

The Major Gifts Report November 2008

Charitable gift annuities at Lutheran Family and Children's Services Foundation (St. Louis) are up considerably thanks to message repetition.

Within approximately three weeks the Foundation spread its message using four methods.

Print advertisement. An ad appeared in the Foundation's Spring 2008 newsletter. Mailed at the end of May, approximately 15,000 people received it.

E-mail. The Foundation sent an e-mail blast to existing donors, and the organization's chief executive officer sent an e-mail to a small group of individuals, as well.

Telephone. Charitable giving donors received a phone call from a development professional.

Letter. The Foundation sent 250 letters to targeted charitable gift donors, aged 70 to 85.

"We did a full-court press on it," says Dianne Johnson, planned giving consultant for Lutheran Family and Children's Services Foundation. "We received more charitable gift annuities in one month than we had gotten before. They had been sliding recently because of a capital campaign, but this really boosted them back up."

Johnson says the Foundation capitalized on the July 1, 2008 rate drop. The message was, "You can still receive the higher rates if you make a gift now."

The response was impressive. While the Foundation typically receives one charitable gift annuity every one to two months, in June it received five gift annuities worth \$55,000.

For organizations wishing to try a similar campaign, Johnson recommends the following:

- *Keep it targeted.*
- *Use multiple ways to get the message out.*
- *Find new ways to present it and to create urgency. You cannot use the same message over and over.*

But Johnson reminds organizations that in order for a campaign like this to work, a consistent planned giving program must already be in place.

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