

Pathways to Donation: Ways to Empower and Encourage Donors.

Kevin Nelson, Growing Hope Globally volunteer

Well, that sounds impressive, doesn't it? We used the steps below to maximize our Summer 2020 fundraiser – a collaboration of several growing projects in Illinois that have a history of fund raising through a participatory event. The COVID pandemic restrictions in Illinois had prevented us from having the accustomed harvest celebrations, and we had all been isolated in some form or another since at least mid-March. Although this happened during COVID restrictions, these pathways could be used for non-COVID events also.

1) What was the event? Several of our GP volunteers have had involvement with a new nature preserve in Ottawa. We proposed the idea for a **Hike to End Hunger event to the Dayton Bluffs Preserve** volunteers and administration, and it was approved and scheduled. The location offered social distanced opportunities for getting out in nature, with stops along the route to learn more about the history of our area and about Growing Hope Globally and the work to end hunger worldwide.

2) What Growing Hope overseas project got helped? The **first thing that we did that I would call a pathway to donation was to choose an overseas program to support.** This provided a focus point for those who were interested in donating. They could see what their donation was going to be used for, and that it wasn't just being dumped into a big pot with no stated purpose. We chose to designate the Tanzania Chamwino program to receive the donations from our Hike to End Hunger.

3) How did you use social media to involve people?

1. Early on, Eric Mattson provided us with a **Google form to allow people to sign up for times to hike.** We were concerned with people having been cooped up that we might be overwhelmed by crowds of people and have problems keeping distanced. This form allowed for capturing info of people who planned to attend. The form also gave a link to the Growing Hope web site and the Donate Now button. I'm not sure how many people actually used the sign up form, but it was a good tool to employ.
2. The Twin Rivers – Barrington Growing Project has a **Facebook** page, and **one of the next pathways to donation was to create an event through that page.** This gives people who are interested in attending a way to put it on their calendars with a date, time, and place. Facebook also provides reminders to keep the event fresh in peoples' minds. In the description of the event, we placed a link to the Growing Hope web page description of the overseas program and to the "Donate Now" button on the Growing Hope web site. We emphasized that even if you couldn't attend the Hike to End Hunger, you were welcome to donate to the program.
3. The next pathway was to encourage everyone we could to share the event. Many people will click a **"Like" on a Facebook post, but to really spread the word, "Sharing" is important.** By sharing, the event notification is multiplied many times over. Many of the people who are part of the several Growing Projects involved in this effort have hundreds of friends on Facebook. So when the event was shared, there were hundreds and hundreds of new eyes seeing what we were trying to do. Even a small percentage making a donation would be more than if we hadn't shared. This is a very important pathway.
4. Along with Facebook, other social media platforms were used to spread the Hike to End Hunger word. **Twitter, Instagram, and others** were used. **The important thing was to always provide a link to the Growing Hope Globally website and the Donate Now button.** This is the key.

4) What traditional forms of communication did you use?

We also used other more traditional forms of promotion. Newspaper stories, visits with local radio stations, church newsletters, all the “Old Faithfuls” of fund raising. We still provided the link to that Donate Now button where possible and appropriate.

5) What were the results?

We wound up with about 75 people hiking on the day of the event. It was a beautiful day, with blue skies and cool fall-like weather. We had stops at a pioneer cemetery that includes graves of people who died during a cholera outbreak in the 19th century, at a burial mound built by Native Americans earlier than that, at a demonstration of how the Illinois prairie is being restored on the preserve, and other interesting topics.

Donations were accepted in several ways: Through the website and the Donate Now button. We made sure to ask people to indicate they were participating in the Hike to End Hunger so funds would be allocated correctly. We also told people that they could donate to the Hike by sending checks to our church indicating Hike to End Hunger. On the day of the Hike, we accepted donations at the check-in site at the Preserve. We actually received several substantial donations that day.

Thrivent members were also encouraged to submit the Hike as a project to support, and received gift cards that were used to buy supplies such as hand sanitizers, water, and sign boards. Thrivent is a not for profit, member owned financial services company. Founded in 1902 as a Lutheran organization, it has diversified and is open to people from all faiths, guided by Christian principles. Thrivent also provided a place on their website for gathering donations, and there were donations made there as well as the other places. Thanks to Thrivent and the local Thrivent representative for their support over the years.

In the end, donations totaled in excess of \$15,000. These funds qualified for the Max Out for Hunger match that was going on at the time of our Hike. When we found out about this match, we included that as a part of each of the other pathways I’ve discussed. It was an amazing event, and the efforts we made were totally worth it.