

## Fundraising in a Challenging Economy

The economy's bad. Everybody knows it. Your boss is worried about the company's bottom line and your co-workers are concerned about their own.

You've participated in our events in the past, and you've registered again for this year's event. But this year is different – you're concerned about maintaining the same level of fundraising as last year, and you may be nervous about asking for money at a time when people's wallets and jobs are so uncertain.

These are important and valid concerns, but there's reason to take an optimistic approach to fundraising. Historic data shows that charitable giving overall has not declined significantly during periods of recession over the past 40 years. Giving still grows, it just grows more slowly.

We know that everyone is being impacted by the recession, but remember that every dollar moves us closer to a world free of MS. People living with MS are turning to the National MS Society for help in record numbers. **We need you to continue to walk, to run, to bike, to ask boldly for support.**

When approaching potential donors, remember the following:

- While most of your regular donors will contribute, they may not be able to donate as much. Plan to ask more people and expect smaller donations. If you usually ask only the people you work with directly, try increasing your pitch to your whole department or go even bigger by asking HR if you can post something on the company intranet.
- Ask your company about matching gifts. Your company may not be able to sponsor your team, but many businesses have programs in place that may allow you to double your fundraising.
- Take advantage of our online tools to ask as many people as possible. While this makes the best use of your limited time, it could also pay off financially, as research shows that donors give more when they give online. Online giving to the Greater Delaware Valley Chapter adds up to nearly 40% of our total revenue.
- At the same time, touch base personally with your top donors. Phone calls can go a long way toward showing them you care about their involvement.
- Talk about what you're doing with enthusiasm and don't apologize when asking for money. MS doesn't slow down when the economy does, and the need is greater than ever.

- If you encounter someone who can't give right now, remember to thank them for their commitment to the Society and keep them posted on your efforts and Society progress. Even if they can't give today, they may be able to again in three, six or 12 months.
- People want to know about the beneficiaries of their donations, so share details about where the money goes. Include the following:
  - Living with MS takes a huge financial toll: the lifetime personal price tag of the disease is as high as \$3 million in lost wages, medication costs and beyond
  - As the economy worsens, record numbers of families living with MS are turning to the Society for help paying for food, rent, home care and physical therapy
  - People living with MS already experience high unemployment rates – in fact, only 41 percent are currently employed
  - Often, losing a job means losing coverage for medications that are essential to prevent symptoms from getting worse. Medicaid and Medicare are much less likely to provide coverage for specific MS medications than are private insurers
  - The Society provides more services for people living with MS than any other organization. Unlike most health charities, we use a customized approach to help people overcome the daily challenges of MS through home care, emergency financial assistance and much more
  - As the largest nonprofit funder of MS research in the world, the Society has invested more than \$500 million in the search for better treatments and a cure

Remember, it's more important that you participate and raise less money than not participate at all. Even if you can't raise money at all, it is very important to us that you're a part of the event. You can volunteer or recruit other participants; these investments will pay off this year and in years to come as we continue to move closer to a world free of MS.