



Building brighter futures
for disabled children

Fundraising Case Study

Thomas Brown – Fundraising for 'Building Thomas a Future in Bromley Cross'



www.sullivansheroes.org

Email: hello@sullivansheroes.org

Registered Charity Number 1163021





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Thomas’ family have kindly documented their process during their fundraising with Sullivan’s Heroes towards their adaptation project, for this Case Study.

Yesterday, thanks to a donation from a charity, [Thomas’s fundraising target](#) with Sullivan’s Heroes of £30K was met.

His adaptations will cost £120K and this was the shortfall we have been unable to find after our remortgage and our Disabled Facilities Grant.

Over the past 5 years we have both been involved in a lot of fundraising but this has been by the far the biggest, the most personal and the hardest fundraiser we have ever done.

Covid, at the time, had made what was already going to be a challenge, so much more difficult too.

What are our 3 top tips?

1. Get your story straight.
2. Get yourself a spreadsheet and get organised.
3. Draw yourself a graph.

Your Story

Write your story down in bullet points as though you are pitching a Hollywood film. If there are any details that make the story unclear, omit them but never lie. If there are details that give your story more empathy then highlight them. Your story is critical to your fundraising campaign. It needs to make people cry whilst enthusing them to get involved with an opportunity to change someone’s (yours and your child’s) life for the better.

Your Spreadsheet & The Cloud

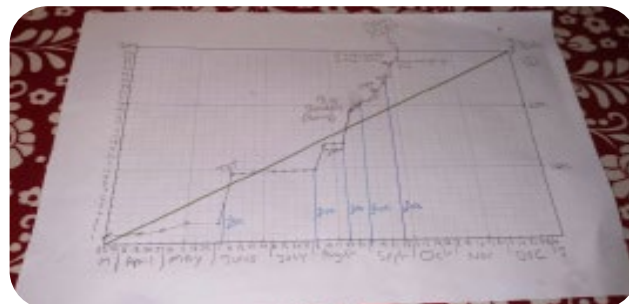
Charities use specialist CRM software but we used Google sheets. The brilliant thing about Google sheets is that it is collaborative so other people can help by working on the same document simultaneously. Our spreadsheet started as a list of targets and the total we were working towards. We then organised it in terms of progress made. Across Tom’s fundraiser, we approached over 250 organisations for help, nearly 95% rejected us.

Category	Item	Value	Total
ADAPTATIONS
GRANTS
DONATIONS
TOTAL

We also collated every document relating to Thomas’s adaptations into a folder. From a scan of his DLA, letters from every medical professional involved in his care and the plans and documentation for his build, as well as detailed income expenditure breakdowns.

The Graph

This sounds so simple but the amounts we are trying to raise can be overwhelming so draw yourself a graph. By setting the amount required against the time you need to raise it you can see at a glance where you are up to.



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£30K over 30 weeks means you are aiming for £1K a week. Sometimes you will be behind, sometimes ahead but we never look at the end target, only where we are against that week.

The Fundraising Process

Ok, you have your story told in a clear sympathetic way. You are organised in terms of how you are going to keep track of who you have approached using your spreadsheet and you are going to keep your spirits up by tracking where you are up to with your graph, how on earth do you start asking people for money?

The Bad News. A LOT of charities do not fund individuals or adaptations however you are now attached to Sullivan's Heroes, which means many more doors have opened to you as you have a charity backer. We found that the secret to success is to be ULTRA-LOCAL.

This means not just people and businesses in the area you live but "Local" in relations to jobs you may hold now or in the past, charities that help specific conditions your child may have, or perhaps related to sports or interests you or your family are involved with.

I spent half my life on this [website](#).

I would look for any charity that was registered near to where we live, overlapped our story or offered potential and then I would ring them, [write to them](#) or drop them an email.

You need to check the site at least weekly as it is changing all the time.



My best success was with a local philanthropist. Within 20 minutes of me emailing him, he knocked on our door with a cheque for £500. Remember – ULTRA LOCAL!

I work in TV and I told our story to the Film and Television Charity. They have given us £3,650 for Thomas's Wash & Dry Toilet.

Thomas's mum Jo, is a teacher. After telling them our story, the Teaching Staff Trust has given us £6,350 and the National Education Union £1,900.

People like to fund THINGS. Go through your build and break it down into as many component objects as you can think of and give each one a story as to why it is essential for your child. The NEU's £1,900 is paying for 5 wheelchair friendly sliding doors for example.

STRIKE WHILE THE IRON IS HOT. Any charity or organisation that gives you even a hint that they may be able to help is probably subtly giving you a signal that they have some money they need to distribute but they need you to tick their boxes. Do your research, adjust your story to fit their aims and provide as much evidence as you can. This is when the backing of Sullivan's Heroes is essential, they don't just give your bid gravitas, Fiona understands their bureaucracy and what they need to hear for a successful application.

It took us a day to [get our story right](#) and do the application form for the Teaching Staff Trust but it netted us £6,350. That is equivalent to over 200 donations of £30 to our Just Giving page from friends and family.



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Whilst approaching Trusts, Charities and Foundations, make sure you do not neglect your social media. You must be relentless in publicising



your fundraiser and celebrating your successes. As your fundraiser gains traction you will find people want to be involved, so do not forget the soft skills and thank EVERYONE!

Alongside tagging people on Facebook & Twitter, we also sent handwritten thank you cards to nearly everyone who donated or helped us. By showing people that

their donation counts, you are creating an army of advocates who may open doors for you that you didn't know existed.

We managed to secure £1,000 from our local Rotary Club and we made sure there was a photo opportunity for the cheque handover. The (socially distanced) event we put on around the handover and the publicity we gave on social media led to a swell of around £4,000 on our Just Giving page.

There is success in failure too. Some of our rejections are brutal, some are just silence but if we ever got a soft rejection in the form of “We would love to help but...”, I usually gave them a ring and

had a chat as often they would suggest potential leads or shine light on an avenue we hadn't yet explored. Remember, people like to help.

Community fundraising was still possible despite COVID, it was just harder, needed more imagination and potentially raised smaller sums. I mentioned ultra local with regards to sporting associations. I managed to raise £640 in an [online sailing event](#) as my family and I are involved with the sailing world. The resulting publicity around my efforts also led to nearly £750 in donations from friends at our local sailing club.

Jo likes to run and our local running club is putting on an event for Thomas in November.

If you want your fundraiser to succeed you need to be relentless and shameless. At the end of the day, without these funds my son's adaptations could not have been funded and I never lost sight of that fact. You are fighting for your family's future and taking the burden off the state to make the reasonable adjustments your child needs to live



their life in safety and with dignity. Never feel ashamed to champion their cause, you are the best advocate they will ever have. Having Sullivan's Heroes on our team, believing in us and championing Thomas's needs gave us the strength to keep knocking on doors with a smile and make this happen

but make no mistake there are no magic wands, white knights or easy solutions. Our target was only met through graft, will power and an unceasing desire to make this happen.

Good luck, Ian & Jo x

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