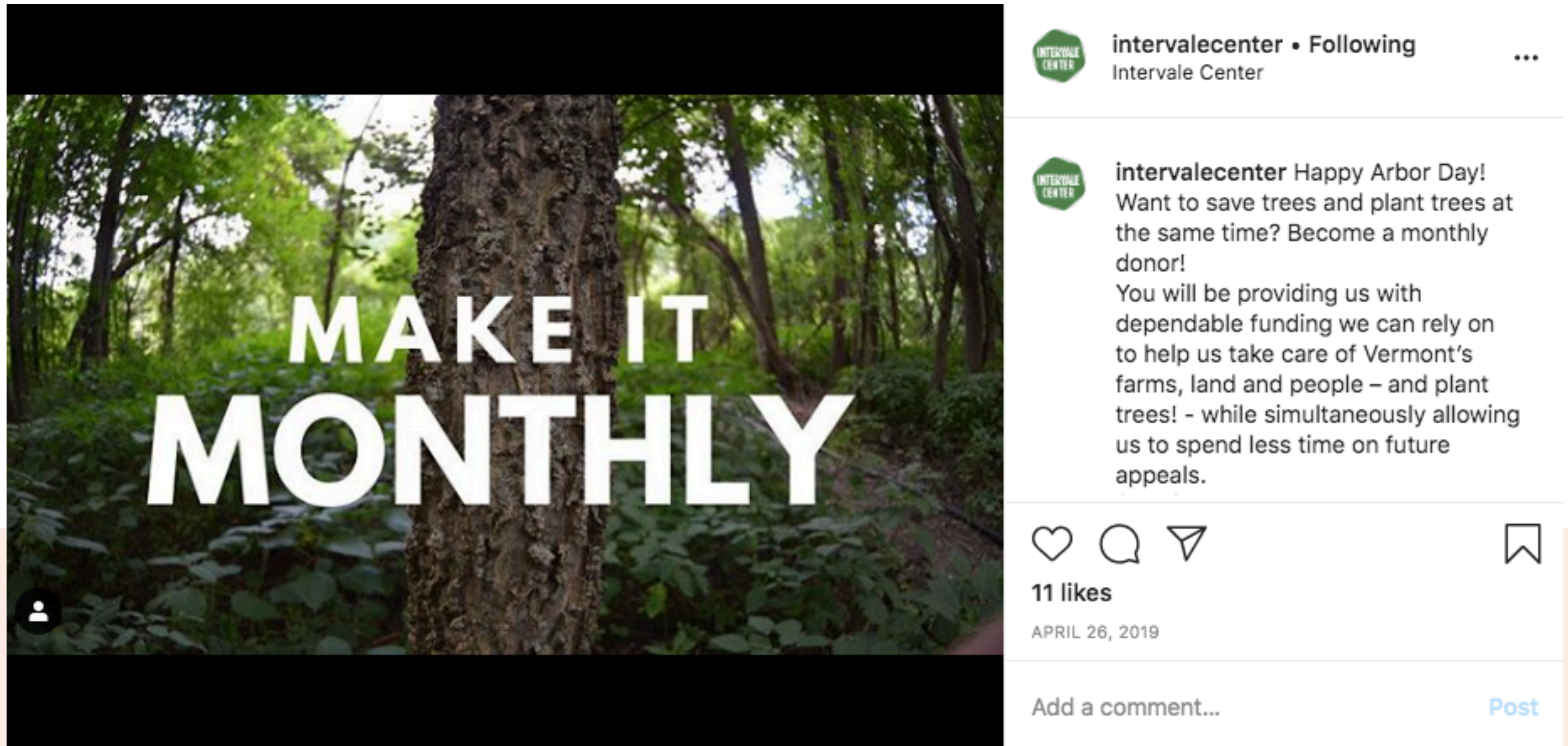


# For Example:





# For Example:





**400%\* Over Goal!**

\*and counting



# For Example:



A Sponsored Ministry of the Sisters of St. Joseph of Boston

May 2020

Dear FIRST NAME(S),

To say that the past weeks have been difficult is an understatement.

