

Fundraising Support and Strategy - Friends of Festival Country K-9s

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Abstract

The Friends of Festival Country K9s is a 501 (c) 3 non-profit organization formed in 2011 by a small group of volunteers dedicated to the goal of developing a dog park in the Iron County, Utah area and supporting homeless animals in Iron County shelters. The group raised enough funds to successfully construct and open Iron County's first dog park in 2019.

In addition to the dog park construction, the Friends of Festival Country K9s also support the Iron County area shelters by providing funds for dog and cat food, litter, medical expenses and by hosting low-cost community microchip clinics and spay and neuter clinics. Members also volunteer by providing foster care, shelter animal transportation to spay and neuter clinics, and community education through low-cost dog obedience, agility, flyball instruction, and more.

Keywords: fundraising, non-profit, dog park, animal shelter, strategy

Friends of Festival Country K9s: Overview

The Friends of Festival Country K9s is a 501 (c) 3 non-profit organization formed in 2011 by a small group of volunteers dedicated to the goal of developing a dog park in the Iron County, Utah area and supporting homeless animals in Iron County shelters. The group raised enough funds to successfully construct and open Iron County's first dog park in 2019.

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Friends of Festival Country K9s - Track Record & Marketplace Position

Since being formed in 2011, this non-profit group has contributed greatly to pets and their owners in the region. They have microchipped over a hundred animals, transported even more to low-cost spay and neuter clinics, and also provided thousands of dollars of funds to feed and treat homeless animals living in Iron County's animal shelters. While many non-profit animal rescues are doing similar work in this area, the Friends of Festival Country K9s are the only non-profit organization in Southern Utah to also build a community dog park. They successfully raised over \$55,000 to build Iron County's first dog park through private donations and grant writing. Located in the city of Enoch on three acres of donated land adjacent to the Enoch animal shelter, Enoch PetSafe dog park is frequented by many community members and their pets daily during all seasons and daylight hours. The park currently has two 6-foot tall, fenced areas, one for small dogs and another for large dogs. Each enclosure has multiple double-gated entries,

signage with dog park rules, waste disposal stations, seating, ADA accessible walkways inside the perimeter, dog agility equipment, lawn, and access to water.

Friends of Festival Country K9s - Goals, Strategies, and Objectives

Since this dog park was not built using community park and recreation funds, additional fundraising is needed to complete the second stage of development. This stage includes trees and shrubs for shade and landscaping, a covered shade structure for each enclosure, a windbreak on the south side of the dog park, and the addition of crusher fines for surface improvement on non-grass areas. These improvements will cost approximately \$6,000 to complete. The third stage includes constructing a third fenced enclosure to be utilized as a “rotation” area and allow for landscape maintenance in the large and small dog runs, special events, and more. It is estimated it would cost approximately \$27,000 to complete the third dog run area fully. In total, to fully complete the construction of all three dog park areas, a total of \$33,000 needs to be raised. Besides building the dog park, this nonprofit group will also continue to educate residents on responsible pet ownership and provide resources for homeless and abused animals. They will accomplish this by offering community education through low-cost dog training clinics and assistance for animal health and safety with low-cost microchips and spay and neuter clinics.

Case for Supporting the Friends of Festival Country K9s

The Friends of Festival Country K9s has made it a priority to educate the community on responsible pet ownership and provide volunteer hours and financial support to local animal shelters.

To Support Homeless Animals

The statistics of animal homelessness are staggering, especially for dogs. With only one out of every ten dogs born kept in a permanent home, approximately 2.7 million dogs and cats

are killed every year because shelters are too full. Also, only 10% of the animals received by shelters have been spayed or neutered. “Due to owners letting their pets accidentally or intentionally reproduce, overpopulation sees millions of these “excess” animals killed annually (11 Facts About Animal Homelessness, 2021).” The Friends of Festival Country K9’s mission statement states, “Our group is dedicated to saving homeless, abused, and abandoned animals. Our goal is to end the euthanasia of healthy, adoptable animals in our county through adoption. We strive to educate the public about spaying/neutering, responsible ownership, and breed discrimination and believe it will make a positive impact in our community.” (Friends of Festival Country K9s, 2021).

