

Legacy *Matters*



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Smart Investment Social (Media in) Philanthropy



Shelton-based Center Stage Theatre uses social media to inform the public about upcoming performances and casting calls. In 2014, it effectively rallied supporters during The Great Give® to win a \$15,000 Grand Prize for raising the most money during the online giving event.



Kayleigh Apicerno of Shelton's Cloud Media Marketing leads social media training sessions for nonprofits and businesses in the Valley.



Seymour Pink has used its Facebook page to tell the community about a fun way to support the fight against breast cancer - order a custom license plate.

Social networking sites are connecting people and causes like never before.

In the philanthropic industry, these sites are being used by nonprofits and donors, alike, to advance causes, to strengthen existing and build new relationships, and to inspire community engagement through knowledge sharing, active listening and online fundraising campaigns.

“Social media has revolutionized the way nonprofits raise money, spread their message, and collect donations. Donors are more invested in these causes because they can follow along on social media throughout the year,” says Kayleigh Apicerno, owner of Shelton-based Cloud Media Marketing. “With social media, the cost of finding and speaking to potential donors has been lowered to almost zero. At the same time, online payment sites such as GoFundMe have made collecting money very easy. Supporters can now send money from their phones almost instantly from anywhere in the world.”

With advancing technology, giving has never been easier, or more attractive, especially to millennials.

“Studies have shown that this generation wants and enjoys giving and getting involved. They are also much more comfortable with sending money via apps and through social media than any generation before,” says Apicerno.

Valley-based Spooner House knows the importance of making and keeping online connections.

“We use Facebook and Twitter at Spooner House to connect with the community and share the progress our organization is making,” says Kate Pipa, development officer at Area Congregations Together, which operates Spooner House. “It allows us to share success stories of say, a resident finding permanent housing, or a need at our organization such as food for the pantry shelves.”

Pipa attributes their expanded outreach to the many “great volunteers and community members” that support Spooner House. They enable “our message to be seen by a multitude of people ... within their networks or to spark ideas on how they may be able to help.”

Both the platform through which nonprofits choose to communicate and the content shared can make all the difference in reach and engagement.

“According to the Pew Research Center, Facebook is the largest social network in the world and the second most visited web page for the U.S., with over 90% of the 18-29 age group, and over 50% of those over 64. So, it really covers the gamut in audience—and provides a platform for advertising and boosting posts,” says Eileen O’donnell, partner and creative director of the Odonnell Company.



O’donnell teaches clients that social channels provide a space for people to connect, gain inspiration, and find a bright spot during their day.

“When a nonprofit organization fills that need—offering connection, belonging, inspiration, hope, or an emotional moment—a branded interaction is created.”

That’s an important step to building advocates, a volunteer base, friends and donors.

“Like most people, millennials do not like being sold to,” says O’donnell. “It is important that nonprofits share their message and build real relationships with supporters through engaging social media posts.”

The causes more likely to get stronger results are the ones that remember why people use social networking sites and provide a channel for meaningful conversation, she says.

F O R G O O D F O R E V E R F O R T H E V A L L E Y

Spotlight: Giving Back on Giving Days



Among the multiple ways donors can give back to their community, Giving Days are an effective way to attract attention to important community needs and opportunities and to support nonprofit organizations in a fun and communal way.

Communicating via social media during Giving Days keeps donors, nonprofits and members of the community updated in real time, and helps build momentum throughout the giving event. Social networks empower people to share and post the day's activities, expanding an organization's reach even more.

Giving Days can increase an organization's visibility and reach through digital media. They can enable people to discover new areas of interest and leverage match incentives for giving, so donors can maximize their impact. Giving Days can also simplify the giving process for donors looking for one secure, online platform to carry out their charitable intentions.

For many nonprofit organizations, like the Valley United Way (VUW), short-term, crowd-funded giving events are popular ways to engage existing and potential donors and to raise money to support important services. These events can be more impactful when sponsors, match dollars and prize money is offered to incentivize giving to participating organizations.

"The Valley United Way is committed to providing a variety of ways for residents to give to their community," says Sharon Gibson Ellis, newly appointed President & COO of VUW. "Giving Days are a great way for the community to engage with the charities they are most passionate about."

