

## Hershey Montessori School

With two campuses located in Concord Township and Huntsburg, Ohio, Hershey Montessori School is a nonprofit, independent school which is chartered by the Ohio State Department of Education. Hershey Montessori offers an integrated, highly-individualized, academically challenging program designed to meet the developmental needs of children from birth through age 15. Hershey Montessori operates in the tradition of Dr. Maria Montessori to provide safe learning environments for children that foster personal and academic growth; independence and confidence; a sense of responsibility for self and community; and joyful lifelong learning. Each child's experience is subsidized by gifts from individuals, corporations, foundations, and school-wide fundraising activities and events.

### Highlights

- Since adding Greater Giving Online Payments, Hershey Montessori takes year-round online donations that reach beyond their immediate community—and 25% of donations are now online.
- By displaying their auction catalog online for supporters to preview, Hershey Montessori generated excitement prior to the live event.
- Using Greater Giving Event Software and Auctionpay cut hours out of the check-in and check-out process—guests left amazed and happy at how quickly they were able to check-out.

### Challenge

Hershey Montessori has a number of fundraising activities, including an annual spring benefit auction, which contributes 56% of the annual fundraising goal, as well as an annual giving campaign. The money raised from these activities is applied to a designated area of the budget each year, such as general operations, the financial aid fund, or professional development of teachers.

Originally, Hershey Montessori had selected another software package as a way to track and manage their event—they had simply outgrown using spreadsheets to track information. Yet once they moved their data to their new program, they found the solution difficult to work with—data entry was confusing and it was difficult to find and retrieve. Then in 2007, Golnar Parry joined Hershey Montessori as their Development Director. The parent coordinator of the auction that year had been researching other software solutions due to continual problems with the current program. They noticed how stressed out the check-out team was at their auction—the software was not working properly, and the guests were waiting in line for over an hour. The experience was so unpleasant for both the auction team and the guests, that the team said, “never again...” and went looking for another solution.

### Solution

Hershey Montessori selected Greater Giving's Fundraising Suite with Event Software, Auctionpay, Online Payments, and Online Auctions. Parry said, “The volunteers that help manage the event are very impressed with how easy it was to learn the software.” She hears comments all the time now on how well the program is designed, and how user-friendly it is. Even the reports they need to extract are structured in an easy-to-read layout.

### Tips from Hershey Montessori School

- Use Online Payments for your annual giving fund—send letters, emails, and follow up on those you haven't heard from. Especially useful are emails that include a link directly to the Online Payments page.
- Get creative with other ways to drive donations—an alumni getting married asked for donations for Hershey Montessori instead of gifts, and drove donations thru the Website.

- Read the Greater Giving Best Practices and Help Menu to give you ideas on speeding up check-out to make volunteers and guests happy.

### Results

In 2008, Hershey Montessori raised more money than before at their benefit auction using Greater Giving products.

In 2009, the auction team used Event Software PC, and displayed their auction catalog on their Online Auction Website for supporters to preview items, and to generate excitement prior to the live event. Guests came to the event ready to spend, and Hershey Montessori surpassed their goal, raising \$55,000 in spite of a tough economy. They had feared that guests might stay away due to the economy, yet attendance increased over the previous year. “People were floored by how quick check-out was in 2008—they were out in 10 minutes instead of an hour plus” said Parry. The rapid check-out improved our guest’s whole experience, and “the buzz continued into the next year—people we’ve never seen at the auction came in part because of the how positive the hype was. I’m sure that Greater Giving was a big part of that.”

In 2010, the auction team began using Event Software Online, and found that volunteers had much greater access and flexibility to work from home, at times that were convenient for them. It also made it possible to have multiple people working in the database at

once, speeding up productivity and reducing stress during important deadlines before the event. The Event Website included in Event Software Online was especially easy to create, and provided a useful way to communicate with supporters. Proceeds from this year were at a near-record high, totaling over \$75,000, despite lingering concerns about the economy.

Parry really appreciates the overall event night structure that Greater Giving solutions offer. In particular the concept of Express Pay—using Auctionpay and Event Software PC in conjunction to facilitate a smoother event. She sees a difference with the entire auction process from beginning to end. With Event Software, “it’s quick to find the info, quick to change it and print new receipts right there—Greater Giving thought through every situation you could be confronted with at your event and provided a solution!” enthused Parry.

And the auction isn’t the only area where they are seeing a return on investment. Since adding Online Payments, Hershey Montessori can take year-round online donations, which reach beyond the immediate community—and 25% of donations to Hershey Montessori are now received online.

All of these fundraising improvements translate to one important goal—to create more opportunities for children to attend Hershey Montessori School and benefit from joyful lifelong learning.