



Youth Music Project

Youth Music Project provides outstanding rock, pop, and country music education for youth, positively transforming their lives through the power of music. The organization offers students tuition assistance, instrument rentals, and exceptional, state-of-the-art performance opportunities.



Challenge

Youth Music Project normally brings 750-900 students through their educational facilities every week. Nearly 40% of those students attend tuition-free, making fundraising a key aspect of YMP's ongoing work.

They first utilized Greater Giving in 2017, for their second annual benefit event. In 2018 the organization also utilized Greater Giving for a Holiday Happy Hour as a final push for year-end fundraising. That event alone raised \$68,000! Since then, YMP has used Greater Giving to manage their big annual fundraising gala, which they usually hold in May.

But 2020 had other plans. YMP postponed their Spring event to the Fall, hoping they might be able to have it in person. Their sponsors, most of whom have close personal ties to the organization, were all on board with postponing. However, it soon became clear there would be no in-person gala—so YMP made the switch to a purely virtual event.

Event organizers knew that taking the gala online presented certain barriers. It would be harder to ensure attendance and keep guests interested throughout the live broadcast. Generating excitement for their online auction items was paramount. The team set their fundraising goals a little lower because they weren't sure what to expect, but they were up to the challenge.

HIGHLIGHTS

Youth Music Project's virtual event netted more money than previous years thanks to the lower cost.

Using the [Greater Giving Online Bidding](#) tools to add last-minute auction items kept the excitement going throughout the live feed. The [Giving Board](#) recognized donors on screen and encouraged higher giving.

By making their virtual event free to attend and stepping up their marketing, Youth Music Project gained *dozens* of new donors!

Solution

Greater Giving was there to support this big change with a ready-to-use mobile bidding platform.

In a big departure from previous years, Youth Music Project decided not to sell tickets to their virtual event to encourage participation from guests near and far—which was easy to implement in Greater Giving, while still collecting that all-important attendee contact information.

To get the word out about the event, YMP fully invested in promotion. They mailed physical invitations, then sent email reminders to their entire mailing list. To drum up excitement for the auction they teased exciting items on social media, ran Facebook ad campaigns, and even promoted it in the newspaper. Staff and volunteers placed a thousand

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individual phone calls to donors and their families for that personal touch. YMP was even able to leverage their membership in the Arts Alliance to reach new supporters of the arts across the country.

To grab guests' attention—and hold onto it throughout the Facebook feed—YMP opened their upbeat "Some Good News" event with a big, star-studded pre-show that included Grammy nominee Bill Hart. The rest of the broadcast was filled with happy, emotional stories from youth served by the organization, peppered by 25 small ad spots recognizing important sponsors or simply congratulating the kids and staff for their achievements. No one took it too seriously, and a spirit of fun prevailed over the night.

YMP recorded the majority of the show in advance to keep things on schedule and avoid any technical interruptions. They played a short Greater Giving video to show guests how to register, bid, and donate in the ongoing online auction, which featured 50 appealing packages.

The live portion of the event kicked off with a short tour of the Youth Music Project facility, and a big \$2500 gift to inspire giving. While YMP's professional auctioneer, Dale Johannes, took donations and entertained on the livestream, Greater Giving's "Giving Board" recognized donors in a classy gratitude reel that played along the bottom of the screen.

170 170 bidders registered for the event through Greater Giving.

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Results

Youth Music Project's first virtual event went far better than anyone expected, raising almost as much money as their in-person 2019 gala! It netted even more after accounting for expenses, due to the much lower cost of an online event versus an in-person event.

The Facebook live stream went off without a hitch thanks to careful planning and execution, drawing over one hundred viewers. Event organizers used the flexible Greater Giving online auction tool to add more auction items and keep the excitement going throughout the stream. Bidders could browse the auction at their leisure using the Greater Giving app, read all about the packages on offer, and take note of any important conditions before bidding on them.

And YMP's impressive promotional efforts paid off: 170 bidders registered for the event through Greater Giving, allowing them to browse and bid on auction items even if they weren't on the livestream—and YMP gained more than forty brand new donors to the cause! Thanks to the Greater Giving registration system, YMP was able to collect addresses and emails for all their new supporters, which is usually difficult to do at a live event. And Greater Giving automatically stored bidders' credit cards for checkout at the end of the night, a function that YMP's Development Director calls "dreamy" for how much time it saves staff.

The night was a big success, and a fun experience for everyone who attended.



Tips from Youth Music Project

- If you are considering taking your event virtual, make the decision as soon as possible. It takes a little longer to do traditional tasks when the processes are all brand new.
- Schedule time with Greater Giving's support team to review your event and double-check all your settings before it goes live to catch anything you might have missed.
- Record as much of the event as possible in advance. Pre-recording minimizes the chance of experiencing technical difficulties, and ensures a smooth, organized, and well-rehearsed show.
- Over-communicate with your supporters! The more touches you have with potential guests, the more people will show up to view the livestream—which translates to more dollars raised.
- Hire A/V professionals to ensure a good quality production, and make sure to have a dedicated, qualified person running your livestream platform. Be sure to book them early!
- It's worth it to pay for an experienced auctioneer. Don't go cheap, and reach out to them as soon as possible to schedule your event.