

Celebrating for charity

Creative ways to combine philanthropy with special events

By Melinda Copp, Contributing Writer



Pictured, from left, are Jack Hoey, Penny Hoey, Paula Heinauer

The people who best know Jack Hoey and Paul Heinauer understand they aren't the kind of guys who like to be lavished with gifts and elaborate celebrations in their honor. But that doesn't mean they don't like a good time.

So when their 50th birthdays came around, their wives, Penny Hoey and Paula Heinauer, wanted to do something special they knew would be meaningful to their husbands.

Both couples are active in Crisis Ministries, and Jack Hoey is chairman of the board of the organization, which provides food and shelter

for homeless people. So the idea of planning their birthday party as a fundraiser for the charity came naturally. Penny Hoey and Paula Heinauer decided on a surprise party with a unique twist: instead of giving gifts, guests were asked to make a donation to Crisis Ministries.

"Just knowing their personalities, we knew they would like the idea," said Paula Heinauer. "We thought it would be a good way to honor them." She and Penny Hoey approached Crisis Ministries, which shared in the planning and coordinating responsibilities.

"We brainstormed with them and they were a huge help," said Penny Hoey.

Crisis Ministries also suggested the Firstgiving, an online fundraising tool to invite guests and collect money. The event took place in July at the Sullivan's Island Shack, was casual, with a Pittsburgh theme. Everyone wore black and gold and they raised almost \$17,000, all of which went to Crisis Ministries' new Transitional Living Center for homeless women and children.

"Penny and Paula knew that the celebration we would appreciate the most would be something that didn't focus on us," said Jack Hoey, who has been friends with Paula since seventh-period study hall in th

grade. They grew up together in Pittsburgh and have remained close friends and business associates. Hoey is the president of Coastal Glass Distributors in North Charleston and Heinauer is the president of Glasspro, which has several locations throughout the Charleston area.

Celebratory giving

Charitable donations are a growing trend in celebrating milestone birthdays, weddings, anniversaries and other special events. Network for Good, an online fundraising tool similar to Firstgiving, has processed more than \$76 million in donations that went to more than 17,000 charities since its inception in November 2001.

And the I Do Foundation, a Washington charity that promotes philanthropy as part of wedding celebrations, has raised \$1.5 million for charities since starting in 2002. Of that amount, \$1.2 million was donated last year.

"There are just so many people out there who don't need anything," said Penny Hoey.

Couples are getting married later in life, and therefore already own most household items and traditional wedding gifts. And milestone birthdays and anniversaries are a great opportunity for people to make a contribution in honor of the event.

Firstgiving is one of the many online resources that make this approach to fundraising easy for

people to coordinate, even if they don't have the ability or time to handle credit cards and keep track of money. Each group sets up a Web page using the Firstgiving template. They can include text and photos, and update the page at any time. Then they e-mail the link to friends and family, or post it in their blog.

"The page reflects the group's creativity and engages the people they're trying to reach," said Mark Sutton, CEO of Firstgiving. And each page is linked to GuideStar, a database of 1.5 million charities, which allows users to pick their favorite. Recipients can use the page to donate money with a credit card and can leave a personal message or RSVP on the page. And the link e-mails are often forwarded, which creates a viral effect and generates even more response.

"Firstgiving is a catalyst that combines a passion for a cause with the things you like to do, like a dinner party or a run," Sutton said. Creating the page is easy and fast, and participants can organize runs or walks, or even create unique events that raise money for charities. Firstgiving charges a 7.35% fee on all the funds raised.

"I was so impressed with Firstgiving," said Paula Heinauer. "Everyone is so busy now and fundraising takes so much time. Firstgiving made it very easy, and a large percentage of the donations came through there."

Online tools sin

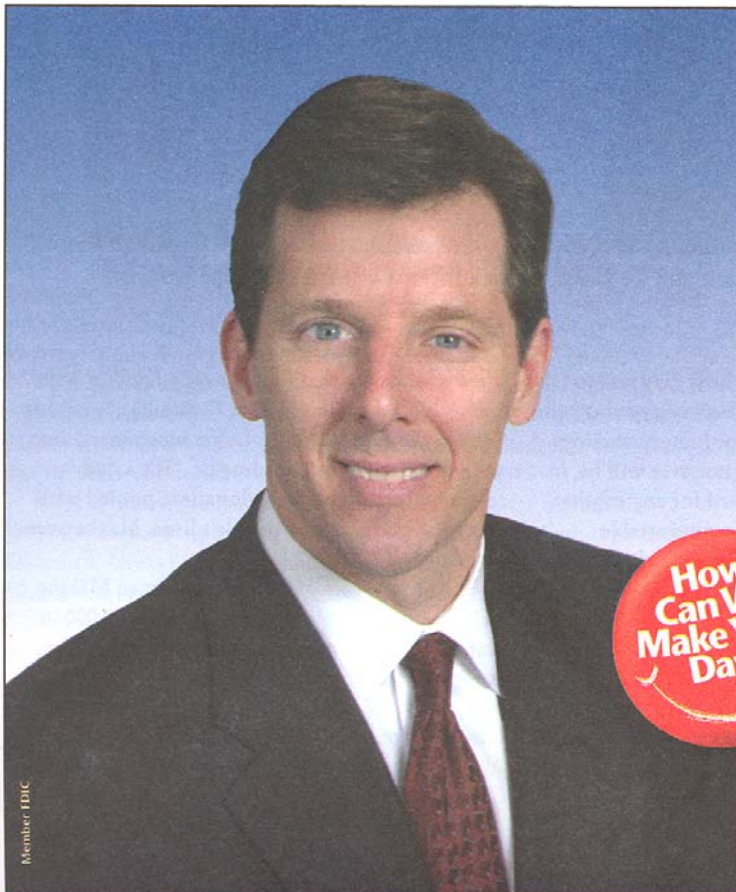
If you're interested in an opportunity to reach the following online people and collecting

- www.Firstgiving.com
- www.NetworkForGood.com
- www.IDoFoundation.com
- www.Whatgoesaround.com

In addition to collecting gifts, Hoey and Heinauer had a silent auction to get their pet or child to appreciate commercial, and arranged envelopes containing supplies needed, such as blankets.

The Heinauers and Hoey had a huge success. Their silent auction raised \$10,000, which they gave to Heinauer and Jack Hoey. The way their birthday celebration had meaning.

"It was humbling to put that much effort into many people could benefit," Heinauer said.



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