Compiled by Chris Stanley

Executive Director, Fisher/Nightingale Houses, Inc.

A compilation of Fundraising, House Support, Financial Management, Services, Media, and Promotional Ideas shared by several Friends of Fisher House Community Groups from across the nation.

2017 FOFH Best Practices

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**Gainesville Fisher House Foundation, Patti Fabiani, Executive Director**

**Fundraising Events and Ideas**

I really think that there are some key elements to always consider:

**Your Own Fundraiser from Your Group**

Is it feasible in the time you have in front of you and does it make sense to spend the time on a fundraiser instead of just asking?

Will it build over the years and pay off both monetarily and public relations-wise or will it be a bust?

Do we have the expertise to do this and will we attract enough followers to have a line of succession?

Are we flexible enough to consider trying for a few years and evaluating?

Single Day, super well-planned and prepped events are always the best! Always carry insurance and licensing! Try to never hire out if you can get free but always qualify what kind of free you are getting. Evaluate it personally, if you are getting a free band go listen to them and ask yourself if you would pay to hear them.

One of the best fundraisers I have been involved with and considering re-upping is the

**Super Cocktail Party!**

This is especially great for upper end donors or developing them and forming a network of people you can reach out to for services. Have all guest fill out a survey (what they would do or volunteer or give e-mail registration, etc.) when they register. Make sure on the program to plug what their donations will pay for at the house and how much you need their help. How many they are helping. The process can be annoying but great! Give out small gift bags for them to collect the cards in or a medium envelope with your logo on it. Committee assignment.

Get a free venue by asking someone with a great house to host. Of course, there must be good parking within proximity. The event is especially popular if it is a local celebrity or house they want to see. Make arrangement s to rope off areas you don’t want them going in and secure all valuables.

Get free liquor and beer by making friends with distributors and making them sponsors! Some distributors will connect you with a particular winery. You will need everyone’s coolers to hold all the ice you need unless you go more Wine tasting-ish!

Make a floor plan and know where everything will go.

Try to get free entertainment, piano/small combo, but good, otherwise pipe it in!

Hire expert servers and bussers and bartenders to help clear and clean. Make a full list of duties and contract for this. Stress to the staff this is a fundraiser and your guests are not to be monitored as to how much they imbibe. They can be very formal about how they serve and this will set the tone. So many fundraisers get out of hand because the guest gets the impression the wine is “free”. Have a tip jar.

Rent glassware and china and forks and linens. Use strong glorious napkins. Have lots of paper towels on hand for clean-up and you could consider a maid service for the next day for the owners. Often they will volunteer to do this. Have large garbage containers for garage or patio. Tap your friends for elegant things like mirrors and flowers for the tables.

You find 25 great cooks to make enough hors de oeuvres for 200 guests and to make their recipe on hand out cards to be placed at the table next to their dish. (They may need some help with this and its best to have them turn it into someone who can do this and make sure they get made.) You can later put them on line. Stress their best and give suggestions for savory, cheesy, sweet, ethnic, etc. – have them sign up and make sure no two are alike. It must be edible with a fork and ask them to bring in their own trays or get chaffers from rental. You can supplement with penne pasta or something like that to fill in if you think you may need it. Figure the portion size to be 1 to 2 ounces per guest per chef. The formula is that not everyone will eat every dish until the end of the night when they eat it to the bone!

Run it for two hours make your speeches. Ask, Ask, Ask! Praise, Praise, Praise! Make great jokes.

Let the guests linger then ring the last call bell and close it up so it ends up 3½ hours.

Get your board members ready with pre-written statements to say to guests. Tell stories from the Fisher House experience – this brings it home. Have them smile and greet, greet, greet!

The secondary thing you could consider would be a small silent auction. If you can get a big item or two it will up your take.

Send thank you’s to all who attended and stress the exclusivity and how they will be in the know for next year! You will end up with an automatic list!

This fundraiser eliminates so many costs and secures a solid group of donors that feel like they have been treated like royalty!

**Third Party Fundraisers**

Some are just a slam dunk. You and your group don’t have to do anything but empower and tell the story. Having a great Dog and Pony Show can motivate groups at presentations and get them to help you! Those that are automatic are great because they must abide by the system they function under and their ruling body. It doesn’t solve all problems but it does help tremendously ease the burden of disclosure.

American Legion

American Legion Riders

American Legion Auxiliary

Daughters of the American Revolution

Sons of the American Revolution

AMVETS

VFW

Boy Scouts

Girl Scouts

Some churches (qualify their intent, this is an entire discussion)

**Things to Avoid:**

Ever contracting with a “professional fundraiser”

Parents who put their kids up to “fundraising” and then covering their costs with donations

Groups that want your list of donors or contacts

Other veteran groups that want to partner, often you may think this brings you strength only to find the opposite. Be cautious and document all meetings.

