

Development Committee Meeting Notes

10/21/20 via Zoom

Attendees: Gordon Aoyagi, Mimi Bornhorst Gaddis, Joan Gossett, Diane Harding, Denise Soderholm, Jackie Wah, Winston Welch, Kathy Whitmire, Scott Wilson

Network for Good – our CRM, where we track donations and memberships. Database was originally created in July 2013, imported info over from Salesforce, the CRM we formerly used.

Giving Tuesday – last year we only got a few donations.

End of year appeal is more popular where people prefer paying by check.

TOC Strategic Plan 2019-2024 is aspirational amount of money from solicitations (individual & corporate), estate gifts, grants. Infrastructure document – need infrastructure to undertake ongoing effective campaign. These are framework documents. Nothing has happened with these two. We have not had Development Committee or Development Chair for several few years. These meetings will allow us to look at these as a framework. Strategic Plan is a good place to start in terms of development.

Fundraising – not just doing an event, it's cultivating people who will give in larger ways, not just donations. Most of the fundraising we have done lately is from Winston getting grants. We also send out annual and semi-annual mail-out solicitations.

Donation Campaigns

First action item – have to have a good fundraising letter for year-end appeal to arrive early December. Follow-up with year-end appeal email. How about embedding a link to a short video with Myles talking about recent accomplishments?

Summer appeals not as productive as year-end appeal. We did not do a mid-year appeal to our members and donors this year due to Covid.

How many people donated to year end appeal last year in comparison to what our membership is? A natural progression, become a member to learning about the organization to wanting to put money into it. Less members are detriment to our fundraising.

What percentage do we get from mailers now? We get a lot. Year-end donor appeal is our major source of money. This is sent to our database. In the past we did donation appeals with purchased mailing list but received a limited amount of donations from them and they were costly to do.

2019 Year End Donation Campaign Statistics

866 letters were mailed from list culled from our database.

TOC received \$19,825 in donations from individuals or family foundations.

Total of 86 donations received, of those:

12 donations were \$500 or more (8 – 500, 2 – 1000, 1 – 2500, 1 – 5000).

Expenses for the campaign were \$431. In addition, we received 2 corporate donations of \$5,000 each (not included in that \$19,825)

Need to reach out to different demographics to become members as TOC has pretty much one demographic and need to enlarge that. How to solicit members in other demographics who become our fundraising pot for years forward? Maybe donate a certain amount, get a membership?

More organizations ask for monthly donations to sustain themselves. Since people cannot go to meetings it's a way to feel a part of that entity and working for that cause. Add ability to donate monthly, semi-annually, etc. to this year's donation form.

This year's letter should mention we are a broader environmental organization, not just trees and signs, trying to addressing bigger issues like climate change, livability. Remind that TOC was addressing climate change before climate change was a thing – not just in Hawaii but in the whole country. Also mention Planned Giving – putting TOC in your will.

One year the letter was mostly photos of different projects rather than regular letter with header, "Here's what you helped us do . . . "

Maybe a section with specific projects: pick a project and donate to it?

People give to their peers – the President, the Treasurer, a board member. Scott will sign year's letter. Letter should be short. Shorter the letter the more likely to be read.

Years ago, TOC had the Inner Circle who pledged a certain dollar amount for 5 years. Got special benefits for that pledge. Held events, tours for this smaller group.

Go through our list and cull consistent donors of a certain amount to pitch idea of becoming Inner Circle member. If they commit to that number of years, give special benefit – newsletter or opportunity to write something for the newsletter. Cultivate these relationships to planned giving level or bequests.

A year from now we may be able to offer tours again. In the meantime, many things we could do on the internet. Special content could be developed. If we had a group – maybe 6 times a year to present a specific topic with an interesting speaker for 45 minutes. Maybe Inner Circle members could be given a membership to gift to someone else? Start a monthly giving society?

We should look to develop more branches. Parts of the state still don't have branches.

Follow-up year end appeal emails from board members? How about phone banking? Phone bank from the office so the call would be coming from TOC. Personal asks for donation from a culled list from our database.

Hand written thank you notes go to all those who donate. Maybe a handwritten letter to ask for more money?

Rebranding

Melanie Kosaka – consultant hired to do research – recasting TOC as an environmental organization.

The survey: she called 40 different people who were interested in environmentalism in Hawaii. When asked to list local environmental organizations they mentioned Sierra Club, Nature Conservancy, Blue Planet, Surfrider Foundation. TOC was not very high on the list.

Her summary of branding project:

Public open to fundraising during pandemic.

People want to donate to educational activities.

Great time to leverage around current high interest in gardening and outdoor activities.

Maybe think about tying this to the Inner Circle idea – a guest lecturer on gardening themes. How to make a garden box? Or worm recycling?

People most likely to donate if asked by a friend, colleague, or family member.

Mostly like to respond to donation requests via social media or email.

Least likely to respond to mail via post office.

Her target audience was younger so they would be considered future members, not our current demographic who respond mostly to physical mail, email, and social media.

Action steps to increase new members. How do we attract these younger people?

1. Look for TOC brand ambassadors to host an activity – gardening, tree tours.
Brand ambassador – is like a social media influencer – someone hired by company to represent in positive way.
2. Add two or three member benefits to leverage current high interest in gardening and outdoor activities.
3. Twice yearly short magazines might align better to younger demographic. Generic timeless pieces: Spring/Fall – not specific months. Scott mentioned creating a calendar as a member benefit especially for older demographic. Hanging wall calendar of exceptional trees of Hawaii.
4. New member benefits – may dovetail into what our existing members may want. Tours to Waimea Nature Park, etc. Setting up webinar with interesting speakers.

Garden of the Month Award

Suggested by Mimi - Realtor would nominate their own listings for the award. Winner would get a certificate. Realtor can put in their advertising. Encouraged to gift membership to home owner. Would be a short Zoom meeting for TOC to choose awardee and we'd have to create the certificate. Would generate a lot of good will. Mimi and Kathy will meet on this.

Maybe get the real estate industry involved with what we do on a local level. Maybe doing a brochure to promote TOC and what we do in the community.

Some group got a big grant to work with realtors. Trying to get realtors to promote trees as tree ambassadors discouraging homeowners from cutting down trees. Meetings were held but the person from the tree group was not very knowledgeable and nothing came of it. Maybe TOC picks this up?

Other Suggestions

Paula Ress sent an email: she gets emails from non-profits every day. Does not get them from TOC. Suggest we send more regular emails with things we have accomplished with an ask.

Scott will do an editorial to newspaper as groundwork to let public know TOC is broadening its appeal and branding. We need to broaden our base by broadening our brand.

Instagram – alarming the number of environmental groups around. 7,000 non-profits in Hawaii and many are environmental, many dealing with trees. How do we stay relevant?

Planned Giving - set-up a free estate planning webinar – no solicitations shall be made. Bequests have been the strongest vehicle for donations to TOC.

Newsletter – will that be done this year? Greenleaf – printed version has not been sent in a while.

What about “My Favorite Street Tree” – should that go on Facebook so people can submit photos? Instagram may be a better place for that. TOC has an Instagram account. Myles used to take care of it.

Next Meeting: Wednesday, December 2, 2020