I know that many people are struggling right now. There is a lot of uncertainty, and the unknown can be hard to deal with. I want you to know that the Sisters are praying for you and your family.

This is not the letter I had planned to write to you this spring.

In fact, as the COVID19 pandemic began to hit our communities I thought about not sending it.

Then I remembered your commitment to the residents of Bethany Health Care Center.

I realized that you would want to know how your dear friends here are faring in the midst of this crisis.

I can tell you that our residents are faring well. I won't sugarcoat the fact that it is difficult for them to not to see their friends and loved ones right now. And they miss celebrating daily Mass in Bethany's Chapel of the Holy Spirit. But I am delighted to share how meaningful the phone calls and video chats truly are for our residents.

Social distancing for us means viewing Mass on CatholicTV. It means joining exercise classes over closed-circuit television in-house and activities like touring the Smithsonian virtually. Playing BINGO in residents' rooms using walkie-talkies has become part of the new norm.

It looks different than the Bethany we know for sure, but it's working to keep our residents safe.

Several residents have shared that they appreciate the one-on-one visits from our Spiritual Care staff. They're enjoying the many unique ways that the Activities team has dreamed up for our residents to be engaged and entertained. Not to mention the special treats that our Food Service group have cooked up for them.

It is still the same joy-filled Bethany Health Care Center you have come to know, but with a bit of a twist.



To keep the residents and staff safe and healthy, protocols have been put into place. We are living and strictly implementing all of the regulations from the local Department of Health.

Month alone, costs of acquiring adequate protective equipment such as gloves, masks, hand sanitizer, as well as the cost of extra equipment, cleaning agents, and extra hours of staffing have been extensive. It's taking all of our resources to ensure the health and safety of our residents. And it's saying, the health and safety of staff working tirelessly to ensure residents' physical, spiritual, social and emotional well-being is paramount.

In a position to help Bethany Health Care Center during this crisis, we would be grateful for your support. Your gift in any amount will go a long way to helping us fight this crisis within the walls of Bethany and keeping our residents and the staff who serve them safe.

Nothing that we can do for you during this crisis, please do let me know. In the meantime, the residents of Bethany will pray for you and your family and look forward to the days to come.

Thank you for all that you do for Bethany and our Sisters,

*Jacquelyn McCarthy CSJ*

Jacquelyn McCarthy, CSJ, RN  
Administrator, Bethany Health Care Center

Visit our website at [BethanyHealthCare.org](http://BethanyHealthCare.org) to learn more, for a page of encouragement, thanks, or to join #TeamBethany!

Bethany Road | Framingham, MA 01702-7237 | (508) 872-6750 | Fax: (508) 875-5425







*A Sponsored Ministry of the Sisters of St. Joseph of Boston*

May 2020

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I know that many people are struggling right now. There is a lot of uncertainty, and the unknown can be hard to deal with. I want you to know that the Sisters are praying for you and your family.

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Social distancing for us means viewing Mass on CatholicTV. It means joining exercise classes





# Trust.

It looks different than the Bethany we know for sure, but it's working to keep our residents safe.



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It is still the same joy-filled Bethany Health Care Center you have come to know, but with a bit of a twist.



Of course, to keep the residents and staff safe and healthy, a number of protocols have been put into place. We are closely following and strictly implementing all of the recommendations from the local Department of Health and the CDC.

In the first month alone, costs of acquiring adequate personal protective equipment such as gloves, masks, gowns, and hand sanitizer, as well as the cost of extra sanitizing equipment, cleaning agents, and extra hours of housekeeping have been extensive. It's taking all of our resources to ensure the health and safety of our residents. And it goes without saying, the health and safety of staff working tirelessly to care for our residents' physical, spiritual, social and emotional well-being is paramount.