**Services we provide to our local Fisher House**

Each week we provide a Hot Biscuit Breakfast and Pizza Fridays

Culligan Drinking Water on contract

Monthly major delivery of food stock

Landscaping supplementation when the VA is slacking

Toiletry round ups

Volunteer requests for gift and goodie bags for guests for each Holiday

Decorations for holidays

Emergency requests

Furniture repair

Professional drapery cleaning

Cleaning equipment

Supplemental supplies: laundry soap, hand soap, Kleenex, rain gear, umbrellas

Replacement supplies for any area

Extra reading materials, books and magazines, videos

**Stewardship practices**

We provide Community Liaison with a huge number of organizations (over 200) by email blast. This serves the house with our Mealtrain Program and volunteerism. Of course donations too! We accomplish this through ROBLY. I find it is a 1/3 the cost of constant contact, easier to use, and has better analytics.

Thank you letters for every donation.

Direct fundraising through presentations

Corporate, individual and foundation grants and matching donations.

Endowment through our Walk of Courage, which now sits at over 700k. We expect when this project is completed to have $2 million so that the throw off from the endowment will eliminate most of our fundraising for our house. If it grows more then we will be on automatic to give for the system.

**Cool promo items**

**** **Lime**

Years ago my kids were elite swimmers and their team came up with this shirt. It was the most popular summer shirt ever. We decided to give these this year as an “extra” at our golf tournament so that all who got them (golfers, volunteers, friends of FH) didn’t just wear our shirts golfing or to club meetings, but also to the beach and anything outdoor. It’s a talking point and ice breaker.

Last year we gave cheapish sunglasses with our name on them. They were a big hit. Folks love to keep them in their boats, cars, golf carts.

We ordered 300 umbrellas with our logo for the house guests. The often go home with the guest so it makes, again, for reminder and conversation.

I order extra and send to various organizations that donate as prizes and incentives for third party fundraisers or for “attaboys”.

The Fisher House Patches go out a lot from my office. So, many groups here do Poker Runs for us. We have great weather and lots of sunshine (I am rubbing it in) and retirees.

**Ideas for media interaction**

A great resource is to let your Public Affairs Officer at the VA know who you are and how available you are for interviews. Be prepared for an interview always with positive things to say about “no matter how you feel about the VA or the military it’s easy to put aside anything negative to help those we promised to help” then launch into the Fisher House.

They can deflect media to you because they have to have such approval for statements it can take them too long to react. YOU can get great coverage and give the public the Fisher House to latch on to.

Check presentations are so TERRIBLY BLAH!!!!!!!!!! Don’t ever expect coverage. I mean would you want to see that? The exception is a really BIG check!

Very often on the national news stories hit about PTSD, VA treatment, etc. If you have a cadre of community folks who have stayed at the Fisher House, you can get them to talk about the benefits of the Fisher House during treatment to reporters. The reporters will love you did I say, will love you!

If you have the relationship with your house manager and Public Affairs Officer and VA administration of trust that you will have their back in this way it can go a long way for many stories.

We send out a press release before every Federal holiday with a story about what that holiday means. It saves the reporter from trying to get an idea. We always put a twist to remind people of the living who struggle with the outcome of war and their families, especially if it’s a local couple a lot of the community can identify with, like this couple. Paul owned a bike shop in town that almost everyone who lived here bought a bike from him at one time or another.

The Corey’s, Paul and Marcey, stayed at a Fisher House following Paul’s liver transplant, so he could receive post-operative care for six weeks. “We’d all sit around and exchange war stories,” Paul said. “There was a great sense of fraternity. It helped the time go faster and it helped heal everyone both physically and mentally.” They credit the Fisher House for being a large part of a successful recovery. “It had the feeling of a big home,” Marcey said. “We would laugh easily and cry easily; emotions were raw.” Shortly after his transplant, Paul became a Gainesville Fisher House Foundation board member and wholeheartedly dedicated his time to ensuring the house’s inception. Paul’s memory will live on in the new North Florida/South Georgia Fisher House forever.

**Recognition programs**

Every year we do the following:

**Summer Student Volunteer Movie Night**

After the staff gets permission from all the parents (high school) we invite High Schoolers and college students to a treat night at TGI Fridays and then a movie.

**Volunteer Recognition Luncheon at the Fisher House**

We invite all our volunteers for a great luncheon hosted by our board. The administrators of the hospital including Voluntary Services and the staff are included. We thank the volunteers with movie cards. The cards are charged with enough for two tickets and some concessions. Usually $30 or around $400 total. The staff are given gifts bags with usually a nice candle and chocolates. We thank the staff and volunteers and give a volunteer of the year award! It also gives the administration a chance to thank them personally too!

