The Ultimate Donor Appeal Lookbook

12 stellar appeals that wowed nonprofit experts
Inside you’ll find real examples from nonprofits who really rocked their donor appeals. Thanks to these friends who provided great fundraising appeals to share with you:

Maeve Strathy
Lynne Wester
Joe Garecht
Vanessa Chase
Laura Tubesing
Lori Jacobwith
What is an Appeal?

Your fundraising appeal is your organization's request for donations to support your mission. It can take the form of an email, print letter, social media post, even a live or broadcast event. An appeal explains your cause, shows its impact, and creates a sense of urgency on the part of your donor.
Now, let’s take a look at some appeals that really wow donors.
Metro Youth Opera

Appeal provided by Maeve Strathy  What Gives Philanthropy
Why Maeve thinks it’s great:

• Incorporates the organization’s mission into the story.
• Includes a compelling photo.
• Very donor-centric: It shows what the organization was able to do with the support of its donors.

Read This Appeal
Women Against Violence Against Women

Appeal provided by Vanessa Chase of The Storytelling Non-Profit
Why Vanessa thinks it’s great:

• Tells a deeply personal story.
• Great model for organizations that may be nervous about sharing a story for confidentiality reasons.

Melissa’s Story

Melissa Endean spent half of her teen years being sexually exploited and sexually violated. She grew up in a small area of BC where there was not a lot of support available for women. Melissa survived the violence and trauma alone, but her journey back to strength was not yet complete. This is Melissa’s story in a film that she herself developed and made.

Read This Appeal
Cancer Care Connection

Appeal provided by Vanessa Chase of The Storytelling Non-Profit
Why Vanessa thinks it’s great:
“They do a really nice job of making their work and donor impact very tangible. They told a story that is slightly complicated, but there is a good emotional element to it.”

For example one of our Cancer Resource Coaches, Carol, was telling me about a client she had helped. The client, Mrs. Kelly, knew of a mother and her young son, Troy, had been diagnosed with a life-threatening cancer. Troy’s mother, Amanda, was unable to maintain her employment because of the rigorous treatment schedule her young son had to endure. Mrs. Kelly was hoping Cancer Care Connection could provide guidance and resources to help with the financial hardship the family was facing.

Read This Appeal
Pacific Lutheran University

“Every day I am thankful for the opportunity to study at PLU. Without the generosity of PLU supporters, I wouldn't be here.”
—Kiersten ‘18

Appeal provided by Lynne Wester of The Donor Relations Guru
Why Lynne thinks it’s great:
• The appeal has a clear call to action.
• It uses a strong visual along with their message.
• A member of the student body who is impacted by donations thanks donors for their support.

Read This Appeal
Livestrong Foundation

Appeal provided by Lynne Wester of The Donor Relations Guru
Why Lynne thinks it’s great:
• It sticks with the organization’s branding.
• An option to donate now takes donors to the organization’s donation page.
• There is an emotional story and image.
• It thanks donors for their support.

Nothing can prepare you for cancer.

Last year, cancer stole the most important person in my life, my wife, Judy. One constant that helped our children and I through this painful time was my connection to LIVESTRONG. LIVESTRONG Navigation provided emotional support through my wife’s treatment and passing. I’m an eleven-year cancer survivor myself, and the Foundation remains a force for good in my life. Once you reach out to LIVESTRONG, you become part of a bigger family. I’ve met many cancer survivors who empower me and give me hope. My life is brighter because of LIVESTRONG.

Thank you for fighting with me and for the people we love.
The YMCA of Charlotte

Appeal provided by Lynne Wester of The Donor Relations Guru
Why Lynne thinks it’s great:
- The visuals are tangible and include a video.
- Lets donors know what their money went toward.
- Provides a compelling story.
- Gives people an option to donate now.

Our first story is about a sixth grader named Imani. She and her stepfather know first-hand that the Y is more than a fun place to go after school. After losing her mother, Imani found a home away from home at the Y.

We have an extraordinary opportunity to ensure a brighter future for kids like Imani. With a gift to the Y, you ensure that everyone has a place to belong and the opportunity to reach their greatest potential.

Read This Appeal
Charity Water

Appeal provided by Lynne Wester of The Donor Relations Guru
Why Lynne thinks it’s great:

- Features compelling images.
- Calls for a specific action.
- It’s a great example of how to incorporate a holiday to encourage donors to give.

This Mother’s Day, donate in honor of a mom and help bring clean water to women around the world.

HONOR A MOM

When you donate, we'll send an email on your behalf letting them know about your awesome gift!

