



St. Therese Catholic Academy

St. Therese Catholic Academy (STCA) is a diverse, welcoming community serving Preschool through 8th Grade students located in the Madrona neighborhood of Seattle. In their 96th school year, they are known for cultural diversity, excellent academic programs (including 1:1 laptops and service-learning), openness to families from all walks of life, and their faith-filled and family-like school culture.

Of their current students, 90% identify as children of color, 43% are Catholic, 60% receive tuition assistance, 33% qualify for free/reduced lunches, and 53% utilize a learning plan to be successful in the academic environment.



Challenge

The challenge with STCA was finding a strategy for all of their unique audiences to participate meaningfully. The audiences for this event included school parents, St. Therese parishioners, and friends of St. Therese. They needed to invite new donors in, share the compelling tale of success, and earn more dollars to support the families at STCA. Additionally, procuring silent auction items such as sign-up parties and events posed a challenge, and auction attendees generally do not RSVP until the very last minute!



Using the comprehensive reporting features and the lasting relationship with **Greater Giving**, Julianne Read, their event planner from **Kilbreath Events**, devised a strategic plan to increase auction revenue and cultivate the many supporters of STCA.

STCA raised \$160,000 at their annual event—more than \$75,000 of that from their raise-the-paddle appeal to support student learning resources. This is the most money STCA has raised in the past 10 years and is an increase of 40% over last year.

Solution

STCA has used [Greater Giving](#) since 2017, so there was a plethora of data available in the reporting feature. Everything from live and silent auction item lists to donors to raise-the-paddle information. The previous years' sales results were key to developing a new path for success this year. By pulling sales reports for live and silent auction items, they could isolate which items provided the most dollars back to STCA and utilize volunteers more efficiently to procure those items.

They also used the sales by supporter data to create a contact list of donors who had given at certain levels and developed a strategy to reach out to those donors individually, personally sharing the good news about all the things happening at STCA and inviting them to participate.

Furthermore, they set up a community-based giving program where they approached non-attending guests and asked them to make a gift of any amount to support the raise-the-paddle effort.

Additionally, they transformed the auction event into a cocktail party with open seating and a highly engaging program. This included new talent, new décor, hosting the event at the school, and featuring a professional auctioneer, DJ, and item reader. Having these professionals on-site was crucial to the event's success.

HIGHLIGHTS

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Using the comprehensive reporting features and the lasting relationship with Greater Giving, Julianne Read, their event planner from [Kilbreath Events](#), was able to isolate trends, review donor giving data that had not been moved to their standard donor database, and devise a strategic plan to increase auction revenue and cultivate the many supporters of STCA.

Some changes needed to be made to the program to engage guests—for example, they required a skilled professional benefit auctioneer who could maximize the amount of money raised. Additionally, they hired an AV team and a DJ to play upbeat music and enhance the auction's energy.

Within this community, the current families have not traditionally attended the auction, so part of the strategy was to use Greater Giving's [Online Bidding](#) platform, as well as a community-based fundraising campaign (built as a package in Greater Giving and tied together with a QR code) ahead of the event to share the story of why funds were being raised and how they could help. Using text messaging from Greater Giving also helped boost online bidding!

Online bidding raised more than the previous year's in-person silent auction. The new strategy was to move all items online; that way, STCA could reduce the amount of space required to host the event. With a venue change, they were able to keep more of the revenue.

\$75K Their raise-the-paddle effort brought in more than \$75,000 (more than double what was raised in previous years)!

160% The live items averaged 160% of their value.

Results

With a strong, data-driven, fundraising event strategy in place, supported by key reports and functionality from [Greater Giving](#), and the team at [Kilbreath Events](#), the community at STCA came together easily and raised the funds needed to support the students. The community-based effort raised nearly \$6,000 via a QR code, which went directly to a special giving page, and it gave many more donors the opportunity to give.

The reports from previous years were critical to developing a strong plan and simplified the decision-making process by providing data for support. With the cultivation done ahead of time, and the precommitted gifts (a new strategy for them this year), their raise-the-paddle effort brought in more than \$75,000 (more than double what was raised in previous years)! Additionally, the live items averaged 160% of their value.



Tips from Julianne Read at Kilbreath Events

- Spend time in your planning process reviewing past years' data to focus on important trends in items and donors. Taking this extra step at the beginning will help you be more efficient and successful as you move through the planning process.
- Utilize the amazing support team at Greater Giving. They are so knowledgeable, and the instant help chat is a relief when you really need a question answered.
- Cultivate donors early in the process. Reach out via email or text to share the story of why you are raising funds. Enlist their support in inviting friends, donating a specific item, or making a precommitted gift.
- Create a strong strategic plan so the rest of the planning is simply executing on your plan. Be flexible and innovative once your plan is in place. If you have a great plan, it's exciting to explore ways to make the event more enjoyable for both you and your guests!

Ready to take your school fundraising game to the next level?
Download our Best Practices for School Fundraising Auctions guide now!

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