VUW participates in #GivingTuesday, a global day of giving following the Thanksgiving holiday, and The Great Give®, an online giving event created by The Community Foundation for Greater New Haven to support nonprofits serving the 20-town region. The 36-hour event attracts major sponsors, including the

Valley Community Foundation, the event's second largest sponsor, which has provided \$25,000 in matching funds and prizes over the past several years.

VUW has raised nearly \$30,000 through The Great Give® since 2012. More than \$5 million in new and matching funds has been distributed to hundreds of area nonprofits since The Great Give® and its predecessor events on giveGreater.org® began in 2010.

While the main objective of Giving Days is to raise money, it is not the only goal. Crowd-sourced funding — or the act of setting aside a specific time period during which many people give — generates excitement and a sense of urgency within local communities. Giving Days present an opportunity for residents to support a charity they feel passionate about in a fun and communal way.

Giving Days are also a useful vehicle for nonprofits to attract the attention of new supporters, especially through the use of social media. A recent study by The Knight Foundation, a national foundation whose goal is to foster informed and engaged communities, found that Giving Day organizers had nine times as much website traffic during their giving campaigns than on an average day; organizations also saw an increase in Twitter followers as well.

Giving Days additionally serve as an effective way to engage local businesses interested in demonstrating support for their local community through event sponsorship.

Our region's annual online giving event, The Great Give® 2017, will take place May 2-3. For more information, please visit www.thegreatgive.org.

Grant Opportunities

VCF is accepting grant applications from nonprofits that serve its 5 town region covering Ansonia, Derby, Seymour, Shelton and Oxford. Grant amounts, application deadlines and eligibility requirements vary by grant process; details and applications are available on our website at valleyfoundation.org/grants.

Grantseekers are encouraged to view the 2017 Grantseekers Orientation Webinar (recorded February 9) about the types of competitive grants available, and submission criteria required for Sponsorships (open year-round); Responsive Grants (applications due Mar. 30); and Needs & Opportunities Grants (open year-round).

Nonprofits are also encouraged to sign up for capacity building workshops.

For more information, please contact Program Officer Valerie Knight-DiGangi at 203-751-9162 or VDiGangi@valleyfoundation.org.

You're Invited!

Join us on the evening of **Tuesday, May 9, 2017** at Race Brook Country Club for the Valley Community Foundation's **13th Annual Reception**. Register at valleyfoundation.org.

Planned Giving

VCF welcomes William and Jo-Anna Holden, Liz Kennard, and Brad and Marianne Smythe to the Gates Society, the Foundation's planned giving community.

Your planned gift will impact the charities you're passionate about forever, regardless of the amount.

Call us at 203-751-9162 or learn more at valleyfoundation.org.



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Good News About the Valley

Mark Your Calendar and Schedule Your Gifts



The Great Give® is just weeks away! Gifts made between 8:00 am on May 2 and 8:00 pm on May 3 on thegreatgive.org will be amplified with pro-rated matching funds from the Valley Community Foundation and its partner in philanthropy, The Community Foundation for Greater New Haven.

Can't wait? Starting Monday, April 17, you can go to the donation page of a nonprofit listed at thegreatgive.org and schedule a gift. All advanced gifts will be credited to participating organizations during the second day of the giving event and will count toward match and Grand Prizes.

As in years past, grants up to \$5,000 made by VCF Donor Advised Fund holders to participating nonprofits will be added to the organization's leaderboard total, count toward select Grand Prizes and be matched on a pro-rated basis. To qualify, grants must be made between April 21 – April 28, 2017.

We're Getting A Face Lift

This year, *Legacy Matters* is undergoing a makeover. In an effort to be more efficient and cost-effective, our format is changing to an expanded quarterly publication.

Future issues will continue to share grant impact and outcomes, made possible through the generosity of our donors. We will also highlight smart investments in our community, upcoming sponsored events, and funds at VCF. A new section will offer respective thoughts from VCF leadership on the state of philanthropy in the Valley.

"We look forward to sharing our new format with the community," says Sharon Closius, VCF President and CEO. "The expanded piece will allow VCF to continue to build an informed community while prudently managing costs. Most importantly, it will continue to depict the vital work of VCF in supporting nonprofits that serve the Valley and the important role VCF plays in providing residents with a trusted institution through which they can create their legacy."