To Support Community Members, Visitors & Their Pets

The dog parks serve multiple generations including children up to senior citizens. The park is a great place for people with similar interests to socialize with each other, share knowledge, & exercise with their pets. With the increase of yard-less low-income housing built in the area, there is also a growing need for community members to have a safe place for dogs to run and exercise. Dogs also can socialize with other dogs, which lessens their chance of becoming aggressive. Although the dog park is not fully finished, it is already heavily used. On average, three to five pet owners are present during most daylight hours with three to eight dogs. During peak times on weekends and evenings, the dog park is frequented by eight to ten owners and fifteen to thirty dogs at a time. Not only is the dog park heavily patronized by community members, but it is also sought out by visitors passing through and needing a safe place to exercise and relieve their pets.

To Increase Community Value & Safety

Having dog parks in well planned communities increases their value and safety. Friend's of Festival Country K9s share on their website that:

“According to the American Pet Products Association, 56.7 million households have at least one dog. Dog parks also tend to be utilized more heavily because of the large number of pet owners in most communities, and patronized year-round as opposed to most recreational sport fields which are only used for limited seasons. Dog parks also encourage responsible dog ownership by providing off-leash areas for dogs to play without infringing on the enjoyment of others such as joggers, or children who may be fearful or allergic to dogs.” (Friends of Festival Country K9s, 2021)

The city finds it is also easier to enforce leash laws when dog parks are an option for community members. They also provide a location where people can share and learn about responsible pet ownership. Dog trainers and Police K9 units also use dog parks for training, dog sports, pet adoptions, demonstrations & competitions. Dog parks also allow a location for owners to exercise companions safely while providing an excellent place for the disabled or elderly to socialize with others.

Friends of Festival Country K9's Organizational Resources

Many generous donors and volunteers fund the Friends of Festival Country K9s clinics and dog park. Most notable, the city of Enoch donated three acres of land located near Enoch Animal Shelter, which the city will maintain as part of the city's municipal resources upon completion. Additionally, the Friends of Festival Country K9's received a generous grant of \$25,000 from PetSafe, an online pet product retailer. Without these significant contributions, the dog park would never have been built.

Despite the difficulties COVID19 caused during 2019-2020, the Friends of Festival Country K9s raised just under \$40,000 in privately donated dollars through various events and drives. As a result, the community's dog park was built, and \$4,000 worth of supplies and assistance were also provided to the Cedar City, Iron County, Enoch, and Parowan animal shelters.

Future Plans for Friends of Festival Country K9s

Although the large dog area and small dog area of the new Enoch Dog Park have been fenced and grass has been installed, most of the dog park's landscape construction and design remain. Also, funds still need to be raised to construct a third area for use as a rotation area. Providing a rotation area will allow for repairs to the landscape and any other maintenance needs in the large and small dog areas and can be used for private pet-related events and training. Each area will be designed to have grass and native xeric shrubs and trees for shade. Covered seating will also be constructed to provide shelter and a resting place for pets and their owners. A walking path on the outer edges of each area will be built to provide a path for pet owners to exercise while allowing easy supervision of playing dogs. These walking paths and the whole dog park will be designed to be ADA accessible so all can enjoy. Once all the dog park areas have been completed, the Friends of Festival Country K9's plan to increase financial and volunteer support to area shelters and increase advocacy for the humane treatment and safety of Iron County's pets.

Friends of Festival Country K9s: One Year Fundraising Strategy

The Friends of Festival Country K9's has accomplished quite a bit since its creation, and to further their efforts, the following strategies are recommended. Board members are advised to meet at least annually to set "SMART" goals and strategies, which are Specific, Measurable,

Achievable, Relevant, and Time Based. For 2021 the following strategies have been developed by this paper's team.

Increase the Donor's Role

At this time, the patrons enjoying the Enoch dog park play a small role in its funding, maintenance, and continued construction. There is a donation box located near the resting area in each dog run area which is great! To more easily allow younger or more technologically savvy supporters to donate, it is recommended that a scannable QR code be installed on the donation box and perhaps at each of the dog park entrance as well. Another tactic could be to invite Facebook followers of the Enoch Dog Park page to hold a Birthday Fundraiser to support the dog park. Regularly featuring past and current donors (to raise visibility and awareness of their actions and the park's needs.) This could be done by scheduling weekly or monthly "volunteer" spotlights on social media feeds and group newsletters.