**Zac Fisher’s Birthday**

We serve a gigantic cake and coffee and punch. Open the house to the staff of the hospital to come over so we can say thank you for helping us keep the communication flowing. The guests are invited to partake. We serve lunch for the staff and volunteers who help.

**Christmas Open House**

We do spectacular decorations all over the house and outside. We make it a party for the volunteers to put them up and take them down with lunch and BIG cookies. Our Open House this year will feature music like caroling through the Open House on Friday, December 8th, 2 pm to about 6. It gives employees time to come over before the weekend and time for the public to stop by. We serve goodies throughout the time, give tours and greet! Media usually always show up for this one!

The hidden advantage to doing these things is for the staff to be able to request extra cleaning, gardening, touch up painting, fixing etc. to look great for the public eye.

**Community Recognition**

Toot your own horn! Have your board members keep a look out for community recognition awards and have them get their friends to nominate your group. It gets media attention, money and good will coming in! We’ve been averaging one big award per year and that has put us on the radar for several family foundations.

**Keep Scrapbooks**

Sounds silly? I have found over the years that people and you will forget all the things you did, accomplished and how it all got done. As with our group we have lost five board members while they served with us. They were dear friends and when the community sees them in our books they get just how deep this runs. We place them on a table for all to see at functions. It’s your history and it passes on to the next group to pick up the gauntlet. It’s also great for Open Houses so the staff and guests see the effort. Just have a file to throw stuff in and find that person who loves to do this. Buy them some supplies and turn them loose. You can even have a volunteer at the house help.

**Talk to the Talkers**

Offer to do your presentation to those that set up presentations and need to have you in their back pocket. Your presentation has to be great so you wow them but with our subject that’s not a problem. Hotels and Conference organizations, Club presidents’ councils, District councils, State Groups that have district governors or the like, any group that is a group of leaders are fabulous. They are in sync with taking your information back and motivating others to call you. Ask to speak for State conventions of American Legion, AMVETS, VFW etc. or call all the state commanders. We were lucky enough to be the statewide charity for several.

**Get PR and Marketing Interns**

We are in a University City where students need internships. I think a lot of the support groups are too! Yes, you pay them and that makes you and them accountable. But it gives you help with some great skills and you can get a lot of media and presentations going. Radio, TV and press interviews are fabulous. They can set up your media release list for you by calling all the media outlets. Empower them to call and set up presentations, send letters, emails, do press releases and tap into their talents. Interview them and make them send samples of their work. Make sure they know they have to produce and that they are responsible for helping all these people.

Keep in mind to always proof everything. Set up a sign off system for that. Google Docs can keep you organized and share information back and forth.

**Other Marketing**

Our new website- It features a 360 tour of our house and video: [www.GainesvilleFisherHouse.org](http://www.GainesvilleFisherHouse.org)

**Fisher House Wisconsin, Andrew Roberts**

1. Coordinated with local business groups to create dedicated partners to volunteer labor for:

* Holiday decoration setup in November
* Holiday decoration take down in January
* Spring mulching

1. Connected with each local business Military Affinity Group to establish a POC within each organization to secure a pipeline for donors/support.
2. Pay for all families to stay off campus if the FH is full and established relations with local hotel to secure preferred rates.
3. Established a donor/supporter contact plan for the top 100 supporters of FH Wisconsin.  Ensures proper touchpoints for key supporters, ensures transparency to Board Member involvement, and provides clear transition plan when Board members are replaced.
4. Purchased FH Wisconsin water bottles for guests in the house:  prevents FH from having to purchase cases of bottled water, reduces waste footprint, allows families to bring fluid into the hospital, promotes FH Wisconsin within hospital and back at home
5. Created relations with local Fox news studio to have a pipeline for PSA’s, special interest stories and potential revenue generation with preferred partners
6. Created a standing Board Governance committee that oversees the pipeline of Board members; helps ensure we have a balanced mix of skills (legal, accounting, finance, etc.), community presence and board member activity.

**St. Louis Fisher House, Jim Donahue, President**

**BACKGROUND**

The St Louis Fisher House Board was formed in early 2007. The eight members who comprise the Board have backgrounds associated with the military and a wide range of work experiences including federal service, financial, legal, retail and management. The one thing we all agree on is optimizing service to Veterans and their families as shown below.

The St Louis VA Medical Center has two large campuses. The downtown John Cochran campus (15 miles away) provides outpatient and specialized medical care ranging from heart surgery to radiation oncology. The Jefferson Barracks campus (where the 20 bedroom suite Fisher House is located) provides long term care ranging from spinal cord to mental health treatment.

**SERVICE TO GUESTS**

Overnight stays: The St Louis VAMC treats patients from across the Central Midwest. We found that outpatients were often getting up in the wee hours of morning to drive up to 200 miles for two or more outpatient appointments…and then trying to drive home. Many of these patients were elderly. This practice was not only unsafe, it was poor service from the VA. We now allow these patients, when they travel with family, to stay in the Fisher House the night before these outpatient visits or the night after, before they drive home. It has won great support from the patients, their families and the VA.

