



Susan G. Komen For The Cure® North Jersey Affiliate

Based on a promise to a young girl who lost her mother to breast cancer, Susan G. Komen For The Cure® North Jersey was founded in 1997. Comprised of a staff, Board of Trustees, Medical Advisory Council, survivors and activists, the North Jersey Affiliate works tirelessly to fulfill that promise to make a difference in the fight against breast cancer. Through fundraising events like the Pink Tie Ball®, the Affiliate supports research and community-based breast health education, screening and treatment programs for uninsured women.

Highlights

- By using Auctionpay, the North Jersey Affiliate doubled the number of auction Express Pay bidders for the 2008 Pink Tie Ball®—the Affiliate’s signature event.
- The biggest issue—finance reconciliation was solved after incorporating Greater Giving Event Software and Auctionpay terminals into their event process.
- The North Jersey Affiliate has saved a huge amount of time by using the Event Software online data entry and reporting features—making information up to date and easy to access.

Challenge

Back in 2006, the Pink Tie Ball® auction committee of Susan G. Komen For The Cure® North Jersey was using Microsoft® Excel® spreadsheets to manage all the details of their event, and encountering many frustrations along the way. As they sat down to plan for their upcoming event, there were so many obstacles to overcome during the planning and execution process that the committee agreed that it was the right time to invest in a technical solution.

One of the obstacles was check-out—it just took too long. Guests, frustrated with the wait, were leaving early and not finalizing their purchases. This situation

created the biggest issue- finance reconciliation. “It was just crazy,” stated Perla Haltner, Webmaster of the Affiliate, “It could take weeks to reconcile.” Furthermore, the event is held in October right before the holidays. If a guest left before paying, it made it hard to chase the winning bidder down. In some cases, so much time went by that the bidder would not remember bidding on an item and refuse to pay. The process needed to change, or the Affiliate could risk losing attendees and funds for their biggest fundraiser of the year.

Solution

Two years ago, a colleague from national headquarters sent the Affiliate a demo of Event Software. Haltner had already created her own database from Access®, but it was no match for the level of features the Event Software offered. Haltner stated that it would “... take years to come up with a similar solution...After evaluating the software I told the managing director, this was the direction we were going.” They decided to take a leap of faith and invest in the entire suite of Greater Giving products—which meant no more confusing spreadsheets and weeks of post event reconciliation.

Many changes had to be quickly implemented. They had re-think the auction model from beginning to end, and train everyone on the new system. Some were resistant to the change, yet nobody could have anticipated the scope of the positive transformation that would be the end result.

Tips from the Komen North Jersey Affiliate

- Leverage Event Software Online, so that your volunteers can work from anywhere and have access to the latest information.
- It’s human nature to be afraid of change, yet trust that your guests will embrace change if it improves their experience.

- Use a Retail Mode Auctionpay terminal to sell raffle tickets—the raffles sold out at the 2008 event, because it was so easy to pay.

Results

In 2008 the North Jersey Affiliate brought their 11th annual Pink Tie Ball® to the New Jersey Performing Arts Center in Newark. The gala, held on October 27th, drew more than 1100 guests and raised nearly \$1.3 million net for research and local community-based programs. “We doubled the number of bidders that used Express Pay. Our guests love Express Pay! Guests that retired early did not have to wait for Finance to open— where in the past, guests that left before finance opened were difficult to track and sometimes we could not complete the sale.” enthused Haltner. Another big plus was being able to give management a report right away of the evening’s results.

Perla Haltner and the auction committee have been very happy with the Greater Giving suite of products and services. She laughed when remembering how challenging it was to convince everyone to make the change.

“Our first year, the finance manager was hesitant of going paperless. He had us carry all the bins and set up to the event just in case. We had one area for

new finance and one area for the old finance, just in case it didn’t work. It turned out we did not need the duplication,” said Haltner. And because “...it’s not human nature to accept change, there were also several volunteers hesitant about the new system, but our guests accepted it very well.” The attendees at the event were in fact, expecting this level of support, because they had seen it at other fundraisers. The change that caused so much anxiety for some of the staff and the volunteers had the opposite effect on the guests, and it was no problem getting many to use Express Pay the first year. “The guests loved getting printed receipts instead of something handwritten— those little things really made a big difference. It raised the level of professionalism for the event,” said Haltner.

But perhaps the biggest transformation of all was solving the financial reconciliation issue. A process that once took weeks, now took only a matter of days. And thanks to the advanced software reporting features, important data could no longer slip through the cracks. Overall, Susan G. Komen For The Cure® North Jersey now has more volunteer time, a progressive auction management system, and increased donors and funds—meaning that the promise made in 1997 has been fulfilled in spades.