Enhance Navigation and Website Useability

Over half of internet users currently navigate using their mobile phone, making updating the Friends of Festival Country website to be mobile friendly a high priority (it is presently not). Also, simplifying the website's "theme" using three colors maximum and two fonts maximum is recommended. Additionally, enhancing a supporter's ability to find the information they are looking for is essential. It is proposed that the website focus on six main sections, namely: *About Us*, *Donate*, *Enoch Petsafe Dog Park*, *Donors & Sponsors*, *News & Education*, and *Contact Us*. Each of these pages could have sub-pages for related topics (for example, under *Donate*, there could be a sub-page for purchasing a memorial block, retail items, etc.)

Currently, supporter information is found on multiple web pages. Combining all the donors (and including links to their websites or social media feeds) onto one easy-to-find

“supporters” page is one goal. Additionally, multiple pages describe ways to donate money by a simple contribution, purchasing products, or signing up as a member. It is proposed that the website streamline all this information onto one easy-to-find and navigate webpage clearly describing and providing links to all the supporter options in one place.

Streamline and Motivate Online Donations

Online donations can be increased by adding a donate button to the top of every web page, creating a special page just for featuring donors, rebuilding the online store by redoing all the product photos and descriptions. It is also recommended that this organization consider adding a print-on-demand product store, which would eliminate the need to carry, produce, and ship products.

Since it is challenging to reach supporters of the Dog park at any one time or place, another recommendation is to build a “digital” fundraising plan (with monthly raffles, drives, contests, etc.) to be conducted through social media and email newsletters. The compilation of a “supporter” email contact list is an essential tool, and if the organization does not already have one, it is strongly recommended they begin to do so. In addition to collecting contact information, it is recommended supporter’s birthdates are also collected. Then the non-profit could regularly send annual birthday/thank-you cards with a request that the supporter consider a social media birthday fundraiser in support of the dog park/Friends of Festival Country K9s.(with how-to instructions). Last of all, using social media posts and newsletters, the organization should promote and educate the public about the Amazon Smiles program and Smith donate programs – by giving step-by-step instructions on how to enroll (every couple of months) on social media and in newsletters.

Initiate Fundraising Campaigns

In addition to acquiring new donors through the strategies already outlined, specific efforts should be focused on promoting social marketing and the use of peer-to-peer fundraising. This empowers donors who are already passionate about the organization to invite their friends to donate and continue to build community. The likelihood of giving will be increased due to being asked by someone they know, and the costs of obtaining these donors will be minimal. Peer-to-peer “asks” to donate time will expand volunteerism and support of the organization. Several online digital tools can be utilized to launch personal campaigns. A specific microsite can promote individual campaigns and be hosted on the organization’s website. It is recommended that the organization set a specific goal for acquiring new donors.

Digitally Provide Information and Resources for Pet Owners

In addition to fundraising, email newsletters could increase awareness and education of and by the Friends of Festival Country K9s. Updates on the dog park’s progress, upcoming events, and seasonally related pet care tips could be included. Another way to better educate pet owners would be to increase the dog park and Festival Country K9’s social media feeds to educate 80% of the time and ask for support for the remaining 20% by creating four educational and one promotional post per week. Educational content could include information about pet health, products, safety, training, etc. Self-promotional posts could feature/thank past donors with a request for followers to donate or volunteer, updates and news about the dog park’s progress, campaigns for/information about the area shelter’s current needs. All newsletters and social media posts will be embedded with a “donate” button or link to the website and donation page.

Initiate Corporate Giving and Fundraising Matches

It is recommended that some fundraising efforts should also target donations through various foundations. Several corporate foundations throughout the State of Utah provide funding

for animal-related projects as well as national foundations. The organization can approach stakeholders such as board members, volunteers, sponsors, and supporters to identify if they have corporate programs through their employment. The doTERRA Healing Hands Foundation is one example of a corporation that fits the criteria, provided the application is made through their community need and sponsorship application process. If a corporation has been identified that uses a corporate match, a specific fundraising campaign should be initiated.

A corporate match campaign can also utilize Facebook's Donation Integration. It is easy for donors to use and allows the donor to see progress toward the goal. The projected goal to complete the dog park would be \$5,900 total, with half of the total being provided by individual donors and half being provided by the corporation. Facebook's Integration software will state the need and will indicate the progress in real-time towards the goal. When kicking off the campaign, it would be ideal to have a live feed that allows for interaction while generating excitement for the campaign. It also brings the donor to the location and directly to the beneficiaries. The live feed should capitalize on the opportunity to provide testimonials, acknowledgments, and funding requests. The corporate sponsor and donors should receive "live" acknowledgments, which may ultimately inspire more donors. Participants online can be invited to share the campaign with their friends, drop comments or ask questions. Information should be provided to direct people to the website to sign up for the newsletter and learn more about the organization. Progress reports can be given through compelling videos posted periodically in the newsfeed and would showcase the project and the beneficiaries involved. When the videos are recorded, attention should be given to the psychology behind donating and why people give. The music in the background should be carefully chosen to elicit the most appropriate emotions.