We do not turn away any families that are eligible to stay in the Fisher House. Normally we have about a 95% occupancy rate. If a family is eligible to stay in the house and we are full, the Board will house them in a nearby Hampton Inn. We have a contract with this facility for a reduced rate. While staying in the Hampton Inn the family is welcome to come to the FH for meals and social events. When room is available they will then move to the FH.

We have two VA campuses in St Louis about 15 miles apart. Many families come here without transportation. During weekday and normal duty hours the VA will operate a shuttle bus between these two campuses. However, at nights and weekends the Board provides a commercial transportation service between the two campuses. The VA and military also send patients to commercial hospitals in the local area. The VA does not provide transportation service to these hospitals, so the Board also pays for commercial service to and from the Fisher House for these locations when needed.

The Army has a large military installation (Fort Leonard Wood) in central Missouri which is about 120 miles away. They will often send military members, and especially dependents, to commercial hospitals in St Louis for highly specialized care. Whether it is the military members or their family members who are hospitalized, we allow the remaining family members to stay in the FH. Likewise, military families come from across the nation for special procedures (e.g. double lung transplant for a new born, etc.) that will keep them in St Louis and the FH for extended periods. These families, including the active duty member, will stay in the FH for the duration.

The Board provides gift cards to the Fisher House Manager for a host of situations. Many times we have a family from a distant location that comes for an outpatient visit and winds up being hospitalized for a week or so. We will use these cards for the spouse to go to Walmart and buy a change of underwear and clothing. We also provide the cards to volunteers for specific items such as decorations, landscaping supplies, etc. Many times we have to provide these cards just so patients and their families can purchase gasoline to get home.

From mid-August to the end of September, the VA shuts down all purchases with a VA credit card to reconcile all accounts before the end of the fiscal year. The FH Manager will not have access to funds in the FH General Post Fund account during this period. The Board will provide all funding during this downtime for all food and miscellaneous purchases.

**FUNDRAISING**

For the past four years, a volunteer committee has hosted an annual Fisher House Golf tournament. There are many attractions such as games, dinner and an auction. The highlight is a helicopter ball drop. Participants purchase a numbered golf ball for $10 each. These balls are then dropped from a helicopter on to the chipping green. The first ball in the hole (or closest to the hole) wins 10% of the sales. This year the tournament generated $32,000 and lots of great publicity for the FH.

For the past three years, the Northwest Chamber of Commerce (NWCC) has hosted a Trivia Night to raise money for the FH. They have raised over $30,000. This year on Veterans Day they plan to host a “Gala” to raise another $30K. To increase publicity, a NWCC member is paying to film professional, short videos (2 to 3 minutes) that can be used for TV publicity, website and Facebook postings, and briefings. We expect this video will pay great dividends.

**REDUCED EXPENSES**

One of our greatest gifts is from a large corporation that volunteered their professional accountants to handle, at no charge, our financial transactions: deposits, credit card processing, accounting, thank you letters, tax preparation, etc. This has saved us thousands of dollars and hours of work.

This same corporation also maintains our website including maintenance, security and credit card processing. After several attempts to hack into our website, the security aspect has proved invaluable.

**PUBLICITY**

One of our major challenges has been to publicize the existence and purpose of the Fisher House to VA employees (especially at our downtown facility and distant outpatient clinics), and to the staff of commercial hospitals used by the VA and DoD. The Board has paid to host many Open Houses for as many employees as possible so they can see the FH first hand. Patients and volunteers are also invited.

The Board has also hosted several “Volunteer Appreciation” events which include lunch, gifts and games. This has increased morale among our many volunteers and attracted many more volunteers.

The Board has produced postcards with photos of the interior of the FH and contact information to mail to spinal cord injury patients across an eight state area of responsibility for the St Louis VA. The VA would like for these 1800+ patients to visit annually to check their progress and set a treatment plan for the upcoming year. These cards encourage the patients and their families / caregivers to come to St Louis for these annual visits, and highlights the existence of a Fisher House with free lodging. It is increasing the number of patients who come for annual treatment.

The Board also provides business cards for members and the FH staff so that we all have the same standard card. Instructions on making contributions are also printed on these cards.

**FISHER HOUSE MAINTENANCE**

The Board also pays for landscaping services beyond the mowing and trimming provided by the VA. We provide supplies (e.g. mulch, plants, tools, etc.) for the volunteers who do minor landscaping. Annually, we hire a professional landscaper to come in and do the major work such as: tree trimming / removal, relocation of large shrubbery, etc. As a result the ground of the FH are beautiful all year long.

