



## Big Brothers Big Sisters of Metro Atlanta

Big Brothers Big Sisters (BBBS) of Metro Atlanta has been serving the Metro Atlanta area for nearly fifty years. Their mission is to enrich children's lives and provide a solid foundation to allow the next generation to be all they can be—one child at a time.

The Atlanta organization's rich history is built on a national heritage more than 100 years old. BBBS fulfills their mission through professionally-supported, one-to-one mentoring relationships. Big Brothers Big Sisters currently operates in all 50 states, and in 35 countries around the world. And the greater metro Atlanta organization is one of their most successful and diverse chapters, thanks to their deep commitment to their mission.

### Highlights

- With a downsized number of auction items due to space constraints, BBBS Metro Atlanta's black tie awards gala still realized their financial goal of \$355,000 in a tough economy.
- Approximately 85-90% of guests chose to pre-register a credit card at check-in.

### Challenge

BBBS Metro Atlanta raises funds in many diverse ways, from "a-thon" events to grants and online donations. However, the centerpiece of their fundraising, is their annual black tie gala and auction, which BBBS has been hosting for 15 years.

To manage all of the details of this event, they did everything manually—trying to keep track of bidders, items, sales, etc. in multiple, complex spreadsheets. Since the event draws around 500 people each year, the manual tracking system was very labor intensive and the team had to start from scratch every year. Another recurring challenge was registration at the event. Most of the tables are sold to corporate sponsors, so it was difficult to know in advance who

was attending the event. In addition, payments for auction winnings were handled with personal checks or, if guests wanted to pay by credit card, outdated credit card imprint machines.

BBBS Metro Atlanta needed a way to efficiently register their guests and sponsors, and capture payments quickly to reduce congestion as their guests arrived.

### Solution

When Nikki Berrian, BBBS Metro Atlanta Decision Support Manager, was hired, she was asked to find a way to streamline the auction, and move away from the manual processes. Berrian is responsible for 'all things technical' the night of the event as well as managing the auction staff and volunteers. The BBBS Metro Atlanta staff and interns, a team of 4-7 people, handle all the pre-event details, sponsorship sales, procurement, etc, and utilize around 30 volunteers the night of the event. Berrian needed to find a solution that was easy for the group to use, accessible by multiple people, and that would integrate with Raisers Edge donor management software. After careful consideration, Berrian and the Special Events Director recommended the full suite of Greater Giving products—BBBS Metro Atlanta made the commitment.

### Tips from BBBS Metro Atlanta

- Changing venues can freshen up the event and you may find rates very comparable.
- Use a professional charity auctioneer.
- Train your staff and volunteers prior to event day, and use the excellent online training, live training and guides from Greater Giving.

### Results

This year BBBS Metro Atlanta automated registration for the first time with Auctionpay card readers. This solution immediately minimized the bottleneaking of guests at check-in and check-out. Berrian was very pleased with the ability to capture the credit card on the front end. The team thought people would have an aversion to pre-registering their credit cards, yet Berrian estimates that they got 85-90%% of all donor cards scanned before the event. "Check-in was way faster and the staff appeared to be much more ready and composed," said Berrian. "Instead of flipping through pages to find the guests name, it popped up on the screen."

The BBBS Metro Atlanta team also used Greater Giving Event Software PC at the event. They found the software easy to learn, and the staff was elated that all the information was in one database. "Amazingly well-executed!" was one guest compliment from the many the event team received that evening. Even the event hotel staff came by and commented on how composed, efficient, and professional the organization was.

The staff also appreciated the time and labor savings from using Greater Giving solutions. The night of the event transactions would previously take hours to close out, yet this year using Greater Giving, the team had the reports printed and receipts ready prior to check-out. They finished so quickly that they even had the luxury of waiting for guests to appear at check-out!

Berrian says "I can't imagine doing this (event) without the Greater Giving system – I can't! It's much more efficient, we can consolidate winners with multiple items—something we were never able to do before—and our guests picked up all of their items at one time!" Her conclusion? "Why would you not use the system when technology is so available?"

The nonprofit's final result? Even though the group downsized the number of items they had in their silent auction because of space constraints, they still realized their financial goal of \$355,000 in a tough economy. These precious funds will help them continue to fulfill their mission—at a time when at-risk children need BBBS Metro Atlanta more than ever.