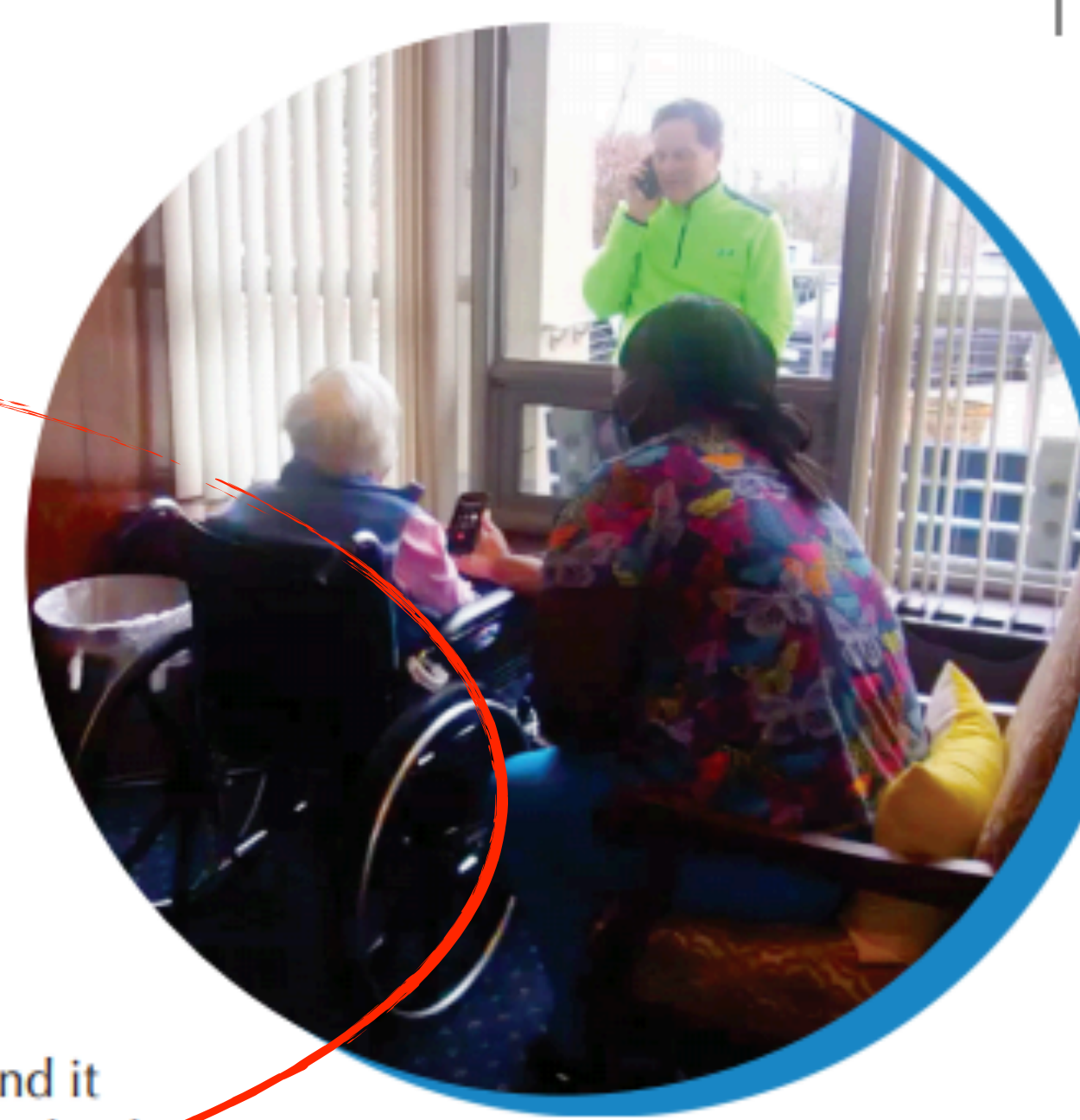
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If there is something that we can do for you during this crisis, please do let me know. In the meantime, I and the residents of Bethany will pray for you and your family and look forward to brighter days to come.

With my gratitude for all that you do for Bethany and our Sisters,

*Sister Jacquelyn McCarthy CSJ*

Sister Jacquelyn McCarthy, CSJ, RN  
CEO and Administrator, Bethany Health Care Center





**The Most Important Thing?**



**How Can You Raise  
An Extra \$45.32  
More With Each  
Gift?**



“Those who received the thank-you gave on average \$45.32 more than those who did not receive the thank-you.”