Because the St Louis Fisher House is located near the river and lots of foliage, we have issues with mold, insect larvae, carpenter ants, spiders, etc. Annually the Board will pay for power washing the exterior of the building and patio to keep them free of these pests.

**Friends of VA Puget Sound Fisher House, Lorraine Thomas, Development Director**

Every donor, regardless of the size of the gift, receives a hand written thank you note after every gift. Each note includes a card with a testimony from a guest, to help connect the Friends' appreciation for the gift with the recipients of that generosity. All regular donors (monthly gifts or those who have given to us consistently over the years) also receive a holiday card signed by the entire board. These notes are pure thanks, no ask, and are separate from the year-end tax letters. We know, because donors have told us, that these notes make them feel connected to the mission and like part of the family. (I suspect it also has something to do with the fact that fully 75% of our donations come from individuals.)

**Story Collection**

The best way to raise money for Fisher House is to tell the story of the guest experiences. In order to do this we arranged with our House manager to include a feedback form that is included in guest check out packets. Passages from the forms are used for the thank you inserts, newsletter and other print pieces, and on social media.

**Fisher House of the Emerald Coast, Inc., Mia Hughes, Administrative Director**

For fundraising at our gala last year (230 people, 23 tables of 10), we limited the decorating budget and only tied one chair with decorative sash per table.  We placed a FHEC rhinestone pin (worth $5) on each sash, with a note at the place setting that suggested a “first right of refusal” to the owner.  If they wanted the pin, they paid $20 but could pass the right to purchase, to the right.  We sold all 23 pins, making them “exclusive” and it was an easy way to make $345 without appearing cheap in the decoration.

For internal process, we upgraded our QuickBooks to the premier edition 2016 and use fully as a database.  With approximately 1,500 “customer” records, it didn’t make sense for us to spend additional funds on a CRM today but we now have an electronic storage system in place.  We scan invoices, thank you notes to customers, correspondence from donors, bank statements, etc. into the records.  Our auditor commented he had never seen a nonprofit (locally) fully utilize the software to this level.  When we are audited (annually) now, the list of testing samples for receipts and disbursements are all within the electronic file we share, reducing staff time on both ends to complete the audit.  We also add notes to the records when we talk with donors, etc.  We only have a staff of one and when the staff changes, the records are concise so we provide some much needed continuity.

For marketing, since coloring is now so popular, we are working on a 20 page coloring book (we hope a draft is ready to share by the conference) that tells how Fisher House came to Eglin and features a squirrel named Shalimar.  The books are less than $2.00 each and serve as an additional outreach beyond a brochure.  We will use the books in May of each year (Military appreciation) to educate elementary school children on the mission and to encourage patriotism. Last year, an artist commissioned by us went into a classroom and taught one of the Florida history lessons, drawing as he spoke that met curriculum for Social Studies and promoted Fisher House too!

For groceries for the house, we have volunteers (and me) that shop and we use an app called OurGroceries.  The house staff place items on that list with dates (so we know timing) and we share the app with volunteers who can see the list and then mark off the items as they are shopping.  Sometimes the staff at the house can see that we are at the store, and they start loading up the list!

We will soon implement a green dot reloadable MasterCard that can be issued to one person, which will eliminate purchasing and the handoff of a gift card to a designated person each time.  It can also be reloaded via an electronic transfer by our treasurer, placing an additional control.

**Rocky Mountain Fisher House Foundation, Sara Morris, Executive Director**

**SERVICES PROVIDED BY THE FOUNDATION TO THE HOUSE**

**Transportation:** The Rocky Mountain Fisher House Foundation provides taxi and Uber transportation services for free to those staying at the house to get to and from the hospital and the house. Our house is about 20 minutes from the Denver VA hospital. Because we serve mainly Veterans and their families who come to us from all over the Rocky Mountain region, this is a great service because many who ﬂy here without vehicles, still have a way to get to and from the hospital easily and safely without having to pay for a rental car or taxi costs.

**Cable TV:** The Rocky Mountain Fisher House Foundation pays for all of the rooms and the main shared living room in the house to be equipped with cable TV. This allows for our guests to enjoy one of the many comforts of home, while staying at our house.

**Newspaper Delivery:** The Rocky Mountain Fisher House Foundation pays for a local newspaper (The Denver Post) to be delivered to the house daily. We serve an older population, who very much enjoys reading the newspaper, so this has been a service that is very much used by our guests.

**Hotel Stays:** When our house is full, the foundation will pay for families to stay at a hotel, so they can still be with their loved ones during their care at the Denver VA Hospital.

**IDEAS TO HELP WITH FUNDRAISING**

**Table Set-Up:** We have a table cloth, which has our logo and name printed on it. We also have a large folding picture display, which sets nicely on-top of the table. This display has pictures of the inside our current house as well as a picture of what our new house will look like when it is built. We use this table set-up when we are invited to CFC events or any other event where we are asked to set-up a table display.