Friends of Festival Country K9's: Accountability & Evaluation

Accountability

It is recommended that the Friends of Festival Country K9s more publicly broadcast the achievements and progress made by the organization. By publicly displaying their actions, accountability for donor dollars will be increased - making current and potential donors feel even more confident about their contributions to the organization. Some strategies for increasing accountability include; submitting press releases about recent accomplishments and fundraising drives, increasing social media posts about the nonprofit's work, progress, and future plans, building and maintaining a detailed "supporter contact list" to which regular newsletter updates can be sent, annual "thank-you" letters with specific details on how their donations were used could also be sent on donor Birthdays, the holiday season, or new year.

Evaluation

It is important to analyze the Friends of Festival K9s campaigns for successes and strategies by collecting and analyzing statistics. This could include "contact" statistics on numbers of animals served, community members educated, etc. Web analytics is also a major tool to help monitor and improve website traffic, including the analysis of monetization or acquiring donations from site visitors.

Utilize Website & Social Media Analytics

To help with fundraising analysis for the organization, tools like Google Analytics can show what these campaigns are or are not accomplishing. Google Analytics can track website traffic, where and what times supporters visit the website and donor demographics. There are tools for acquisition, retention, engagement, monetization, conversion, and analysis. Visitors, new visitors, current and recent website clickers can also be viewed, and the countries and states

the visitors are from (Google Analytics, 2021). Analytics could help identify, reach, and target specific audiences. A real look at things like percentages of visitors that visit the site and donate could help focus on increasing the number of donors and donations received. This could improve conversion rates and identify what is working for the website and what should be changed.

When it comes to social media, there are plenty of resources available in the social media tools themselves. By having the ‘business’ features on the social media pages, any nonprofit organization can track the effectiveness of their campaigns (donations and participation included). The social media landscape lends itself to creative ways to track the fundraiser’s progress and effectiveness and gain a dedicated and loyal following.

Collecting Supporter Statistics & Social Media

In addition to the information that web analytics provides, there are other ways to assess success. Collecting and evaluating your data is key. If not already being done, it is essential to collect information that illustrates who has donated, what they have donated, when they donated, where they donated, and why they donated. This could be compiled in an excel spreadsheet along with donor contact information.

Analyzing ROI & Greenfield’s Nine-Point Performance Index for Each Fundraising Event

It is recommended that after each fundraiser, have a collaborative “after-action” meeting with the team involved to analyze how the fundraising effort went, calculate the ROI (Return of Investment), analyze supporter participation and growth rates. You want to know how much money the event cost, how much money was spent, how many new and returning donors are participating, and how much more was raised than previous events. Furthermore, it is always a good idea to utilize Greenfield's Nine-Point Performance Index. Through this helpful tool, you can analyze information related to participants, income, expenses, the average cost per gift, cost

of fundraising, return, etc. This helps determine if the event was efficient, effective, or both. Finally, it is crucial to remember that all these tools should be used collaboratively by the team rather than by one individual.

Increase Donor Stewardship

It is essential to make sure donors feel good about donating again in the future. The easiest and most effective way is to show the donors how important they are. Board Members and volunteers could gather at “after the event” meetings to write thank-you cards to participants describing how their contribution helped support the Friends of Festival Country K9’s mission. Paired with the cards, virtual events can be held, and videos posted on social media feeds to thank donors for supporting the organization. Later in the year (perhaps at a set time of year,) publicly thank supporters once again with concrete proof of how their donation enhanced the Friends of Festival Country K9’s efforts. Thank-you cards and social media posts should show the ‘real world’ impact being made, including delineating what their donations represent (such as what percent of the money went into which projects.). This will showcase the organization's success and secure future support by ensuring donors feel good about contributing again.

Track Grant Writing Efforts

When applying for grants from specific organizations, it is important to keep track of grant writing failures and successes to better target grant writing efforts and adjust where the organization's focus should be. Even failures bring knowledge, so keeping an archive of all past grant applications (awarded or not) is essential.

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