**Learning to Say Thank You: the Role of Donor Acknowledgements, Authored by Jen Shang, Adrian Sargeant, Kathryn Carpenter, and Harriet Day**




**Why Miss Out on the  
Opportunity Sending a  
Beautifully Written Thank You  
Letter Provides?**



# A Receipt Is Not a Thank You





These are the moments that you make real ...  Inbox x



**Trócaire** <webmaster@trocaire.ie>  
to me ▾

Mon, May 13, 8:08 AM (3 days ago)



Dear Pamela,

Can you picture what it means to a loving mother to know her children can sleep safe and warm, for the first time in God knows how long? And imagine the peace you bring when her babies wake to a hearty breakfast instead of the aching gnaw of an empty stomach. That's the real human face. That's what your kindness makes possible.

Every day I think of all the special moments that mean so much.

The time you took to think of those less fortunate

The minutes, and the care, you used to fill out the form and make your generous donation of Euro 10 Transaction Id: 197791.

And the good work that can happen now because you chose to give.

Thank you. It's hard for me to capture just what it means. But because you chose to give, your love and generosity will now live in so many moments of grace and mercy.

Picture that special instant when lines of weariness and worry turn to smiles of relief – relief from hunger, relief from cold, relief from fear - because of what your generosity gives. It's food in times of famine. Shelter in times of conflict. Hope in times of despair. It's the knowledge that someone out there cares.

It's an incredible gift to give – and I couldn't be more grateful that you're part of the Trócaire team.

Never forget, it is only the kindness and caring of people like you that allows Trócaire to be there on the front line, long after the cameras have gone. Doing all we can to honour your generosity and to ease the fears of those who need help - in your name. And I hope you will remember each evening – as darkness falls and your own bed starts to call - that someone, somewhere can now sleep a little more easily because of you.

Thank you for every fear that's eased. Thank you for every unshed tear. Thank you for the lives that are better because you're here.

Caoimhe De Barra

CEO Trócaire.

[www.trocaire.org](http://www.trocaire.org)

P.S. We will also post you a confirmation of the details of your generous pledge for your own records. If you ever have any questions about how your donations are spent, please give us a call any time. Call 01 629 3333 for our Maynooth office or 028 9080 8030 for our Belfast office. Or email our donor care manager Declan at [declan.dixon@trocaire.org](mailto:declan.dixon@trocaire.org). We'd love to help. Your Donation Details: Date: >Date: Monday, 13 May, 2019 - 13:08 Amount: Euro 10 Transaction Id: 197791



# For Example:

## THANK YOU OVERHAUL #1: NORTHEAST GEORGIA HUMANE SOCIETY, BEFORE:

### LISA'S COMMENTS:

- This letter does lots right: lots of you vs we, hooray! Tells the story of one dog. ☺ Sounds like it's written by a human being. ☺ Largely jargon free, and uses a beautiful sign-off ("Warm wags,").

### My suggestions for improvements:

- **Font size**: Calibri 11. Suggest 12pt or higher, serif my preference.
- **Use personal format**, not block. **Tab paras**.
- **Address block**: I recommend constraining your format from the start: 1" margins all around, input enough lines for address block, etc. Otherwise you could run over one page.
- **Tone**: The poignant tone feels like an appeal to me. I've done a lot with animal welfare and our general rule was always to get as grateful and upbeat as we could in the TYs. Your audience might like different. Watch faceless numbers "countless suffering animals" – I know loads of animal charities use this, but this letter has a good writer and I feel like you can find a beautiful substitute.
- **If you use a photo**, caption at the photo when possible. (This one's wrapped so you're probably A-OK.)
- **Proof**: watch typos, in this case missing words where highlighted (this is one of my most frequent typos too, so we run it past 2-3 eagle eyed staff to help catch them)
- **Tax language**: if you want you can warm this up as I did in Pam's webinar.

[[date]]

[[address]]

Dear [[salutation]],

What would you do if you saw an animal suffering? I already know the answer. You would immediately help, just like your recent donation of [[gifts.ack.amount]] on [[gifts.last.mmDDyy]] helps countless suffering animals every day.