**Tent:** We have a tent that has our logo on the front of it as well as some ﬂags (representing all of the military branches) that we can Velcro onto the tent, which makes the tent stand out. We use our tent at outdoor events such as clay shoots and golf fundraisers. The tent provides shade and is easily visible to those at the event.

**PROMOTIONAL IDEAS**

**Brochures:** We created a brochure about our house as well as our new house that is expected to be built in 2018. This brochure is an easy hand-out to those who visit our table or tent and want more information about who we are and what we are about.

**Promo Items:** We also have pins, letter openers, pens, magnets and drink koozies made with our logo and name on them. We hand-out all of this at our events and fundraisers.

**T-Shirts for Volunteers:** When we have fundraising events we provide T-shirts with our logo to all of our volunteers. This allows easily identiﬁes our volunteers at an event. Also, our volunteers love the t-shirts and wear them long afterwards to help bring awareness around Colorado about our house.

**Friends of Fisher House Houston, Sarah McMullen**

**Fundraising events and ideas**

Building relationships with the Houston sports teams and the players that are known to support Veterans’ causes (i.e. J.J. Watt and Brian Cushing).

Focus on cross-community activities on Veterans’ Day such as a competitive radiothon. Each community charity could compete to raise funds for their respective charities.

Continue building a relationship with Occidental in support of their work as sponsors for Veterans on behalf of the Astros.

Open houses and tours.

We are discussing ideas for off-site events such as bike-a-thons.

A long-term goal is the production of a concert benefit at a local venue, utilizing the talent of an artist who supports Veterans’ causes (underwritten by a sponsor).

**Services provided**

Build our brand with the various members of the restaurant community to enhance meal donations.

Now that we have three Fisher Houses, our goal is to underwrite a kitchen attendant to oversee the kitchens of our Houses. This is particularly important in an effort to manager large frozen food donations from companies such as Sysco and HEB.

Expand relationships with Houston and Texas-based companies for in-kind donations. We have secured the donation of all mattresses for FH I through Texas Mattress Makers. We have also worked with them to customize and donate one mattress for an active duty airman/guest being treated for cancer. They have already indicated a desire to work with us on future in-kind donations and cross-promotions.

**Promo ideas**

We have already manufactured customized FH tote bags for our Houston guests. In conjunction with the bags, promotional content will be produced such as notepads, pens, resource information, T-shirts, etc.

We are beginning the production of video stories that can be used on our website and at special events.

We are interested in learning more a about cause-related marketing and how it might benefit us.

**Media interaction**

Brochures and tri-folds to be distributed to our VA Hospital as well as the entire Houston Medical Center. It is crucial to build awareness of FH throughout the medical center since this expansion is a relatively new development. Our goal is to create permanent displays at each institution. We need to discuss the merits of including donor response cards, perhaps include these cards in direct mail to donor base only.

**Media placement:** We began our media placement following the issuance of our 501c3 tax-exempt confirmation and in conjunction with the opening of FH III. In coordination with Veterans Day, we were featured on several local programs including “Houston Newsmakers” and “Houston Life” (latter segment in conjunction with FH active duty airman/guest who received custom mattress for use at Fisher House and for his continued care in San Antonio). Other stories pending include an additional TV segment on KPRC with Jennifer Rena and a segment on “Great Day Houston.”

We plan to continue enhancing and optimizing our social media presence on Facebook and Twitter.

**Recognition programs**

Develop a donor database including the cultivation of young donors that reflect the age of many of our active military, plus local veterans’ organizations, sports organizations, local companies and corporations.

Our goals include building and retaining relationships in our community and this type of database will be invaluable to us.

In support of receiving donations, we are sending timely written thank-you letters. We are discussing implementing personal phone calls, as well. Consider a thank-you gift for donors on a certain level (i.e. our tote bags). Appreciate the fact that mass solicitations via email can be counterproductive so we want to grow and develop a personalized approach to encourage recurring donations.

Develop a donor-centric quarterly newsletter (with response card) that can be targeted to our database. Newsletter will be featured on our website as well. Format would include a letter from our President, volunteer profiles, stories about people who have been served by FH Houston as well as any messages of support.

**Stewardship practices**

In keeping with donor recognition, we have been discussing the importance of growing our donor base and the importance of personalizing the experience. As a community charity, we recognize the importance of having a presence in the Houston area. Ideas have included:

Developing a designated page on our website to recognize “friends” of the charity and to update donors on our projects and how we are using and applying their donations.

Events – tours, open houses, off-site gatherings - perhaps implementing video stories as part of the presentation.

We would like to discuss the importance of designating one board member (or a committee) just to manage donor relations.

