



CASE STUDY

How the Fort Wayne Pet Food Pantry gained valuable fundraising expertise and increased revenue 1000% through Jumpstart



The challenge

Founded in 2010, the [Fort Wayne Pet Food Pantry](#) has a simple mission: to keep pets in their homes. Initially, on a weekly basis the organization's founder used donations to purchase and distribute pet food from her vehicle to those in need. The organization later joined a low-cost, high volume spay and neuter clinic and served pet food from their parking lot. Together, these programs dramatically decreased the area's animal euthanasia rates.

In 2019, Chele Watson, a factory worker turned animal welfare advocate, became the organization's "accidental executive director" when the pantry's board asked her to take the position. She embraced the role, working 80 hours a week between the factory and as Fort Wayne Pet Food Pantry's volunteer executive director. Chele and a group of dedicated volunteers kept the pantry running through the COVID-19 pandemic, but the organization's finances were steadily declining. "The fundraising we were doing was cost prohibitive," Chele recalls. "We were sending a paper newsletter and email with a PayPal link a few times a year. Whether it be somebody's birthday or the holiday season we would get a pile of money, but it wasn't enough."



“ Participating in Bonterra's Jumpstart program is like getting a full-ride scholarship to the best fundraising course at a prestigious college... A program like Jumpstart can provide a mountain of opportunities that simply would not be available to folks doing really transformative work in your communities. And when you support and promote a program like Jumpstart, you are building a foundation for a better community. It's good sense to support the passion and support the work in your community.”

— Chele Watson | Executive director at Fort Wayne Pet Food Pantry



The strategy

In late 2020, the organization received what Chele likes to call a “golden ticket”—the opportunity to participate in the [Jumpstart program](#) with support from the [Community Foundation of Greater Fort Wayne](#). The program, managed by Bonterra, provides nonprofit grantees with Bonterra Donor Engagement’s Guided Fundraising solution (formerly Network for Good) and a personal fundraising coach to strengthen their fundraising capacities.

Chele worked closely with her personal fundraising coach, Chany, to gain the confidence and technical acumen needed to fundraise successfully in a challenging time. “Chany coached me through how to speak to the donors in a way that created trust and didn’t show how we were trying to stay afloat,” Chele said. Chany also encouraged Chele to highlight how the organization shared resources with other community organizations, like Humane Fort Wayne, to help more animals in need. This strategic fundraising plan’s results speak for themselves: the pantry raised \$190,000 in fundraising revenue in one year. That’s a 1000% increase from the previous year!

Taking this approach didn’t just result in more money for the organization, it also gave the pantry the credibility needed to collaborate, and ultimately merge, with Humane Fort Wayne January 1, 2022. This was a win-win decision for both organizations—the pantry offered supplies Humane Fort Wayne needed, while the pantry benefited from the name recognition and larger-scale operation Humane Fort Wayne had. Additionally, Chele became an employee of Humane Fort Wayne, allowing her to cut back to a reasonable work schedule.

Kudos, Chele! Your work with Jumpstart helped your organization reach record-breaking fundraising levels, and establish a strategic partnership that will ensure more animals have safe and loving homes.

Results



Raised over
\$190,000
in revenue.



1,000
animals served
each week.



Received
\$30,000
gift from first
major donor.



Established agreements with
AMAZON and **CHEWY**
to bring in-kind pet food
donations to the community.

About us

Bonterra's Jumpstart program provides grantmakers with effective fundraising capacity building support for their grantees to create transformative change. The year-long program pairs nonprofits with a personal fundraising coach and is provisioned with integrated technology needed to engage community, diversify revenue, and sustain their programs.

