

Comedy Show Raises Funds for Children's Hospital

by Sandra Sims, Fundraising Coach
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Comedy has proven to be a great fundraiser for Rainbow Babies and Children's Hospital, part of the University Hospitals of Cleveland health care system.

Robert Telecky has been part of the organizing team for the Stand-up Comedy themed fundraiser called "Comics For Kids, Laughter Is The Best Medicine" for three years. The idea for the event came from a friend who knew of his interest in stand up comedy.

The first comedy show in 2003 was a gathering of a group of local comics who donated their time. A theatre in Downtown Cleveland donated a room for the night, tickets were sold at the door and \$2500 was raised. From these humble beginnings the event has grown into a popular annual event, raising even more funds for the Children's Hospital each year.

The third annual comedy event was recently held on October 3, 2005. Building on the experience and connections from the previous two years, the event was an even greater smash success, with \$10,000 raised to help hospitalized children!

This year the planning team pulled out all of the stops, promoting the event at the hospital and through other publicity and advertising. In addition they added several new revenue streams this year including program advertising sales, silent auctions and DVDs.

A strategic partnership was formed between the facility owner and the hospital. The organization was given the use of the facility and would collect all money from ticket sales and the club would get the business of all food and liquor sales. The other compromise was that the event would be held on a Monday night since typically are no shows scheduled for Monday. The owner of the club is also a huge advocate for children's causes so that helped a great deal.

After ticket sales, the next largest amount of income came from advertisement sales in the show program. Letters were sent out to various companies that have provided services to the hospital in the past.

According to the Robert, “We expressed that the proceeds from donation would be used for printing expenses and advertisement costs for the event. We asked for \$300 for a half page ad and \$500 for a full page ad. Keep in mind the companies we targeted were fairly large companies or companies that have had sizeable accounts with the hospital so it was a way of giving back to them.”

Each company that purchased an ad sent in a high resolution logo or company created advertisement in an electronic format. Microsoft Publisher was then used to create the show programs.

This year the planning started much earlier and solicitations for advertising also went out earlier. The team also wasn't afraid to try new ideas such as a silent auction and a 50/50 raffle.

A table was set up in the hospital atrium during lunch hours to sell tickets for the show. An additional \$400 was raised through a raffle because tickets were sold prior to the event and the winner did not need to be present in order to win.

One of the most creative ways that this event maximized its fundraising efforts was through video taping the event. A professional video production, normally a \$12,000 cost, was obtained for only \$2,000 because the production company agreed to donate. In addition donations were received to cover that cost so in essence the production was free! Now DVDs are now being sold for \$20 each to raise seed money for next year's event as well as spread awareness of the show.

This event is a great example for other non profit organizations that even though the first year of an event may be small, it can easily grow into a much larger and more profitable fundraiser. Robert notes, “We simply kept having the event and after three years we are now gaining a reputation of putting on a great show. So along with flyers and e-mails I think a great deal of interest was and is being generated by word of mouth.”

Plans for next year's event are already underway. The group is already receiving offers of help from new supporters including the Cleveland Improv. With dedication and experience on their side, the sky's the limit for Comics for Kids.

About the Author: Sandra Sims has been fundraising for various charities for over 10 years and is dedicated to helping non profits raise more for their causes. She is the author of several informative resources for non profit organizations including [The 5 Keys to Successful Fundraising](#), [The Beginner's Guide to Fundraising](#) and [Sample Fundraising Letters](#)

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