



Greetings from The Prospero Group President Doris Feinberg

Happy Spring!

Finally, the long winter is over and Memorial Day weekend is almost here. For many organizations, summer presents special stewardship challenges. Donors go away. Donors are busy. Donors are not receptive to thinking about any “heavy” challenges. All true. But it’s possible - and sometimes even easier - to do great stewardship in the summer. We’ve put together some ideas that may help you spark your summer stewardship program. Hope it’s helpful!

All of us at The Prospero Group wish you a safe, healthy, memorable summer!

Please send this newsletter along to any colleagues or friends who might be interested and, of course, contact me at any time at dfeinberg@prosperogroup.com.

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Hot Ideas for Summer Stewardship

Summer will be here in a flash. And we’ll all be brainstorming creative ways to keep our organizations top of mind and keep our donors engaged amid vacations, graduations, weddings, camp, sports, and all the other delicious distractions of the season.

Can we compete with the siren song of summer?

Here’s a thought: we don’t have to. Swimming against the tide will actually get us nowhere fast.

The secret to success in summer stewardship - just as it is all year long - is to build the function organically into the rhythms of our organizations and the lives of our donors. If we think of fundraising as relationship-building, it’s easy to think of stewardship in the same context as sustaining relationships with family, friends, and all the other important people in our lives. Our donors are, after all, our friends.

Here are some creative stewardship ideas to spark your relationship-building plans this summer:

- Are you cultivating or stewarding young parents? Plan a weekly, monthly, or once-a-summer “mom’s (or dad’s or parent’s) night out” at your organization or at a convenient, popular location. Provide on-site activities for kids to do while their parents are listening to a lecture or performance, participating in a brainstorming session, or touring a new facility. Or plan a program that parents and kids can enjoy together!
- Is your organization located in a summer community with an active social season? You can plan a must-attend event, heavily promoted within the right social networks. You can also ask your donors to help you, your board members, and your organization’s leadership to gain access to the existing social whirl. A few great dinner party conversations can pay dividends long after summer has become just a memory.

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- Can you help your donors find great summer enrichment opportunities for their kids, while performing essential volunteer functions and deepening a family's affinity for your organization? Parents will never forget your role in providing their child with a stellar growth opportunity. They'll also be grateful that you allowed them to go to work, secure in the knowledge that their children are spending their summers in a safe, stimulating environment. And there is nothing like hearing your mission described in the words of a young person who has just discovered passion for the environment, or health care, or the arts.
- Can you give something priceless to a donor, in addition to the satisfaction of supporting your mission? Can you share your time with someone who's lonely? Can you stand with someone in the shadow of grief? We know a Rabbi who made it a point to call an elderly donor to say Shabbat Shalom every Friday for years. We also know an executive director who drove a widower to his wife's grave once a month. Both of these simple, exquisitely human gestures inspired major planned gifts.

Does summer offer special engagement opportunities for donors? Do you run a food pantry where demand spikes when school lunches stop? Does your environmental organization offer nature walks that can offer a peerless experiential experience for donors and their families? Look for ways to make your organization an organic part of your donors' summer. In summer, as always, stewardship is about authentic, small gestures that strengthen the bond between you and your donor - sending a link or news clipping on an issue of interest, sharing photos of grandchildren at school or at camp, remembering birthdays and other important milestones, sending an e-mail or making a phone call or scheduling a lunch. The goal is to communicate in the space between what your organization needs and what your donor wants. It all flows from there.

The bottom line: stewardship is like dieting. It's a lifestyle, not a task. Viewing it as life, not work, will make it more fun - and easier to fit into your day. And stewardship that bubbles up naturally from your donor relationships will seem more authentic and more meaningful for everyone involved.

How are you stewarding your donors? Please send me ideas you'd like to share at dfeinberg@prosperogroup.com. We'll publish a sampling of your brilliant ideas in a future newsletter!

About The Prospero Group

The Prospero Group, LLC provides fundraising counsel that ensures lasting growth and change for non-profit organizations. We promote effective governance models and principled leadership to empower professionals and boards as the driving forces of philanthropy.

Services

- Capital Campaign Planning and Oversight
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