Read This Appeal
The Pink Fund

Appeal provided by Laura Tubesing of Network for Good
Why Laura thinks it’s great:
• The story and photo made it tangible.
• Paired with the weekly challenges it compels you to join.
• The organization does a great job of finding ways to remind their fundraisers and donors about the campaign every week.

"I cannot express my gratitude in enough words for the help that The Pink Fund has offered me. The grant has helped me in paying partial rent of my apartment for 3 months. I am truly grateful for each and every penny that is donated by the kindhearted and generous people who reach out to so many patients like me all over the nation. I am truly blessed and forever grateful to God for His blessings and mercy, for sending help through organizations like The Pink Fund and many more." ~ Mahnaz

Read This Appeal
MU Performing Arts

Did you know? #MuRealCosts

Appeal provided by Lori Jacobwith of Ignited Fundraising
Why Lori thinks it’s great:

• It has fun with the “costs” of the theater’s work.
• It gives voice to all the costs of delivering the performance in a way that made sense and was easy to understand.
• This email campaign resulted in sold-out performances every night of the show!

Hello Lori,

Did you know that ticket sales only cover a third of the actual cost of Mu’s stage productions? Hiring actors and designers, paying for fabric and nails, renting theaters and paying royalties are all part of these production costs. Taking an idea or story from heart, to page, then to stage requires a large amount of resources before the curtains open. The real cost of producing is no secret in theater circles, but is often unknown by audiences, supporters and theater enthusiasts.

Read This Appeal
Minnesota Literacy Council

Life-changing literacy services for kids, youth and adults

Appeal provided by Lori Jacobwith of Ignited Fundraising
Why Lori thinks it’s great:

• It’s fun!
• It includes a people story (Aaron), and Larry the Book Bag’s personality made this appeal stand out in the sea of other appeals I receive.
• I could clearly see what action to take, and I took action immediately.

Larry
Literacy Bag Extraordinaire

PS: I’ve heard the literacy council needs to raise $50,000 by June 30 (the end of their fiscal year). So if you have a moment to spare, give a gift TODAY. You can even give online at mnliteracy.org/donate.

Thank you for making my friendship with Aaron possible!

Read This Appeal
Can Do Canines

Appeal provided by Lori Jacobwith of Ignited Fundraising
Why Lori thinks it's great:

• Demonstrates a clear call to action.
• Emphasizes recurring giving.
• Makes good use of impact labels: "$10 per month provides a training cape and three months of food for a puppy."

Dear Lori,

What are you thankful for? Feeling safe in your own home? Freedom to live the life you've always imagined?

Every day, our clients are thankful for their furry heroes, assistance dogs that provide them with freedom, independence, and peace of mind. However, they are also thankful for the generous support of people just like you that helped to provide their furry hero to them free of charge. Will you become a Can Do Canines monthly HERO today and help match more amazing dogs with the people who need them most?

Our dogs open doors for people, but so can YOU, by becoming a monthly HERO, you'll help to change lives, save lives, and help make the world a better place. Your monthly contribution to Can Do Canines of any size makes a huge difference.

Read This Appeal
The Fundraising Authority’s Sample Appeal

Appeal written by Joe Garecht and featured on his blog, The Fundraising Authority
Why Joe thinks it’s great:
• It’s short—people don’t like to read long emails.
• It’s emotional.
• It makes a clear ask

Would you be willing to make a special year-end donation of $50, $100 or whatever you can afford to help us meet our goal and bring 500 more people in from the cold?

We simply can’t do it without you. Your support will make a real, lasting impact in the lives of those who are still in need.

Please, click here to make your donation now. The lives of hundreds of others like Amanda are at stake.

Thank you for your continued support and friendship.

With gratitude,

Fred Mertz
Executive Director
The Metropolitan Shelter

Read This Appeal
Now that you’ve looked over these awesome appeals, what do they have in common?
1) A specific call to action.
2) Compelling images.
3) They tell a story.
4) They all have a clear ask.
Have you seen a stellar appeal you want to share?

Share it with us: @Network4Good
Thanks to
Maeve Strathy
Lynne Wester
Joe Garecht
Vanessa Chase
Laura Tubesing
Lori Jacobwith
for providing the appeals!
More Resources to Check Out:

How to Write Amazing Fundraising Appeals:
http://n4g.me/fundappeals

Storytelling for Nonprofits:
http://n4g.me/freestorytellingguide

About Network for Good

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We’d love to hear about your fundraising goals and how you’re reaching out to donors online. We can offer suggestions on tools that are right for your organization and show you some great campaigns for inspiration. To schedule a demo or find out more, contact us today: 888.284.7978, option 1. Or visit us online.