

CASE STUDY

Matthew Reardon Center for Autism saves state funding and builds donor relationships





About

Matthew Reardon Center for Autism (MRCA) is a multi-faceted nonprofit organization based in Savannah, Georgia, which works to provide and promote opportunities for success and full inclusion to autistic persons, their families, and communities.

Their organization consists of three main components: an advocacy team that works to connect children and their parents with support services and ensure that the public education system is properly serving autistic children; a year-round day school for children diagnosed with autism spectrum disorder (the only accredited program of its kind in Georgia); and an inclusive preschool which provides a superior learning environment for all children, including those with learning differences.



Objectives

In early 2020, the Georgia state legislature was considering budget cuts and proposed the elimination of all state funding to the MRCA, an action which would have forced them to close their schools and eradicate southeast Georgia's only comprehensive educational and advocacy support programs for autistic children and their families.

In response to this existential threat, MRCA's immediate priority became connecting their supporters with elected officials in order to advocate for continued funding for their education programs.

Initiatives

Through their search for a digital advocacy tool that would allow them to quickly begin a campaign to preserve their state funding, MRCA identified Bonterra Fundraising and Engagement as an ideal technology partner. With the ability to easily create beautiful and mobile-responsive forms, which could be embedded into their website and allow supporters to send messages directly to their legislators, they were able to immediately launch an advocacy campaign that made it easy for supporters to share their own stories of MRCA's impact on their lives and communities.

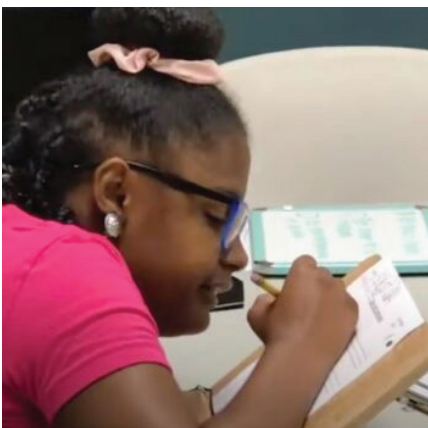
“ The advocacy capability in the Bonterra solution helped us identify so many new contacts to engage, because previously we didn't know that they cared so much about the organization. **Suddenly everyone had the chance to share their stories about the organization**, and we could easily identify those supporters and start sending them emails, updates, and engaging them for fundraising as well.”

— Chelsey Beck, director of communications and development, MRCA



“ I love it because it’s so powerful. It has saved me so much time, and we’re raising money that we never considered we would.”

— Chelsey Beck, director of communications and development, MRCA



90%

of state funding restored after hundreds of supporters shared their stories



300%+

increase in fundraising from individual donors



350%+

increase in first-time donors, more than quadrupling their individual donor pool

By using Bonterra Fundraising and Engagement, MRCA was able to connect hundreds of supporters to their legislators and save their state funding. “The tool really paid for itself in the first few weeks that we had it,” says Chelsey.

In addition to their successful advocacy campaign, MRCA used Bonterra's solutions to begin engaging individual donors at a new scale. Although they had not previously been able to conduct significant donor outreach, with Fundraising and Engagement they implemented an email program to begin cultivating relationships by telling donors their story and highlighting their impact. Tasks like sending out year-end contribution reports or identifying supporters who engaged in advocacy actions and could be contacted for fundraising became possible. This ability to see every single action a supporter has taken helps MRCA send more of the right messages to the right supporters at the right times.

MRCA built an entire marketing and communication program for their donors and supporters, and they continue to find new avenues to optimize their results. With easily customizable online forms, they've also recently tested adding an additional contribution option to their event sign-up forms. That simple change offered donors a smooth experience and a straightforward way to show additional support, and it's helped the organization raise hundreds of dollars.



“On our old software, we weren't really able to engage our donors. With Bonterra Fundraising and Engagement, you can drill down so far and segment your contacts in so many ways — we're engaging donors like never before and our fundraising goes up and up because of it.”

— Chelsey Beck, director of communications and development, MRCA



As a one-person development and communications operation, having software that is easy to use and built for efficiency has been a game-changer for allowing the organization to maximize output and impact.

“ The targeted email tools in Bonterra Fundraising and Engagement have saved me so much time. I used to have to manually enter or import data between separate systems, now if someone signs up on a form on our website, it goes straight into our donor management system, and I can automatically send emails to those people who want to hear from us.”

— Chelsey Beck, director of communications and development, MRCA

Want to see how the right software can help your nonprofit do even more to advance its mission?

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