



Covenant House Michigan

Covenant House Michigan is a faith-based nonprofit organization that provides hope to homeless, runaway and at-risk youth ages 18-24. We provide shelter, educational and vocational programs, as well as other support services, to help overcome hurdles such as homelessness, unemployment, inadequate education, violence, drugs and gangs. Our goal is to redirect them onto a path toward meaningful and successful adulthood.

Covenant House Michigan has come to be known by Detroit area young people as a place they can go to build a better future and be treated with respect and unconditional love. As a member of Covenant House International, we stand together as a powerful human rights movement for homeless and trafficked youth in 31 cities across 6 countries.

Highlights

- By choosing Greater Giving Online Event Software Covenant House was able to collect donations as soon as 48 hours after the event.
- The software was used throughout the planning, execution and post event process, making it invaluable throughout the year.
- Staff and volunteers were able to easily transfer documents and work collaboratively anywhere, anytime via Greater Giving's online tool.
- Greater Giving's Online Event Software was easy for staff and volunteers to learn quickly and effectively.

Challenge

Covenant House's largest annual fundraising event combines an appeal for contributions with a night out on Broadway. Every year, their stage production allows them to present something new for their guests, while keeping to their creative central theme of a stage produced show.

As a result of the special circumstances regarding theatre seating, Covenant House forgoes a silent auction, instead making their appeal for donations at the conclusion of the evening's event. Over time organizers found that using basic spreadsheets for their record keeping had failed them, with lapses in information gathering and missed opportunities to connect with their donors.

Additionally, with over 400 people in attendance and low theatre lighting, it was a challenge for event organizers to catch all the pledges offered during the Fund-a-Need portion of the evening. Organizers attempted to gather contributions through a pledge system via texting. This approach was well received by their attendees; however, it took organizers a month to collect donations and they found it was impossible to track all the contributions that were originally pledged.

This approach also failed in collecting guest information from the 95% of the tickets sold prior to the event through their sponsors. To circumvent this issue staff frequently worked with their sponsors before the event to collect guest names and phone numbers. This caused a substantial amount of missing data, concern about the check-in process on the night of the gala, and a significant amount of valuable time being lost to manually processing the information.

Solution

This year, Covenant House Michigan purchased Greater Giving's event management software and Online Bidding tools to managing the planning of their largest annual event. In an effort to prevent problems, organizers recruited volunteers with backgrounds in retail that would potentially be comfortable with busy and possibly chaotic conditions. They created a test project and trained all their volunteers prior to the night of the event, providing training videos for GoTime and the Online Bidding software. Requesting a credit card up front was also new and they ensured that their staff had additional training on how to instruct guests to enroll in GoTime's check-out, and while it was a shift in how the Covenant team typically worked with their guests, the organizers found the new system worked very well.

Another much anticipated event of the evening is a raffle for wine packages. Because of state laws, organizers needed a way to report the number of tickets sold in order to comply with the state liquor and raffle licensing requirements. This information was easily provided through Greater Giving's reporting capability. In a matter of minutes, SUM07 created

a report that provided all the information they needed and the confidence of knowing the numbers reported were a complete tally of items sold.

Results

On the night of the big event, Covenant House organizers found the pre-training exercises they had provided their staff and volunteers had prepared them to host a smoothly run event. Missing information was collected from their guests at registration and credit cards were swiped at check-in. A simple slide presentation provided instructions to guests on how to contribute over cell phones during the Fund-a-Need portion of the program and in the end they raised more money than ever before!

The volunteers thought the system was easy to use and the guests accepted the change well. As for Amy Maple, Assistant to the Executive Director of Covenant House Michigan; her job was done within 48 hours after the event when her staff submitted the credit cards data and automatically collected all the money raised during the event. "We like the system so much we are now using the Online Payments piece for volunteer registrations, as well as some smaller events like our Underground Dinner."

Along with the ease of collecting donations, Maple's favorite GoTime features are the ability to work in the Cloud, a feature her volunteers found invaluable, and the reporting tool that is built right into the software. Covenant House Michigan plans to continue using Greater Giving's Event Software and Online Bidding; and have already recommended it to a sister chapter who has implemented Greater Giving Online into their event planning!

Tips from Covenant House of Michigan

- Set up a practice project to train your volunteers in the system prior to the event.
- Train your volunteers on best practices for requesting a credit cards.
- Appoint experienced people to be event ambassadors to help anyone who needs help navigating through the process.
- Produce a simple slideshow presentation to offer at the start of your Fund-a-Need program to provide information on how to contribute via cell phone.