

## **Your Personal Story: The Key to Fundraising Success**

Telling your personal story, either through a letter or an email, is the best way to raise money for Bridges to Community. Why? Because asking is the key to fundraising and people give to people. Telling your story puts a face on your fundraising efforts.

### Steps to Telling Your Story:

Create a short and compelling letter. Be sure to include:

1. Why you are going on this trip.
2. Information about Bridges to Community.
3. Your fundraising goal.
4. A direct ask to support your fundraising efforts with a donation.
5. Avenues of donating: directly to you, online through Network for Good, via Facebook, or directly to Bridges (see Page 2 for details on each to decide which option(s) makes the most sense for you).
6. Your donation page link at least twice.
7. Assure your network that online giving is safe and secure and Bridges is a registered 501c3 charity working our mission since 1992.
8. Thank people for their support. (And send them a thank you note with photos and information on the project/program they supported)

A sample email is included in this packet to help you get started writing your personal story!

### Ways to Market Your Story:

Send emails to family and friends. Try using your holiday card mailing list!

- Include the link to your donation page to make it easy for people to respond.
- Send an email to everyone in your email address book.
- Update your fundraising page by signing on and following the simple instructions. – Tell your personal story and upload your own photo!

Some helpful tips:

- Utilize matching gifts: many companies match donations; since the trip fee is 100% tax deductible, these funds are eligible for matching gifts too.
- Get family, friends, and team members involved in fundraising: ask them to forward your emails to their network to increase your reach in addition to donating.
- Ask local businesses: Go and ask local businesses to donate to you. You may be surprised by how many people will help. If you frequent their business, be sure to mention that.

## **Ways to Fundraise**

There are numerous platforms to help you raise funds for Bridges:

### *Peer to Peer Fundraising:*

Personal emails with easy links/instructions to donate are the most effective way to raise funds. We find that using multiple fundraising avenues gives donors options and flexibility and therefore makes them more likely to give. A sample email is included in this packet to help you get started writing your personal story!

1. Network for Good is a third party platform similar to GoFundMe, where you can write a personal narrative, set a fundraising goal, track your progress, and add offline gifts. All funds are sent directly to Bridges and we handle all thank you and tax letters. Our Development Staff would be happy to set up a page for you to circulate to your friends and family.
2. You can set up a fundraiser on Facebook. All funds are sent directly to Bridges, but donations are not itemized on the paperwork we receive, so your donors will not receive personal thank you/tax letters.
3. Folks can also donate directly on our website. Please make sure that they note their gift is in honor of you so we can track your total funds raised.
4. For those donors wary about online giving, folks can send a check with your name in the memo to: Bridges to Community, PO Box 459 Bronxville, NY 10708.

### *Third Party Fundraising Events:*

Hosting an event is a great way to raise money while having a good time. These events are organized and run by you. Funds are collected by you and a lump sum check is sent to Bridges after your successful event. Your donors will not receive thank you/tax letters from Bridges. Bridges is happy to let you use our logo, branded table cloths, etc. Here are a few events that people have hosted in the past: collecting a cover charge at your favorite bar, Battle of the Bands, silent auctions, and soccer tournaments.

## **Important facts about Bridges to Community and Our Projects:**

- Mission: Bridges to Community's mission is to build a more just and sustainable world through service learning and community development by engaging volunteers to work in developing countries—building community and changing lives.
- Programs: Bridges works with the selected communities in four primary program areas: housing, health, education, and economic development.
- Impact: Together, with our volunteers, we positively affect over 5,500 Nicaraguan and Dominican lives per year.
- Poverty in Nicaragua: Nicaragua is the second poorest country in Latin America after Haiti. More than 43% of the Nicaraguan population lives in rural areas and 68% of them are trying to survive on a little more than \$1 per day. Overall, 46.2% of the population lives below the poverty line. Poverty also results in child labor, which affects more than 167,000 children and adolescents.
- Poverty in the Dominican Republic: More than a third of the Dominican Republic's total population lives in poverty, and almost 20% are living in extreme poverty. In rural areas, poor people constitute half of the population. The highest incidences of poverty and extreme poverty occur in the Dominican-Haitian border regions and particularly in the mountainous areas. The rural poverty rate is about three times as high as the urban poverty rate.
- Health Scope: facilitate medical brigades and build health posts and clinics to increase healthcare access; design and build hygienic latrines and biodigesters to improve sanitation; dig wells and water systems to deliver potable water; install indoor smokeless stoves to decrease chronic health issues related to smoke inhalation; reforestation to decrease soil erosion that contributes to respiratory issues associated with dust storms and malnutrition due to poor crop production
- Education Scope: offer High School, College, and Vocational School scholarships; offer internships; build schools, libraries, and classroom buildings; lead youth leadership workshops; offer focused service learning in the areas of engineering and medicine
- Economic Development Scope: establish a community fund through our housing program; train community leaders to manage the community fund; coordinate diagnostic studies to determine viable business options for communities and assist in implementation (such as nurseries and gardens, chicken coops, and cacao and allspice cooperatives)
- Housing Scope: build and repair homes identified by Bridges' staff and community leaders

## Sample Preliminary E-mail

Customize this email with personal stories  
and past experiences with Bridges to Community

Dear **Joe Sample** (*personalized emails or letters work best if possible*),

I hope that all is well!

You may know that I will be traveling to **(Site)**, **(Country)** on **(Date)** with Bridges to Community, a charity close to my heart. Myself and fellow volunteers will be working to build sturdy homes for a family in need. The current home is made of scrap wood walls, a tin roof, and is no match for the hurricanes and earthquakes that plague this area. Dirt floors, no door to lock, and a roof that leaks means that their basic human need for a safe shelter is not being met. The impact of this new home is huge; increasing this family's health and sense of security. It will allow all members to leave the home to pursue education and employment. My goal is to raise **\$X** to support Bridges' community development work which includes this housing program, as well as health, education, and economic development programs, but I can't do it without your help: **(insert Network for Good link)**

Bridges has been working with impoverished communities in Nicaragua since 1992 and in the Dominican Republic since 2010. **(Insert Poverty Statistics for applicable country)**. Bridges works with these selected communities to improve access to housing, healthcare, education, and increase economic development.

50% of Bridges' operating budget is raised through general donations from people like you. I hope you will consider giving to support this wonderful organization: **(insert Network for Good link)**

If you are weary of donating online, feel free to send a check made out to:  
Bridges to Community  
480 North Bedford Road  
Chappaqua, NY 10514

By supporting this project, you will be changing the lives and helping build a bridge to a world unlike our own:  
**(insert Network for Good link)**

Thank you for your support and generosity!

Sincerely,

**Insert Your Name**  
Bridges Brigadista