



Loudoun Citizens for Social Justice/Loudoun Abused Women's Shelter (LAWS)

Since 1985, the Loudoun Citizens for Social Justice/ Loudoun Abused Women's Shelter (LCSJ/LAWS) has provided temporary emergency shelter, food, and emotional support to women and their children escaping from domestic violence and abuse in Loudoun County, Virginia. This organization also currently provides a wide range of direct services to more than 1,500 people in their community annually. LCSJ/LAWS also presents prevention and education programs throughout the county to reduce the incidence of domestic violence, sexual assault and child abuse. Through its complimentary programs, LCSJ/LAWS seeks to empower survivors of personal violence, so that they may live productive lives—free from fear, anxiety, and danger.

Highlights

- Greater Giving Event Software has helped auction staff to build a timeline to follow year-round, and manage Board and volunteer involvement.
- Registration and check-out was a 100% improvement from the previous year using Auctionpay and the Express Pay process.
- Using Greater Giving solutions, the LAWS Gala 2008 had the “best event execution ever,” according to attendees.

Challenge

LCSJ/LAWS has been hosting an annual Gala since 2002, and, while the organization managed to raise funds, it also experienced high stress levels from running the Gala. All administration of the tremendous amount of registration details fell onto already taxed personnel who are simultaneously taking calls from people in crisis situations. For the Gala's first three years, event management lay on the shoulders of the Board of Directors, who all had full time jobs, with little extra time for event details. There were too many

“cooks in the kitchen,” and it showed on event night. “Somebody absolutely has to be in charge,” stated Sue Curtis, Executive Director of LCSJ/LAWS. “We needed a system to provide one central source from which to drive the event.”

This situation led to their biggest event challenge, which was the sheer chaos surrounding registration and check-out. All the guests wanted to register and check-out quickly, yet there was no one in charge of each station, and without a centralized database, key information was not in place at the station. This led to confusion, backed-up lines, and a disorganized image to their guests—a significant drawback given LCSJ/LAWS' mission.

Solution

The Board knew they could not continue in the direction they were going, and began looking for an event management solution. Their search led to Greater Giving, and after careful consideration LCSJ/LAWS chose Greater Giving as their event software provider beginning in 2008. Curtis says that their main reason for choosing Event Software was to streamline the registration and check-out process—and the results far exceeded their expectations.

Curtis and her team love the way the data flows easily into the software and into their donor management system. “One of the best things about the software is that it gives the staff a tool to manage the event, the registration, procurement etc., and it helps them build a timeline and manage the activities to the timeline efficiently,” she said.

Bid sheets, reports, and the attendee information had been done manually in the past. With Event Software, they had an easy fix. “Holy Moley! Printing the bid sheets was so easy—it even set the bid increments,” Curtis enthused.” And now they can quickly send

thank-you letters to donors after the event, including information on how their money is being utilized by the organization. By showing donors how their dollars contribute to the cause, they create a sense of partnership with donors and strengthen donor empathy with their mission.

Tips from Loudoun

- Use Event Software to keep on track with event tasks, such as procurement, sponsorships, etc.
- Thank-you letters need to be sent to donors right away—include information on how their money has been utilized by your organization to build empathy and create a sense of partnership.
- Export the attendees registered into your donor management software—this builds your donor contact list for future fundraising campaigns.

Results

The LAWS Gala draws about 250 people annually, and offers both a live and silent auction. In 2008, the LCSJ/LAWS staff worried about how the worldwide financial

crisis would impact their fundraiser. Thanks in part to Greater Giving, the impact was minimal. “2008 was our best event ever,” stated Curtis. Registering people directly into the software database made the night of event run much smoother. And registration and check-out was picture perfect. “Having guests pre-register their cards for Express Pay made a 100% improvement on registration, and check-out was flawless,” said Curtis.

Guest response echoed Curtis' enthusiasm, giving feedback that the 2008 gala was LCSJ/LAWS “best event execution ever.” It was also very rewarding for the LCSJ/LAWS staff and volunteers to see people come out to the event they had worked on for months. “Our staff is usually behind the scenes, and don't get to meet the donors often. This year they were touched by donors coming up to them and thanking them for the work they do. What a morale booster!” said Curtis.

With a solution that works and an invigorated attitude, LCSJ/LAWS can now focus on building upon their fundraising strategy, and raising even more funds to support their noble cause.