**Other ideas:** Consider an online chat room for all FH community charities to exchange ideas and resources.

**Fisher Houses, Inc., Dwayne Hopkins, Executive Director**

Fisher House, Inc. Appreciation Event

* Event held each year in October
  + Community leaders, Board of Directors, and key military leaders attend the event (Wing Commanders and key sponsors like USAA)
  + Fisher House guests also invited
* Event Last about 1.5 hours
  + Important to get commanders back to their jobs and held during lunch time only
  + Held in the parking lot of Fisher House III
  + Covered tent
  + Lunch provided
* Live band during event and afterwards
* Two awards presented at the event by the President of the Board Of Directors
  + Helping Hands Award (awards for someone who contributed towards the Fisher House, Inc. mission)
  + Bronze plaque for a key sponsor and posted in our gazebo area for all to see
* Cost of entire event about $10K
  + Tent setup, rental, food, band
* Benefits
  + Recognition for sponsors and community
  + Sponsors gets to see how money is spent (i.e., new storage facility, parking lots, renovations)
  + Sponsors gets to meet some military families
  + Open house afterwards for all attending the event

**Friends of the Arizona Fisher House Board, Ellen Jimenez, President**

I have a list below of some of our exciting moments, for at least the last year....

* Purple Heart Golf Tournament – We teamed up with the Purple Heart Foundation and put together a great event, with some of the proceed to benefit the Arizona Fisher House
* Citi 5k- Annual Veterans Run to benefit AFH – This is held during Veterans Weekend, great exposure for us. Event sponsored by Citibank and donations sent via United Way – team and community event
* 9/11 Tower Challenge - 2nd year for us to be named a recipient. All local military and first responders are invited to participate in honor of all those who lost their lives on 9/11. They will climb 110 floors, 2071 steps, same as the Twin Towers. Board is there to support, volunteer and share of the Arizona Fisher House
* Chris Cobb Mt Denali Climb – Chris is retired Air Force – referred to the Board by a First Sergeant at Davis-Monthan AFB as an idea to make a recipient for his Climbing of Mt Denali – lots of media coverage, and continuous opportunities to bring exposure to the Arizona Fisher House
* James T Harris Radio Show – We were guests on the show, James T Harris was part of our Radio a Thon last year, likes to have us on from time-to-time to share updates, donation opportunities, and volunteer opportunities. Fisher House Foundation sends in recordings of families and their stories.
* 1702 and 1912 Brewing – Put together an event in which they collected wish list items for the AZFH for a month. Finished the month with an event which the Board attended along with families which had previously stayed at other Fisher Houses and local businesses as a networking event. All money's raised went to AZFH
* Bike Poker Run – Two Poker Runs this year – great to be at those to raise exposure and gratitude for supporting our families in the AZFH
* Smile Amazon.com – asked us to set up and account as people shopping on Amazon.com were requesting us
* Lotus Radio Show – Guests on a radio show with a focus on our Hispanic community (we are only 45 minutes from the Mexico border)
  + This led to Jeep Dealership and Lotus Radio's Rock Station putting together a campaign - test drive for money for the AZ FH
* Speaking Opportunities with local churches, Republican luncheons

We have coins and wristbands which we offer as a thank you for donations.

We have a lot of joy in seeing the reactions on people's faces who are learning for the first time of the Fisher House. Honoring and taking care of our men and women who serve, including their families, there is no greater joy.

**Fisher/Nightingale Houses, Inc., Chris Stanley, Executive Director**

It is our belief that the Fisher/Nightingale Houses, Inc. (FNHI) is a business and needs to be run in the same professional manner. Our core belief is that in all we do, we are here to support the Fisher House managers and the Fisher House guests – and that drives every decision we make. Our motto is *Touching Lives with Compassion*.

The FNHI established a donor program on 1 January 2002. There are three levels: Supporter ($50 to $250 donation or donation-in-kind or 25 hours of volunteer service); Friend ($251 to $500 donation or donation-in-kind or 50 hours of volunteer service) and Patron ($501 or more donation or donation-in-kind or 100 hours of volunteer service). We also established a Microsoft Access database to track all supporters. We then send out renewal letters to encourage giving again. Currently, there are 606 active Supporters, 110 active Friends and 287 active Patrons (and a total of 4,791 donor records) – and the program has tracked more than $6.4M since inception.

Quarterly, the FNHI purchases $2,000 in Visa cards and gives them to the FH Managers to use to make purchases for the House guests (milk, juice, condiments, etc.). We also budget for two volunteer recognition events annually. The FNHI has made large purchases and donated them to the Government (i.e., plantation shutters for FH I, a vehicle for the House managers to use to do their business, a $150,000 2,500 square foot playground, replacement laptops for every FH room, etc.). We also pay for the annual “weed and seed” services for the Fisher Houses and have paid for professional trimming of the trees and bushes every other year as well as landscaping as needed. All donations are properly proffered to the Government.