Animals like Lydia (photo) **who found** by a kind lady who spotted her struggling to walk along a busy road. Starving and dirty, Lydia also was covered in more than 75 ticks who were sucking the life out of her.

Your gift immediately went to work to help Lydia as soon as she was delivered into our care. Your support meant she had x-rays which revealed a severely fractured pelvis and leg. Your donation meant she has medications, special splints and bandages, nourishing food, and a soft bed. Best of all, Lydia now has all the care, and all the time, she needs to heal.



We don't want to even think about what could have happened to Lydia, but because you chose to be a LIFE SAVER, Lydia **has second chance** for happiness and love! You made that possible.

Amazed. Inspired. Grateful. That's how your generosity makes me feel. THANK YOU for being part of our family of LIFE SAVERS!

Warm wags,

Julie Edwards  
Executive Director



# For Example:

## THANK YOU OVERHAUL #1: NORTHEAST GEORGIA HUMANE SOCIETY, AFTER:

[[date]]

[[Names]]

[[Address1]]

[[Address 2]]

[[City,]] [[ST]] [[Zip]]



Dear[[salutation]],

When gentle hands lifted broken little Lydia to safety, you were there.

The same way you'll be there for every cast-off friend who will come through our door in the days and weeks ahead, because of your wonderful donation of [[gifts.ack.amount]] on [[gifts.last.mmDDyy]]. **Thank you with all my heart.**

It's so hard to express what your gift means to sweet souls like Lydia. Her photo tells the tale of a lifetime. She was starving, alone, with multiple fractures and covered in ticks.

Lydia wouldn't have had a chance without you. But with you, *everything* changed.

Your donation meant x-rays to find what was broken... medications to ease her pain... special splints and bandages... nutritious food to fill her tummy... and of course, a soft bed! **Thanks to you, Lydia and so many other animals here have all the time they need to heal.**

You chose to be a LIFE SAVER, and I'm forever grateful. Because today a little dog named Lydia has a second chance for a lifetime of love.

Thank you today and always for being part of our family of LIFE SAVERS!  
Warm wags,

Julie Edwards  
Executive Director

P.S. Thanks to your amazing support Lydia just found her forever home! If you're in our neck of the woods, I hope you'll come by to see all the wonderful work you make possible. And please call us if you ever have questions. Thank you so much, again, for caring about the animals.

*The Humane Society of Northeast Georgia is a 501(c) (3) non-profit organization, Federal Tax ID#58-0678817, which means your donation could be tax deductible. Please help us keep Georgia beautiful by keeping this letter as your tax receipt. It lets you know no goods or services were received in return for your kind gift. Thank you again!*



# In Today's Webinar, You Learned:

- How consistent donor communications builds trust
- How to ask for monthly gifts in a pandemic
- The importance of empathy and vulnerability
- Your most important message
- And more!





# Take Action Now:



## You're busy!

At any time of the day, you're...  
*working on developing moves management processes,  
entering data into Quickbooks,  
launching an endowment campaign,  
putting the final touch on next week's virtual gala,  
getting a "massive number of grants" submitted,  
starting your monthly giving program,  
building the infrastructure of your development office,  
working on your first capital campaign...  
or even "coordinating a transport of cats from a high-kill animal shelter."*

I've been there. There are never enough hours in the day.

But chances are good (I'd bet money), that you're missing out on more than a few opportunities to grow your individual giving program. Even better? These opportunities won't cost you a dime.

- ➔ Download your Seven Communication Pieces PDF
- ➔ Make a plan for growing your monthly giving program in 2020
- ➔ Hop on the phone and call at least five donors.



"What if 2020 isn't canceled?

**What if 2020 is the year we've been waiting for?**

A year so uncomfortable, so painful, so scary, so raw  
that it finally forces us to grow.

A year that screams so loud, finally awakening us from our ignorant slumber.

A year we finally accept the need for change.

Declare change. **Work for change. Become the change.**

A year we finally band together, instead of  
pushing each other further apart.

**2020 isn't canceled, but rather the most important year of them all."**

-LESLIE DWIGHT



**Thank you for  
being the change.**





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