We have four or five volunteers who pop popcorn in the atrium of the Wright-Patt Medical Center (where the Pharmacy is). We started this in July 2005 and have raised $259,634.61 (gross) with a net of $197,074.52 (in 1,861 popping days) – an average net income of $105.90 every day we pop. There are also signs about the Fisher House on the machine so it also serves an educational/ informational purpose.

Quarterly, the FNHI purchases $7,500 in restaurant gift cards and donates them to the Fisher House. The managers use these to sponsor meals for the guests in the Houses.

We have a very active website and Facebook page – which keeps people educated on what the Houses are doing, what events the FNHI are doing, etc.

In September 2004, the FNHI started our annual event – “An All-American Evening.” It is held at the National Museum of the U.S. Air Force and the subtheme changes each year. Since its inception, a total of $958,564.09 (net) has been raised. We have a dedicated committee, a detailed action item tracking spreadsheet and hold a total of seven meetings to pull the entire event together with a committee of about 15 people (most on the auction item subcommittee).

- September 2004 – 154 tickets sold; net of $5,020.78

- April 2005, “A Country Wish” – 217 tickets sold; net of $31,255.79

- April 2006, “And All That Jazz” – 248 tickets sold; net of $54,132.55

- April 2007, “Rockin’ American Bandstand” – 309 tickets sold; net of $56,967.16

- April 2008, “Escape to Paradise” – 330 tickets sold; net of $73,864.22

- April 2009, “Cruisin’ the USA” – 382 tickets sold; net of $55,302.98

- April 2010, “Extreme Makeover – Fisher House Edition” – 390 tickets sold; net of $107,679.99

- April 2011, “This New House” – 368 tickets sold; net of $97,424.59

- April 2012, “Go Wild for Our Heroes” – 354 tickets sold; net of $77,740.22

- April 2013, Cancelled due to threat of sequestration but our corporate sponsors allowed the FNHI to keep their donations; net of $66,212.91 (and our guests missed it and commented on such the following year)

- April 2014, “Coming Home”, – 315 tickets sold; net of $77,441.38

- April 2015, “Through the Years (Our 25th Anniversary Celebration)” – 311 tickets sold; net of $78,510.57

- April 2016, “The Ultimate Tailgate” – 319 tickets sold; net of $87,820.46

- April 2017, “A Night at the Movies” – 290 tickets sold; net of $89,190.49

-- This is a total net income of $958,564.09 in 14 years

- April 2018 will be a comedy theme (with a professional comedian) and we’re already exploring at 2019 and 2020 themes

In order to conduct fundraisers on the installation, we obtain Force Support Squadron and Legal approval for all on-base fundraisers. With the upcoming Fisher House at the Dayton VA, we have already coordinated with the VA Medical Center Director and his Legal staff on procedures to conduct fundraisers on the VA campus.

We have a great group of third party fundraisers supporting us (Combat Veterans Motorcycle Association – more than $120,000 in five events (nearly $40,000 in May 2017); AMVETS Post 51 – more than $65,000 in three annual events ($32,000 in June 2017); 100+ Men Who Care – $10,600 in March 2017; 100+ Women Who Care – $20,900 in November 2016; First Baptist Church – Classics Ministry – monthly donations totaling $4,737.94 since March 2014; Megacity Hockey Club – Dulahan concert at Gilly’s Jazz Club – $19,115.02 in five events since January 2012; Miami Valley Military Affairs Association annual golf tournament – $78,150 since January 2002 ($12,000 in 2016 – 2017 presentation pending); Ohio State Auxiliary, Fraternal Order of Eagles (State President’s year-long project) – $35,265.12 in June 2016; Stockslager’s Greenhouse and Garden Center – annual “Combos for Our Country” plant sale – raised $5,173 since May 2012; Voss Auto (four car shows in 2016) – more than $3,000. All of these come with great publicity about the Fisher Houses and many include television and radio appearance/coverage.

We participate in the Combined Federal Campaign, the Combined Charitable Campaign (for state of Ohio employees) and the United Way.

We prepare and publish our Annual Report by February of the following year. Hard copies are printed for specific uses and it is posted to the FNHI website.

We recently put together a committee to review and update our ByLaws and all of our Policies and Procedures, which consist of:

* Code of Ethics
* Conflict of Interest
* Disclose of Wrongdoing, “Whistleblower”
* Diversity
* Document Retention
* Donor Program
* Executive Director’s Performance
* Investment
* Measurable Effectiveness
* Non-Discrimination

We are Better Business Bureau Charitable Advisory Services certified and belong to the Fairborn, Beavercreek, Huber Heights and Dayton Chambers of Commerce. This gives us access to their members. (The Beavercreek Chamber of Commerce makes a donation back to us annually, equal to the amount of our membership, so it is a no-cost membership.)